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BEYOND THUNDER RIVER

Solo Adventure in Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age™



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Solo Adventure in Robert E. Howard's Hyborian Age

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INSTRUCTIONS

Conan Beyond Thunder River is a solo *GURPS* adventure. You'll control a Player Character — Conan or a hero of your own design — and this book will serve as the Game Master.

As you move through the adventure, you'll be called upon to make various choices. Each choice will send you to a different numbered paragraph, which will give you more information, more instructions and possibly call for more decisions.

Sometimes you will have to fight the savage Picts, or other, stranger foes. Run these combats according to the normal *GURPS* rules, moving and rolling for your opponents as well as for your own character.

The object is, of course, to survive and complete the adventure. If you don't make it the first time . . . try again.

Good luck, and may Crom defend you!

Getting Started

You will need a pencil, scratch paper, three six-sided dice and the *GURPS Basic Set*. You will also need hex paper and markers to fight out the combats — we recommend *GURPS Battle Maps* and *Cardboard Heroes*. (Figure 2 in *Cardboard Heroes Set I* and Figure 10 in *Set II* make good Conans!)

You will also need a character. A character sheet for Conan the Cimmerian can be found on p. 64. If you would rather use one of your own characters, or design a new one, go ahead. Just follow the guidelines in the next section.

Designing Your Own Character

Obviously, an adventure that is challenging for a great hero like Conan will be instant death for the typical 100-point character. Therefore, we recommend a more heroic base of 400 points for PCs in *Thunder River*. Do hold to the normal limit of -40 points in disadvantages and -5 points in quirks, though.

Regardless of *who* your PC is, he must be the commander of the scouts at Fort Tuscelan, in the Aquilonian province of Conajohara. Thus, he must meet the following requirements:

Military rank. Though the scouts at Fort Tuscelan are not part of the formal organization of the Aquilonian army, their commander holds the rank of "officer in charge of scouts." This position is equivalent to a regular army captain, and requires the advantage Military Rank 4 (cost: 20 points). Because of your rank, subordinate soldiers are generally obligated to do as you command. This advantage also includes one free level of Social Status, as well as a +1 reaction from those of lower rank and from residents of the frontier. (A complete discussion of Military Rank can be found on p. 62 of *GURPS Horsecloans*.)

Scout skills. The character must have Tracking and Stealth at 12 or better, and Area Knowledge (Black River environs)-10 or better. (Area Knowledge is a Mental/Easy skill affording a character familiarity with a specific geographic region.)

Combat skills. He must have two weapon skills at 12 or higher, one of which must be with a ranged weapon. He must also have Tactics-12 or better.

Character Background

Possible backgrounds for your Hyborian PC include:

Aquilonian noble. Most nobles in the Aquilonian army disdain command of irregular troops as scouts. Thus, a PC who is an Aquilonian nobleman would be unusual for his breed. Aquilonians have strict notions of honor and right, according to a code of chivalry. Recommended skills and advantages: Social Status; Wealth; Savoir-Faire; Area Knowledge (Aquilonia).

Aquilonian warrior. Typical troops of Aquilonia include Gundermen, a race of tough, blond soldiers who favor sword, pike and chainmail; and Bossonians, a short, swarthy people legendary for archery. Recommended skills and advantages: Area Knowledge (Aquilonia); Streetwise; Leadership; Tactics.

Barbarian mercenary. Just like Conan, your character could be a moneyfighter from a less-civilized nation. Good candidates for a homeland include Cimmeria, Vanaheim and Asgard. Most barbarians often suffer from Social Stigma (see p. B19), though well-traveled barbarians — such as Conan — may have their rough edges smoothed over. Recommended skills and advantages: Toughness; Alertness; Survival; Naturalist.

Civilized mercenary. The countries of Ophir, Argos and Zingara are all good homelands for mercenaries. Recommended skills and advantages: Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold; Area Knowledge (Hyboria); several languages.

Frontiersman. There are two types of woodsmen in Conajohara province: veteran settlers, who come from almost any background and have developed fighting and survival skills from harsh experience against the Picts; and the Tauran, an Aquilonian people who have a tradition of woodlore but not of practical combat. Recommended skills and advantages: Animal Empathy; Danger Sense; Naturalist; Tracking.

Half-breed Pict. A half-Pict certainly has survival and combat skills. Being a half-breed, however, is a -15 point Social Stigma (Barbarian) in Aquilonia. Recommended advantages and skills: Alertness; Combat Reflexes; Survival; Pict language.

Female Characters: Due to the strict chivalrous notions of Aquilonia, being a female warrior will be a struggle — probably the only military command possible for a woman is one over scouts and irregulars. A woman warrior carries a Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) among Aquilonians, suffering a -1 on reaction rolls. Recommended advantages and skills: as appropriate to character's background as described above.

How to Play

The adventure is divided into numbered paragraphs. *Do not read them in order* — they will make no sense at all. Rather, read the "Introduction" first, then turn to the paragraph to which it directs you. Read that paragraph, decide your course of action from that point, and then turn to the paragraph that your current paragraph directs you to. And so on.

Most paragraphs offer you at least two choices, and sometimes several. Sometimes you may choose freely; sometimes a roll against one of your skills or attributes will send you to other paragraphs. Sometimes you will fight a battle, the outcome of which will determine which paragraph you will turn to next.

Current Time

Certain events in the adventure occur at predetermined times, so you'll need to keep track of the time as you play. To do this, make a "Current Time" heading on a piece of scratch paper. At various points throughout the adventure, you will be instructed to add a certain number of hours to your Current Time. When this occurs, simply update your Current Time as needed.

The adventure begins at 6 a.m. on Thursday morning.

PlotWords

Conan Beyond Thunder River can be different every time you play it. To stay on the same storyline for an entire run through the adventure, you will be asked to write down various

PlotWords. From time to time, there will be special instructions for characters who have certain PlotWords; be sure to follow these instructions if you have the indicated PlotWord.

You begin the adventure with three PlotWords, and you may be assigned additional PlotWords — or be instructed to erase one of the PlotWords you have — during play. To find your starting PlotWords, roll a die once for each of the tables below:

Table A	Table B	Table C
1-2 Mighty	1-4 Dauntless	1-2 Valorous
3-4 Triumphant	5-6 Intrepid	3-6 Brave
5-6 Strong		

Partners

During the adventure, you may acquire one or more partners. They will *usually* be under your command, fighting at your side. The adventure will often tell you what your partner says, or what you tell him — if you don't have a partner at these times, simply disregard this dialogue.

If, during a combat, you fall unconscious while your partner is still up and active, continue the fight using your partner. If your partner wins the battle, assume that he will be able to revive you within a few moments. Continue play normally, as if you had won the battle yourself. If your HT was reduced below 0, you will fall unconscious again once you have taken 5 additional points of damage.

If your partner is injured and cannot travel, you may either stay with him (if the adventure gives you that option), abandon him, or carry him along. If you decide to carry him with you, you will take a -2 penalty on any Stealth roll and a -5 on any Swimming roll. If your partner's weight increases your encumbrance to extra-heavy, then add double the number of hours listed whenever you are instructed to adjust your Current Time.

Character Points

At the end of your adventure — assuming you survive it! — turn to p. 58, where you'll be told how many character points you receive for your performance.

Repeat Games

After you've played *Conan Beyond Thunder River* a few times, feel free to *select* your starting PlotWords, rather than rolling them randomly, especially if there are certain PlotWords that you have never played.

This adventure is also an excellent combat trainer. Try different tactics, and explore all the possibilities — when you're playing solo, you can never *lose* . . .

Adding a GM

Once you've played solo several times, you'll know the plot well enough to run this adventure for your friends. You can let them read the adventure (or read it to them), helping with the game mechanics and running the bad guys . . . or you can run it as a game-mastered adventure.

When you're the GM, you can change anything you like. For instance, if you think a certain encounter pits Conan against too many Picts — or too few! — feel free to adjust their number.

The Picts

The majority of your foes in this adventure will be the savage tribesmen of Pictland. The following information will help you run the Picts you encounter.

Pict Tactics

The Picts are a fierce and aggressive people, with no love for

civilized men. Furthermore, this adventure takes place in former Pictish territory, only recently conquered by Aquilonia. For these reasons, unless the text indicates otherwise, the Picts will attack whenever they are encountered, closing for melee combat and fighting to the death.

Pict Tribes

If the adventure calls for a Pict but doesn't mention his tribe, roll one die and consult the table below. Stats for typical tribe members are given in the appendix (see p. 61). Unless stated otherwise, assume all Picts in the party are from the same tribe.

1 Hawk	4 Wolf
2 Turtle	5 Ferret
3 Raven	6 Otter

Miscellaneous

Random Victim Table

Occasionally, you will be directed by the text to roll one die and consult the table below to determine the victim of various attacks. If the person indicated is not in your group, roll again. If the result is a type rather than an individual, but you have several characters of that type, randomly select one of the type as victim.

1 Gunderman	4 Balthus or Glorius
2 Bossonian	5 Tiberias
3 Scout	6 Yourself

Page References

In this book, you will often be provided with page references to help you find useful rules or information more easily. References to pages identified only by numerals — see p. 34 — indicate pages within this book. References to pages identified by numerals preceded by a "B" — see p. B116 — indicate pages in the *GURPS Basic Set*.

Danger Sense, Vision and Hearing Rolls

If you have Danger Sense and fail a Vision or Hearing roll, immediately make a Danger Sense roll. If you make the Danger Sense roll, your special sense detects the threat anyway — follow instructions as if you succeeded at the Vision or Hearing roll.

For complete rules on Hearing and Vision rolls, see p. B81.

Healing

At various times during the adventure, you will be able to stop long enough to administer first aid to injured characters. You may do this at anytime if you are within Fort Tusculan. Outside the fort, you may take the time to heal only when the text tells you this is possible. Be sure to update your Current Time to reflect the time spent healing. A complete discussion of First Aid and healing can be found beginning on p. B111.

Mentally Stunned

If a character is *mentally stunned*, he may take no action in combat. Make an IQ roll for the character at the start of every combat round. If the roll is successful, the character snaps out of his stunned condition.

Apply a +1 modifier to the IQ roll for each previous IQ-roll attempt made in this encounter.

"Beyond the Black River"

This adventure is based on the story "Beyond the Black River," by Robert E. Howard, which can be found in the book *Conan the Warrior*, from Ace Books.

ADVENTURE

Introduction

Like his ancestors before him, King Numedides of Aquilonia felt the need to assure himself a place in the history books. And like many of those ancestors, the method he chose to accomplish this was conquest: He would add a new province to Aquilonia, the greatest kingdom of Hyboria!

Considering the strength of his civilized neighbors to the south and east — Nemedra, Ophir, Poitain, and Zingara — Numedides decided that his armies would fare better against the undisciplined barbarian hordes to the north or west. Remembering the unfortunate conclusion of an Aquilonian attempt to absorb Cimmeria — the land to the north — a few years before, Numedides elected to send his armies west, into savage Pictland.

As the King predicted, the Pict tribes could not long stand in the face of the advancing Aquilonian army. Soon, Numedides had carved himself a respectable province out of eastern Pictland, which he named Conajohara. The new province pushed the western border of Aquilonia from Thunder River to the Black River, almost 40 miles further west. To secure Conajohara for Aquilonia, Numedides ordered the construction of Fort Tuscelan, on the east bank of the Black River.

With the completion of Fort Tuscelan, Aquilonian settlers began to move into Conajohara, carving out small farms and homesteads from the region's untamed woodlands. All seemed well, until recently, when it became clear that the Picts had not entirely given up on Conajohara Province . . .

Unable to unite as a single army, the squabbling Pictish tribes have resorted to the traditional tactics of their people: swift border raids and ambushes upon defenseless settlers and travelers. Pict activity has kept the Aquilonians from settling near the

Black River; today, the nearest homestead is over five miles back from Fort Tuscelan, on the river. Pict raiders have been shot by Aquilonian soldiers within a mile of Velitrium, on Thunder River, the old border between Aquilonia and Pictland.

Yet as Pict activity in Conajohara seems to increase, support from the Aquilonian court diminishes. When King Numedides first appointed the talented young nobleman Valannus as Governor of Conajohara, Valannus advised the construction of two forts on the Black River. Numedides dismissed the suggestion out of hand, insisting that one well-garrisoned fort of Aquilonia's finest would be more than sufficient to keep the savages on the west bank of the river.

When Fort Tuscelan proved unable to adequately defend the province from the hit-and-run tactics of the Pict raiders, Numedides did not send Valannus the additional troops he so desperately needed. Instead, he *recalled* over two thirds of the Tuscelan garrison, including all its cavalry. This left only a few hundred men to defend a fort meant to hold thousands! Clearly, King Numedides is more concerned with having conquered Conajohara than he is with holding on to it.

Not surprisingly, morale among those men left in the fort — mostly Gunderland pikemen and Bossonian archers — was seriously damaged when the cavalry was pulled out of Conajohara. But that event can be understood; fat nobles, lounging on velvet cushions, sipping iced wine served them by naked slave girls, have often been known to toss away the lives of honest soldiers for political expedience. Another recent event, however, has frightened the men of Fort Tuscelan far more deeply.

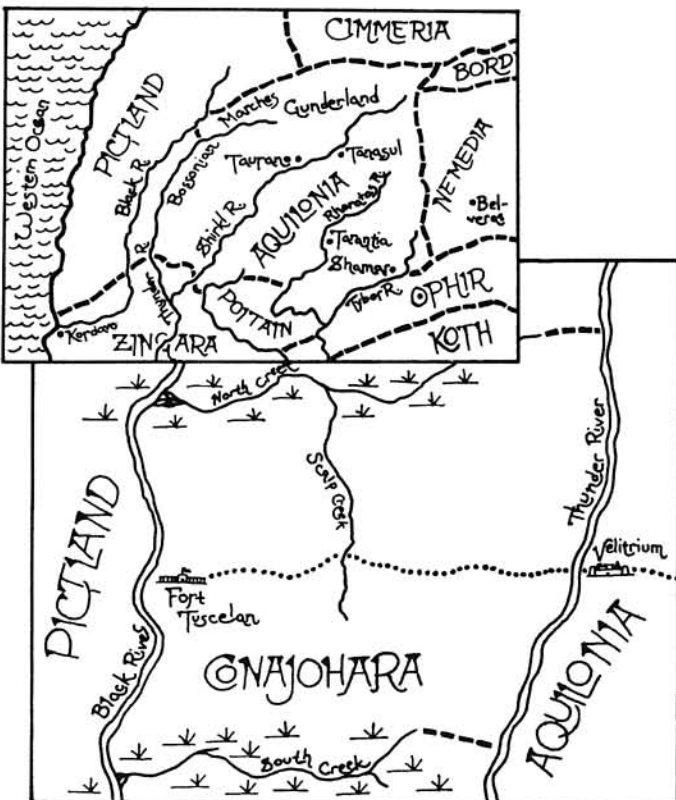
A few days past, a mule-train of ale headed from Velitrium to Fort Tuscelan was stolen by a band of Picts under the leadership of a witch doctor named Zogar Sag. Foolishly, the Picts stopped to sample their loot on the east side of the Black River, still in Conajohara. The drunken savages were captured and taken to Fort Tuscelan.

Though his advisors warned him that the imprisonment of the great shaman, Zogar Sag, was a shame the Picts would not bear, Valannus was swayed by the merchant Tiberias, a man of clout both in Conajohara and in Numedides' court. It was Tiberias' train that the savages had stolen, and the merchant demanded justice. The Picts — including Zogar Sag — were thrown in the fort stockade.

But the walls of Fort Tuscelan could not hold the Pict shaman; by stealth or by sorcery, Zogar Sag escaped the stockade. Soon after, a message arrow arrived at the fort, bearing the witch doctor's pledge of death to those who imprisoned him. Since the arrow arrived, the bodies of three soldiers and a scout — all of whom were involved in the capture of the Picts — have been found, dumped near the fort as if the savages had no use for them. Apparently, Zogar Sag does have a use for the heads that were once attached to the bodies, however, as he has not seen fit to return them yet.

Aside from the men already slain, only two others were present when Zogar Sag and the drunken Picts were captured: Governor Valannus and the merchant Tiberias. Valannus stoically ignores the implications of recent events, while the merchant continues to curse the Picts and the damage they have done to his trade.

You are a mercenary, the officer commanding the scouts at Fort Tuscelan. Like yourself, the few dozen men in your com-



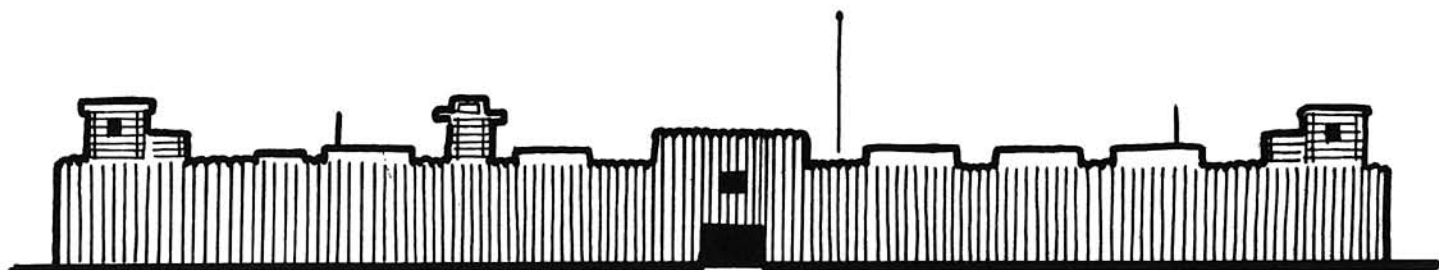
mand are not regular soldiers in the Aquilonian army. They are woodsmen, trackers, hunters, skilled at moving alone through forests like Conajohara unseen and unheard. But the fact that they are not true soldiers does not mean that they are not fighters. On the contrary, most are former settlers, from Tauran or other provinces, and have fought the Picts all their lives — in the Picts' territory, on the Picts' terms. That experience has made them survivors, like yourself.

Newly arrived at Tuscelan, you have quickly gotten to the business of learning all you can about the primitives beyond the river. On solo scouting patrols, you penetrate farther into the uncharted woods than any before you — except the Picts, of course. Already, you have located Gwawela, a major Pictish vil-

lage across the Black River from the fort. You have also scouted the terrain several miles upstream and down, on both sides of the river, identifying major Pict trails through the area. You may refer to the Area Map on p. 62, which shows the territory you have reconnoitered. Each hex on that map is one mile across.

You must now decide *who* you are, if you have not done so already. If you are Conan, use the ready-made character sheet on p. 64. If you do not wish to play Conan, see *Creating Your Own Character*, on p. 2.

When you are ready, turn to 1, *unless* you have Danger Sense, Acute Hearing +2 or better, or Intuition. If you have any of these advantages, turn to 43.



1 Morning at a frontier fort comes early. Soldiers get up under their own power or are roused from their bunks by a sergeant's boot. Details soon are sweeping the grounds, aiding in the kitchen, and relieving the night watch — the noise of buckets and brooms, the rhythmic marching of boots, and the profane cursing confirm that Fort Tuscelan's routine continues as normal.

As a scout, military discipline doesn't apply to you. You can rise at any time, though the men may think you a laggard if you spend all your time in bed.

If you sleep in this morning, turn to 47. If not, turn to 85.

2 If you recruit the Gundermen pikemen, turn to 50.

If you recruit from the Bossonian archers, turn to 129.

If you invite any of the scouts to accompany you, turn to 533.

When you are done recruiting, turn to 203.

3 Anyone approaching would clearly be seen, and an alert sounded. The wooden doors of the gate are nearly closed. You hear a sound like a mallet pounding against wood, and the murmur of a large group.

If you linger in the thicket, turn to 463.

If you charge the guards, turn to 48.

If you circle and climb the village walls, turn to 75.

If you leave Gwawela, turn to 153.

4 "Not here in Conajohara," you say. "A breed of foresters is rising who will meet the Picts at their own game."

"Too few," scoffs Julian. "And too little time."

"True," you agree. "But the number grows. If the savages do not rise soon, it will forever be too late for them."

Turn to 34.

5 "I'm surprised an Aquilonian can stalk a Pict without getting his throat slit," says Glorious, eyeing you with a shade of contempt. "In their forest world, the barbarians have the edge on *civilized* men."

"Like this one here?" you reply, indicating the Pict raider.

"Aquilonia may be wise in its civilized knowledge," says

Glorious, "but that knowledge extends only so far — to the boundaries of the uncharted, primeval forests. Who knows what shapes earthly and unearthly lurk beyond the dim circle of light civilization has cast?"

"However," she says, spitting on the bloodied ground, "this Pict was not one of the nobler sons of nature. Shall we move on?"

Turn to 99.

6 If you have companions with you, turn to 95. Otherwise, turn to 527.

7 You cause great confusion in Pictland. The courtyard is full of the blood of their war leaders, while men stand free where only prisoners have stood. Zogar Sag flees. You plunge down an ill-lit pathway, attempting to escape this village.

Turn to 429.

8 Fight the battle.

If you make a run for the river, hoping to swim to safety, turn to 45.

If you lose consciousness, turn to 100.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

If you win the battle, turn to 285.

9 Your blade swiftly snicks through the rawhide thongs. In a moment your freed companion stands beside you. "I didn't think you were coming," says your friend.

"There isn't a Pict born who could stop me," you explain, as you look for a way out of this village.

Your rescued companion will fight for you if you have a spare weapon.

Turn to 429.

10 The woods are this creature's habitat. You flounder after it, but the sound of its passage — large branches snapping, leaves rustling as if blown by a storm — draws steadily fainter.

Turn to 215.



11 “Last night the drum-talk was unusually thick,” you confide. “The savages are up to something.”

“Perhaps,” says the old man, drawing circles on the wooden table with the condensation from the mugs. You ask what he means. “Perhaps it isn’t the savages.”

He steepled his fingers. His face takes on the aura of a prophet. “The Picts are not the only dwellers in the primeval wilderness. There is an older race of man among them — secretive, often hunted by the savages, yet sometimes sought for their skill in the mystic arts. This other race is the Ligureans. No Aquilonian truly knows their story.

“As our armies march deeper into this wilderness, we might be disturbing something unspeakably ancient. If a secret Ligurean civilization exists, hidden behind the shield of the Picts, might they not take an active hand in our repulsion?”

“A secret enemy,” you grunt.

Purenus brushes a stray lock of white hair from his eyes. “That’s what I think about, when the drum-talk rolls through the night,” he says.

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, turn to 41. On a roll of 3-6, turn to 464.

12 “I am called Cenwulf,” says the lad. “I’m new here. At night I often sit up here on the battlements, thinking of my girl back home.”

“You tempt a good Pict archer to get in some target practice,” you caution.

“I’m careful,” he says. “But what I mean to tell you is this. Twice now I’ve seen, close to the stroke of midnight, a man approach the fort from the woods. He’s always met by someone.”

“Could you see the man clearly, lad?” you query.

“I weren’t no Pict savage,” says the archer. “The man from the woods is fair, as fair as any Aquilonian. It strikes me that there’s something familiar about the man from the fort, though I’ve only spotted his backside, and that only at a distance.”

“Is he one of the Bossonians? Or an officer?”

“He’s not one of us,” the lad replies. “If he’s an officer, I can’t put a face to him.”

“Have you told anyone else?” you ask.

“I can’t,” he says. “If they knew I’m up nights like a moon-struck calf, they’d never let me live it down. Don’t tell anyone. Promise!” Like a rabbit, the archer scampers away, leaving you to finish your survey of the battlements alone.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

13 The source of the scream is between you and Fort Tuscelan, perhaps only a few minutes’ sprint distant.

If you avoid the screamer, turn to 326.

If you race to aid the victim, turn to 263. Your penalty for the die roll in that paragraph is -3.

14 The building appears deserted. It is well built but plain. Stout logs form the framework, about which the walls are formed of bark and twig, and overhead is a thatch roof. There are entrances on either end, and small barred windows admit adequate sunlight in daytime. You notice no light within.

If you enter, turn to 86. If you leave, turn to 62.

15 One of the savages raises his weapon to the sky and emits an ululating yell. In the distance the cry repeats, then repeats again. Pictland knows it has visitors.

You have the *PlotWord* **COURAGEOUS**.

Return to the paragraph which sent you here.

16 By the time you wake, the strange being has done all that it desires. The merchant’s body, bereft of its head, lies in a slick pool of congealing blood. Disgusted, you gather up the corpse and continue the journey to Fort Tuscelan, certain that the Picts have no need to bother you now. Your companion, if you have one, is conscious and travels with you.

Turn to 326.

17 Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your Stealth against a hostile Stealth skill of 12. Subtract a penalty from your die roll equal to the number of companions you have. If you did not move this hour, give yourself a +1 bonus.

If you win by more than 2 points, turn to 77.

If you lose by more than 2 points, turn to 257.

If neither of the above apply, turn to 162.

18 Fight the battle, keeping track of the number of rounds fought. Your enemy is a Pict of the Hawk tribe (see p. 61).

Roll two dice every turn. On a roll of 11 or 12, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 315.

If you reduce the Pict to 5 or fewer hits, turn to 245.

If you win, turn to 63.

If you are knocked unconscious, turn to 83.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

If the battle takes longer than 15 rounds, turn to 49.

19 The canoe suddenly shudders, nearly spilling you over the side into the black waters. “Hit a snag,” comes the word passed in a whisper.

Turn to 110.

20 “Anything unusual happen last night?” you ask. The man shakes his head. “We were on duty, if that’s what you mean.”

“And nothing happened?” you ask.

“I don’t see what you’re getting at,” replies the guard, tensely. “We were on duty. Nothing happened.” There is nothing more to learn from these men.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time.

If it is before 7 p.m., turn to 85.

If it is now 7 p.m. or later, turn to 56.

21 If it is 6 p.m. or earlier on Friday night, *and* you have the Plot Word *MAGNIFICENT* turn to 309; if you do not have this PlotWord, turn to 219.

If it is after 6 p.m. on Friday night, if you have the PlotWord *MAGNIFICENT*, turn to 185. If you do not have *MAGNIFICENT*, but do have *VALOROUS*, turn to 119. If you have neither of these PlotWords, turn to 61.

22 The thick, pendulous throat of the merchant is torn from ear to ear. “You think *this* was done with a knife or sword? Only a talon could have made a gash like that,” you explain. “The flesh is ripped, not cut. The creature was scared off when we ran up. Other victims had their heads taken — no doubt to decorate Zogar Sag’s altar. But Tiberias still has his.”

“Perhaps a panther . . .” your partner says.

You shake your head impatiently, and explain about Zogar Sag and the murders at the fort. “But if you want further proof, look here!” At the edge of the clearing is a bloody footprint on the hard loam. The mark is strange, monstrous, three-toed — like reptile or bird, yet unlike either.

Turn to 355.

23 With a split second to act, and in the dim light of early night, you know only this: in the clearing stands a man, grossly large, with his back toward you. He screams, hands spread out in a pleading gesture — ignoring the shortsword sheathed at his side. Light glints from a jeweled ring on his hand and from the gold trim of his boots.

If you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*, turn to 71.

If you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*, turn to 171.

If you have the PlotWord *STRONG*, turn to 273.

24 You tear your eyes away from the gruesome altar and pole, then repress a cry of horror. A few feet away rises a hideous pyramid built of gory human heads. Dead eyes stare glassily up at the black sky. Numbly, you recognize the men who followed you into the woods — though one is missing.

Roll one die and consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see which of your captured companions is missing from the gory pile. If the result is “yourself,” roll again.

Turn to 130.

25 The warriors sight you against the river’s reflective waters. Howling battle chants, they attack.

Use Combat Map A. Consider the eastern trail edge to be the eastern bank of the river. Place Picts at W7, W10 and W4. If you haven’t already, roll to determine the tribe of Picts being fought (see p. 3). You are at W5.

Turn to 8.

26 “I can solve that mystery,” you declare. Valannus eyes you thoughtfully and motions for you to con-

tinue. You explain about the Aquilonian renegade in Gwawela. You describe his death.

“A traitor!” explodes Valannus. “That explains it — Zogar Sag’s force was *not* too small, with the aid of the right traitor inside this fortification. We’d have been slaughtered!”

“If we hadn’t killed him in Gwawela, he’d have been here in time to work his treachery,” you say.

Turn to 560.

27 You stumble quickly after it. Your quarry makes enormous noise as it blunders through the woods, groaning and snapping thick branches. You briefly glimpse it: small red eyes, a furry figure larger than man-size, and a crested head. Unfortunately for you, the woods are this creature’s habitat. You flounder after it, but the sound of its passage draws steadily fainter. At last, frustrated, you return to the fat corpse.

Turn to 383.

28 When you return to the fort, you are shown directly to the rude blockhouse. Insisting on speaking to the governor, you are summoned to his chambers where you explain what you have seen.

“This is important news,” says Governor Valannus, rubbing his forehead. “A Pict attack on this fort must be only hours away.”

You nod. “The nightly drum-talk is constant.”

“Come back and meet with me tonight,” he says. “I have something to discuss with you then.”

Return to 85.

29 The medical officer at Tuscelan, a hard-drinking former cavalry officer with skin like antique leather, beckons you to a bloodstained trestle table. Downing a long draught from a flask, he shuffles to your side and squints at you. “Arturo, aren’t you?” he asks.

If you leave, return to 85. If you allow the doctor to work on you, turn to 58.

30 Aquilonian customs do not allow women — the “weaker” sex — to call challenge. You are not honor-bound to fight. Return to 381.

31 “Very well,” you say, stowing the pouch before the others see. “But cast off that breastplate. It’s too heavy for you, and of less use than trouble.”

“Bless Mitra,” breathes the merchant, dumping the heavy armor. “I knew you’d see it my way.”

Stats for Tiberias are given on p. 60. The pouch contains \$100 worth of gems and weighs ½ lb.

Turn to 420.

32 You have the PlotWord *COURAGEOUS*. Turn to 508.

33 You leave Valannus to his worrying and drop down to the foresters’ stall to eat and to recruit your volunteers. A raid like this is better with few men than a regiment — five hundred men couldn’t fight their way to Gwawela, but a half-dozen might slip in and out again.

Your raiding party may consist of a maximum of eight people, including yourself.

If you met Glorious, and if she is alive, turn to 120.

If you met Balthus, and if he is alive, turn to 255.

Otherwise, turn to 2.

34 “I sense you have reservations,” says the officer. “Let’s take Venarium as a prime example. What took place? Our army marched in, scattered some clans and built a fort-city . . . and when the Cimmerians roused themselves, they took the place in a single day. They were barbarians as primitive as the Picts, only not as stupid.”

“Your story is familiar,” you admit. (If you are Conan, the story is more than familiar — you fought at Venarium.)

“And it proves my point,” says Julian. “It is civilization that is unnatural, a whim of circumstance. Barbarism is the natural state of mankind and must always, ultimately, triumph.”

Turn to 79.

35 Suddenly, a triumphant yell rises from the Pict horde — there is utter turmoil within the fort! The east wall collapses in a dozen places. The savages charge in among the fort’s defenders. You stare at the splintered logs, wondering if the job is the work of Zogar Sag’s magic . . .

It’s time to lead the counterattack.

Turn to 88.

36 Try a DX roll. If you succeed, turn to 303. Otherwise, turn to 453.

37 With a great roar you charge into the smoke, flailing at the surprised and startled savages. Blood spurts in gouts as they fall before you until you reach the altar — but a growing force of Picts, their wits gathered, forms around you.

Use Combat Map C. Disregard the stake. You are at A. Place any companions behind you and away from the bonfire. Your weapons are ready.

Turn to 229.

38 “You’re no local,” the warrior woman observes. “Aquilonians fall like wheat beneath Pict knives.” When you mention your home nation, her eyebrows rise.

“I’d like to go there someday, after I’ve made a name for myself in the world.” She eyes you from toe to scalp. “Perhaps the men from your country are not as weak as the *gentlemen* in Aquilonia.” You gather that she has no love of Aquilonians.

Turn to 99.

39 You find a line of fire through the trees, raise your bow and release a shaft at the exposed back of your enemy.

Use Combat Map A. The Pict is crouching (-2 to be hit) at position A. He is *mentally stunned* (see p. 3), and receives no defense roll against the surprise attack. When he recovers from surprise, the raider duels with arrows until his quiver is empty, then draws his sword. You are at C.

When ready, turn to 18.

40 You instantly identify the nature of the wound, as well as that of the slithering creature which drops down your arm and escapes to the woods. Jewel Snakes are common in this wilderness. They are deadly.

You know what killed the merchant . . .

Your wilderness training takes over. A strip torn from your breeches is wrapped around your upper arm as a tourniquet. Putting your lips to the ragged pair of holes at the center of the wound, you suck out the blood and spit it to the ground. When the blood refuses to come easily, you slash the wound with your knife to open the blood vessels. *Suck and spit, suck and spit.* An odd taste lingers in your mouth, and a numbness.



CARROLL

Try a roll against HT, at -3 due to the severity of the venom. If you succeed, turn to 152. If you fail, the venom kills you — your adventure is over.

41 “This can’t be all you want to know,” says the old man. “Ask more.”

If you end this conversation, turn to 464.

If you continue to talk with Purenus, return to 92 and choose a new topic.

42 If you haven’t met a renegade, turn to 502. Otherwise, turn to 202 (if you haven’t been to this building before) or to 145 (if this is a repeat visit).

43 The incessant percussions of the Pict drums across the river rob you of sleep. You know the importance of relying on instinct, on the “extra sense” that warns of trouble when reason says there is nothing amiss. Such a presentiment worries you through the night.

Turn to 1.

44 You streak through the courtyard, easily circling the surprised warriors. Your blade swiftly snicks through the rawhide thongs, and in a moment your freed companion stands beside you. “I didn’t think you were coming,” says your friend.

“There isn’t a Pict born who could stop me,” you explain.

The enemy braves make no move toward you. They watch Zogar Sag, who glares at you with burning eyes. He hisses, and his serpent glides toward you.

Use Combat Map C. Place your characters within three hexes of B. The freed prisoner is at “stake.” Your weapons are ready.

Your rescued companion may fight, though he has no weapon unless you give him one.

Turn to 266.

45 On Combat Map A, consider the eastern trail edge to be the eastern bank of the river. If, at the end of any combat round, you are adjacent to the river, you may turn to 180. Make a note of this.

Return to 8.

46 As the serpent loops its way toward your companion, your shot strikes home. Blood spurts from the wound. The old shaman gives an enraged shriek as the knotted and maddened reptile goes berserk, rolling into the line of Pict warriors. Its furiously lashing tail mows down a dozen men, while its convulsively snapping jaws splash others with a venom that burns like liquid fire. Howling, cursing, screaming, frantic, the Picts scatter before the serpent.

If you rescue your captured friend, turn to 9.

If you flee Gwawela, turn to 429.

47 In no time, your snoring is heard throughout the barracks.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

48 You lead your men to the edge of the clearing, maintaining silence. Luck is with you — the guards are gazing at something within the village and do not notice you. Then you strike.

Use Combat Map A. The southern edge of the map is the village wall — no characters may cross it.

Place six Picts within two hexes of T2. The guards are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3) and their weapons are not ready. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine the tribe of the guards. Place your characters within three hexes of W8.

Roll one die at the start of every round of combat. If a 6 is rolled, write down the number of this paragraph, and turn immediately to 146.

If you wish to flee, turn to 32.

If you fall unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If everyone in your party is unconscious, turn to 100.

If you win the battle, turn to 138.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



49 Roll one die. If you roll 1-3, turn to 78. If you roll 4-6, turn to 96.

50 The Gundermen — tawny, tough swordsmen and pikebearers of the garrison — are excellent fighters, though clannish. As you step into their barracks, one of their sergeants greets you with a shout. “Lost, are you?”

“I’m here for a reason,” you snort.

“The word is out,” the Gunderman replies. “Some kind of death-blood raid on the savages. Well, you won’t find any fools here! We like living.” Behind him, the other soldiers agree.

Nevertheless, you try your best to be persuasive.

Make a reaction roll for the Gundermen. If you have previously been told to use a reaction roll modifier for the Gundermen, use it now. Also use any personal modifiers that might apply.

If the reaction is “Very Good” or better, turn to 509.

If the reaction is “Good” or worse, turn to 431.

51 The gate swings inward. The guards grunt when they catch sight of Tiberias. “Haven’t you ever seen me before?” growls the merchant.

“Pallus, you owe me five lunas,” says a pikeman. “You said he heard the loon and wouldn’t come back alive.”

“Damn your loon calls,” snarls the merchant. “There’s nothing wrong with me.”

You head for the governor’s quarters to report.

Turn to 154.

52 Your opponents are warriors of Zogar Sag’s inner circle — elders of the tribe, fierce braves of long experience. Behind them throng dozens of confused braves, who soon will come to their elders’ aid . . . then all hope will be gone.

Roll one die for each of the eight Pict warriors, and consult the table below for placement on the Combat Map.

Die roll	Position	If already occupied, use this position
(1)	1	7
(2)	2	8
(3)	3	9
(4)	4	10
(5)	5	11
(6)	6	12

Place Zogar Sag at Z — he will remain here, moving only to avoid danger. The prisoner is at A. The serpent is a Forest Snake (see p. 59) — place it at “altar.” Use the rules on p. 3 to determine the tribes of the elders, rolling once per character.

Fight the battle.

Whenever a Pict dies, roll one die. On a roll of 1, turn immediately to 127; on any other roll, continue the battle here.

If you strike Zogar Sag, turn to 368.

If you flee, turn to 308.

If you are adjacent to the prisoner, turn to 229.

If you know about a renegade, and spend a combat round looking for him, turn to 104.

If you check out the serpent, turn to 446.

If you are unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If everyone in your party is dead or unconscious, turn to 100.

If you win the battle, turn to 7.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

53 Roll one die for each of your party within Gwawela, and place him in the corresponding numbered hex. If a hex is occupied, place the character in an empty adjacent hex. The one who failed the Stealth roll is *mentally stunned* (see p. 3). Those outside the village cannot help in this combat.

Fight the battle.

If any of your opponents *aren’t* mentally stunned at the start of a combat round, roll one die. If a 6 is rolled, write down the number of this paragraph, and turn immediately to 146.

If you flee, turn to 429.

If you win the battle, turn to 526.

If you are unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If your party loses the battle, but you are outside the village, turn to 153.

If all of your party within Gwawela are unconscious or dead, turn to 100.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

54 You find the old man in the large shed where the troops eat. Seeing you, Purenus waves and smiles. He gives up an inspection of stored goods and climbs down the ladder.

"Be seated, youngster," he says snappily, dispatching one of his minions to get mugs for ale. "It's the privilege of the quartermaster to sample the wares occasionally," he confides. "Have to test the brew." When the drink comes, you both sample it — and report that it is very, very . . . adequate.

Purenus chuckles. "I know you didn't interrupt your daily routine just to drink with an old man. How can I help you?"

"You're the expert on the Picts," you say . . .

Turn to 92.

55 Valannus shudders and walks to a casement. He stares silently over the river, black and shiny under the glint of the stars. Beyond the river, the forest rises like an ebony wall. The distant screech of a panther breaks the stillness. A wind whispers through the black branches, rippling the dusky water.

"Who knows what gods are worshipped under the shadows of that heathen forest?" says Valannus. "The lives of all the people west of the Marches depend on this fort. His Majesty refuses to send reinforcements, so the fate of the frontier depends on those of us now here.

"Zogar Sag's witchcraft is panicking the soldiers. They fear the black plague which Zogar Sag threatens and whisper of desertion. If the plague is loosed upon us, the soldiers will desert as a body!"

Valannus lifts his head to meet your gaze. "Zogar Sag must die. You've penetrated farther and know the forest trails better than any other. Will you take a band of men tonight to Gwawela village and kill that devil? I know it's mad. There isn't more than one chance in a thousand that you'll come back alive. But if you don't get him, it's death for us all."

If you agree to Valannus' proposal, turn to 141.

If you turn him down, turn to 519.

56 "Except for that fat fool," interrupts one of the men. "That wasn't last night," grumbles the chief guard.

You seize on the information. "What about a fat fool?"

"Tiberias, the merchant," says your informant. "He just rode out of here, heading for Velitrium. At sunset? I asked him. Alone? I asked him. But he and his mule took the trail."

"It's the call of the loon," remarks one of the guardsmen. "Dark Pictish sorcery. Zogar Sag wants that man dead."

You realize where your duty lies. Grabbing one of the guards for company, you plunge into the dark forest after the merchant.

The guard is a Gunderman (p. 60). He will be your partner until you return to the fort.

An hour passes. Turn to 234.

57 Creeping this close to the forest native will take more ability than most men have. Your hope is that what he sees on the road will distract him.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your Stealth against the Hawk brave's Hearing of 11.

If you win by more than 5 points, turn to 93.

If you win by 5 points or less, turn to 133.

If you lose by 5 points or less, turn to 189.

If you lose by more than 5 points, turn to 313.

58 The combat physician is more competent than he appears. His medical skills are Physician-14, First Aid-14, Surgery-9.

Make a Physician skill roll for the doctor. If successful, you

regain 1 HT. A critical success recovers 2 HT. A critical failure costs 2 HT . . . if you are dead, your adventure is over . . .

An hour passes (or more, according to the Healing Chart). When you are done here, return to 85.

59 To your amazement, the feathered shaman grasps the arrow and rips it out, laughing maniacally. There is almost no blood — in fact, the lips of the ugly wound seal shut of their own volition.

Turn to 462.

60 Your advantage is that they haven't seen you yet, though they act as if they know you're here. No doubt some eagle-eyed savage spotted you swimming the channel. If fortune smiles now, you might escape this death trap — and the hunted will become the hunter.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills — your Stealth against theirs. Use the Pict tribe previously rolled.

If you win the Contest by 4 points or more, turn to 520.

If the Picts win the Contest by 4 points or more, turn to 126.

Otherwise, turn to 25.

61 Little is left to show that a fort ever stood on the banks of Black River. You know the Picts' custom — no Aquilonian was left alive; the dead from the battle, both civilized and savage, were piled inside the fort. Then the whole installation was burned to the ground.

You touch a charred timber, looking for something tangible to represent your friends. At your touch, the beam flakes away to gray ash and is gone on the wind.

The savages have passed to the west. You must now head to the safety of Velitrium — warning the settlers to flee, if you can. Add 2 hours to your Current Time.

Turn to 557.



62 If you check out the hut of the flowers, turn to 474.
If you visit the skull-hung building, turn to 122.
If you investigate the long, plain structure, turn to 14.
If you return to your companions (if you have any) and stealthily creep to the central square, turn to 252.

63 At the start of the fighting you heard someone crash into the undergrowth — no doubt the wayfarer whom the Pict targeted for death. Now that the savage is taken care of, you wonder what became of the traveler on the road.
“All’s safe now. There was only one of the dogs,” you call.
Roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, turn to 94. On a roll of 4-6, turn to 136.

64 Even in the failing light, the marks of strangulation are obvious. The throat is bent and twisted, with a rainbow of black and purple bruises. Dead eyes bulge from the blue-toned face. “No human hand did this,” you say. You explain about Zogar Sag and the murders at the fort.
Your companion gasps. “Such incredible strength . . .”
Turn to 355.

65 If any of your former companions are prisoners of the Picts, turn to 382.
Otherwise, turn to 212.

66 “No Aquilonian can stalk a Pict without getting an arrow in his gullet,” she remarks, eying you from toe to scalp. “Civilized men are too weak for the wilderness.”
When you mention your birthplace, a smile plays about the woman’s lips. You like the fire in her sparkling green eyes.
“The Aquilonians won’t win against the savages,” she says.
“The Gundermen tried to push the border northward once. They destroyed a few barbarian clans in Cimmeria and built a fort-town, Venarium.”

“I’ve heard the tale,” you grunt.
“The barbarians swept out of the hills without warning in a ravening horde,” she continues. “They stormed Venarium with such fury that none could stand before them. Men, women and children were butchered. Venarium was reduced to a mass of charred ruins, as it is to this day.”

“The Aquilonians were driven back across the Marches, and have never since tried to colonize Cimmeria. The Picts, too, will have their day,” she says. “I have come to fight the savages in that great battle.”

If you are Conan, turn to 139. Otherwise, turn to 99.

67 If anyone in your party is unconscious, turn immediately to 148.
Otherwise: If you have the PlotWord *COURAGEOUS*, turn to 17. If you don’t have that PlotWord, turn to 510.

68 If you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*, turn to 27.
If you have the PlotWord *STRONG*, turn to 239.
If you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*, turn to 161.

69 You hear a wild scream, breaking at its highest point — the cry of a man in dire fear or agony. You stop short, half crouching, weapon ready — a savage figure of suspicion and menace, poised to spring and rend.
Roll one die.
On a roll of 1-2, turn to 107.
On a roll of 3-5, turn to 13.
On a roll of 6, turn to 214.

70 *You have the PlotWord HEROIC.*
If more than one of your companions has been taken prisoner, turn to 24. Otherwise, turn to 130.

71 Overshadowing the man is a bulky, misshapen figure, blocking out the starlight. You see flaming red eyes and a peaked head. A bestial reek fills your nostrils.
Turn to 549.

72 The battle goes as you predicted. Your force is never called on, since the savages never break the fort’s defenses. As you survey the battleground after the fighting, everything betokens the Pict defeat: heaps of slain savages, broken canoes hanging on the crest of the river-wall, and hundreds of spent shafts littering the fields.

Shortly afterward, you are summoned to Valannus’ quarters. The governor looks the best that you’ve seen him in days. “The Pict assault was a failure,” he says, pointing you to a chair. “I never would have thought Zogar Sag unintelligent. Savage, yes. But to attack this fort with such a small force, knowing what we’ve done to similar raiding parties . . .”
Turn to 26.

73 The monster serpent raises its arched neck and stares at the wizard. Zogar Sag continues his dance, adding to it an unearthly wailing. The snake too begins to dance, weaving in a pattern matching the shaman’s. It loops itself around the altar and the man upon it. Soon only the man’s head is visible, the rest of his body hidden beneath the shimmering coils.

With a cry of infernal triumph, the shaman casts a pouch into the fire. An explosion of smoke and sparks temporarily blinds you, but not before you glimpse a hideous writhing and changing. A shuddering sigh goes through the crowd.

If you wade into the crowd to kill Picts, turn to 170.
If you attack the shaman with an arrow or similar ranged weapon, turn to 200.

If you attack the forest serpent, turn to 435.
If you move toward the prisoner, hoping to rescue him or end his misery, turn to 37.
If you know anything about a renegade and wish to assault him, turn to 246.
If you wait and watch, turn to 529.

74 The river picks up speed as it runs through one of the minor rapids that dot its course. You try to keep to the side channel, but the fierce currents draw you into the middle of the rapids.

The canoe gives a sudden shudder and halts, nearly spilling you over the side. Black waters churn angrily around you. “Snag,” comes the word passed in a whisper.

Black River hides a host of hidden rocks and snags. The canoe is wedged between two of them somewhere below the waterline. You grab a pike, halberd, spear, or the closest approximation of a pole you can find.

Turn to 208.

75 Slicing through the omnipresent vines, you push through the thick woods until you stand at the foot of the village wall. Up close, it is less than impressive. The gaps between the great logs are large enough to pass a hand through.
Turn to 256.

76 If it is night time (that is, between 6:30 p.m. and 6 a.m.), turn to 153.

If it is daytime and you have the PlotWord *COURAGEOUS*, turn to 174; otherwise, turn to 350.

77 You intrude upon the Pictish wilderness as silently as a panther. Your men follow. Suddenly, you freeze — there's motion ahead.

If you avoid the hazard, turn to 510.

If you fight what you've detected, turn to 554.

78 Charging out of the underbrush like a boar looking for something to gore comes a muscular young man of medium height. He ineptly grips a short, heavy sword.

"Up, Aquilonia!" he bellows, charging the Pict.

Place the new warrior at H — use the stats for Balthus on p. 60. The Pict, undeterred by poor odds, redoubles his efforts against you and ignores your ally.

Continue the battle.

If you win the battle, turn to 268.

If you and your new ally are both unconscious, turn to 243.

If you are unconscious, but the young warrior is still able to fight, turn to 118.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

79 "I'll tell you more," breathes Julian. "The wizards of the Picts — they have powers beyond the ken of civilized man. Our civilization cannot overcome magic."

The small man looks around, as if afraid the trees conceal eavesdroppers. "Tuscelan cannot be held. The proper plan must be a strategic retreat — that will save the majority of the troops to fight again, to preserve a border on Thunder River and keep Velitrium secure.

"Think it over. I've not mentioned this to my men for fear of dispiriting them — I suggest you not mention it to yours. I'll seek you out again on the morrow, to talk further."

Turn to 123.

80 Two braves, rounding the corner of a nearby hut, spot the person dropping from the wall. Without hesitation, they charge.

Use Combat Map E. Place the Picts at A and B. They are alert with ready weapons.

Turn to 53.



81 With the nimbleness of a hunting cat, you dart between bush and tree until your enemy is only a bow shot away. Still, the raider seems ignorant of your presence. He squats behind a clump of bushes and takes a studied view down

the road. Though he draws an arrow from his quiver, he does not nock it yet.

If you loose an arrow at your enemy, turn to 39.

If you creep close for a hand-to-hand struggle, turn to 57.

82 You heave Tiberias' body clear of the ground and dump it onto the litter. You take one end, your partner takes the other, and in moments you head once again for Fort Tuscelan.

Then your right bicep suddenly stings. You reach to slap away the insect — and feel something slither beneath your hand.

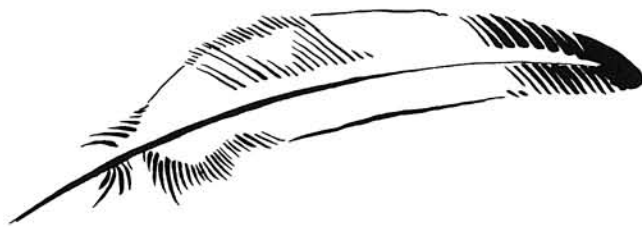
Turn to 40.

83 You receive a clout that makes the universe reel. Stars tremble in the skies and your lights go out.

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, turn to 118. On a roll of 4-6, turn to 134.

84 You exit from the unguarded main gate without challenge. The savages continue to search among the huts for you — they don't realize you're gone!

Turn to 510.



85 Fort Tuscelan stands in the remote woodlands like an isolated intruder, constructed from the timbers of the savage land which the kings of Aquilonia have chosen to conquer.

The soldiers within, many of them veterans from other frontiers of their kingdom, attend their duties with vigilance. In the watchtowers, ballista crews keep an alert eye on the cleared grounds beyond the outer walls. They also watch the nearby Black River, from which could erupt squadrons of canoes filled with savage warriors. Guards on patrol duty take care not to present a tempting target to savages who might be hiding in the forest canopy, ready to loose a feathered shaft.

There are many things to do at Fort Tuscelan. You may:

Visit the parade grounds, where the soldiers gather (158).

Ascend a tower and speak with the Bossonian archers who man it (109).

Check with the gatehouse guards (186).

Inspect the scouts you command (224).

Seek out old Purenus, the scarred veteran who knows more legends of the Picts than any other man alive (54).

Get assistance from the fort medical officer (29).

Leave the fort to scout around (137).

If it is 8 p.m. or later, turn to 131.

86 Entering the long, low building, the smell provides your first clue to its nature. It's a barracks. Zogar Sag must have high plans indeed, if he has special dwellings for his warriors. Judging by the high-quality weapons, this might be the witch doctor's idea of a military academy.

If you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, turn to 145.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 202.

If you have *both* of the above PlotWords, turn to 42.

If you have neither of the PlotWords, turn to 492.

87 Prudence overcomes derring-do at the crucial moment. You swerve away from the screaming braves and dive among the huts, slipping away from your confused enemies — for now.

Turn to 429.

88 “Up, Aquilonia!” you roar, leading your men forth. Commanding men in a fast-flowing, fierce battle takes experience, intelligence and a sound knowledge of men and tactics. You shout orders over the turmoil of battle, coordinating your pikemen in a solid phalanx against the undisciplined savages.

Try a Tactics skill roll (defaults to IQ-6 or Strategy-6). If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, there is a -2 penalty to the roll due to the chaos.

If you succeed at your roll, turn to 163. If you fail, turn to 543.

89 The sabertoothed tiger attacks.

Roll one die and consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see whom the creature kills. If *you* are killed, your adventure is over.

Otherwise, you and your companions run blindly into the village. With every step you fear the snarl of the returning cat.

You have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*.

Turn to 556.

90 Your only advantage is that they haven’t seen you, though they act as if they know you’re here — no doubt some eagle-eyed savage spotted you swimming the channel. If fortune smiles on you, you might escape this death trap.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills — your Stealth against theirs. Use the Pict tribe previously rolled.

If you win the Contest, turn to 150. If you lose, turn to 25.

91 You take cover within a deep thicket, within a spear-cast of Gwawela. The forest grows to the very walls of the village — if the savages didn’t hack the foliage back, the vine-wrapped oaks would overshadow their huts.

You see the rude palisades and a single entrance. Huge logs, trimmed of branches but not of their bark, are pounded deep into mud to form the walls. The top of each log is sharpened to a point. There are no defense towers, and no sign of a walkway along the top of the wall.

You see six guards at the gate. They are attentive. Terrain is on their side — around the gate, a clearing has been hacked from the indomitable woods.

If it is daytime — that is, between 6:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. — turn to 191.

If it is nighttime, turn to 3.

92 You may ask Purenus about:
Legends among the Picts (402).

Zogar Sag (310).

Pict tribes (132).

Or you may let Purenus select his own topic (11).

93 Almost supernatural abilities enable you to creep undetected behind the raider. The rancid stench of his perspiration fills your nostrils. Beyond him you catch a glimpse of what must be his target: a lone wayfarer.

You toy with the notion of taking the raider prisoner. You could easily do it. But Picts make poor prisoners, preferring any death — even suicide — to imprisonment.

Then the raider nocks his arrow and takes aim at the traveler. You take the only action you can — an attack from behind.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills: your weapon skill (using the skill for any weapon you carry) versus the Hawk Pict’s Hearing.

If you win the Contest, turn to 128. If you lose, turn to 156.

94 The wayfarer slowly emerges from the bushes at the side of the trail.

Turn to 268.

95 “Up, Aquilonia!” You are surprised to hear the shout, and more so to see your companions charging to rescue your imprisoned friend. Reluctantly, you follow.

Turn to 44.

96 Suddenly a warrior dives out of the forest, shortsword flashing. A Gunderman, perhaps — you note the steel cap and chainmail shirt traditional to that Aquilonian province. Gundermen are excellent fighters. Moments later, you realize that your ally is female.

Place the woman at G. Use the stats given for Glorious on p. 60. The Pict, undeterred by poor odds, redoubles his efforts against you, ignoring your ally.

Continue the battle.

If you are unconscious, turn to 134.

If you win the battle, turn to 218.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



97 The firelight is sporadic, but the range is not great. Make your attack roll. The serpent is 15 yards away. Its great size offsets the darkness — there is no modifier to your roll. You may aim or brace, but doing so may increase the chance of being seen.

If you hit the target, roll damage for the blow and turn to 46.
If you miss, turn to 149.

98 Turn to 287.

99 The stats for Glorious are given on p. 60. She will be your partner until you reach the fort.
Turn to 343.

100 Awake, you wish you were dreaming. You are tied to a stake surrounded by howling savages. In a pile nearby are the heads of your slain companions. The evil shaman, Zogar Sag, dances obscenely in feathers and war paint before you. This is Gwawela, the Pict village.

If you were captured during the day, it is now 10 p.m. the following night. If you were captured at night, it is now 4 hours later — if that makes it daytime, then it is now 10 p.m. that night.

If you yell “Up, Aquilonia!,” turn to 253.

If you spit on the witch doctor, turn to 36.

If you are silent, turn to 372.

101 The gate swings inward and you pass through with your grisly burden. The guards grunt as they see the body, and hastily slam the great gate shut. “Have you never seen a corpse before?” you ask.

Their faces are pallid in the torchlight. “That’s Tiberias,” blurts one. “I recognize that fur-trimmed tunic. Gristus here owes me five lunas — I told him Tiberias heard the loon call, when he rode out of here with that glassy stare.”

You leave the corpse with the gate guards, then head for the governor’s quarters.

Turn to 154.

102 A feathered shaman — Zogar Sag — dances a slow and shuffling dance before the fire. It looks as though he wears a carved wooden mask, then you realize the ferocious expression is natural . . . and inhuman.

Three warriors drag a man into the firelit circle. You don’t recognize him — undoubtedly a settler snatched by a raiding party, poor devil. Bound with rawhide thongs, the writhing prisoner is cast upon the altar.

The shaman dances, weaving an intricate pattern before the stone altar. Then, from the firelight’s edge, a great serpent appears. Its beady eyes glitter and its forked tongue darts in and out. The assembled Picts show no fear — which is odd, for the snake is the one living creature feared by the savages.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 211.

If you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*, turn to 73.

103 You step out of the shadows, scanning the darkness for hidden guards.

Turn to 300.

104 There is no sign of the renegade. He must have lost himself in this crowd. Return to 52.

105 Roll one die. On a 1 or 2, turn to 497; on a 3 or 4, turn to 265; on a 5 or 6, turn 173.

106 Zogar Sag reels back, the shaft quivering in his flesh.

If you have the PlotWord *INTREPID*, turn to 196.

If you have the PlotWord *DAUNTLESS*, turn to 59.



107 The sound is near at hand.
If you avoid the screamer, turn to 326.

If you race to aid the victim, turn to 263.

If you make a quick but cautious approach, turn to 143.

108 A pillar of green flame towers over you. The swamp devil’s sharp talon slices through the air. You move to parry with your own ready weapon.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your melee weapon skill against the enemy creature’s DX (see p. 60).

If you win the Contest and you have the PlotWord *INTREPID*, turn to 164.

If you win the Contest and you have the PlotWord *DAUNTLESS*, turn to 454.

If you lose, turn to 223.

109 As you mount the ladder within the wooden tower, one of several that stud the outer defenses, a voice calls from shadows. “Who goes?”

You identify yourself. After some whispering, a twisted and mottled face appears above. “It’s all right,” says Karlus, a hard-drinking Bossonian veteran.

A young face shows itself. “An officer . . .”

"Hush, boy." Karlus gives you a wink. "One of us, a soldier." Telling the others to make room, he ushers you to a seat in the dark quarters at the top of the tower. This must be a prime place for the archers to gather, you think, where officers can't intrude without warning.

"The lads and I have been discussing the devils which that Pictish wizard, Zogar Sag, has loosed on us," says Karlus, "Give me a bow, and I'll face any mortal quarry — but I can't fight magic!" The others in this crowd — a dozen of more — mumble agreement with your old acquaintance.

If you try to improve the morale of this group by a hearty speech, turn to 168.

If you encourage them to talk further, turn to 193.

If you threaten retribution for treason, turn to 135.

If you excuse yourself from this meeting, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

110 The bottom of the canoe fills with river water. Whispering profanity, you locate where the wall of the fragile canoe is crushed. Though you try to stem the flow of water, a trickle continues. You realize you must head immediately for the Pictish bank.

Turn to 231.

111 "If I were him . . ." you begin. Then it comes to you. Hastily you explain to Valannus about the renegade you saw in the camp of the Picts.

"I see," exclaims Valannus. "A traitor — here at Tuscelan!"

You and the governor begin a thorough inspection of the fort, looking for any place where traitors might weaken the walls or burrow a tunnel. Reliable guards are assigned to every post for the most probable time of attack: sundown.

"Now we've made certain against treachery," you tell the governor. "Zogar Sag cannot win."

Turn to 401.

112 Suddenly a demoniac yelling breaks out between you and the fort. You swear like a madman. "They're attacking!" Through a gap in the trees, you spy the welcome shape of Fort Tuscelan . . . and the dread events there.

Turn to 339.

113 From the shadows a solitary figure staggers toward you — this must be a village guard.

Use Combat Map E. Place the Pict at A. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine his tribe. He is *mentally stunned* (see p. 3), and his weapon is not ready.

Turn to 53.

114 You grip the body and heave it clear of the ground. The fat merchant weighs less than you expect. You shift the corpse on your shoulders until the balance feels right and start off with long, mile-eating strides for Fort Tuscelan.

Then your right bicep suddenly stings. You reach to slap away the insect — and feel something slither beneath your hand.

Turn to 40.

115 Use Combat Map A. Place your characters anywhere west of the trail, so long as everyone is at least five hexes from the trail. Your weapons are ready.

Turn to 380.

116 You know better than to join in the triumphant cry from the other soldiers. Instead you shake



your head, standing with your arms folded and head slightly bent — a somber and brooding figure.

"The fort's doomed," you explain to a friend. "The Picts are blood mad, and won't stop until we're all dead — and there are too many of them. A few more charges, and the Picts will be over the walls and breaking down the gates!"

Your force is soon called on to launch a counterattack.

Turn to 88.

117 As you lead your party of volunteers out of the fort, a short, fat man toddles after you. "Hold there," he calls. "I'm coming."

"Why, it's Tiberias," says one of your men.

Sure enough, the portly figure proves to be the merchant you rescued. He waddles up, struggling under the weight of a huge breastplate he has buckled on. "Take me with you," he says.

You eye the merchant critically. His armor is more than he can carry, his sword is slung too far forward to be easily drawn, and the man's bobbing chins give you some doubt as to his ability to handle the rigors of the wilderness. "I've no mule for you to ride on . . ." you begin.

"I'm a marked man," interrupts Tiberias. "Zogar Sag wants me dead. My only safety lies in being with you." He draws a small leather pouch from his belt. "I can reward you."

If you accept Tiberias as part of your crew, turn to 31.

If you turn down the merchant, turn to 395.

118 You fight with all your will to press the gathering mists away from your skull. A noise like the splitting of a ripe melon reaches your ears. Raising eyelids clogged with drying blood, you take a bleary look around.

A muscular blond is astride the fallen savage, who will obviously never rise again. Seeing you stir, the Aquilonian waves.

"Thanks for the help," he says.

Turn to 268.

119 If Julian is alive, or if you know nothing about the health of Julian, turn to 61.

If Julian is dead, turn to 185.

120 When you reach the compound, the warrior woman waits for you. "The word is that something's on for tonight," says Glorious hungrily.

"So?" you grunt.

She holds her dagger glinting in the torchlight. "I've a hungering for Pictish blood on my blade. Let this steel find a place in some savage heart."

If you accept her as part of your team, turn to 379.

If you turn her down, turn to 159.

121 You find yourself with your back to the stone altar, surrounded by braves no longer stunned by the shaman's conjuring and your own swift action. It's a desperate situation.

If you have the PlotWord *HEROIC*, turn to 230. If you don't have this PlotWord, turn to 335.

122 You dash across the lighted pathway and enter the shadowy recesses of the large building. You glimpse a grim stone altar faintly lit by the fire outside. Behind the altar is an idol, bestial, yet vaguely manlike in outline.

If you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*, turn to 172. Otherwise, turn to 384.

123 The officer walks rapidly back to the fort, while you resume your survey of the fort's defense. The conversation leaves you mystified.

Fort Tuscelan stands in the remote woodlands like an isolated intruder, constructed from the timbers of the savage land which the kings of Aquilonia have chosen to conquer.

The soldiers within, many of them veterans from other frontiers of their kingdom, attend their duties with vigilance. In the watchtowers, ballista crews keep an alert eye on the cleared grounds beyond the outer walls. They also watch the nearby Black River, from which could erupt squadrons of canoes filled with savage warriors. Guards on patrol duty take care not to present a tempting target to savages who might be hiding in the forest canopy, ready to loose a feathered shaft.

Picts are not masters of strategy. Any assault will follow the pattern of the last: a two-pronged attack, combining a wing of canoe-borne warriors with a wing of braves hidden in the woods on the Aquilonian shore. When the fort is surrounded, the savages will charge in waves until either their strength is broken or Tuscelan has fallen.

Even with the weakened state of the garrison, many tribes would have to unite to breach the walls of Tuscelan.

Roll one die and add the result to your Current Time. Then, turn to 85.

124 As you point out, the face of the merchant is oddly twisted, and the skin distended as if pressed from within by an abundance of pus or gas. There is an orangish pallor about the dead man and a distinct bitter scent.

"But what killed him?" asks your partner, examining the corpse without touching it. "There are no marks of violence."

You explain about Zogar Sag and the murders at Fort Tuscelan. "This is the work of the forest devils, like all the others."

"Such sorcery!" exclaims your companion. "And the creature leaves no tracks."

Turn to 355.

125 You think you hear something . . . Try a Hearing roll. If you succeed, turn to 69. If you fail, you hear nothing more — turn to 326.

126 Out-stalking savages in their own wilderness is a dangerous game. The trick is to use the mind. Savages rely on simple skills and traditions. To win, you must maneuver intelligently, putting them at the disadvantage.

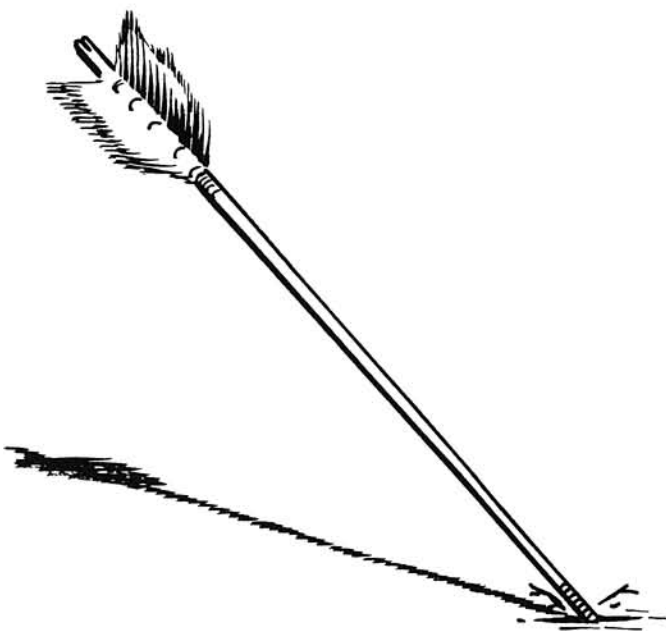
You circle behind the Pict warriors, crawling from one vine-infested thicket to another . . . only to discover that the aborigines have won this round.

Turn to 238.

127 As you slay a mighty Pict war leader, the savages draw back. "Oneobas is dead," cries one. The cry is taken up by the mob. "Oneobas the jaguar-slayer! Oneobas the bringer-of-meat!" Overcome with terror, the Picts flee from the courtyard.

For the time being, you are free. However, these savages never stay scared for long.

Turn to 429.



128 You slay the raider with a single, well-aimed blow. As he dies, his now-limp hands release an arrow which flies randomly into the woods.

Turn to 63.

129 Short and swarthy, with unintelligent faces except for their small, sharp eyes, the Bossonians are the finest archers in the kingdom. You find several of them in one of the fort's towers.

"Gather round. I've something to ask of you." The Bossonians are curious to hear what you say. They haven't the rowdy boisterousness you expect in combat troops.

You explain your raid to Gwawela, Zogar Sag's home village, and the need to preserve the border against further magics from that shaman. The men listen avidly, concentrating on your message. At last, you ask for volunteers.

Make a reaction roll for the Bossonians. If you have previously been told to use a reaction roll modifier for the archers, use it now. Also use any personal modifiers that might apply.

If the reaction is "Very Good" or better, turn to 509.

If the reaction is "Good" or worse, turn to 431.

130 Three warriors drag a man into the firelit circle — your captured companion, poor devil. The writhing prisoner is tied to the stake with rawhide thongs.

A frenzy grips the savages. They begin a fearsome howling that transcends that of wolves. Drums fill the night with their thunder. Then silence, as a feathered shaman appears.

Zogar Sag dances a slow and shuffling dance before the fire. You think at first he wears a mask, until you realize the expression is natural . . . and inhuman. He weaves an intricate pattern in the air between himself and the altar.

Suddenly the primitive shaman freezes to statuelike stillness. His plumes ripple once then sink about him. Standing erect and motionless, he appears to grow and expand.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 211.

If you do not have this PlotWord, turn to 178.

131 It is early evening when an orderly tracks you down. By the time you get to the blockhouse, the governor is fuming.

"Tiberias rode out of here at sunset," says Valannus, his face red with anger. "The fat fool! Zogar Sag threatens to have him killed next, and the idiot rides into the one place I can't protect him — the forest."

"What are you going to do?" you ask.

"What else?" he replies. "I'm sending you after him. I can't send troops — the damned savages would ambush them in the darkness. Bring back our fool . . . alive."

You quickly equip yourself and leave. If you wish to take Pyrus, one of your scouts, along with you, see p. 61 for the stats. He will be your partner until you return to the fort.

Turn to 234.

132 "If the savages were to unite against us," you ask the quartermaster, "how many tribes could they bring, and what would be their strength?"

The old man shakes his head. "I know only what you should know. Along the river are the people of the Hawk, Turtle and Raven clans, who once had villages and sacred ground in Conajohara. They fight one another often, but they put this jealousy aside to fight Aquilonians. Still, they haven't the men to conquer this fort, even in our current weakened state.

"In the depths of the forest is a powerful union of tribes known as the Wolf Confederation. The river tribes are often raided by war parties of these Wolfmen. This forces the Hawks, Turtles and Ravens to leave a garrison behind to defend against the Wolves whenever they attack us."

Purenus takes a long draft of ale. "Should the Wolves unite with the river tribes, the numbers of savages free to assault our walls would multiply several times. I'm afraid it would mean the destruction of Tuscelan. Fortunately, the Wolfmen hate the rivermen. Only a great war leader could unite them."

"Like Zogar Sag?" you ask.

"Perhaps," says Purenus. "The aborigines are often dominated by their shamans."

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, turn to 41. On a roll of 3-6, turn to 464.

133 Nerves taut with the effort to control every movement and muscle, you sneak within a few yards of the ambusher. You catch a glimpse of what must be his target, a lone traveler on the trail.

Suddenly, the Pict nocks his arrow and takes aim at the figure in the road. There's no time for finesse — you must strike now.

Use Combat Map A. The Pict is at position A. He is *mentally stunned* (see p. 3) by your attack. You are at W7.

To distract the savage from his target, on the first round of combat you *must* attack with a ranged weapon or charge and shout a challenge.

When ready, turn to 18.

134 You fight the enclosing mists, force your eyes open, elbow yourself into a sitting position . . . and witness a flash of steel. A shortsword descends to crush the skull of an unlucky Pict. "You're fortunate I came along," says your rescuer, cleaning her weapon before sheathing it.

Turn to 218.

135 "Blast your souls!" you exclaim in a whispered shout. "Do you call yourselves loyal soldiers of Aquilonia and yet speak such sedition? What sort of men meet in secret hideaways plotting disloyalty?"

"Karlus," says one. "You vouched . . ."

"Cold steel is enough to vanquish any wizardly knave," you declare, drawing your blade. "And if I hear more dispirited talk, this blade will sheath itself in your rebellious hearts!"

Make a reaction roll for the archers. Apply a -2 penalty.

If the reaction is "Very Good" or better, turn to 284.

If the reaction is "Good" or worse, turn to 232.

136 It takes time to locate your new quarry. Standing silent beside a great tree and dressed in subtle forest hues, the figure is difficult to isolate from the surroundings. Then your eyes meet. There is a quiet tug of wills, of commanding mien confronting indomitable strength.

If you are male, turn to 314. If you are female, turn to 275.



137 Decide which equipment (from your character sheet) you bring. Remember that encumbrance counts against many of the skills you use when scouting — heavy armor weighs you down.

As the guards open the heavy wooden gates, you feel relief. Suited to the vagaries of the outdoors, you don't like sheltering behind the palisades of a fortress. The walls most see as protective to you are imprisoning. The forest beckons.

You leave the timber bulk of the outpost behind. The wind off the fast-flowing Black River is chill.

You may do any of the following once:

Swim the river in order to scout in Pict territory (212).

Scout the woodlands along this side of the river (183).

Patrol inland, between the fort and the eastern settlements (165).

Circle the fort, surveying its defense situation (204).

138 If you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, turn to 479. Otherwise, turn to 176.

139 "I was there," you say. "I was one of the horde that swarmed the walls. I hadn't yet seen fifteen snows, but already my name was told around the council fires."

You have the woman's full attention. "What is your name?" she asks.

"Conan, of Cimmeria."

"I've heard of you." Interest quickens her gaze.

Turn to 99.



140 If any of your companions have been taken prisoner, turn to 70.
Otherwise, turn to 102.

141 "Let me pick the men," you say in agreement.
"By all means," replies Valannus.
"We'll start within the hour," you tell him. "If we live, we should be back by daybreak."
Turn to 33.

142 Again you circle through the woods, moving with a tigerish grace. The remaining Picts, occupied with their struggling prisoner, are unaware of you.

Use Combat Map D. The Picts are at positions A and B. The braves by the prisoner crouch, but will abandon the woman and fight you. You are at D. Your advantage is surprise — both Picts are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Turn to 377.

143 You blunder into a clearing and slide to a stumbling halt, almost colliding with a crumpled body in the dirt. You mutter a horrified oath.

Turn to 383.

144 "But as for you," says Valannus, "you risked your life many times over on last night's raid. If you like, you may leave for Velitrium now. Take your survivors with you. I'll give you a diplomatic missive for King Numedides. It's an honorable way to get clear of this disaster."

The governor lifts a mug to his lips and drains off a considerable quantity. Then his restless eyes meet yours. "I'm offering you life," he says.

If you decide to remain at the fort, turn to 353.

If you accept the offer to escape Tuscelan, turn to 539.

145 There's little time to think — aroused warriors on your trail block the exits. Far from being your shelter, this building may be your grave.

Use Combat Map B. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine the tribe of Picts being fought. Place Picts at F and E. You are at C. Place your companions (if any) anywhere in the room more than two hexes from a Pict.

Turn to 456.

146 The sound of fighting has caught others' attention. A shout goes up within the village. Warriors move in your direction, waving weapons and howling like beasts.

For the rest of this combat, roll one die at the start of each round. If a 1 or 2 is rolled, a new Pict enters the fight. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine his tribe. Place the new arrival at A or, if that hex is occupied, in the nearest empty hex.

You have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*.

Return to the paragraph which sent you here.

147 Afterward, you silently drink your ale in a tavern along the river bank, gathered with men who speak in hushed voices and nurse their red-stained bandages. A gaunt forester with his arm in a sling and a bloody wrapping about his head approaches you. You recognize an old friend.

"We've won, for now," he says, drawing up a seat. "The savages are withdrawing. Velitrium is safe."

"For now," you reply. "But what of Conajohara?"

If you know that Tuscelan survived, turn to 197.

If you do not know this, turn to 396.

148 If you have the PlotWord *COURAGEOUS*: There is no time for first aid now — more savages are moving in your direction. Abandon unconscious characters, and turn to 17. If you are unconscious, your companions abandon you — turn to 100.

Otherwise, you may use any healing technique at your disposal (see the Healing chart on p. 3). Keep track of time used. You may abandon a companion rather than wait for his recovery.

When done here, turn to 510.

149 Roll one die. If you aimed or braced for your shot, add 1 to your die roll.

On a roll of 1-4, turn to 490.

On a roll of 5 or 6, turn to 462.

150 Stepping over creepers and bypassing swampy ground where signs of your passing would show, you outmaneuver the savages. After desperate minutes, it is clear that the aborigines are still prowling where you came ashore — you've lost them.

It's odd, you think. Did they spot you by chance, or are there watchers posted up and down this river?

Turn to 285.

151 "The best thing we can do now," you say, "is to warn the settlers, and get them to safety."

Add 2 hours to your Current Time and turn to 557.



152 The pain does not increase, nor does the evil-colored blotch that surrounds the wound grow larger. It appears that you have removed enough of the venom. Nevertheless, you are not in good shape — you must avoid blood-stirring events for the next few hours, to keep the remaining venom from spreading within your system.

Roll one die. If, during this number of hours, you exert yourself — through combat, running, carrying this heavy body, and so on — make a HT roll. Success means you're OK, and will not have to roll again. Failure means the remaining venom kills you.

If you leave Tiberias' corpse in the woods, turn to 326.

If you continue to carry the body, turn to 338.

153 Sound is your enemy — a Pict war party could hear a mumbled word or the inadvertent snapping of a slender sapling, and descend on you with a hail of arrows.

If you are in a trail or road hex and travel on the pathway, turn to 205.

If you travel, but do not move along a trail or road, turn to 226.

If you remain where you are, turn to 501.

154 Valannus is a young man, well-knit, his finely chiseled countenance carved into sober cast by toil and responsibility. "I feared the Picts had caught you at last," he says.

"When they get my scalp, the whole river will know it," you reply. "They'll hear Pictish women wailing their dead as far as Velitrium."

If you brought Tiberias' body to the fort, turn to 430.

If Tiberias lives, turn to 365.

If neither of the above apply, turn to 274.

155 For your luck to have been so abysmally poor is incredible. Yet there they are, moving through the forest in your direction — Picts, a trio of warriors, weapons ready. They haven't seen you, but it's only a matter of time.

If you turn back to the river, hoping to escape, turn to 180.

If you flee along the river bank, turn to 90.

If you wish to out-stalk them, turn to 60.

If you boldly attack them, turn to 220.

156 As you launch your death-dealing strike, the Pict — alarmed by some primeval instinct — cocks his head and rolls to the right. Your blow hits, but not with the intended lethal effect.

The Hawk brave takes half damage from your weapon. You do not need to roll to hit, but if you are using hit location rules, roll for hit location.

If he is dead or unconscious, turn to 63.

If not, you are in a fight. Use Combat Map A. The Pict is at W5. He will fight to the death. You are at position A.

When ready, turn to 18.

157 "Bravo," says the officer, sweating from his brief run to catch up with you. "I've been wanting to converse with you, in a private manner, if you would."

You grunt. "Yes, yes, I know that feeling," concurs Julian. "My men are in an uproar, too." He lowers his voice to a whisper. "Valannus is a young fool. Doesn't he know that Aquilonia will never hold more Pictish land? When the aborigines arise, we will fall before them."

He winks. "I think you and I are the only officers in this outpost who understand warfare. Surely you can see that the time is coming when the savages will swarm over the walls of our eastern cities!"

If you let Julian drone on, turn to 34.

If you disagree, turn to 4.

If you rudely end the conversation, turn to 123.

If you nod your head in agreement, turn to 79.

158 You enter the open central court of Fort Tuscelan. Ringing this space are rows of barracks, the stables, tiny merchants' stalls, the towering blockhouse and other outbuildings. No drills are scheduled for today. Rangy off-duty Gunderman pikemen and local forest runners mingle with the shorter, stockier forms of Bossonian archers. There is a sullen appearance about the group, a hint of malingering that warns of deeper problems. The mens' morale is low.

An older man, whose balding head is an odd contrast to his hard, well-muscled body, recognizes you. "Here's the one," he calls out, loud enough for all to hear. "It's time for a tourney!"

The men, formerly passive, come to malicious life. "Tourney! Tourney!" More soldiers crowd into the square, their eyes on you. Though rare elsewhere, tourneys pitting an officer such as yourself against enlisted men are popular along the frontier. By military tradition, you may accept the challenge and name the contest, or you may decline.

If you cry, "Archery! Some target practice," turn to 227.

If you yell, "Steel on steel," turn to 260.

If you search for your own men in the swarm, and yell, "Combat, bloody combat — frontier style," turn to 244.

If you decline the challenge, turn to 192.

159 A flicker of light, and the woman's dagger imbeds itself between your feet. "Damn your hide," she storms, charging away from you.

Turn to 2.

160 You charge into the midst of the clearing, taking the raiders by surprise.

Use Combat Map D. The Picts are at positions A and B. They abandon the woman to fight you. You are at I. Your advantage is surprise — the Picts are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Turn to 377.

161 Ahead of you, a soft blue-green witch light moves through the trees faster than you can ever hope to match. Its outlines are indistinct, but it is taller than a man, and it glides rather than walking or running.

You snarl a savage curse. If you have a thrown weapon, you hurl it ferociously. But the thing glides on without altering its course. Then it is gone, and the forest crouches in breathless stillness. Frustrated, you return to the corpse.

Turn to 383.

162 If you are not in a trail or road hex, turn to 455. If you are in a trail or road hex, but aren't following the path, turn to 115.

If you are following a forest trail or the Velitrium road, turn to 207.

163 Your force sweeps forward, easily retaking the lost positions. But as you do so, the savages surge forward elsewhere. Valannus leads a counter-thrust, only to go down beneath a torrent of Picts. Clearly the battle is lost.

If you wish to flee the fort, turn to 553.

If you launch another charge against the Picts, turn to 543.

164 There's a howl as your weapon strikes the exposed talon. The creature hastily retracts it. The attack was meant, not for you, but for Tiberias' body. You unceremoniously dump the corpse and stand over it protectingly, countering every move of the flame monster.

The flame flickers uncertainly. Then the unearthly thing leaps with lightning speed for your throat.

Use Combat Map A. If you are traveling on a trail, use the trail shown on the map; otherwise, disregard the trail. The fire creature is at F and is a swamp devil (see p. 60). You are at T12. If your companion is with you, place him at T9. Place the corpse in hex T11 and the adjacent western hex.

Fight the battle.

If your companion is not with you, roll one die at the start of every round — on a roll of 1, he or she appears at B.

If you come in physical contact with the creature, turn to 545.

If you are unconscious, and your partner is unconscious *or* you don't have a partner, turn to 16.

If you win the battle, turn to 221.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



165 You strike out to the east, crisscrossing the dirt track which leads to the town of Velitrium, on the far bank of Thunder River. You see no obvious signs of savages, but that does not surprise you. A torn leaf, a trampled vine, or a bent twig are the only clues on a Pict trail.

Try a Tracking roll. Make as many skill rolls as you like, but add 1 hour to your Current Time before each skill roll. Tracking a man is normally easy (+5 bonus), but Picts are master woodsmen — there is only a +3 bonus. If it is later than 8 a.m., apply a -1 penalty for each hour after that time.

If it is 8 p.m. or later, turn to 234.

If you make a Tracking roll, turn to 495.

If your Tracking fails to turn up any trails and you decide to head back to the fort, turn to 85.

166 On the frontier, strict protocol is not always followed — on your return to the fort, you are shown directly to the blockhouse. When you insist on speaking to the governor, you are summoned to his chambers. You explain what you have seen.

“Impossible,” says Valannus, rubbing his eyes, with such a tone of resignation that you realize he already believes what he protests. “The man is of noble blood — to so foully betray his nation, and the soldiers who look up to him . . .”

“I saw what I saw,” you insist.

The governor turns to his adjutant. “Have Julian brought to me, here. Take a brace of guards with you for security.” When the adjutant comes back empty-handed, the governor orders the fortress searched inside and out. Shortly, it becomes evident that the renegade officer was warned and has managed to escape.

Add 3 hours to your Current Time and return to 85.

167 If you are within three hexes of Fort Tuscelan, turn to 112.

If you are four to six hexes from Fort Tuscelan, turn to 270.

If you are more than six hexes from the fort, turn to 387.

168 You snort your derision. “What talk, Karlus! Wizards are no more than flesh and bone, for the most part — I’ve never seen one I couldn’t handle with cold hard steel.” You regale the archers with tales of warriors overcoming magic and magicians until you think you have them calmed.

Make a reaction roll for the archers. If you have Diplomacy or Fast-Talk, there is a +2 bonus. If you encouraged the men to talk longer, apply a -2 penalty.

If the reaction is “Very Good” or better, turn to 284.

If the reaction is “Good” or worse, turn to 232.

169 You join in the shout, a grimly cheerful figure. “The Picts are blood mad,” you explain. “They won’t stop until they’re all dead — but there aren’t enough of them. Zogar Sag miscalculated. A few more charges and they’ll be broken.”

If Julian is dead, turn to 72.

If Julian is alive, or if you don’t know, turn to 35.

170 With a great roar, you charge into the midst of the smoke, flailing with your weapon at the surprised and startled savages. Blood spurts in gouts as they fall before you, until you are beside the altar — but a growing force of Picts, their wits gathered, forms around you.

Use Combat Map C. Disregard the stake. You are at E. Place any companions behind you and away from the bonfire. Your weapons are ready.

Turn to 52.

171 Directly in front of the man looms a towering light — an animated witchfire. A solid core wavers in the obscuring flame, but you can make out neither likeness nor shape. The hair on the back of your neck rises.

Turn to 549.

172 A pyramid of human heads rests on that altar. There is a grim familiarity about their features.

If Tiberias is alive, turn to 417. Otherwise, turn to 487.

173 The wilderness is indeed filled with war parties. By their markings, you note that two tribes are on war patrol together. You recognize the Ferret tribe’s war paint, but the other marking is unfamiliar to you. Zogar Sag must be gathering aid from tribes throughout Pictland.

Your enemies are eight Picts. Four are members of the Ferret tribe (see p. 61). Use the rules on p. 3 to determine which tribe the other four braves most closely resemble.

Turn to 421.

174 The Picts know you are nearby. They are on your trail — war parties scour the forest for miles in every direction.

Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your Tracking skill (to disguise your tracks) against the Picts’ Tracking skill (to track you down). Use a Tracking skill of 12 for the Picts, with a +5 bonus for tracking a man-size quarry (+3 if you have Tracking-14 or above). If you are on rocky ground, you receive a +5 bonus.

If you win the Contest, or in the event of a tie, turn to 510.

If the Picts win the Contest, turn to 105.

175 Use Combat Map A, but disregard the marked trail. Place your characters anywhere further than three hexes west of the trail. Your weapons are ready.

Use the rules given in paragraph 421 to place your enemies. Use the W numbers.

When ready, turn to 551.

176 You quickly stash the bodies of the guards in the undergrowth, then dash within the village. Amazingly, no one notices.

Turn to 213.

177 “Suit yourself,” says the young man, obviously disappointed. “Maybe next time . . .” He stalks to the barracks.

Turn to 2.

178 As the enchanted shaman looms over your friend, the prisoner makes a desperate act of defiance. He spits in the Pict’s face.

A howl of outrage sweeps the massed savages. The shaman, wiping the spittle from his face, waves away the braves who would kill your friend. Instead, Zogar Sag snarls for men to open the village gates. Warriors form a double row from the open gate to the stake, nervously edging away from the alley they’ve created.

A tense silence reigns as Zogar Sag turns to the forest, rises on tiptoe, and sends a weird inhuman cry shuddering out into the wilderness. There is an odd sibilance about the sound. It is the sound a snake would make, could a snake yell.

A giant serpent enters Gwawela — the pale, abominable terror of old known as the Ghost Snake. You had thought it extinct — yet here it comes, rippling over the ground, its head level with the prisoner’s head, its fangs loaded with venom said to drive men to madness.

If you attack the shaman with an arrow or a similar ranged weapon, turn to 200.

If you wade into the crowd to kill Picts, turn to 304.

If you attack the Ghost Snake, turn to 97.

If you move toward your imprisoned companion, turn to 44.

If you know about a renegade, and attack him, turn to 246.

If you wait and watch longer, turn to 6.

179 Abandoned characters may have been taken prisoner by the savages.

Roll one die for each character abandoned. On a roll of 1-3, that character is a Pict prisoner. On a roll of 4-6, the character escaped the Picts . . . for now.

Turn to 140.

180 You immerse yourself in the cold flowing current, hoping against hope that you can escape. Behind you, someone shouts — and the alarm cry is repeated up and down the river. You strike out with your full strength for the Conajohara shore. Swarthy warriors in loincloths emerge on the Pictish bank. Raising bows, they launch a barrage of barbed and feathered bolts.

Roll one die for each Pict. On 1 or 2, he's a Hawk; on a 3 or 4, he's a Ferret; on a 5 or 6, he's an Otter.

Turn to 322.

181 "Glorious," you begin, shuffling your feet. "No one at Tuscelan has to know. We met on the road. The wound is from a Pictish blade. I will testify — truthfully — that you are a fine warrior."

Make a reaction roll for Glorious. If you are a barbarian, add 2 to the roll. If you are Aquilonian, subtract 1 instead. Also apply a modifier equal to the damage done by the wound — add it to the roll if you wounded her, subtract it if she wounded you.

If the result is "Poor" or worse, turn to 225.

If the result is "Neutral" or "Good," Glorious agrees to keep your reputation safe — turn to 99.

If the result is "Very Good" or better, Glorious agrees and thinks the plan was her idea — turn to 217.

182 You streak for the great hut, maneuvering so the shadows conceal you. As you run to the entrance, you see that this hut is indeed festooned with wreathed flowers and fragrant vines. You pass through the darkened archway and step within.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 443.

If you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*, turn to 472.

183 Roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, turn to 240. On any other roll, turn to 236.



184 Roll one die. If you roll a 6, turn to 262. On any other result, turn to 429 if you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, or 62 otherwise.

185 There's a sweet sense of homecoming as you catch sight of the frontier fort, banners flapping in the strong wind over a bloodsoaked field. Everywhere there is evidence of a recent battle: heaps of slain savages, broken canoes on the crest of the river-wall, and hundreds of spent shafts littering the fields.

You are conducted directly to Valannus. The governor's left arm is in a sling and his face is pale — but he is cheerful. "You missed the action," he says, drawing up a chair. "The Pict assault failed. I never would have thought Zogar Sag unintelligent. Savage, yes. But to attack this fort with such a small force . . ."

If you have the PlotWord *MAGNIFICENT*, turn to 518.

If you don't, turn to 26.

186 The gatehouse of Fort Tuscelan, though built from timbers, resembles that of any stone castle of Aquilonia. The stout building stands behind the main gate of the fort in such a way that anyone entering the fort must pass through it. One of the tallest towers uses the gatehouse for a foundation, and can bring its ballistae to bear on any Picts imprudent enough to approach.

The drudgery of being a gatehouse guard is livened by only two things: gambling and gossiping. As you approach the gatehouse, a conversation is in progress.

"Zogar Sag got Soractus, didn't he?" says one guard. "The shaman said he'd kill the scout who found him drunk."

"Soractus rushed out of here that night like a crazy man," says a second voice. "It was the middle of the night, but he insisted on going down to the river. I tell you, what could he see on the river at midnight?"

"And his corpse," says a third voice. "Dripping wet, mutilated . . . and tied up outside the gate, where they spotted it at first light."

If you eavesdrop further, turn to 235.

If you enter the gatehouse, turn to 279.

187 "Who am I to say?" you reply. "Ask Valannus. He's the governor. We're just the warriors. I say let him do his job, and you and I will do the things they pay us for. Right, lads?"

The men nod their heads. "Thanks," says Jehan.

The foresters lose respect for you. In any further reaction rolls, the scouts have a -1 penalty toward anything you ask of them. Make a note of this.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

188 As the man walks up, you remember . . . It was a barracks conversation, typical gossip of a bored garrison. A young recruit claimed that Julian had a mistress in Velitrium. When the men scoffed — some swore the officer had no taste for women — the soldier said that he'd seen Julian with his mistress. He said the girl had the coloring of a half-breed Pict, but with the fine-chiseled features of a girl from a civilized land.

When he said this, he was mocked. The men said it was impossible for a noble Aquilonian to consort with savage maidens, no matter how comely. Yet the lad stuck with his story.

You've also heard it said that Julian has a passion for gam-

bling, and that he was once a master swordsman — though he's past his prime, by the looks of him.

Turn to 157.

189 The forest savages have senses as keen as those of the wild animals they hunt. As you approach, the Pict freezes — then whirls, readying an arrow. His eyes lock on yours.

Use Combat Map A. The Pict — a Hawk brave — is at position A. He will Step and Ready on the first round, readying his arrow and facing you. The savage will use his bow until you are within six hexes, when he will switch to the shortsword. The Pict will fight to the death. You are at D.

When ready, turn to 18.

190 If your weapon was transformed, it returns to its original shape. Roll one die, and add the number rolled to your Current Time.

If it is 8 p.m. or later, turn to 234.

Otherwise, roll another die. On a roll of 1-4, turn to 236. On a roll of 5-6, turn to 85.



191 The stout gates are open wide. The forest is alive with savages hunting and patrolling. There is no chance to enter Gwawela unobserved in daylight, you regretfully conclude — it would be suicide. Any attempt must be made after nightfall. Neither is it wise to stay here. You move away from the village.

Turn to 153.

192 You politely decline the offer of tourney, knowing they cannot force an officer to duel with an enlisted man. As you turn your back, the men mumble.

“Coward!”

“Scouts can’t fight!”

“Mothered by a half-Pict savage, I heard . . .”

Add 2 hours to your Current Time. The men of the fort now have a -1 penalty when reacting to anything you propose — make a note of this.

Return to 85.

193 “That isn’t the half of it,” says another of the Bossonians, punctuating his remarks with a clenched fist. “The wizards are drawing beasts out of the wilderness. Edric was mauled by a forest cat not a stone’s throw from here.”

“And they enchant snakes,” comments another.

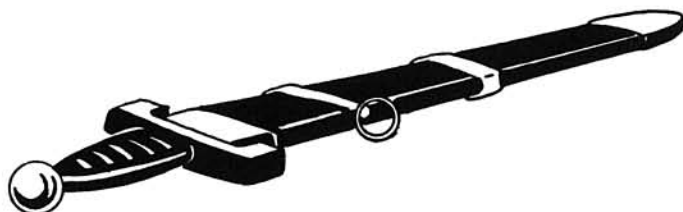
“The savages poisoned the water supply,” says a squeaky-voiced recruit. “Forty men died in a day!”

“Zogar Sag conjures forest beasts to fight for him,” said the first man, hammering out his words with the fist. “It was the beasts that poisoned the water — had to be!”

Karlus nods. “The drums talk every night. Mark my words — more devilment is coming.”

If you try to improve morale, turn to 168.

If you excuse yourself from this meeting, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.



194 Distracting her with soothing words, you step forward — and lunge for her sword arm as she draws! Before she can react, the weapon clatters to the ground and your brawny arm is around her throat. “Struggling will do you no good,” you advise.

Glorious growls something and digs her elbow into your ribs. Your other arm restrains her before she can do you harm as you cut off her air. At last, she gasps. “I give, I give.”

You release her. She sucks in air. “Wasn’t fair . . .” she wheezes. “But at least you’re not soft.”

Turn to 217.

195 Try a Quick Contest of Skills — the Stealth of an unknown presence against your own Vision. Roll one die to determine their tribe (see p. 3), and use the Stealth score of that tribe of Picts (see p. 61). Make a note of the Pict tribe rolled.

If you win the Contest, turn to 155. Otherwise, turn to 238.

196 The wounded Pict leader shrieks and totters to the dirt, helplessly clutching his breast. While braves converge on the stricken leader and carry him away, confused warriors rush around the clearing brandishing their weapons and looking for someone to kill. One sees you, forcing you and your companions to run.

You have the PlotWord **MAGNIFICENT**.

Turn to 515.

197 “The frontier stands as it is. Black River remains the border. Zogar Sag has lost,” says the man.

You sigh and reach for the wine jug. “Perhaps,” you reply thoughtfully. “But barbarism is the natural state of mankind. Civilization is unnatural, a whim of circumstance. Barbarism must always ultimately triumph.”

THE END

198 The savage falls forward, soiling the piled clothing with his blood. You glance at his companions — they struggle with the woman and do not notice the loss of their comrade.

If you charge the other Picts, turn to 160.

If you sneak up on them, turn to 142.

If you return to Fort Tuscelan, turn to 271.

199 Thunderous applause breaks out. Muscled arms lift you into the air, bearing you away to the barracks. Insisting on feting you like a true champion, the men refuse to let you go before several hours pass.

Roll two dice, and add the number rolled to your Current Time.

The men of the fort have gained respect for you. In any future reaction rolls, apply a +1 bonus toward anything you ask of them. Make a note of this.

Return to 85.

200 The firelight wavers, but the range is not great. Make your attack roll. The shaman is 20 yards away. The flickering firelight and billowing smoke are a net -4 penalty to the attack roll. You may aim or brace, if you like — but it might draw attention to you.

If you hit the target, roll damage for the blow and turn to 106.
If you miss, turn to 149.

201 Add 1 hour to your Current Time.
If it is before 10 p.m. on Thursday, turn to 250 (if you are crossing into Pictland) or 28 (if you are returning to Conajohara).

Otherwise, turn to 369.

202 You find disturbing evidence of another kind: a chest beneath a cot. To find a cot in a Pict dwelling, when the aborigines typically disdain civilized furnishings, is odd enough . . . but to find the chest filled with the gear of a soldier of Aquilonia — boots, chainmail, even an officer's helm — is even more remarkable.

Then you find damning evidence: a certificate of rank issued to one Julian. You know him — he's an officer at Fort Tuscelan. Why are his goods in a Pict lodgehouse?

You may equip yourself from the materials found here. The chest provides a suit of chainmail, a pair of leather boots, a greathelm and a morningstar. Pict goods are around.

Turn to 492.

203 If Tiberias is alive, turn to 117. If he is dead, turn to 420.

204 As you start down the road, a short, hawk-faced man puffs after you. "Wait! Wait a moment!"

You recognize him. He's Julian, an Aquilonian by birth and an officer over the Gundermen. He has noble blood and political aspirations, but you wouldn't trust him to command a latrine-digging squad.

Try an IQ roll. If you make it, turn to 188. Otherwise, turn to 157.

205 You plunge further down the way, careful not to blunder into the bushes that fringe the path. Light filtering through the branches is your only guide.

Turn to 307.



206 As your blow whistles through the air, the savage — warned by some primeval instinct — whirls, screams and rolls to one side, hatchet ready. Answering yells come from his companions. Your weapon strikes but not with the force intended. The Pict gets no defense roll.

Roll half damage for your weapon and apply it to the raider you've attacked.

Prepare for battle, using Combat Map D. The Picts are at positions A, B and C. You are at E. Your advantage is surprise — the Picts by the prisoner are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3), but will abandon her to fight you.

Turn to 377.

207 Use Combat Map A. Place your characters at the north end of the marked trail.

Turn to 380.

208 Try a roll against ST to free your craft from its perch. This attempt may be made by any single character in your party. Afterward, the same character must make a DX roll or the item used as a pole falls overboard.

If you succeed at the ST roll, turn to 242. If you fail at the ST roll, turn to 370.

209 Try an IQ roll. Due to the dark and surprise, you suffer a -3 penalty on the roll.

If you succeed, turn to 363. If you fail, turn to 114 (if you are alone) or 82 (if you have a companion).

210 Roll two dice, and add the number rolled to your Current Time. If it is 8 p.m. or later, turn to 234. Otherwise, turn to 85.

211 The central fire flares up — enough to cast its radiance on a spot that had not previously caught your eye. You stifle a gasp. In the inner circle of swarthy savages, you spot a fair-skinned man clad in war paint and doeskin.

Try an IQ roll. If you are successful, turn to 418. If you fail, turn to 536.

212 Trusting the overhanging branches to conceal you from spying savages, you silently ease yourself into the cold flow of the river and stroke for the distant shore. Black River isn't treacherous to the swimmer — the major threat depends on what awaits you on the far shore.

Turn to 247.

213 Concealing yourself in the shadow of the towering wall, you get your first details of the interior of Gwawela.

The benighted savages have little knowledge of civilization, kept ignorant by the petty chieftains and shamans who dominate them. Filth and disease run rampant. Rats scurry between the huts, burrowing freely in the refuse piled everywhere. The half-starved, lethargic dogs ignore them. And what a stench!

In the center of the village is a commons. Firelight spills out from communal firepits edging the square. It is from here that the howling comes.

On the fringes of this court is the largest structure in the village. Human skulls hang from the eaves. Besides this, there are only two real buildings in Gwawela: a two-story, flower-strewn hut to the west, and a long, plain building near you. The rest are mud huts.

If you leave your men here and scout the village on your own, turn to 62.

If you stealthily move closer to the central square, bringing your companions with you, turn to 252.

214 Ghostlike, the faintest of wails on the wind, you hear a wild, faraway scream break at its highest point — the cry of a man in dire fear or agony. It comes from the east, far away.

A return to the fort is necessary. Turn to 326.

215 If Tiberias is alive, turn to 352.
If he is dead, turn to 355.



216 You hurry down the road, cross Scalp Creek, and come in sight of the first settler's cabin — a smouldering ruin. The Picts have come this far. You spot four bodies: three children and a woman. Your warning has come too late for them.

The night continues in this vein: cabin after cabin burned, settler man and woman and child dead. A red glow becomes evident through the trees as the Pict raiders burn more and more cabins and farms. Fortunately, the blood lust of the savages blinds them to other considerations — no war parties stop you from reaching Thunder River.

There you join a militia unit. The savages get as far as the walls of Velitrium, where you help to turn them back with the power of axe and torch. Many a settler's cabin lies in ashes before the painted horde is thrown back.

Turn to 147.

217 If you are an Aquilonian, turn to 5.
If you are a barbarian, turn to 66.
If you are neither of the above, turn to 38.

218 You make sure the savage is dead, then stand and take in your new companion. Eyes meet. There is a quiet tug of wills, of commanding mien confronting indomitable strength.

If you are male, turn to 314. If you are female, turn to 275.

219 There's a sweet sense of homecoming as you catch sight of the frontier fort, banners flapping in the strong wind.

On your arrival, you are conducted directly to Valannus. The governor is hungry for the slightest detail of Zogar Sag. He looks ill to you — he's pale beneath his unshaven face, except where the dark patches stand out beneath his eyes.

"At least you're alive," he comments. "From the sound of the drums last night, half of the Pictish nation was out hunting you down. Any casualties?"

You report on how many of your men are dead, and how they fell.

"And what of Zogar Sag? Is he slain?" asks Valannus. You reluctantly shake your head, and report the shaman alive. "I expected as much, but it was worth the attempt. What else do you have to report?"

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 367.

If you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*, turn to 261.

220 You rise from your hiding place and hurl yourself upon the nearest Pict. It's a desperate fight — you're outnumbered three-to-one — but you've been in tight spots before . . .

Use Combat Map A. Consider the eastern trail edge to be the bank of the river. Place Picts at W6, W9 and W12. If you haven't already, roll one die to determine the tribe of Picts being fought (see p. 3). You are at W11.

Turn to 8.

221 The enemy staggers and falls sprawling. The fires that veil it leap fiercely upward — red as

gushing blood — hiding the figure from view. A scent of burning flesh fills your nostrils. You back away from the inferno, dragging the merchant's body with you. In seconds, nothing remains of the flame-thing except a lingering dark shadow in your dazzled eyes.

Turn to 326.

222 Two Picts hustle through the woods. Their markings identify them as Gwaweli, but they don't look like braves — they're old and wear finery of beads and golden wire. Yet they aren't chiefs. Perhaps they are village elders, returning from concluding a treaty with a neighbor tribe.

Your enemies are two Picts from Gwawela, members of the Hawk tribe (see p. 61).

Turn to 421.

223 Before you can react, a sharp talon slices down from the towering green flame. There's a wet, ripping sound. Then the thing is gone — with Tiberias' head.

If you pursue, turn to 489.

If you let it leave, turn to 326.



224 The scouts of Fort Tuscelan are a breed apart, and they know it. But they are few — mostly former settlers, many originally from the Tauran province or the frontier marches, survivors hardened by life in Conajohara . . . and by the Picts.

Their gathering place is the "foresters' stall," a small, roofed enclosure just off the main parade ground. You often drop by.

They hail you affectionately as you approach. "You'd better be quiet now, Jehan," says one to another of them, looking at you meaningfully.

"Go ahead," you urge. "Talk freely."

Jehan nods. "We're not happy, and I think it's pretty near unanimous. Right, boys?" The others give their acknowledgment. "The garrison is under-strength. There's only a few hundred pikemen and archers, plus a few dozen woodsmen like ourselves, with no hope of reinforcement. The king has pulled out the cavalry — and without the horse soldiers, we're trapped here." He lowers his voice. "And there's talk that King Numedides is mad. Half the men of this fort are ready to desert!"

"That's strong talk," you remark.

"It is that," says Jehan. "You're the officer here — what do you make of this? We know you'll tell us true." All eyes focus on you.

If you agree that there is no hope, and tell them so, turn to 249.

If you tell them that the fort is defensible, turn to 286.

If you sidestep the question, turn to 187.

225 "Be still," mutters Glorious, giving you a dark look. "I'm not telling anyone." Having said that, she walks down the trail towards Tuscelan. You follow.

Turn to 99.

226 You avoid clinging briars and low-hanging branches, gliding between trees without touching the stems.
Turn to 544.

227 Rough hands thrust one of the Bossonians out of the crowd. The archer, garbed in a curious blend of breastplate and leather contrived so as to leave both arms bare — unrestrained for better use of the bow in combat — rubs his jaw and takes your measure.

“Do it, Otho!” calls one of his countrymen.

Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your Bow skill against Otho’s Bow-16.

If you win by 5 or more, turn to 254. If not, turn to 283.

228 Before you release it, you know the shaft will score. The bowstring twangs. Like lightning, the feathered arrow cleaves the air and pierces the apple.

Then the apple, deftly split in half by a perfect shot, falls in two parts to the ground.

The crowd is too amazed to make a sound. It’s the bald man who breaks the silence. “By the gods,” he cries, “that’s the best piece of archery I’ve seen in all my days!”

Turn to 199.



229 You slice through the rawhide thongs that bind the captive, then jerk him to his feet. To your amazement, he hisses at you. The man reels from side to side, eyes bulging, then collapses. He slides away from the fire on his belly, wriggling from side to side. You can do nothing against such sorcery.

Turn to 52.

230 With burning eyes, the shaman calls his serpent to attack.

Use Combat Map C. Place your characters within two hexes of D.

When you are ready, turn to 266.

231 At your signal, your men swing the canoe into the open channel, making for the far shore. Emerging from the black shadows of the brush that fringe the bank and coming into the open of the midstream creates the illusion of rash exposure. But the stars give little light — only the keenest eye could make out the shadowy shape of the canoe.

You swing under the overhanging branches of the west shore. One of the men gropes for a projecting branch and holds fast to it, securing the boat. No word is spoken.

Turn to 153.

232 “The officer is correct,” says Karlus, coming to stand at your side. “Let’s be loyal. What say ye, Brant? Hagar?”

“Aye,” reply the named archers, though they seem sullen.

“So there you have it,” Karlus says to you. “We’re a trustworthy troop. When the Picts come to cut our throats, we’ll be here.” He ushers you back to the courtyard of the fort.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

233 Cautiously you watch the woods, waiting for the fierce, painted faces to thrust through the leaves. You listen — does a stealthy savage footfall disturb the silence?

Turn to 307.

234 The shadows lengthen, deepening into the woods. If you are alone, turn to 537.

Otherwise, roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, turn to 69. On any other roll, turn to 125.

235 “*Something* called to those men from the depths of the forest,” continues the second voice.

“The loon,” says the first guard. “Only the doomed ones hear it.”

“That’s what Soractus heard,” says the second voice. “He went mad and rushed down to the river to meet his death, like a hare running down the throat of a python.” The man starts to cough, and excuses himself to get a drink. He spots you in the doorway. “Looking for someone?”

If you ask about recent unusual events, turn to 20.

If you excuse yourself and leave, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

236 As you pass from glade to glade, taking no trail but following instinct, the woods on this bank of Black River remain still. Soon you are on the low rise southeast of the fort. From its heights you can scan the river for several miles. You see no canoes filled with war parties in its fast-flowing channel.

Then you *do* catch sight of something — a wisp of smoke rising from the forest. The wisp quickly becomes an active plume of gray and black drifting over the forest canopy. The fire’s source is hidden from you.

The smoke is a mystery. Picts burn settlers’ cabins when they raid . . . but you know of no settlers living this far south. The woods are remote from both the fort and Velitrium, and too close to the southern marshes.

If you cautiously approach the site of the fire, turn to 296.

If you run, hoping to catch Pict raiders, turn to 332.

If you return to the fort, turn to 271.

237 An archer follows you. He looks like a raw recruit. “May I speak with you?” he asks, nodding toward the walkway. “Out there, where we’ll have some privacy.”

If you accept, turn to 12.

If you avoid him, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

238 A horrendous howl breaks out behind you. Before you can turn, the full weight of an aborigine crashes into you. You hear others thrashing through the forest, heading toward you.

Use Combat Map A. Consider the eastern trail edge to be the



bank of the river. Place one Pict at W9. The other Picts do not appear on the map at the start of combat — they fanned out to search for you. If you haven't already, roll one die to determine the tribe of Picts being fought (see p. 3). You are at E and are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Roll one die every turn. On a roll of 1, a Pict brave arrives. Place the reinforcement at W6. If a 6 is rolled, roll again: if an even number is rolled, then there will be no more Picts arriving in this combat. Make a note of this.

Turn to 8.

239 The thing crashes through the woods, snapping tree limbs with a facility that marks a beast more massive than a human. It senses you are pursuing it, and cries out with a banshee howl that makes your skin crawl.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 291. If you fail, turn to 354.

240 You strike north, into the fertile bottomlands between Fort Tuscelan and the northern marshes. The forest is tranquil. A flash of white catches your eye as a deer scampers across your path. Squirrels chatter at you. Though there are many trails in this unsettled region, some left by the savages who once dwelt here, you follow no single path but choose a course that intersects with several — hoping to catch a raider unaware.

As you approach one such trail, your strategy pays off — you spot a lone figure ahead. Crouching down into the cover afforded by low-growing vegetation, you watch as the person nears.

By the doeskin garments and the beaded moccasins, you figure the stranger to be one of the savages. Yet as you get a closer inspection of the girl — for such the figure appears to be — questions arise. Her features are not those of a Pict — her skin is too fair. You wonder why such a maiden would stroll alone on the Conajohara side of Black River.

You have the PlotWord VALOROUS.

If you shout "hurrah" to the girl, hoping to speak with her, turn to 298.

If you follow her, turn to 277.

If you ignore the girl and scout elsewhere, turn to 190.

241 You part the leafy screen and see the lone Pict, back toward you, kneeling beside the wagon. He hacks at a locked chest with a hatchet. After the third blow the hasp gives way. Howling with delight, the savage overturns the container, tumbling a variety of women's wear onto the grass.

Killing this raider should be easy if you get a good first blow. The others might not notice his death.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills: your weapon skill (using the skill for any weapon you carry) versus his Hearing-12.

If you win, turn to 198. If you lose, turn to 206.

242 The fragile rivercraft gives a great lurch as you lever it off the rocks. You are free again.

Roll one die. If the result is an even number, turn to 484. If the result is odd, turn to 110.

243 Picts seldom take prisoners, and never while raiding miles beyond Black River. You never feel the blow that converts your scalp into a savage's grisly trophy.

Your adventure is over.

244 Your foresters are easy to spot in this crowd. They're a separate breed — tough, independent, able to live in the wilderness. If Aquilonia had enough warriors like these . . .

One of them, at the back of the mob, gives an explosive laugh. "Savage-style fighting, eh?" You recognize Pyrus, an old friend.

"That's what I said," you reply.

He chews on a long stalk of grass, taking his time. Like most of the scouts, Pyrus came to Conajohara shortly after the conquest. Most of that first generation died, shot full of Pict arrows, or gave up and went east to the safety of Velitrium. Only a few stayed in the land beyond Thunder River, where they've become hardy and wise in the ways of the wilderness.

The scout spits out the stalk of grass and passes his weapons to his friends. "I'll do it," he says.

The bald man forces his way to the center of the courtyard, barking instructions. Men draw an arena boundary in the dirt. Others come to relieve you of your armor and your heavy weapons, replacing them with hatchets and knives.

"These be the rules," shouts the bald man. "This is Pict-style, savage combat — hatchets and knives are all you'll be allowed. Any trick is fair play, so forget about your chivalrous notions. And, as the savages wear no more armor than loincloth and moccasins, you'll be allowed no more than buckskin breeches and shirt.

"The first one of you who strikes blood as the result of a blow in melee combat will be the victor." He orders you to one side of the arena, and Pyrus to the other. "Now, begin!"

Use Combat Map G. Your only armor is buckskin breeches (PD1, DR1). Your weapons are three hatchets and a half-dozen small knives. Pyrus is at B — see the scout on p. 61 for his stats, but use only the weapons and armor listed above. You are at A. Recalculate Encumbrance and Speed for both of you.

If Pyrus loses any HT as the result of a blow in melee combat, immediately turn to 398.

If you lose any HT as the result of a blow in melee combat, immediately turn to 330.

If you are knocked unconscious, turn to 419.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

245 Make an IQ roll for the Pict. If he succeeds, turn to 312. If he fails, return to 18 and continue the battle.

246 You charge into the midst of the smoke, flailing at the surprised and startled savages. Blood spurts in gouts as they fall, until you are within the inner circle, face to face with the renegade — who, surprised, now fumbles for his weapon.

If you haven't recognized him before, you do now. The hawklike features belong to Julian, an officer from Fort Tuscelan — in blood-feast with the savages!

Try an IQ roll for Julian (IQ-12). If he succeeds, turn to 428. If he fails, turn to 477.

247 Try a Swimming roll. You have a +3 bonus (you entered the water intentionally), but there is a penalty equal to twice your encumbrance level — swimming in armor is difficult. If you are Fat, remember your +5 bonus.

If you fail the skill roll, turn to 280.

Otherwise, you swim across safely — turn to 201.

248 The soldiers crowd around, roaring their enthusiasm. Rough hands slap your back and pound your shoulders. Muscled arms lift you into the air, bearing you away to the barracks, while the men chant your name over and over again.

"By the gods," the bald man cries, "what an archer!"

Insisting on feting you like a true champion, the men refuse to let you go before several hours pass.

The men of the fort have gained respect for you. In any future reaction rolls, apply a +1 bonus toward anything you ask of them. Make a note of this.

Roll two dice, and add the number rolled to your Current Time.

Return to 85.



249 "I won't lie," you tell your men. "Defense of the fort is hopeless without support."

"I thought as much," says Jehan. He turns to face his fellow scouts. "There's no need for heroics in the defense. When the savages attack, we fight — like the woodsmen we are — and then

we make our retreat and let the Picts have the ground they've paid for in blood. We'll fight, but we won't die for Tuscelan."

The sentiment is universal. Now that you know where your men stand, you leave.

The men in your command respect you, but they are demoralized when it comes to fighting for Conajohara. If you attempt to recruit any scouts later in this adventure, apply a -2 penalty to that roll. Make a note of this.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

250 With the caution of the prowler in a foreign realm, you haul yourself over the bank and into the dense forest. You pause long enough to wring water out of your soggy clothing. Some items, such as your footgear, you tied about your neck during the swim — they are dry, unless you failed a Swimming roll.

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, turn to 195. Otherwise, turn to 290.

251 Suddenly, a triumphant yell rises from the Pict horde. Looking again at the fort, you see utter turmoil — the east wall has collapsed in a dozen places. The savages are in among the soldiers.

"But how?" asks your companion.

"Zogar Sag's doing, no doubt," you answer. "That's done it. The fort is doomed. Zogar Sag's army will sweep all the way to Velitrium."

Turn to 151.

252 You move between the deserted huts. Everyone in the village is gathered in the central square, intent on whatever dastardly evil Zogar Sag is conjuring. You crawl behind a pile of refuse and, from concealment, watch.

Forty or fifty Pict braves, naked but for loincloths and war paint, squat in a wide semicircle around a central fire. One of them holds a great drum between his knees, pounding it to some primitive cadence. Before the fire is a crude altar made of rough stones heaped together, charred with fire and stained with blood. Your skin crawls — you've heard tales of altars like these, and the fearsome rituals performed before them.

If you abandoned any of your companions on the journey to Gwawela, turn to 179.

If you haven't, turn to 140.

253 You scream "Up, Aquilonia!" — the age-old battlecry of a mighty Hyborian nation. Though few of the savages speak a civilized tongue, the braves know this taunt. The assembly almost turns into a mob before Zogar Sag can soothe his warriors. You can't hear what the old witch says, but you can see the evil leer on his face. At his order, the village gate is opened wide to the shadowy wilderness.

Turn to 372.

254 Otho scowls, then spits on the packed dirt. "Hardly wouldn't be fair," he grinds out in a bass voice, then backs into the crowd. Despite the prompting of the mass, no other steps forward.

The bald man — who is obviously in charge here, though he has no official rank that you know of — shrugs his shoulders. "No man here can beat you," he admits. "Let's try some fairer game. Name another sport."

If you name another type of contest, return to 158 and select from the options there.

If you decline the challenge, turn to 192.

255 When you reach the foresters' stall, Balthus is there. The scouts have apparently adopted the forest-knowledgeable stranger. When he sees you, the Tauran hurries to your side. "Let me go with you," he exclaims. "I've hunted deer all my life on the Tauran."

"News travels swiftly," you remark.

If you accept Balthus as part of your team, turn to 379.

If you reject him, turn to 177.



256 To climb this wall, a character must succeed at a Climbing-3 roll. There is an additional penalty equal to the character's encumbrance level.

The wall is three yards tall. Anyone who fails his Climbing roll falls two yards, taking 2-8 damage. Someone may catch falling characters — this counts as landing "on something soft," and reduces damage to 2-5. However, both the falling person and the catcher take this damage!

Once atop the wall, no roll is required to climb down.

One character may lift another to the top of the wall, if the person lifted weighs no more than 25 times the ST of the lifter.

A person atop the wall may secure a rope, which his companions may climb. The rope takes ten seconds to tie, and the person on the wall must make a DX roll. If he fails this roll, he falls, taking 3-9 damage. Roll one die — on a 1-3, he falls inside the wall. If he falls within Gwawela, or if any member of your party is in Gwawela when he falls, turn immediately to 288. If no one is inside Gwawela after the fall, turn immediately to 17.

Ascending a rope, once it's tied, requires a Climbing-2 roll. In order to use a rope, you must have brought one with you . . .

After each climbing attempt — using a rope or not — the climber must make a Stealth roll. If the Climbing roll was successful, there is a +3 bonus to the Stealth roll.

Characters unwilling or unable to scale the wall must be abandoned. Characters abandoned *outside* Gwawela rejoin you if and when you leave the village. Characters abandoned *inside* Gwawela are taken prisoner by the savages.

If a Stealth roll is failed, turn immediately to 288 (if any characters are within Gwawela) or 17 (if no characters are within Gwawela).

Otherwise, turn to 323 when your party has climbed the wall.

257 Whether it's the cast of fate or a fatal slip-up, the result is the same: you're in trouble.

In the encounter which follows, your characters are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3). However, your weapons are ready.

If you aren't in a trail or road hex, turn to 455.

If you are following a forest trail or the Velitrium road, turn to 207.

If you are in a trail or road hex, but you are not following the path, turn to 115.

258 Abruptly, you find yourself alone in the clearing. Your foe has fled.

If you follow, turn to 10 (if you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*) or 534 (if you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*).

If you don't follow, turn to 215.

259 Or is there . . . ? Looking closely, you see that the "sentry" is only a spear propped in place next to a shield. The guard deserted his post to view the ceremonies, leaving only his weapons on duty.

If you enter the hut, turn to 359.

If you leave, turn to 62.

260 The soldiers draw back, leaving one of their number standing suddenly alone. He's a Gunderman: compactly built, fair-skinned, with yellow hair cut square beneath a steel cap. He wears a mail shirt and polished leg-pieces, and is girt with a sword and a belt full of daggers.

"Take him, Thorus!" urges his compatriots.

The tall man hesitates, then gives a wolfish smile. "By rights, I may choose the weapon . . ." he says.

Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your best melee weapon skill against Thorus' (use the stats given for the Gunderman on p. 60).

If you win by more than 3 points, turn to 317. Otherwise, turn to 294.

261 The governor drills every last item of information out of you, hungry for the slightest detail about Zogar Sag. At last he utters a final, discouraging opinion. "Tuscelan is doomed," says the governor. "I expect the assault tonight. Whether our men will stand or flee, I cannot tell — and it really doesn't matter. We are walking dead men."

Turn to 144.

262 The ugly brute rears back and gives out a great roar, loud enough to shake the fragile timbers of this uncivilized lair. Not even the savages can miss such a clue to your presence.

You have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*.

If you are in battle, return to 505. Otherwise, turn to 429.

263 You tear through the woods in the evening twilight. Branches rasp against your face and arms, lacerating the exposed skin. Despite the entangling limbs and vines you refuse to slow, forcing your legs and heart to pump ever faster.

Roll one die, and add your Move score to the result. If you were instructed to apply a modifier to this roll, do so.

If you have a partner, make rolls for each of you. If your partner's result is lower than yours, you must either slow to his speed — using his result below — or leave him behind. In all other cases, use your result below.

If your result is 11 or greater, turn to 23.

If your result is 9 or 10, turn to 488.

If your result is 8 or less, turn to 143.

264 You busy yourself at the edge of the clearing. With a few strokes you cut a pair of saplings nine or ten feet long, and denude them of their branches. Then you cut a length from a serpent-like vine that crawls among the bushes nearby. Making one end fast several feet from the end of one pole, you whip the vine over the other sapling and weave it back and forth. In moments you have a crude but strong litter.

"The forest devil isn't going to mutilate Tiberias' dead body if I can help it," you growl. "We'll carry the body to the fort. I never liked the fat fool, but we can't have Pictish devils making so cursed free with our men's corpses."

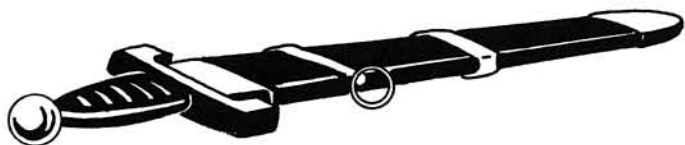
You bend to lift the corpse onto the litter.

If you have the PlotWord *STRONG*, turn to 209. Otherwise, turn to 442.

265 The forest is full of war parties. The paint on these braves identifies them as members of the Falcon tribe. Zogar Sag must be gathering aid from tribes throughout Pictland.

Your enemies are six Picts. Falcon braves have the same stats as Otter braves (see p. 61).

Turn to 421.



266 You size up the monster reptile: its wedge-shaped head, huge as that of a horse and as high as a tall man's head, followed by a palely gleaming barrel rippling behind. A forked tongue darts in and out. The firelight glitters on bared fangs. You gaze down the loathsome gullet in which you might soon be engulfed, and feel a wave of nausea. There is nowhere to flee.

Place the Ghost Snake (see p. 59) at S. Pict braves form a living wall, preventing characters from exiting between the huts, through the large building, or across the dotted line on the map.

Fight the battle.

If any of your characters are killed or lose consciousness, turn to 299.

If you win the battle, turn to 346.

267 You travel south one river hex. Half an hour passes — update your Current Time.

Roll one die. If you roll a 6, turn to 357. Otherwise, turn to 484.



268 "A Pict, by the gods!" exclaims the stranger. He is a young man of medium height, with an open countenance and a mop of tousled, tawny hair unconfined by cap or helmet. His garb is common — a coarse tunic belted at the waist, short leather breeches, and soft buckskin boots that come short of the knee. A knife hilt juts from one boot top. The broad leather belt supports a short, heavy sword and a buckskin pouch. Though not tall, he is well-built — the arms that the short sleeves of his tunic leave bare are thick with corded muscle.

"They told me that these devils sometimes sneak across the border," he says, "but I didn't expect to meet one this far in the interior."

You try not to laugh. "You're only four miles east of Black River. Picts have been shot within a mile of Velitrium. I followed this one for hours, and came up on him as he was aiming at you. If I'd been an instant slower, there'd be a stranger in Hell tonight."

Make a reaction roll for the young man. Although an Aquilonian, the wayfarer is not from Conajohara — your local reputation won't affect this roll. If he fought against the Pict with you, add 3 to the die roll.

If the reaction is "Neutral" or better, turn to 318. If it isn't, turn to 347.

269 The bowstring twangs. The shaft springs toward the fruit as if guided by a string. The apple, impaled, topples to the dirt.

"By the gods," the bald man cries, "that's a great piece of archery!"

Turn to 199.

270 Suddenly you halt, tense, ears lifted. An instant later your companions hear it — a demoniac yelling from the direction of Fort Tuscelan. You swear like a madman. “They’re attacking the fort. We’re too late! Come on!” You spy a low rise and run for it, hoping to catch sight of the battle at Tuscelan.

Turn to 339.

271 When you return to the fort, they ask what you know about the plume of smoke rising from the southeast. Valannus is not pleased with your report. He orders you to take a squad of soldiers and return.

Three hours pass — update your Current Time.

Turn to 296.

272 Rough hands shake you. Opening your eyes, you see a scout from the fort. He helps you to your feet, and asks what happened. You tell him little about the bizarre incident.

The stats for this scout can be found on p. 61; he will be your partner until you return to Fort Tuscelan.

Turn to 210.

273 Suddenly, the man pitches to his knees. His keening ends, replaced by a guttural sound — he might be choking. You see no sign of an attacker.

If you wait and see what happens, turn to 513.

If you flee, turn to 326.

If you slash at the empty air with your weapon, turn to 559.

If you rush to the man’s side to provide medical assistance, turn to 457.

274 “But listen,” Valannus says. “Zogar Sag has struck again.” He tells you of the discovery of Tiberias’ headless body outside the fort gate.

Turn to 55.

275 The woman steps down to the road and holds out her hand. “They call me Glorious,” she says.

Equipped in steel cap, shirt of chainmail and sheathed short-sword, the woman is attractive. Auburn hair, cut short in a practical length for fighting, frames a delicate face with too much of an olive tinge to be native to Aquilonia. Her voice, deep for a woman, has the fiber to be heard above the fray of battle.

“I followed that Pict all day,” you explain. “I came up on him as he was aiming on you. If I’d been an instant slower, there’d be a stranger in Hell.”

Turn to 217.

276 You part the leafy screen and see the lone Pict, back toward you, kneeling beside the wagon. He raises a hatchet to break off the lock on a wooden chest . . . then turns his head. His eyes lock on yours. He cries out a warning and stands, his hatchet ready for combat.

Use Combat Map D. The Picts are at positions A, B and F. The savages by the prisoner will abandon her and fight you. The Pict at the wagon is kneeling, giving you a height advantage (see p. B107).

You are at H. Your advantage is surprise — the Picts by the prisoner are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Turn to 377.

277 Following the girl is easy — she travels a clearly defined path, and you know where it leads. The trick is to remain unobserved — a simple matter of stealth.

Try a Contest of Skills — your Stealth skill versus her Hearing. Her Hearing roll, modified for circumstances, is 7.

If you lose, you have been noticed — turn to 360. Otherwise, turn to 344.



278 Soft life behind secure walls has no appeal to you — the silence of the woodlands, ominous to most Aquilonians, you find exhilarating. Hot on the tracks of a Pict raider, you are in your element. It is the life where you belong.

Following the Pict trail pits your woodcraft against that of your quarry. The primitives use ingenious tricks to leave a difficult trail when on the Aquilonian side of Black River.

Try a Contest of Tracking skills. You have a +3 bonus to your roll. If it is later than 8 a.m., apply a -1 penalty for each hour after that time. The Pict has Tracking-14, and receives no modifier.

If you win the Contest, turn to 348.

If you lose, turn to 306.

In case of a tie, add 1 hour to your Current Time. If it is 8 p.m. or later, turn to 287. Otherwise, continue the Contest.

279 “*Something* called to those men . . .” continues the second voice. He is interrupted by a cough from another guard as you walk in, and the conversation dies.

The guardsmen are Gundermen, muscled and blond, outfitted in short-swords and chainmail. “Looking for someone?” asks one of them, standing.

If you mention the overheard conversation, turn to 311.

If you ask about recent unusual events, turn to 20.

If you excuse yourself and leave, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

280 The rushing river closes over your head. You gulp river water, then struggle to the surface and gasp for air.

You immediately lose 1 fatigue. Continue to make Swimming rolls, losing 1 ST to fatigue per failed roll, until you succeed or fall unconscious and drown.

If you succeed, you swim across safely — turn to 201.

281 On noiseless, padded feet, the awesome carnivore enters the village. Presently it emerges, a fair-skinned human carcass clenched between its jaws. The beast ignores you and vanishes into the wilderness. You hear its deep roar recede into the distance.

If you enter through the open gate, turn to 213.

If you retreat into the woods, turn to 153.

If you now scale the village walls, turn to 75.

If you remain here, turn to 465.

282 Dazed by the violent shaking of the ground, half-blinded by the rising dust, you throw yourself clear of the wooden stake. You smell the musky scent of the beast as it plunges by . . . splintering the pole, but not slowing. It charges on, stampeding into a mass of Pict huts.

You take advantage of the confusion, fleeing through the open gates.

Turn to 153.

283 Otho scowls at you, screwing his eyes small as he peers at your fingers and arms. Then he spits on the packed earth. "I'm game," he growls.

Excited shouts break out. Bossed by the bald man, soldiers set up a series of targets within the compound, each being smaller and more distant than the one before it. The last of the targets is the most fiendish — suspended on a rope from an archers' loophole on the side of the great blockhouse. Each target consists of a series of concentric circles, with an area at the center — about a fifth of the entire target — colored red.

A line is scraped in the dirt. Spectators are hustled behind that line, creating a clear lane of fire. You and Otho are herded to the opposite end of the court, away from the blockhouse.

"The contest proceeds in stages, with smaller targets at each stage," barks the bald man. "Each archer gets two attempts at each target. If one of them scores a hit in the red center of the shield and the other cannot, the first is the victor. If both pass the test, the contest proceeds to the next target.

"Questions?" The two of you shake your heads. "Then commence." He draws a line in the dirt with his boot, then motions for you to stand behind it and take your shot at the first target.

The Target Difficulty is -2 (make a note of this).

Turn to 333.

284 "It's only magic . . ."
"Cold hard steel . . ."

"If I get one of them within bowshot, why I'll . . ."

From the remarks of the men, you can tell you've won them over. That's one less worry to face. You leave, walking out along the fort's battlements.

The Bossonians have gained respect for you. In any future reaction rolls, apply a +1 bonus toward anything you ask of them. Make a note of this.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 237.

Otherwise, roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

285 If you continue your scouting mission, turn to 290. If you return to Fort Tuscelan, turn to 247.

286 "You're wrong," you grunt. "Without the horse troopers, we're trapped in this stockade . . . but that doesn't make victors of the savages. We may be few, but our numbers are enough to save this fort from the tribes the Picts can muster." You pause for thought. "If every one of the river tribes attacks, we can still stand against them."

"I think you've got the right of it," says Jehan, clapping your hand. "I trust you."

The foresters gain respect for you. In any further reaction rolls, the scouts have a +1 bonus toward anything you ask of them. Make a note of this.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

287 If it is earlier than 8 p.m., turn to 85. Otherwise, turn to 234.

288 Roll one die, and divide the number rolled by 2 (round up). Count down the uncrossed-out boxes below until you count a number of boxes equal to the number rolled. Cross that box out, and turn to the associated paragraph. If all the boxes are crossed out, begin fresh by erasing all of the marks.

☐ Turn to 113.

☐ Turn to 80.

☐ Return to 256.

☐ Turn to 325.

289 You bolt from the lodge before other pursuers catch up. Turn to 429.

290 It doesn't take long until you are aware that there is too much activity on the Pict shore. Parties of warriors constantly march along the river trails — not scouting, but going somewhere. The frequent movements force you to give up any thought of pushing inland in daylight. One thing is clear. These braves are assembling for war. *Against Aquilonia*.

Bringing this news to Governor Valannus is of the highest importance. You must return to the fort, no matter how many savages you bring down in red death.

If you wait for dusk before swimming the river, it is now 6:30 p.m. — turn to 247.

If you risk a daylight crossing of Black River with your urgent message, turn to 180.

291 You curse yourself for a fool. The cry is familiar — it's the bray of a frightened mule. You've been chasing *Tiberias' mule*. You immediately turn about and return to the clearing, hoping to find further signs of the monster.

Turn to 383.

292 If you have the PlotWord *DAUNTLESS*, turn to 258.

If you have the PlotWord *INTREPID*, return to 386.

293 "A woman!" says your companion. "Great Mitra, a woman cried out then!"

"Probably looking for a cow," you grunt.

"Well?" he says. "Let's go to her rescue."

If you go with him, turn to 452.

If you let him go while you guard *Tiberias' body*, turn to 356.

If you go but order him to guard the body, turn to 517.

294 Roll one die.

If you roll a number from 1 to 3, turn to 404.

If you roll 4 or 5, turn to 328.

If you roll 6, turn to 349.

295 The only way to transport *Tiberias' corpse* is to lug it yourself. You thoughtfully eye the body, then bend down to lift the deadweight and sling it onto your shoulders.

If you have the PlotWord *STRONG*, turn to 209. Otherwise, turn to 338.

296 Approaching the source of the smoke, you spot a blaze through the trees. Presently you arrive in a clearing and see the glowing remains of a log cabin, burnt to the ground. This was once a settler homestead. You see a new, hastily planted garden; a stretch of ground cleared of trees and

stumps, which would have been the farmer's first field; and an ox-drawn wagon tied at the fringe of the woods.

Of the farmer, there is no sign. A woman's body lies on the ground, limbs roped to wooden stakes, soaked with drying blood.

The savages' trail leads west. It ends at the river. You break off the fruitless pursuit and return to Fort Tuscelan.

Four hours pass. Turn to 287.

297 Fight the battle. All of your characters are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3). All start with a ready weapon — a paddle (equivalent to a club).

If a human falls overboard, note the number of this paragraph and then turn to 345 for instructions.

If you are unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If everyone in your party is unconscious, turn to 100.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

If you win the battle, turn to 548 if you are traveling north, 267 if you're going south, or 231 if you wish to land on the Pictish shore of the hex you are now in.

298 "Hurrah!" you cry, crashing through the woods and setting foot upon the Pict trail. The girl is startled but stands her ground, surveying you frankly — she is not the typical, easily frightened female of the aborigines. The maiden tosses her head, causing her blackly burnished hair to briefly soar in an ebony mass before resting again along her back. In accented Aquilonian, she says, "You should fear to walk alone in our forests, wanderer."

You identify yourself as no wanderer, but a scout from the fort. "These woods, so close to our fort, are hardly the domain of the tribes," you counter.

She laughs. The sound is infectious, yet strikes oddly upon your senses — it isn't forced, but in some other way seems unnatural. "The woods will always belong to us," she says. "You can no more conquer the woods than you can conquer me." You sense a challenge in her words.

If you wish to talk further with her, turn to 425.

If you draw a weapon and try to take her prisoner, turn to 320.

If you grab her, turn to 394.

If you want nothing more to do with her, turn to 190.

299 The great snake springs upon your fallen comrade, clamping its mighty jaws about the body and swallowing it whole. Then sluggishly, hindered by its bulging belly, the reptile makes its way toward the village gate and the wilderness.

If you are dead, your adventure is over. Otherwise, turn to 515.

300 There is a sentry in the entrance. Try a Vision roll, with a -3 penalty due to the darkness. Characters with Bad Sight (Nearsighted) automatically fail this roll.

If you succeed, turn to 259. If you fail, turn to 491.

301 You part the leafy screen of branches, peering out at the ox-drawn wagon. You see the burning cabin, the Picts struggling with their prisoner . . . but no sign of your quarry.

Then comes a horrid yell. A weight lands on your back. You've found the missing Pict — or rather, he's found you.

Use Combat Map D. You are at G, in close combat with the Pict at H. He uses a *flying tackle* (see p. B101) on the first round.



There is a ready knife in his hand. You are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

The other Picts are at A and B. They crouch, but will abandon the woman and fight you. They are *mentally stunned*.

Turn to 377.

302 A single sight rivets the gaze of everyone in the compound — two arrow shafts protruding from a single target high overhead.

The bald man scratches his pate. "It's hard to see from here. Perhaps one of the shafts is not quite on center," he says. "Itrium, run up there!"

A youth, one of the young recruits, bolts for the blockhouse and disappears within. A wooden shutter swings open, and the young man's head bends low to survey the target hung below. His high-pitched reply comes faintly to the courtyard below. "Both shafts are good!"

An amazed murmur rumbles through the men. The bald man chuckles, then draws aside with several others for a hurried conference. Soldiers yell compliments to you and Otho. A few slap you on the back. At last, the bald man steps once again to the cleared center.

"It isn't often that we see such skill here at Fort Tuscelan," he cries, to which the crowd replies by drowning him in applause. He waves his arms to hush the mass. "Such skill requires a special challenge."

Someone in the crowd sights something and cries out, followed by laughter from the crowd. Two men enter the courtyard leading a blindfolded, decrepit gray mule. Since King Numedides withdrew the cavalry from the fort, only a few mangy pack animals are left in the stables. The mule, with pieces of cured leather draped across his backside for protection, is brought to stand before the blockhouse. An attendant carefully perches an apple on the animal's spiny backbone.

"That will be your target," the bald man announces. "When I give the word, begin firing as swift as you will. The first to strike and knock the apple from the mule's back is the winner."

Try a Quick Contest of Skills — your Bow skill against Otho's skill of 16. No modifiers apply.

If you win the Contest by 4 or more points, turn to 228.

If you win the Contest, but by less than 4 points, turn to 269.

If you lose the Contest, turn to 330.

303 The splatter catches the Pict full on the face. Red with rage, he shrieks for men to open the village gate. The shaman holds off angry braves who would slay you immediately to avenge the honor of the tribe. The look on Zogar Sag's face promises vengeance.

Turn to 372.

304 With a roar, you charge into the smoke. Your weapon flails at the surprised and startled savages. Blood spurts in gouts as they fall back. Then Zogar Sag gives a sibilant cry — and his serpent slave slithers toward you.

Use Combat Map C. You are at E. Place your characters within three hexes of E, one to a hex.

When you are ready, turn to 266.

305 “That should satisfy your honor,” you say, stepping out of her reach. She gives you a hard look but makes no move.

You now consider the consequences of this fight. In Aquilonia, chivalry lives. If the soldiers at the fort hear about this — and they will, unless you do something — you'll have to live with this dishonor for as long you stay in this nation.

If you slyly try to make a deal with Glorious not to mention this battle, turn to 181.

If you don't, turn to 225.



306 The infrequent signs of the raider's passing lead you away from the road. The ground grows boggy. In the wet ground the trail is easy to follow. Then it ends. Footprints lead to the far end of a rotted log in a stagnant pond.

The Pict has laid a clever trail! If the cunning aborigine swam the pond, the trail should resume on the far bank. Or the savage, with the woodlore of his primitive race, might have left a clear path to this pond, then returned back along his steps to start a less obvious trail.

Try a regular Contest of Skills, pitting your Tracking +3 against the Pict's unmodified Tracking skill of 14. If it is later than 8 a.m., apply a further -1 penalty to your own effective skill for each hour after that time.

If you win the Contest, turn to 348.

If you lose, you are unable to pick up the trail again — add 3 hours to your Current Time, and turn to 287.

307 Move your party to any hex adjacent to your current hex, and which connects to your current hex by a trail or road. Add half an hour to your Current Time.

Turn to 459.

308 Confusion reigns in the heart of the Pict stronghold. You and your companions flee from the central courtyard. Dozens of hatchet-waving braves erupt in pursuit, led by a shrieking Zogar Sag.

Turn to 515.

309 You can feel the tension in the air as you approach Fort Tuscelan. Atop the walls of the fort you can see the Bossonian archers, spread far too thin to provide adequate missile defense for the undermanned fort. You hail the Gunderman at the gate, and are quickly admitted. He leads you to the office of Governor Valannus, to give your official report.

“Well,” Valannus asks, motioning you to sit. “What of Zogar Sag? How fared your mission?”

“Good news, I think,” you begin. You go on to describe the wounding of Zogar Sag in the Pict village.

“Is he dead, then?” demands Valannus.

“I don't know,” you reply. “His braves carried him away before we could finish him.”

“Then we must hope that his injury makes the difference,” Valannus says. “For our fort cannot hope to hold off all the savages of Pictland, if they have Zogar Sag to unite them.”

From your post on the wall of the fort, you hear the beating of Pict drums increase as the sun sets. The first waves attack just as the orange disc of the sun drops below the horizon. Here and there, a man drops, a Pictish arrow in his chest or throat. On the field below, the clash of weapons can be heard, as the savages throw themselves against the phalanxes of Gunderman pike.

But there are no reinforcements for the Picts. The horde that should have numbered thousands cannot exceed a few hundred. As the battle wears on, the Picts grow fewer and fewer. By daybreak, the savages have fled — only the men of Fort Tuscelan remain on the battlefield.

In the light of morning, you walk among the corpses littering the field. Though the cost to the fort has been dear, there are at least two dead Picts for every fallen Aquilonian. You hear your name called and glance up to see Valannus approaching. His arm is in a sling, but he wears a cheerful expression.

“Tell me, Valannus,” you begin, after greeting him. “The paint of these savages marks them all as members of Zogar Sag's own Hawk Tribe. I see no braves of other tribes among the dead. What do you make of this?”

“Simple, my friend,” the old man smiles. “No savage in his right mind would follow a shaman who could be hurt by a common arrow. When you wounded Zogar Sag, the tribes he had united against the fort dispersed.”

“So the Hawks attacked alone,” you say, following Valannus' line of reasoning. “They had to shed Aquilonian blood to regain the honor they lost when we raided their village.”

“Exactly,” he concludes. “Now I must draft a report to King Numedides, explaining how the entire province has been saved by one person. You're about to be noticed in royal circles, my friend.”

You snort. “I'd rather have a stiff drink, my hazard pay, and my leave time. I know this place in Velitrium . . .”

THE END

310 “The men are convinced that Zogar Sag commands devils,” you tell the old man. “What do you think of him?”

“Don't know much of the shaman,” says Purenus.

“Tell me what you know,” you insist.

“Well, now,” begins the quartermaster, “you should know that the power on which Pict shamans draw is older than Aquilonia, perhaps older than civilization itself. To it, you and I are nothing more than fleabites.”

“Does it have a name?” you ask.

“Jhebbel Sag,” says Purenus. He glances from side to side,

and speaks in a hoarse whisper that is difficult to follow. "The cult is worldwide and ancient, going back to the time when men and animals were brothers and spoke the same language. A master of the cult can speak with brother-animals."

"Go on," you urge.

"That is all I know," says the old man.

Turn to 464.

311 "Perhaps," you say. "Tell me what lured the dead men."

The chief guard tries to change the subject, but another of the Gundermen is more forthright. "The loon," he says. "Only the doomed ones can hear it."

"That's what Soractus heard," adds another guard. "He went mad and rushed to the river to meet his death, like a hare running down the throat of a python."

"Who can be sure the folk of Pictland are human?" murmurs the chief guard.

You help yourself to the guardsmen's ale. "If I can get in axe-throwing distance of that shaman, I'll settle that question. Magic holds no fear for me."

"But why?" asks a guard. "You believe in ghosts, spooks, goblins and all manner of uncanny things. Yet you don't seem to fear any of the things in which you believe."

"There's nothing in the universe cold steel won't cut," you answer. "I'm not going out of my way looking for devils . . . but I won't step out of my path to let one go by."

The chief guard belches rudely. "Is that what you came here for, to listen to our chatter?" he asks.

Turn to 20.

312 The Pict runs away from you, placing cover between you and him whenever possible. If you cannot see him, try a Quick Contest of Skills: your Vision versus his Stealth.

If you win the Contest, return to 18 and continue the battle. If you lose, the savage disappears into the forest — turn to 63.



313 As you move toward your quarry, a dense thicket forces you to circle. You lose sight of the Pict. When you come clear of the obstructing brush, you gaze ahead . . . and the savage is gone!

Suddenly, a muscular arm reaches out from behind and clamps around your throat. Your treacherous enemy heard you, doubled back . . . and you have become *his* prey!

Use Combat Map A. The Pict is at position E. His intent is to grapple and then strangle you. He fights bare-handed and will battle to the death. You are at W9. Your main weapon is ready . . . but in close combat, it may not be useful. Unfortunately, you are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

When the combat is set up, turn to 18.

314 The figure — an armed and armored woman — steps down to the road and holds out her hand.

"They call me Glorious," she says, by way of introduction. You have to agree.

The woman, in her steel cap and mail shirt, a shortsword on her hip, has the makings of a goddess. Auburn hair, cut to a

practical length for fighting, frames a delicate face colored with too much of an olive tinge to be native to Aquilonia. Her bosom swells mightily beneath the weight of the chainmail, causing you to wonder what delectable curves might appear in a more alluring environment. Her voice, deep for a woman, has the fiber to be heard above the fray of battle. If there were amazons in the civilized north, they would surely look like this.

"I followed that Pict all day," you explain. "I came up on him as he was aiming on you. If I'd been an instant slower, there'd be a stranger in Hell tonight."

Try an IQ roll. If you make it, turn to 217. Otherwise, turn to 381.



315 A gaunt, scarred beast erupts from the forest. You recognize him — it's Slasher.

The dog belonged to a settler who homesteaded a few miles south of the fort. The Picts raided. When you arrived, the settler was dead. The dog lay senseless among three Picts he'd killed. You took him back to the fort and dressed his wounds. When he recovered, Slasher turned wild — hunting the savages who killed his master.

Stats for Slasher are given on p. 60. He fights on your side until you reach the fort, the river or Velitrium, at which time he returns to the wild. Place him in the Combat Map hex farthest from your foe or foes.

Return to the paragraph which sent you here.

316 If you can get close enough, you can wrest that sword away from Glorious and teach her who's in charge . . .

It's a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your DX against her IQ. Give yourself a +1 bonus for every point of Brawling, Judo or Karate you have above 14. Glorious' stats are given on p. 60.

If you win, your trick works — turn to 194.

Otherwise, she sees through your gambit — turn to 438.

317 Roll one die.
If you roll 1-3, turn to 349.
If you roll 4-6, turn to 375.

318 "It's almost impossible to track down and slay one of those forest devils." The man looks at you with something akin to worship, and holds out his hand. "I'm Balthus, from Tauran." Tauran is a western Aquilonian province, buffered from the Pictish frontier by the Bossonian Marches provinces.

You introduce yourself.

"I'm heading for Fort Tuscelan," says Balthus. "I haven't decided if I want to settle, or enter military service at the fort."

"I've seen good woodsmen from the Tauran," you say. "But you'll need hardening."

Turn to 406.

319 "Did Thorus know you?" asks the bald man.
You shake your head.

"He's new here," replies the bald man. "One of Julian's recruits. I can't believe a Gunderman would violate his honor in fair tourney. There must be a reason."

"I know of none," you say.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

320 You draw your weapon and advance on the slender creature. "Let's head for the fort and discuss things," you say grimly.

"I think not," she whispers with a smile. She mutters something you do not understand. A chill wind blows along the trail.

Then to your consternation, the weapon in your grasp transforms . . . into a poisonous forest serpent! You throw it down. The girl runs into the forest, leaving behind only her lingering, unsettling laugh.

Fight the battle. Use Combat Map A. You are at W5 and are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3). The Forest Snake (see p. 59) is at position A.

If you lose consciousness, turn to 272.

If you win, turn to 190.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

321 The bonds are tight — too tight to break. You rack your brains for a plan, *something* that will save your hide . . . Try an IQ roll, at -2 due to desperation. If you succeed, turn to 432. If you fail, turn to 541.

322 As the arrows fall into the water about you, you realize that safety lies in diving deep, where the barbs won't penetrate.

Try a Contest of Skills — their Bow skill versus your Swimming skill. You receive a penalty equal to twice your encumbrance level — swimming in bulky armor is difficult.

If you decide to hold your breath and swim deep beneath the surface, you may apply a bonus to your Swimming roll — any amount from +1 to +5. (If you decide to take this bonus, write down the amount you take.) No other modifiers — not even the Fat bonus — apply to this Contest.

If the Picts win, make a note of the margin by which they win, and turn to 413.

Otherwise, turn to 366.

323 If you are entering Gwawela, turn to 213. If you are leaving, turn to 153.

324 Roll one die. On a roll of 1-4, turn to 296. On a roll of 5-6, turn to 331.

325 Your entry does not go unnoticed. Emerging from a darkened hut, a tiny Pictish girl-child — brown with grime — peers fearfully at you with wide eyes. Howling, she disappears toward the village center.

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-4, turn to 429. On a roll of 5 or 6, return to 256.

326 As you approach the dim bulk of Fort Tuscelan, a guard barks a challenge. Torchlight shines through a barred aperture into your eyes. "Open the gate," you snort. "You see it's me, don't you?" Military discipline sets your teeth on edge.

If you bear Tiberias' body, turn to 101.

If Tiberias is alive and accompanies you, turn to 51.

Otherwise, turn to 514.

327 As Glorious' blood seeps into the undergrowth beside the Velitrium road, you realize you're in trouble. According to Aquilonian custom, hanging is the penalty for killing a woman, even if it is done in fair combat. Immediate flight is the safest course, but it won't be easy. To the west lies Pictland, which no civilized man has ever crossed. In all other directions lie Aquilonian provinces. However, if you hide the body well, Glorious may never be missed.

If you flee Aquilonia, you step beyond the realm of this adventure. Close the book, and begin your own story.

If you hide the woman's body and proceed to Fort Tuscelan, roll one die and add the number rolled to your Current Time, then turn to 287.



328 ". . . axe!" cries the Gunderman, unbuckling his scabbard and handing it to a companion.
The duel will be with the standard axe. Turn to 451.

329 Blessing the spirits of your ancestors — or any-one or anything else that intervenes in your safe arrival — you reach the Conajohara side of the river. Wary of Pict arrows, you crawl out of the water in the lee of a fallen log.

Roll one die, and add the number rolled to your Current Time. Turn to 28.

330 Cheering sweeps the parade grounds. His companions engulf your opponent, raising him on their shoulders and carrying him away to the barracks. In the midst of the laughter and celebration, you are left behind.

A rough hand thumps your back. "Sorry about the loss," says the bald man. He gives you an appraising look, then adds in a low voice, "I think it did the men good. There'll be no more dispirited talk for a while." He follows the men into the barracks.

Roll one die and add the result, in hours, to your Current Time. Then turn to 85.

331 The Picts are no longer a threat. If you have not done so, you sever the bonds and free the settler.

The lady is large and muscular, almost bursting through her calico gown. She has an unattractive, bovine face, and her large bosom is as shapeless as a pillow. "Thanks, stranger," she says huskily. Then she strips off her outer clothing, revealing the body of a male youth.

Tears streak the boy's face. "Those devils got my pa," he sobs, pointing at the ashes of the cabin. "I was scared. I figured they wouldn't harm a woman . . ."

"They were going to rape and torture you," you explain. "When they found you weren't a woman, the savages would have done even worse to you."

Your rescued friend is Owen. He is your partner until you return to Fort Tuscelan. His stats are identical to those for Balthus (see p. 60), except that Owen has no armor or weapons.

Add 4 hours to your Current Time. Turn to 287.

332 You plunge heedlessly through the wilderness toward the smoking mystery. Branches catch at your head and limbs and score your skin. Knowing that your only chance to catch the raiders — if there are any — is with speed, you force your struggling body to run faster.

Then, gauging yourself close, you pause to catch your breath and get your bearings. The smoke comes from a fire in a clearing ahead. You hear wild and ferocious cries — Picts!

If you charge into their midst, turn to 412.

If you approach more carefully, turn to 371.

333 Make a Bow skill roll both for yourself and for Otho. Use the Target Difficulty as a penalty to the skill rolls.

If one of you misses, turn to 378.

If you both miss the target, turn to 436.

If you both hit the target, and the Target Difficulty is 6 or less, turn to 411.

If you both hit the target, and the Target Difficulty is greater than 6, turn to 302.

334 You circle through the woods, avoiding dry branches and similar hazards that might announce your presence to the savages.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your Stealth against the Pict's effective Hearing of 9.

If you win, turn to 241.

If you lose by 5 points or less, turn to 276.

If you lose by more than 5 points, turn to 301.

335 Use Combat Map C. Disregard the stake. You are at C. Place any companions behind you and away from the bonfire. Your weapons are ready.

When you are ready, turn to 52.

336 Your arms are filled with the struggling daughter of the wilderness. At last, realizing she cannot break your hold, the girl relaxes and gasps for air.

A cloud steals over the face of the sun. The girl turns to you, eyes intent and seeming to glow. "The loon flies close to the moon tonight, on an arctic gust from the Gulf of Ghosts," she whispers. "Your name is known by the Friends of the Dead. A restless serpent coils in the darkness, with a venom prepared for you. The battle is lost. You are dead already."

"Who the devil are the Friends of the Dead?" you demand.

But the girl hangs suddenly limp in your arms. "Release me," she begs.

If you refuse, turn to 525.

If you let her go, turn to 360.



337 Roll one die. On a roll of 1-4, turn to 180. Otherwise, turn to 247.

338 Though easy at first, the task of carrying Tiberias grows more difficult with each ground-devouring stride. Sweating, you again consider abandoning the body beneath a bush. In the morning, a litter party from the fort can return for it.

Tiberias weighs 210 lbs. The maximum weight you can carry on your back for more than a few feet equals 20 times your ST. Using Tiberias' weight as given above, determine your new encumbrance. (Don't forget to add the weight for your other gear!)

If your encumbrance (including Tiberias) is less than "extra-heavy," you can easily carry his corpse back to the fort.

If your new encumbrance is "extra-heavy," you can carry him, with difficulty. Until you arrive at the fort, whenever you are asked to update your Current Time, add *double* the amount of time listed.

If your new encumbrance is greater than "extra-heavy," you can lift Tiberias but you can't carry him far. You must get rid of more weight, or abandon the body.

If you abandon Tiberias' body and return to the fort, turn to 326.

If you continue to carry it, turn to 390.

339 You see the fort by the light of torches thrust over the parapets on long poles. These cast a flickering, uncertain light over the clearing. In that light you see throngs of near-naked, painted figures packing the cleared ground beneath the fort walls. The river swarms with canoes. Fort Tuscelan is surrounded.

An incessant hail of arrows rains against the stockade from the woods and the river. The deep twanging of the bowstrings rises above the howling. Yelling like wolves, several hundred warriors with axes in their hands run from under the trees and race toward the eastern gate. A withering blast of arrows from the fort leaves the ground littered with corpses. The survivors flee for the trees.

The men in the canoes rush their boats toward the river-wall, and are met by another shower of clothyard bolts and a volley from the small ballistae mounted on towers along that side of the stockade. Stones and logs whirl through the air, splintering and sinking canoes. The surviving boats draw back out of range.

A deep roar of triumph rises from the walls of the fort, answered by a bestial howling from all quarters.

Turn to 399.

340 Each of the woman's arms is lashed to a stake. *Cutting the ropes.* In the heat of combat, the ropes are -2 to hit. Each is DR 1, HT 2. On a critical failure, the woman is struck.

Pulling free. If you can grab a rope, you may attempt to pull its stake out of the ground, but the stakes are set deep. Try a ST roll at a -3 penalty (-5 if using only one hand). If you are successful, one stake is pulled out.

When free of both ropes, the woman fights as your ally. Use the stats for Balthus (p. 60), but without armor or weapons. She will first arm herself with any weapon you give her or a dagger from the wagon, then attack Picts as if Berserk (see p. B24). The Picts ignore her until she wounds one of them.

Record the number of this paragraph for future reference, and return to 377.

341 You kneel beside the fallen warrior. Tenderly you remove her steel cap and the heavy mail shirt, allowing her to breathe more easily while you check for signs of life. In time, she comes around.

Turn to 305.

342 As you course through the darkness, ducking beneath low branches from the close shore, a muffled thump comes from the back of the canoe. The heavy weight falling from above causes first upset, then panic — it's alive.

Use Combat Map F. Place your characters within the canoe, sitting, one per hex. Roll one die and consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see who the creature lands on — place the Anaconda (see p. 59) in the character's hex. You win the battle by killing the snake or by forcing it overboard.

Turn to 297.

343 Roll one die, and add the number rolled to your Current Time.

Turn to 287.

344 Stalking through the trees, taking cover when the gaze of the forest girl sweeps in your direction, you follow your quarry east into the interior of the province.

The young woman arrives in a clearing, eyes branching paths leading south and east, then takes a seat beneath a large, dead oak. Almost immediately, you hear the cry of a hunting falcon. Cupping her hands to her mouth, the girl responds by imitating the call of a loon. A silent figure detaches itself from the edge of the woods and approaches the girl. To your amazement he is an Aquilonian, dressed in the clothing of a settler — coarse tunic, breeches and buckskin boots, with a shortsword at his belt.

If you draw your sword to take them prisoner, turn to 450.

If you report back to the fort on this rendezvous, turn to 28.

If you creep close to listen to their conversation, turn to 409.

345 Any character — friendly or hostile — forced over the side of the canoe must immediately make a Swimming skill roll. There is a penalty equal to twice the character's encumbrance level. Fat characters get a +5 bonus. There is no time to discard armor.

If the roll succeeds, the character clings to the side of the canoe and can hoist himself back into the canoe on the third following combat round. Roll one die, and place the character in the matching numbered water hex on the Combat Map.

If the roll fails, the character is swept down the river by the fierce current and is out of the adventure.

If you are swept away from the canoe, turn to 494. Otherwise, return to the paragraph which sent you here.

346 A hush falls on the Pict assembly at the death of the great snake. Zogar Sag is not in sight. No warrior moves.

If you attack the warriors, turn to 499.

If you rescue your friend, turn to 532.

If you flee, turn to 479.

347 "No ordinary man can track down and slay one of those forest devils," the man says doubtfully. "Are you a member of the fort garrison?"

"I'm no soldier," you reply. "I draw the pay and rations of an officer of the line, but I do my work in the woods. The governor knows I'm of more use ranging along the river than cooped up in the fort."

"That's queer talk," the stranger remarks.

"It's nothing to me," you reply. "I'm a mercenary. I sell my sword to the highest bidder. I never planted wheat and never will, so long as there are other harvests to be reaped with the sword."

The stranger tells you his name — Balthus of Tauran.

Turn to 406.



348 You spy the Pict as he cautiously slinks from a clump of trees to a vine-snarled thicket. He keeps a wary eye on the Velitrium road, you notice. But the savage hasn't seen you.

The Pict is short, dark, thickly muscled and — except for a loincloth, a necklace of human teeth, and a brass armlet — naked.

One hand grips a heavy black bow. A shortsword is thrust into the girdle of his loincloth.

He is too distant. A bow shot would need luck to score, and the primitive would likely escape before you could close and finish him. You need to get closer.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting the Pict's Hearing against your Stealth with a penalty equal to your encumbrance.

If you win the Contest, turn to 81.

If you lose by a margin of 5 or less, turn to 374.

If you lose by more than 5 points, turn to 313.

349 The Gunderman gives you an evil smile, then unbuckles his scabbard and hands his sword to a companion. "Halberds," he announces.

The weapon used in the duel will be the halberd.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 414. Otherwise, turn to 451.

350 In the light of day, the Pictland is lushly green . . . and even more treacherous. Who knows when a savage brave might find your track, or glimpse you in the distance, or stumble upon you while moving along a trail?

If you are in a trail or road hex, and travel along that path, turn to 233.

If you don't follow a Pict trail or the Velitrium road, turn to 500.

351 You come awake choking, spitting ice-cold water. The bald man sets down a bucket and crouches at your side.

"I apologize," he says. "I had no idea one of our own men would try something so low." You mumble something about killing Thorus, and try to sit up. "You can't kill him," explains the bald man. "He's run away into the woods. The savages will get him — no great loss."

Turn to 319.

352 If you haven't before, you recognize the fat victim of the forest devil — Tiberias, the merchant doomed to death by Zogar Sag. He brushes the dust and mud from his ermine-trimmed tunic and gilt-worked boots.

"Damn thing sprang at me," he breathlessly explains. "I was forcing my way through the woods, leading my mule — where has he got to?" He scans the dark forest, but the animal has fled beyond sight.

You scratch your head. "But why were you abroad at night in these woods?"

Tiberias looks confused. "Business. Pressing business. I . . . there was something . . . somewhere I had to go." He shrugs. "Hardly matters. Forget the mule — he'll stray home or get killed without any help from us. Let's get back to the fort."

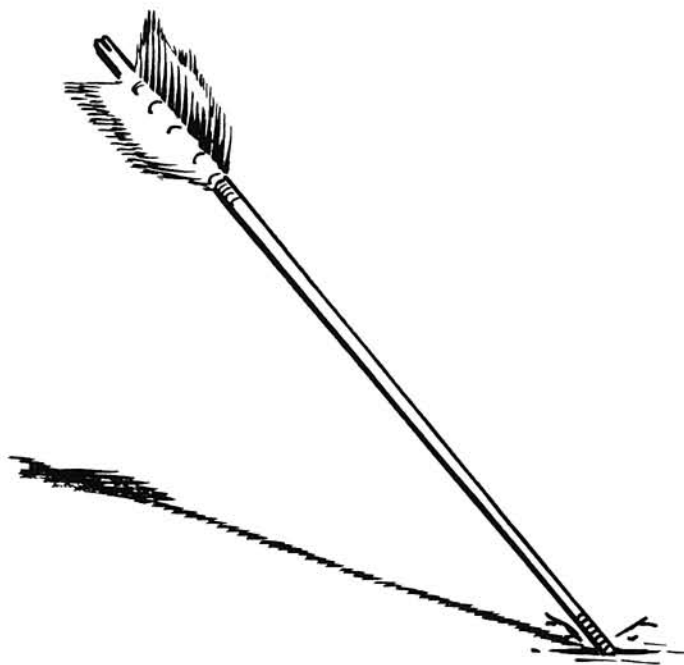
Turn to 326.

353 In view of the current emergency, you are given a post in the fort defense: command of the blockhouse, with responsibility to lead reserve troops to throw back the Picts if they breach the outer wall. After reviewing your men and resources, you take the opportunity to rest.

You may sleep until 6 p.m. Friday, recovering HT or from fatigue in the process.

The Picts attack at sundown. Throngs of near-naked, painted figures charge from the fringe of the clearing. The river swarms with canoes. In moments the fort is surrounded.

An incessant hail of arrows rains against the stockade from the woods and the river. The deep twanging of the bowstrings



risers above the howling. Yelling like wolves, several hundred warriors with axes in their hands run from under the trees and race toward the eastern gate. A withering blast of arrows from the fort leaves the ground littered with corpses. The survivors flee for the trees.

The men in the canoes rush their boats toward the river-wall, and are met by another shower of clothyard bolts and a volley from the small ballistae mounted on towers on that side of the stockade. Stones and logs whirl through the air, splintering and sinking canoes. The surviving boats draw back out of range.

A deep roar of triumph rises from the walls of the fort, answered by bestial howling from all quarters.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 169.

If you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*, turn to 116.

354 You put on a burst of speed, ignoring branches that whip against you. The mysterious assassin is out-spied. You draw your blade, and spring in front of it . . .

And curse yourself for a fool. You've spent precious minutes chasing *Tiberias' mule* — while the real assassin escapes! You rush back to the clearing where the merchant's body lies.

Turn to 383.

355 "There's nothing more to be done here," you say. "And I'm not going after the mule. It'll wander back to the fort or to some settler's cabin."

Returning to the fort is an obvious move. One decision remains: whether to bring Tiberias' body with you on the three-mile trek, keeping the remains from the attention of the savages, or to leave it for a party of soldiers to retrieve in the morning.

If you hide the body in the woods, turn to 326.

If you bring the corpse with you, turn to 295 if you are alone, or 264 if you have a companion.

356 The night remains serene and warm. Fireflies tumble after themselves on the breeze. You catch the scent of roasting meat wafting from the fort's cookfires — Tuscelan can't be far now.

Then a blinding flash cleaves the darkness.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 108. If you fail, turn to 223.

357 Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your Stealth against a hostile Stealth of 14. For each character in your group who possesses Boating (Canoe)-12 or greater, add +1 bonus to your roll (maximum bonus +4).

If you win the Contest by more than 2 points, turn to 392.

Otherwise, turn to 481.

358 Groggily, you open your blood-crust ed eyelids. You have no idea how long you've lain here. There is no sign of Glorious. You are lucky not to have been eaten by a prowling forest cat. Your strength rapidly returns, but you feel terrible.

Roll two dice, and add the number rolled to your Current Time. You may use the time for healing.

Turn to 287.



359 The significance of this structure is suddenly apparent — you've heard of flower lodges. In this hut, tucked into sweet-scented cubicles and pampered far in excess of usual Pictish ways, a small number of aboriginal maidens dwell. You hear whispered conversation from a room above — no doubt the girls are watching the ceremonies in the central square from their elevated perch.

A flower lodge is usually tightly guarded, but the sentries have deserted their posts to view Zogar Sag's ceremony. You find two spears, a hatchet and a buckler standing watch.

Try a Stealth roll to see if your entry goes unnoticed.

If you succeed, turn to 448. If you fail, turn to 472.

360 The lithe sprite avoids you and runs into the woods, where you quickly lose sight of her. Floating back on the breeze comes her continuing laugh — infectious, melodious, but with an unsettling undercurrent of menace.

Turn to 190.

361 You bolt from the building, hoping to lose your enemies in the dark. It galls you to flee — it's against every instinct. In moments, the mob is on your heels.

Turn to 515.

362 The ghostly creature is terribly real in the moonlight. You note the low-hung savage head and the great curved fangs that glisten in the reflected firelight. The beast is longer and heavier than a common tiger and as bulky as a bear. Mighty chest and shoulder muscles give it a top-heavy look, while its massive jaws fill a disproportionately small skull.

No civilized man has set eyes on one of these ancient creatures in centuries. It's the survivor of an older, grimmer age, the subject of myth and legend — the sabertoothed tiger.

If you are outside the village, turn to 281. If you are in Gwawela, turn to 521.

363 They call it instinct — the automatic, primitive reactions that dwell below the level of conscious thought, the ones that now save your life. Out of the corner of your eye, you notice a glittering bangle in the dead man's pomaded hair — a jeweled band. You see it *move* . . .

You jerk back, clear of the miniature serpent's strike. A quick stamp with your boot, and the venomous creature is dead.

Turn to 338 if you are alone or 326 if you have a companion.

364 Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your Move score against theirs. Be sure to use *current* Move values, adjusted for encumbrance. Remember: if your ST is less than 4, your Speed is halved.

If there is more than one pursuer, roll for each and use the *lowest value* for their side in the Contest (they run together).

If your companions flee with you, roll for each member of your party and use the *lowest score* in the Contest. You may abandon slow companions to avoid having to use their die roll, but you can never abandon yourself. For each companion abandoned, one pursuer is lost.

After each Contest, each runner must make a HT roll. If the roll is failed, he loses 1 ST to fatigue. If a pursuer falls unconscious, he drops out of the chase. If your companion falls unconscious, you must abandon him or stop. If you fall unconscious, turn to 100.

If you win the Contest by 5 points, you outdistance your enemy — turn to 510.

If you lose the Contest or stop, the enemy catches up with you — turn to 175.

Otherwise, continue the Contest of Moves.

365 "But listen, Valannus," you grunt. "Zogar Sag struck. Tiberias would be selling his otter skins in Hell if I hadn't come along." In a few words you relate the grisly affair.

Turn to 55.

366 You're not dead yet . . . but you're not ashore, either.

Try a Swimming roll. You have a +3 bonus (you entered the water intentionally), but there is a penalty equal to twice your encumbrance level — swimming in bulky armor is difficult. If you are Fat, you receive a +5 bonus.

If you took advantage of a bonus in the earlier Contest against the Picts, apply that bonus now as a *penalty* against this skill roll.

If you succeed at the skill roll, turn to 329. If you fail, turn to 397.

367 "Zogar Sag doesn't have the men to take this fort — not from the numbers I saw in the wilderness." "But he's an intelligent man," says Valannus. "Crafty, cunning,

ning . . . The Picts have hurled themselves against us before, and we've always decimated them. He won't attack unless he is sure of victory."

"He may be counting on his magic, and the demoralization of the fort garrison," you suggest.

"Tuscelan is doomed," says Valannus. "I expect the assault any moment. Whether the soldiers will stand or flee, I cannot tell — and it really doesn't matter. We are done for."

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 111. If you fail, turn to 144.

368 The old shaman gives a pitiful shriek.

If you have the PlotWord *INTREPID*, turn to 196.

If you have the PlotWord *DAUNTLESS*, turn to 486.

369 The Area Map on p. 62 is your guide. You are in the Black River hex directly west of Fort Tuscelan. Use a pencil to trace your progress from one hex to another. Each hex represents an area one mile across — the river is shown out of scale.

Turn to 510.

370 The underwater snag holds your vessel fast. A half hour passes — update your Current Time. Turn to 208 and try again, with a +1 bonus if the same individual makes the attempt.

371 You see a blaze through the trees. A log cabin, burning fiercely, stands in a clearing. Around it are a garden, a stretch of ground clear of trees and stumps, and — on the edge of the woods — an ox-drawn wagon.

Of the farmer, there is no sign — he may have been in the cabin. But you see his wife — two savages force her to the ground, tying ropes to her wrists and ankles and securing them tightly to stakes driven into the dirt. Although she is struggling valiantly, it is clear that the savages will soon have her at their mercy. A third savage is by the wagon, ravaging it for loot.

You know of the atrocities committed on women by these devils of the forest. You must act soon to save her.

If you charge the savages tying the woman, turn to 412, and begin reading with the second paragraph in that entry.

If you sneak up on the savage by the wagon, turn to 334.

If you head back to the fort for reinforcements, turn to 271.

372 Zogar Sag begins to dance, weaving a strange and intricate pattern. A trio of savages ring out man-made thunder on their drums while the crowd howls.

Then, abruptly, the shaman ends his dance — and rising to his toes, issues a trumpeting call toward the forest in an alien, undulating tongue. An echo of that cry returns . . . and a great beast lumbers out of the woods. The massive creature, heavy with fur and as large as the greatest hut in this village, eyes you with small, piglike eyes. Wicked, yellow tusks are enormously out of proportion to the rest of the mighty bulk — the legendary Pictish elephant. None have been seen for a century.

As the great beast begins a charge at Zogar Sag's beckoning, you wonder if you'll live to tell this tale around an alehouse. The ground shakes as the mastodon builds to full speed. Frantically, you test your bonds.

Try a ST roll, at -3 penalty due to the strength of the bonds with which you are tied — these Picts know your strength.

If you succeed, turn to 282. If you fail, turn to 321.

373 Reeling, blood dripping from gashes in your neck, you fall away from your enemy. The beast flees, regaining human form before it reaches the forest. Floating back on the breeze comes a girl's laugh — infectious, melodious, but with an unsettling undercurrent of menace.

Turn to 190.

374 The forest savages have senses as keen as any wild animal. The warrior freezes as you stalk him, then whirls, drawing an arrow. His eyes lock on yours.

Use Combat Map A. The Pict is at position D. He will Step and Ready on the first round, readying his arrow and facing you. The savage will use his bow until you are within six hexes, when he will draw his shortsword. He will fight to the death. You are at W6. Your weapon is ready.

When ready to begin the combat, turn to 18.

375 The Gunderman gives you an evil smile, then unbuckles his scabbard and hands his sword to a companion. "Flail," he announces.

The weapon used in the duel will be the flail.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 414. Otherwise, turn to 451.

376 If Glorious is conscious, turn to 305.
If she is unconscious, turn to 341.

If she is dead, turn to 327.

377 Roll one die to determine the Picts' tribe (see p. 3). If you have already determined the tribe, do not roll again — it remains the same.

Place the woman at C and the southern adjacent hex. For her stats, use the Balthus stats on p. 60, ignoring weapons and armor. She must remain prone with her head at hex C. Her legs are free to pivot, allowing kick attacks to both side hexes.

Keep track of the number of combat rounds fought. In addition, roll two dice every turn. On a roll of 11 or 12, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 315.

If you are adjacent to the woman, and try rescuing her, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 340.

If you fell one of the savages, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 410.

If you wish to run away, and if you are more than 10 hexes from your nearest adversary, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 445.

If you win the combat, turn to 331.

If you lose consciousness, your companions continue the battle.

If you and your allies fall unconscious, turn to 243.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



378 The one who missed receives a second shot. If the shot hits the target, turn to 411. Otherwise, turn to 330 if you miss or to 248 if Otho misses.

379 "Thanks," says your new team member, with an enthusiastic grin. "I won't let you down."
"Tonight, you do your best — or die," you reply grimly. Turn to 2.

380 Roll one die. Count down the boxes below until you count a number of boxes equal to the number rolled. Cross that box out, and turn to the associated paragraph. If all the boxes are crossed out, begin fresh by erasing all the marks.

- ☐ Turn to 458.
- ☐ Turn to 466.
- ☐ Turn to 497.
- ☐ Turn to 482.
- ☐ Turn to 531.
- ☐ Turn to 265.
- ☐ Turn to 222.
- ☐ Turn to 173.



381 "There'll be no place for you at Tuscelan," you warn the woman. "Not as a warrior. Aquilonian customs are strict. Thank the gods you're a comely wench . . ."

You are surprised by the snarl from your new companion.

"Wench!" she explodes. "I am no plaything for some noble officer or moneybagged merchant. My steel is as good as anyone's, my nerves are cool, and my agility makes up for any brawn I lack." Spluttering, the woman is too angry to speak.

Finally she draws a dirk and casts it point first in the dirt between your feet. "I call challenge." She means to fight you, steel upon steel, in a battle to first blood to avenge her honor.

If you are an Aquilonian, or if you succeed at an Area Knowledge (Aquilonia) or Savoir-Faire roll, turn immediately to 30.

If you apologize, turn to 461.

If you walk to the fort and leave her behind, turn to 343.

If you forcefully tell Glorious to hold her tongue, turn to 426.

If you draw your weapon, turn to 512.

382 You suspect the shore is lined with Picts waiting for you, but you determine to cut your way through. Then . . . you hear the natives' drums start to beat. The pattern is distinctive. You recognize the drum-talk: foes have been captured. The prisoners will be used to make a great magic against Fort Tuscelan.

The prisoners are your friends and companions. There is no greater brotherhood than the bond between warriors. You have no choice — your conscience calls you back to the wilderness, to rescue your friends from the fiends of the forest.

Turn to 153.

383 The body of a man lies there, a short, fat man clad in the ermine-trimmed tunic and gilt-worked boots of a wealthy merchant. His fat, pale face is set in a stare of frozen horror. His shortsword is in its scabbard. The man is Tiberias the merchant.

The signs are plain: The merchant was forcing his way through the thick woods, leading a heavily laden mule — no doubt with a bundle of otter skins to sell in Velitrium. *Something* sprang out at him from cover of the bush. Tiberias gave the scream which you heard, and then he was dead — selling his otter skins in Hell.

You hear the mule in the distance, thrashing about under the trees. There is no sign of the creature that attacked. In the darkness there is no hope of following a trail.

Your partner gazes at the motionless body, then at the darkening woods. "A Pict did this?"

"No," you answer. "A forest devil."

"How do you know he wasn't killed by the savages?" your companion asks.

You point to the corpse. "Look."

If you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*, turn to 64.

If you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*, turn to 22.

If you have the PlotWord *STRONG*, turn to 124.

384 A fresh horror is upon you — the indistinct idol heaves up, lifting long, misshapen arms toward you. You must deal with this menace, one way or another.

If you retreat the way you came, turn to 184.

If you press forward, weapons drawn, turn to 505.

385 If you return to Fort Tuscelan, add 4 hours to your Current Time and turn to 287.

If you return to the clearing to rescue the woman, turn to 324.

386 Disregard the trail shown on the map.
If Tiberias is alive: His stats are given on p. 60. He is *mentally stunned* (see p. 3), but will fight on your side once he snaps out of it.

Fight the battle.

If your companion was left behind in the chase: Roll one die at the beginning of every round. If a 1 or 2 is rolled, your companion bursts from the woods and joins you in this battle — place him at W10 (W4 if Tiberias is dead).

If you injure the beast, immediately turn to 292.

If you win the battle, turn to 355 if Tiberias is dead or 352 if Tiberias is alive.

If you lose consciousness, your allies continue the battle.

If you and all your allies fall unconscious, the beast slits your throats.

If you are dead, your adventure is over.

387 You catch a faint whisper on the wind. Listening, you hear a sound like the howling of wolves coming from the direction of Fort Tuscelan. It's too late to warn the fort now. The savages have begun the attack.

There is no longer a need to go to Gwawela — if your friends were prisoners, they have been sacrificed by Zogar Sag to make great magic before the attack.

You must travel to Velitrium, warning the settlers along the way. Roll one die, add 2, and increase your Current Time by a number of hours equal to this result.

Turn to 557.

388 As you turn to the gate, a bestial roar erupts. An immense, pale-furred carnivore rushes at you.
Turn to 449.

389 Angry and shocked, you strike with savagery and might. The Gunderman staggers and collapses. Blood stains the dirt. Someone rushes to check the body. "He's dead."

The pleasure of the day is gutted by this odd incident. Soldiers drift away, grumbling. The body is dragged off — knowing Aquilonian custom, you doubt it will be honorably buried.

The bald man approaches you.

Turn to 319.

390 If you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*, turn to 442. Otherwise, turn to 326.



391 "Tricked us with its damnable caterwauling!" you rave, swinging your weapon about your head in your wrath. "I might have guessed! Now there'll be five heads to decorate Zogar Sag's altar."

"But what is it that can cry like a woman and laugh like a madman, and shines like witchfire as it glides through the trees?" asks your companion.

"A forest devil," you respond morosely. "Grab the poles. We'll take in what's left of the body. At least our load's a bit lighter." And with that grim bit of philosophy, you grip the poles and stalk on toward the fort.

392 A sound comes to you, wafted over the gentle rippling of the river — the splash of a paddle! You silently signal the rest of your crew. Your canoe pulls tightly to the shore, paddles motionless, invisible in the darkness. The strange canoe passes by in midchannel crammed with braves in war paint, moving toward Gwawela.

Turn to 484.

393 You hear a shrill witch-laugh as something hurled to the ground bursts with a bright flame, leaving your vision full of colored spots. The explosion produces foul smoke that veils the sun, forcing you to reel back, coughing and spluttering. By the time you can see again, you and your partner are alone in the woods . . . except for an infectious, melodious laugh, tinged with an unsettling undercurrent of menace.

Turn to 190.

394 You leap forward, throwing your arms about the girl. She fights back with far greater strength than you expect. Sharp fingernails claw at your skin. However, she makes no cry for help.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your DX against her DX-13 — a standard grappling maneuver. You receive a +3 bonus.

If you win, turn to 444 if you are male or 336 if you are female.

If you lose, turn to 360.

395 "Go home, Tiberias," you say roughly. "When this night's work is done, there'll be no more Zogar Sag to taint your dreams."

The merchant trembles. "I'll not live the night out. This is on your head!"

"So be it," you reply.

Turn to 420.

396 "They'll not rebuild the fort," says the man. "Conajohara is lost to Aquilonia. The frontier is pushed back — Thunder River will be the new border."

You sigh and reach for the wine jug. "Barbarism is the natural state of mankind," you thoughtfully reply. "Civilization is unnatural, a whim of circumstance. Barbarism must always ultimately triumph."

THE END

397 The rushing river closes over your head. You gulp river water, then struggle to the surface and gasp for air.

You immediately lose 1 ST to fatigue. Continue to make Swimming rolls, losing 1 ST to fatigue per failed roll, until you succeed or fall unconscious.

If you lose consciousness, you cheat the Picts in a most unusual way — you drown before they kill you. Your adventure is over.

Otherwise, turn to 322.

398 Your opponent challenges you with a strong assault, but your defense forces him back. As he reels, sweating and winded, you press your advantage. His reactions unsure, his vision blurred, your enemy gives you an opening — and you score. The dance of battle is over.

Turn to 199.

399 "Shall we try to break through?" asks one of your companions.

If you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, turn to 434.

If you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*, turn to 552.

400 The troops, at first stunned by Thorus' dishonorable strike, now close in on him. Your assailant disappears beneath a pile of hitting and kicking soldiers.

The bald man steps in to stop the slaughter, but he is too late. When Thorus is pulled out from under the mob he is a bloody ruin. With his remaining eye, the dying man gestures to you and tries to speak.

As you kneel beside him, Thorus parts his lips — then spits a mouthful of broken teeth at you. "Barbarian pig," he gasps, then collapses.

The bald man savagely kicks the Gunderman. "The filthy animal is dead. Drag this swine outside the gates. Let the vultures feast on his entrails!"

The pleasure of the day is gutted by this odd incident. Soldiers drift away, grumbling. Thorus' body is dragged off.

Turn to 319.

401 The battle goes as you predicted. Your force is never called on, since the savages never break the fort's defenses. As you survey the battleground, everything betokens the Pict defeat: heaps of slain savages, broken canoes, and hundreds of spent arrows littering the field.

Shortly after the battle, you are summoned to Valannus' quarters. The governor looks the best that you've seen him in days.

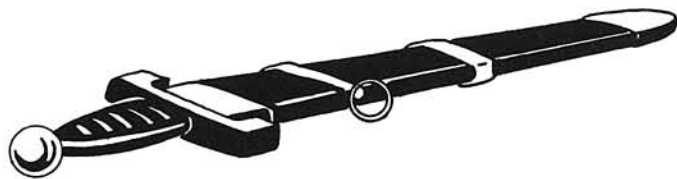
"The Pict assault was a failure," he says, pointing to a chair. "For the savages' assault to succeed, they had to have aid from within the fort. But you, my friend, in spotting the renegade in the Pict village, prevented them from receiving that aid."

"Have you captured the traitor?" you ask.

"Not yet, but we know who it must be," Valannus replies. "Several of our men spotted Julian — in savage war paint, no less — among the raiders. I doubt he will find much welcome among the Picts after today!" Valannus chuckles, then continues. "In any case, the credit for Fort Tuscelan's survival goes to you and your mission across the Black River. I'll be writing my report to the king tomorrow, and you'll figure prominently in it. You're about to be noticed in royal circles, my friend."

You snort. "I'd rather have a stiff drink, my hazard pay, and my leave time. I know this place in Velitrium . . ."

THE END



402 "The men are driving themselves mad with legends," you tell Purenus, "Tales of beasts serving the Picts . . ."

"Oh, they're quite true," answers Purenus. "The primitive people have power, and animals sometimes follow their orders."

"The loon is a common waterfowl, but in Pict legend the bird is mystic. It can lure a man by its call, and afterward the man — if he lives — claims not to have heard the cry of a bird at all. No other hears the loon's cry, only the victim."

The old man grins. "Then there are the *swamp devils*. I've never seen one, but they're said to be thick as bats in the swamps beyond Black River. That's what you hear on hot nights, when the wind blows from the south — like the howling of damned souls. According to legend, a swamp demon can't be tracked."

"Lastly, there's the *chaken*," says Purenus. "The shamans catch them young and train them. It has a form like a man, though gnarled and misshapen and covered with thick hair. Its head is like an ape, and it has a foul bestial reek. It is a great tracker, able to keep on a scent for days."

Roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, turn to 41. On a roll of 3-6, turn to 464.

403 The pale beast sweeps past you on the main path and enters the village. The short hair stirs on your scalp.

Turn to 362.

404 "... swords!" cries the Gunderman, lifting his blade toward the sky. The weapon used in the duel will be the shortsword. Turn to 451.

405 If you are conscious, turn to 305.
If you are unconscious, turn to 358.
If you are dead, your adventure is over.

406 You explain the ways of the frontier to the young man as together you return to the fort.

Balthus' stats are given on p. 60. Until you reach the fort, he is your partner.

Roll one die, and add this number to your Current Time.

Turn to 287.

407 Your lips brush against hers. Unable to restrain yourself, you drink ever deeper of the pleasure of her unusually chill mouth. She responds in kind. As you pull her closer with hungry arms, she clings to your chest.

When you at last open your eyes, the girl is gone.

You stumble about, calling for her over and over, wishing you knew her name. By the time you wander back to Fort Tuscelan, many hours pass.

Turn to 210.

408 The pale beast stands between you and the village gate. The short hairs stir on your scalp.

Turn to 362.

409 You make a hurried study of the terrain. Behind the couple, a fallen log offers a place of concealment from which you can listen to them. A long, circuitous route will lead you there — if they don't hear you.

Try a Contest of Skills, your Stealth versus the Hearing of the couple. Involved in conversation, each has an effective Hearing of 8. Roll for each.

If you lose, turn to 523. Otherwise, turn to 480.

410 Picts are fanatic warriors who long for nothing more than to slit a foe's throat. When fighting their traditional Aquilonian enemies, they care not whether they live or die as long as they bloody their foe. However, surprise and quick action sometimes work a miracle . . .

Roll one die. On a 1 or 2, turn to 440.

On any other roll, return to 377.

Do not return to this paragraph again during this combat.

411 "Hold!" cries the bald man. At his signal, a youth runs to remove the former target from the field, leaving the lane of fire open to a smaller, more distant target. When the lad is clear, the bald man yells, "Commence!"

Increase the Target Difficulty by 2.

Turn to 333.

412 You charge into the midst of a clearing. Before you stands a fiercely burning log cabin. Near it, one savage holds a woman down while another ties her with ropes fastened to wooden stakes. A third savage loots an ox-drawn wagon across the clearing.

Use Combat Map D. The Picts are at positions A, B, and E. The savages near the woman crouch, but abandon her to fight you. You are at J. Your advantage is surprise — the Picts are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Turn to 377.

413 Curse those savages! Their marksmanship is excellent. As you come up to breathe, you feel the sharp bite of an arrow. By reflex, you dive down again.

For every point by which the Picts win the Contest, you are hit by one arrow. See the Picts' stats for damage caused.

If you are conscious, turn to 366.

If you are unconscious, you swallow water and drown.

If you are dead, your adventure is over.

414 You instantly understand his strategy. Figuring that you outclass him with weapons you know, the Gunderman is gambling that he can beat you with something unusual — a weapon few fighting men master.

Turn to 451.

415 With burning eyes the shaman searches you out, then calls for his braves to kill you. A militant rumbling moves in your direction. You run for it.

Turn to 515.

416 The beast seems to glide rather than stride. More than ever, the blue-green flame can clearly be seen as a covering that hides the creature within — you are unable to penetrate its fire-misted outlines. It is taller than a man, but less bulky.

Your opponent is a swamp devil (see p. 60).

Turn to 386.

417 You count four heads, and recognize them — Soractus the scout, and the soldiers who took Zogar Sag prisoner. This is where the old shaman stacks his tokens of victory. It gives you grim satisfaction to know that the pile is not complete: Tiberias still lives, thanks to you!

Turn to 384.

418 No Aquilonian can attend a Pict blood-feast, painted in war paint and seated in the inner circle as this man is, without being a renegade against his own kind. The man stirs himself, and the hawklike features betray their identity — Julian! An officer from Fort Tuscelan, in blood-feast with the savages!

If you have the PlotWord *HEROIC*, turn to 178. If you don't have this PlotWord, turn to 73.

419 The sharp blow sends you stumbling. Your vision blurs. Then follows a period of blackness, after which strong arms pull you back on your feet.

Turn to 330.

420 Your raiding party boards its canoe and eases into the rapidly flowing waters. On your instructions, the men are careful to stay close to the east bank and to stroke with their paddles as silently as possible.

The Area Map on p. 62 is your guide. You are in the Black River hex immediately southwest of Fort Tuscelan. Use a pencil to trace your progress from one hex to another. Each hex represents an area a mile across — the river is shown out of scale. You may turn to this map at any time during the adventure.

You must continue to monitor day and time. If your Current Time is earlier than 10 p.m. on Thursday, advance it to 10 p.m.

Turn to 484.

421 Roll two dice for each of your opponents. The combat map is marked with two series of locations — a "W" and a "T" series. If you are traveling in a wilderness hex containing a trail, place your opponents in the T spots matching the number rolled. Otherwise, place your opponents in the W spots matching the number rolled.

Example: Placing two Pict hunters in a non-trail-hex combat, you roll a 6 and a 9. Place the first hunter at W6, and the other at W9.

If the hex indicated by the dice is occupied, place the opponent in any adjacent empty hex.

Turn to 551.

422 A slithering sound approaches. Use Combat Map C. Place your characters within three hexes of F. When you are ready, turn to 266.

423 Loud voices second the proposal. An older sergeant shakes his head. "This is a tourney, not a duel of honor," he says. "Blunted weapons, I say." Quickly, others second the vote.

The bald man nods, and turns to address you and your foe. "So let it be. Blunted weapons, gentlemen. This will be a contest of skill, not a mindless battering of armored flesh."

At his command, soldiers outline in the dirt a boundary for the duel. Other men relieve you and your opponent of personal weapons, replacing them with blunt weapons such as raw recruits practice with. Then, eager to witness the mayhem, the men crowd close to the line. Latecomers bring benches and stand on them to better witness the contest. You glimpse a watching eye or two — probably female — behind the partially open shutters of the blockhouse.

"Begin!" shouts the bald man.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your weapon skill against Thorus'. For Thorus' stats, see the Gunderman on p. 60.

If you win, turn to 398.

If you lose, turn to 330.

424 As you pass through the gate, a cry of bewilderment springs from the Picts. Several braves rush toward you, but a feather-bedecked shaman calls them back. The witch doctor points at something *behind* you, and calls again in that awful, undulating cry.

If you ready your weapons and turn around, turn to 408.

If you run for cover within the village, turn to 475.

If you run for the forest, turn to 388.



425 “What resistance could you offer?” you chuckle. A cloud steals over the face of the sun. The girl turns to you, eyes intent and seeming to glow. “The loon flies close to the moon tonight, on an arctic gust from the Gulf of Ghosts,” she whispers. “Your name is known by the Friends of the Dead. A restless serpent coils in the darkness, with a venom prepared for you. The battle is lost. You are a dead man.”

“Who in the devil are the Friends of the Dead?” you demand. But the strange girl turns, fleeing into the woods.

If you let her go, turn to 190.

If you try to follow her, turn to 360.

If you stop her, turn to 394.

426 You kick the dirk back at the feet of its owner. “Gods, woman, this is no place to call challenge. Half of Pictland will be on us in moments.”

Glorious collects her knife. “I’m no camp follower,” she says. “My steel is as good as yours.”

“All good steel belongs in the belly of savages,” you reply. “Be still until we’ve the walls of Tuscelan around us.”

Turn to 99.

427 The crowd falls back with horror as you once again face off against the Gunderman. Knowing Aquilonian custom, you can hardly believe one of them dared knife you in the back. If you don’t kill Thorus, the crowd probably will.

Continue the combat, using Combat Map G. Thorus is at D, and has a ready knife. You are at C and have the weapon you just fought with, but it isn’t ready. Keep track of the number of rounds fought.

If you win, turn to 389.

If you are knocked unconscious, turn to 351.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

If 15 turns pass, turn to 400.

428 The war-painted traitor backs away just as your blade descends toward his vitals. He draws his shortsword. Before the savages realize what is going on, you have a bare moment to slay this sly renegade — if you can.

Try a Contest of Skills, pitting your skill with any melee weapon you possess against Julian’s Shortsword-15.

If you win the Contest by 3 or more points, turn to 477.

If you don’t, turn to 540.

429 Feet pound throughout the village, searching for intruders . . . They come this direction. Torches flare up along the darkened alleyways. Drums pound. So much for your mission — you’ll be lucky if you can escape from this cauldron of seething activity.

If you’ve been alone, any companions with whom you entered Gwawela rejoin you now.

Try a Stealth roll. You have a penalty equal to your encumbrance and -1 for each companion.

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 522.

If you score a critical success, turn to 467.

If you fail the roll, turn to 515.

430 “But listen, Valannus,” you grunt. “Tiberias is dead.” You relate the grisly affair.

Turn to 55.

431 Your speech falls on deaf ears. “Leave us,” says one. “Men can’t fight the sort of magics Zogar Sag wields.”

There are no volunteers here. Return to 2.

432 You realize there is no hope. Turn to 541.

433 The creature is on its victim in a second. The fat man is paralyzed with fright, and falls lifeless after a single blow. The monster’s gaze fixes upon you.

Turn to 460.



434 You shake your head, standing relaxed at last — a grimly cheerful figure.

“The Picts are blood mad,” you explain. “They won’t stop until they’re all dead. There are too many for us to break through to Valannus, but not enough to take Tuscelan. Zogar Sag miscalculated.”

“So we should save our own hides,” concludes your ally.

“And warn the settlers,” you reply. “Pict war parties are rampaging throughout Conajohara this night, hoping to sweep east before anyone knows of the assault on Tuscelan. We failed

to warn the fort. It would have made no difference — the fort's adequately manned for this attack. A few more charges and the Picts will be broken. But there are still Pict raiders loose from here to Velitrium!"

If Julian is dead, turn to 151.

Otherwise, turn to 251.

435 The light is sporadic, but the range is not great. Make your attack roll. The serpent is 17 yards away, and is +6 to be hit due to its size and lack of motion. The flickering firelight and billowing smoke are a net -4 penalty to the attack roll. You may aim or brace, if you like — no one is paying attention to you.

If you hit the target, roll damage for the blow and turn to 516.

If you miss, turn to 149.

436 Each of you may take two more shots at the target. Return to 333.

437 Tricked by some damnable caterwauling, you think to yourself, swinging your weapon about your head in your wrath. You might have guessed a trick — now there'll be five heads to decorate Zogar Sag's altar! A Pictish devil must have done this.

You jerk the remainder of the body to your shoulders, determined to save what you can. At least the load's lighter. With that grim philosophy, you stalk on toward the fort.

Turn to 326.

438 The sound of an enemy blade as it is drawn from its sheath is electrifying to the warrior. As Glorious readies her shortsword, you eye her stance, the way she holds her sword, and the steely glint of her eyes. Then, like a tiger, you leap forward to meet her charge.

Fight the battle, using Combat Map A. Glorious is at W3. You are at W4. If a Pict corpse is present, place it in B and the adjacent southern hex. See p. 60 for Glorious' stats.

If Glorious is wounded, turn to 376.

If you are wounded, turn to 405.

439 Superior numbers win out even against brave men. You enter one last passageway to find the far end filled with Picts! You are cut off. The savages outnumber you by better than twenty-to-one. Resistance is futile. They beat you senseless. Take one die of damage.

Turn to 100.

440 Cowed by your prowess, the warriors of the forest flee. Turn to 331.

441 You hurry down the road, cross Scalp Creek, and come in sight of the first settler's cabin — a long, low structure of axe-hewn logs. You pound on the door. "Get up! The Picts are over the river!" you cry.

A low cry echoes your words. The door is thrown open by a woman in a scanty shift. Her hair hangs over her bare shoulders in disorder. In one hand, she holds a candle; in the other, she holds an axe. Her face is colorless, eyes wide with terror. "Come in!" she begs. "We'll hold the cabin."

"No," you reply. "We must make for Velitrium. Picts are all over this province. Don't stop to dress — get your family and come."

"But my man's gone," she says. "He went to town . . ." Behind her peer three youngsters, blinking and bewildered.

"Then he's safe," you say. "But we've got to hurry along the road and warn the other cabins."

The night continues in this vein: cabin after cabin warned, settler man and woman and child turned out into the night, grabbing scant belongings, saddling horses and mules to ride. A red glow becomes evident through the trees behind you as Pict raiders burn cabins and farms. This pleases you — the savages' destructive natures have overcome Zogar Sag's instructions. The light will only warn more settlers to flee.

There will be fighting on Thunder River. Raiders will get as far as the walls of Velitrium, where you turn them back with the power of axe and torch. Many a settler's cabin lies in ashes before the painted horde is thrown back.

Turn to 147.

442 If you have the PlotWord *DAUNTLESS*, turn to 483.

If you have the PlotWord *INTREPID*, turn to 356.

443 Out of a side room steps a lovely maid. By the doeskin garments and beaded moccasins, she looks Pictish — yet her delicate features seem out of place. The room grows darker, while the girl's eyes glow.

"The loon flies close to the moon tonight, on an arctic gust from the Gulf of Ghosts," she whispers in accented Aquilonian. "Your name is known by the Friends of the Dead. A restless serpent coils in the darkness, with a venom prepared for you. The battle is lost. You are a dead man."

"What in the devil . . ." you begin. But you cut off your reply as the sight before you prompts you to replace uttered word with unsheathed steel. For in the place of the fair maid now stands a beast — the forest chaken.

Use Combat Map B. Place the chaken (see p. 59) at D. You are at A. Your companions (if any) are between A and F.

If you are unconscious, your companions continue the battle.

If everyone in your party is dead or unconscious, turn to 100.

If you win the battle, turn to 504.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



444 Your arms are comfortably filled with the struggling daughter of the wilderness. At last, she realizes she can't break your hold, and relaxes softly against you.

The girl gasps for air, and her cheeks wash with a red blush. "Kiss me," she whispers through half-parted lips. You feel a warmth tingle through you. For an instant, it seems as if her eyes are golden and glowing.

If you refuse her request, turn to 485.

If you try to knock her unconscious, turn to 320.

If you do as she asks, turn to 407.

445 You dash toward the tree line, hoping to out-sprint the hostile primitives and win your way to freedom. Shouting terrible curses, the savages follow.

Try a Quick Contest of Skills, pitting your Move against theirs. Use your *current* Move value, adjusted for encumbrance. If the anyone is with you, roll for each of you, and use the *lowest value* in the Contest (you run at the same speed). Remember: if your ST is less than 4, your Speed is halved.

After the Contest, make a roll against HT for each runner. Those failing the roll lose 1 ST to fatigue.

If you win the Contest by 10 points, turn to 530.

If you lose, the savages catch up with you — turn to 470.

If you win, but by less than 10 points, you aren't free yet. Continue the Contest.

If anyone falls unconscious, turn immediately to 498.



446 The forest snake lies in the dirt, shuddering in powerful convulsions. It looks incapable of harming anyone.

This observation costs you no time — you may still take an action during this combat round. Return to 52.

447 If your companion is Glorious, turn to 538.
If your companion is male, turn to 293.

If you have no companion, turn to 356.

448 There's no more to do here and too much danger of being caught by a high-strung Pictish girl.

Turn to 62.

449 The sabertoothed tiger attacks. There is no time for refuge!

Roll one die and consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see whom the creature kills. If *you* are killed, your adventure is over.

Otherwise, you and your companions run blindly into the woods. With every step, you fear the snarl of the returning cat.

You have the PlotWord RECKLESS.

Turn to 153.

450 The two are startled by your sudden approach. With drawn weapon, you command them to surrender in the name of the king. The man's fingers twitch as they reach toward his sword but he gives up the notion, staring instead with wide eyes at your weapon.

The girl, waiting for her companion to act, despairs and reaches into her belt.

Turn to 393.

451 The Gundermen join in with a chorus of shouts and cheers militant enough to rock the palisades of the fort. The bald man curtly silences them, threatening the more boisterous of his group with an iron-sheathed mace.

"Tradition," he yells, "grants that the soldiers of the fort may set the ground rules for the combat. What say ye, men?"

"To the death," shouts an upstart.

Roll one die. On a 1-2, turn to 423. On a 3-6, turn to 496.

452 You burst into a dim glade and halt, crouching, lips snarled, weapon lifted. There is no sign of a settler woman here. The scream came from this glade or close by — you don't mistake the location of sounds, even in the woods. But where . . .

Abruptly the sound rings out again — *behind you*, in the direction from which you came. It rises piercingly and pitifully, the cry of a woman in frantic terror — and then, shockingly, it changes to a yell of mocking laughter that might have burst from the lips of a fiend of lower Hell.

With a scorching oath, you wheel and dash back the way you came. Your companion follows.

Turn to 489.

453 Your spittle falls to the dust. A watching brave laughs callously. The shaman calls for men to open the village gate.

Turn to 372.

454 There's a howl as your weapon strikes the exposed talon, which the creature hastily retracts. The attack was meant, not for you, but for Tiberias' body. You unceremoniously dump the corpse and stand over it protectively.

To your amazement, the creature of blue-green fire bolts back to the woods, gliding like a serpent through the dense bushes of this part of the forest. Its outlines are indistinct, but it is taller than a man and less bulky. It gives off a glimmer of weird blue light — indeed, the eerie fire is the only tangible thing about it. It moves much faster than you can match.

You snarl a savage curse. If you have a thrown weapon, you hurl it ferociously. But the thing glides on without altering its course. Then it is gone.

However, Tiberias still has his head — for whatever good that will do him. You stalk on toward the fort.

Turn to 326.

455 Use Combat Map A but disregard the marked trail in this fight. Place your characters anywhere west of the trail, so long as everyone is at least three hexes from the trail. Your weapons are ready.
Turn to 380.

456 Fight the battle. The cupboards marked on the map are weapon racks in this encounter.
If you wish to grab a weapon here, turn to 535.
If you exit the building from either doorway, turn to 361.
If you are unconscious, your companions continue the battle.
If everyone in your party is dead or unconscious, turn to 100.
If you win the battle, turn to 289.
If you are killed, your adventure is over.

457 You haul the man to his feet, pounding on his back. He gurgles and his eyes roll. You shake him like a tree in a windstorm, lifting his great bulk into the air. The man's thrashings still. He lies limp in your arms, dead.
Turn to 383.

458 Not everything is what it seems to be in the Pictish wilderness. The Forest Snake, one of the deadliest denizens of the primitive realm, suspends itself from a branch over a trail or clearing. It waits until a beast brushes against it, then drops . . .
Consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see who the Forest Snake falls on, and place the creature in that character's hex. Your characters are *mentally stunned* (p. 3).
Turn to 551.

459 Roll one die. The following modifiers apply:

In "Pict Patrol" hex	+2
You have the PlotWord <i>COURAGEOUS</i>	+2
You have the PlotWord <i>VALOROUS</i>	-2
In a trail hex west of Black River	+2
If you didn't move this hour	-1

If the result is a 6 or higher, turn to 17. Otherwise, turn to 510.

460 The beast moves with terrifying speed, abandoning the fright-bound man and pouncing at you.
Set up the fight on Combat Map A. The beast is at T12. You are at W5. If you have a companion, place him at W10. The fat man is Tiberias the merchant — place him at F.
When you are ready, turn to 542 if you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*, or 416 if you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*.

461 You pick the dagger from the ground, stammering as you seek words generally unused. "Nothing was meant in what I said. I beg your pardon. I decline challenge."

"Too soft to fight," she says, sheathing the dirk once more. "Are the rest of the soldiers like you? No wonder the Picts are restless."

"With the noise you make," you reply, "we'll be lucky to see Fort Tuscelan. Half the Pictish tribes must have heard your yelling."

Turn to 99.

462 You dive under cover, hoping that the savages don't spot you. The excited babbling that breaks

out makes it clear that the act was not unnoticed. Then you hear a triumphant shriek from Zogar Sag.

If you have the PlotWord *HEROIC*, turn to 422. Otherwise, turn to 415.

463 The wolfish howling from the Pict village rises in volume and exultation. Then, suddenly the village quiets.

A scramble at the village gate makes you anxious. Pictish braves throw open the gate, then run back within the settlement. You now see the fire-rimmed inner square of the village. Plumed and painted braves stand in two rows, forming a broad lane between the open gate and the middle of the central court. A weird inhuman call shudders out into the night.

If you enter through the open gate, turn to 424.

If you retreat into the woods, turn to 153.

If you circle around and scale the village walls, turn to 75.

If you remain here, turn to 403.

464 The aged quartermaster slowly draws himself to his feet, finishing the last of his drink with a swallow. "I've enjoyed our talk," he says.

"You are very wise," you say.

His eyes twinkle. "I may be too old to fight, but I'm not entirely useless." Purenus shuffles away, leaving you free to return to your prowling of Fort Tuscelan.

Add 2 hours to your Current Time. Return to 85.

465 Motion along the path alerts you — more Picts coming this way! You lead your force back to the shelter of the deep woods, beyond sight of Gwawela.
Turn to 153.

466 Not every savage in the forest is looking for blood — at least, not of the human variety. Some seek food. You encounter two such hunters.

Your enemies are two bow-armed Picts. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine the tribe — if a non-archer tribe is selected, roll again.

Turn to 421.

467 An inspiration! Smearing campfire ash on your skin and donning Pictish buckskin rags over your clothes, you march boldly through the village.
Turn to 84.

468 Suddenly you feel a penetrating, fiery pain between your shoulders. Whirling, you spot Thorus dancing away from you, his knife slick with your blood.

Check Thorus' stats — use the Gunderman on p. 60 — to see how much damage he does with his knife.

If you are unconscious, turn to 351.

If you are dead, your adventure is over.

If neither of the above apply, turn to 427.

469 As you plunge around one more corner, one of the devils scores a hit with a throwing axe . . .

Roll one die and consult the Random Victim Table (p. 3) to see which of your party is struck. There is no Defense roll. Roll to see where the blow strikes. The weapon does 1 + 3 damage.

If one of your companions falls unconscious, he's captured by the Picts.

If you are conscious, turn to 556.

If you are unconscious, turn to 100.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

470 Use Combat Map A. Disregard the trail. You are at F. If the woman is with you, place her within three hexes of F. Roll two dice for each Pict, and place the savage at the "W" spot matching the number rolled. For instance, if you roll 4, place the Pict at W4.

Continue the battle.

If you wish to run away, and are more than 10 hexes from your nearest adversary, write down the number of this paragraph, then turn to 445.

If you win the combat, turn to 331.

If you lose consciousness, continue the battle using any allies still able to fight.

If you and all your allies fall unconscious, turn to 243.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

471 You wait, but this was the height of the meeting. After a harangue by the witch doctor, the group breaks up. You and your allies try to slip unobtrusively away . . . but a shout indicates that your efforts are unsuccessful.

You have the PlotWord RECKLESS.

Turn to 515.

472 You hear whispered conversation, and then a Pictish maid enters the room — not expecting company, if her lack of clothing or her ear-splitting scream are any guide.

So much for scouting Gwawela! The savages know something is up after that alert. You flee, hoping to escape detection.

You have the PlotWord RECKLESS.

Turn to 429.

473 Roll one die. On a roll of 1-2, turn to 511. On any other roll, return to the paragraph that sent you here.



474 If you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, turn to 182. Otherwise, turn to 507.

475 A bestial roar erupts behind you. You run for the nearest hut, yelling for your companions to follow . . . but there isn't time.

Turn to 89.

476 Of course! Rounding one more hut, you stretch for the maximum amount of lead over your pursuers. Then, like a flash — "Up! To the roofs!" you whisper to your men. In seconds you lie prone on the thatched roof, trying not to breathe loudly, desperately hoping the ramshackle structure won't collapse under your weight. The sound of the mob, the stench of torches and the shouts of enraged men draws near and then recedes.

For the time being, you've made it. Now to get out of here.

Turn to 429.

477 A flash of steel, a penetrating thrust and a choked howl. A stream of crimson falls in the dust. The fair-skinned man is dead.

Turn to 121.



CARROLL '88

478 As you avoid the deadly jaws of the ape creature, it breaks free of your embrace with enormous strength. As you prepare to defend yourself in mortal combat, the outlines of the furred beast blur . . .

Turn to 393.

479 Your first thought is for escape — but the canny savages outsmart you. Running braves cut off your retreat. You dart for the primitives' huts, hoping to lose the mob in the winding pathways.

You have the PlotWord RECKLESS.

Turn to 515.

480 You ease yourself behind the rotted log. Their conversation evades you at first, then becomes clear as you adjust to the stillness of the glade.

"Hawk, Lynx and Turtle tribes move at dawn," comes the clear voice of the aboriginal girl, awkward in the civilized tongue. "Julian promises . . ."

Julian! He's an officer at the fort, in command of a Gunderman unit. Julian is of the lesser nobility, aloof and pretentious, but you've never suspected him of treason.

" . . . the fort will be betrayed," the speaker continues. He makes the girl swear that the Picts will leave untouched a certain chest in the blockhouse. You sense that the conversation is over.

If you rush back to the fort to report, turn to 166.

If you charge into the clearing, hoping to take them prisoner, turn to 450.

481 Roll one die, and divide the number rolled by two (round down). Count down the uncrossed-out boxes below until you count a number of boxes equal to the

number rolled. Cross that box out, and turn to the associated paragraph. If all the boxes are crossed out, begin fresh by erasing all of the marks.

- ☐ Turn to 19.
- ☐ Turn to 74.
- ☐ Turn to 342.
- ☐ Turn to 524.

482 One brave is dressed in fine leathers with streaming plumes. His companions guard him carefully — could this be a chief of the Picts?

Your enemies are three Pict braves and a Pict Leader. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine the tribe, but roll twice — once for the braves, then again for the leader.

If the Pict Leader falls, record the number of the paragraph in which he falls, then turn to 511.

Turn to 421.

483 You cover more than a mile, and the muscles in your legs ache, when a cry rings shuddering from the darkened woods. You start convulsively, and drop your burden. It's the cry of a woman — perhaps a settler's wife strayed too far into the woods.

If you ignore the cry, turn to 447.

If you plunge into the forest after the call, turn to 452.

If you order your companion to guard Tiberias' body, and then dive into the woods, turn to 517 if your companion is male, or 547 if Glorious is your companion.

484 The river is a vague trace between walls of ebony. As you creep along in the dense shadow of the east bank, the paddles that propel the long boat dip softly into the water, making no more sound than the beak of a heron.

If you travel north (against the current), turn to 548.

If you move south (with the current), turn to 267.

If you land on the Pictish shore of the hex you are now in, turn to 231.

485 "I think not . . ." you say. "Do it now," she demands breathlessly. "I command it."

If you continue to refuse, turn to 525.

If you try to knock her out, turn to 320.

If you give in, turn to 407.

486 The witch doctor flees. You chase him, but warriors cut you off. Instead, you head into the village, diving among the filthy huts, leading your companions to safety.

Turn to 515.

487 The face of the freshest head grins up at you — it is Tiberias the merchant. The five heads stacked here are the victims of Zogar Sag. Only one is lacking — Valannus himself.

Turn to 384.

488 The entangling limbs and vines force you to slow, even as a second scream penetrates the night air. Precious minutes tick by while you stumble through the woods, fumbling forward as you gasp for air.

At last you blunder into a clearing and slide to a stumbling halt, almost colliding with a crumpled body in the dirt. As you mutter a horrified oath, you glimpse something fleeing through the woods. It must be the thing that killed the merchant.

If you pursue the fleeing thing, roll one die. On a roll of 6, turn to 239. Otherwise, turn to 68.

If you don't pursue it, turn to 383.

489 Ahead of you, something moves through the dense bushes of this part of the forest — something that neither walks nor flies, but seems to glide like a serpent. Its outlines are indistinct, but it is taller than a man and less bulky. The creature gives off a glimmer of weird blue light. Indeed, the eerie fire is the only tangible thing about it. It moves faster than you can ever hope to match.

You snarl a savage curse. If you have a thrown weapon, you hurl it ferociously. But the thing glides on without altering its course. Then it is gone.

You plunge back through the foliage to where the merchant's body lies. Your profanity is lurid and impassioned. Tiberias' body no longer has a head.

If you have a companion, turn to 391. If you are alone, turn to 437.

490 You dive back under cover and are amazed that the savages never notice your abortive shot.

If you have the PlotWord *HEROIC*, turn to 246. Otherwise, turn to 529.

491 Beside the main — and only — door to this place, a sentry stands concealed. You see the sharp point of a spear, and the circular shadow of a shield of Aquilonian pattern. To enter, you'll need to avoid the front entrance and climb through a lower-story window.

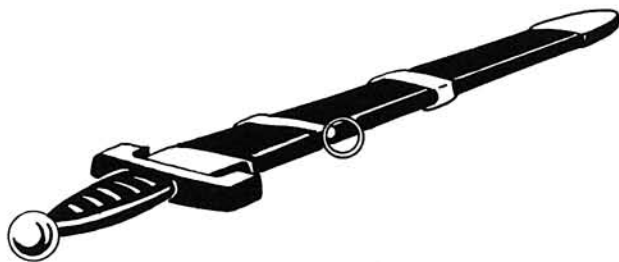
If you climb through a window, turn to 359.

If you leave, turn to 62.

492 This is a good find; you may equip yourself from the Pict goods stored here. You find large numbers of short swords, hatchets*, throwing axes*, spears, short and regular bows (with arrows), and knives — as much as you can carry.

Items marked "*" above are made of bronze or poor steel, and are of *cheap* quality (see p. B59).

When you finish plundering this building, turn to 429 if you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, or 62 if you don't have this PlotWord.



493 As you prepare to battle the warrior woman, a memory plays tag at the fringes of your mind . . .

Milkius! He was an officer of archers when you came to Tuscelan. The man kept a woman at the fort, one of the camp followers. One night, in a jealous rage, she came at him with a knife — and in a stupor of sleep, Milkius slew her instead of subduing her.

Valannus had him *hung*. Aquilonia's laws are pitiless toward those who kill women — even in a duel.

If you still fight, turn to 438. If you back down, turn to 461.

494 You lose sight of companions and canoe as the tumbling waters push you downstream.

Try a Swimming Roll. There is a penalty equal to twice your encumbrance level. If you are Fat, remember your +5 bonus. If you want to discard armor or equipment, see p. B81.

If you fail the Swimming roll, the amount by which you fail is the amount of fatigue you receive. If you are unconscious, you drown in Black River.

If you survive the Swimming roll, roll one die. The number rolled is the number of hexes you move south. You wash ashore at a land hex adjacent to the river hex you are now in. Roll again: if you roll 1-5, you wash up on the Pict bank; otherwise, you land in Conajohara.

For every hex you are swept downriver, add one hour to your Current Time.

Turn to 153.

495 Success! You strike the spoor of some savage who passed this way. The signs are clear: A single person, barefoot, stalks the Velitrium road. The manner of the trail, looping from one covered position to another, paralleling the well-traveled road, suggests a Pictish brave on a solitary raid. The trail leads east, toward Velitrium and the settled regions of Conajohara.

Following a Pict trail challenges the best of scouts. The savage woodsmen are expert at hiding their passage. They are also crafty: many a forester, thinking to track them down, has met an arrow shot from ambush by a Pict who doubled back.

If you scout the trail, turn to 278.

If you avoid this challenge, add 2 hours to your Current Time and turn to 98.



496 The crowd rebukes the upstart. An older sergeant steps forward. "To first blood," he says. Quickly, others second the vote.

The bald man nods, and turns to address you and your foe. "So let it be. Battle to the first blood. And when we say 'first blood,' gentlemen," he says, stepping closer, "we mean that you should fight skillfully. No killings. The one who kills will have to deal with me next."

Under his command, the soldiers outline in the dirt a boundary for the duel. Other men relieve you and your opponent of personal weapons, replacing them with identical weapons. Likewise, your armor is exchanged for typical infantry gear. Eager to witness the mayhem, men crowd close to the line. Latecomers bring benches and stand on them to better witness the contest. You glimpse a watching eye or two — probably female — behind the partially open shutters of the blockhouse.

"Begin!" shouts the bald man.

Use Combat Map G. The boundary on the map is the dirt line drawn by the soldiers. Thorus is at B. For stats, see the Gunderman on p. 60. You are at A. Your armor is identical to that worn by Thorus (recalculate Encumbrance and Speed).

Due to the press of spectators, it is impossible to exit the arena. If either character hits a spectator, the duel is called off, and the offending character loses the tourney.

If your opponent receives the first wound, turn to 558 if you have the PlotWord *VALOROUS*, or to 398 if you have the PlotWord *BRAVE*.

If you receive the first wound, turn to 330.

If you are knocked unconscious, turn to 419.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

497 The wilderness is full of war parties. Zogar Sag must be gathering aid from throughout Pictland. Your enemies are four Picts — see p. 3 to determine the tribe. Turn to 421.

498 If a Pict falls unconscious from exhaustion, he drops out of the chase. If all the Picts drop out, you win — turn to 530.

If the woman is with you and drops unconscious, you must stop — turn to 470.

If you lose consciousness, turn to 243.

499 There is no hope. The massed warriors overpower you. Turn to 100.

500 In the silence of the forest, your anxiety raises the slightest of sounds to nerve-shredding levels. Was that the noise of a small animal moving through the trees, or a Pict scout tracking you down?

Turn to 544.

501 An hour passes. You may use this time for healing. Turn to 459.

502 There's little time to think — a figure lunges at you from the darkness. He calls your name angrily. The language is Aquilonian . . . and so is your attacker. He's Julian, an officer from Tuscelan!

Use Combat Map B. Place Julian at D. Stats for Julian are given on p. 60. You are at A. Place your companions anywhere between A and E.

Turn to 456.

503 The great cat springs upon your fallen comrade, clamping its mighty jaws about the body and tearing it from side to side. Before you can move, the beast leaps for the wilderness with its bloody prey.

Turn to 479.

504 As you stand triumphantly over the slaughtered animal, the weird magic of the forest works again. Outlines confuse: beast and girl, girl and beast, beast and girl. At last, one form remains — a beautiful, dying maiden.

She looks up with pleading eyes. Bending low, you hear her whisper, "Julian! My love . . ." Then she is dead.

This battle was ominously silent. Turn to 429 (if you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*) or 62 (otherwise).

505 You flail at the shaggy creature. Your foe is a mighty challenge — a bull ape, a species which Picts hold sacred to the gorilla-god Gullah, the Hairy One Who Lives On The Moon.

Use Combat Map B. Disregard the furniture. Half-hexes may not be used for movement. You are at C. Place your companions (if they are with you) in any hex between C and F. The altar and the ape are at A. The bull ape (see p. 59) is chained, and must remain within two hexes of A.

Fight the battle.

Roll one die at the start of every round of combat. If a 6 is rolled, turn immediately to 262.

If you are at the entrance and desire to flee, turn to 184.

If you are unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If everyone in your party is dead or unconscious, turn to 100.

If you kill the bull ape, or if you get past it to the far side of the building, turn to 429 (if you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*) or 62 (if you do not have this PlotWord).

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

506 A single savage swing is enough to fell the fat man, leaving him lying in his entrails. But you've made a wrong move — the monster is on you before you can free your weapon from the bloody carcass.

Use Combat Map A. You are at T11. The beast is at F. The fat man was Tiberias the merchant — he lies at T12 and the adjacent western hex. If your companion is with you, place him at W4.

When you are ready, turn to 542 (if you have the PlotWord *MIGHTY*) or 416 (if you have the PlotWord *TRIUMPHANT*).

507 Getting to the palatial hut takes time, as it lies on the distant side of Gwawela. More than once you dart for cover, to find only a stray dog or fowl wandering across your trail. Every savage of importance seems to be at the central gathering.

At last you stand on the empty pathway before the great hut, festooned with wreathed flowers and fragrant vines.

Try a Hearing roll.

If you succeed, turn to 550. If you fail, turn to 103.

508 You dash toward the tree line, hoping to lose your enemy in the darkness.

Each opponent involved in personal combat with you follows. If you are followed by a single foe, every opponent in sight of you makes an IQ roll, starting with the nearest — those who make their rolls also follow, to a maximum of three pursuers.

Your companions can escape with you. Determine pursuers for *each* individual fleeing, in any order desired, as above.

Turn to 364.

509 Your speech impresses them. "I'll go!" cries one. "I'll not sit on my arse while Conajohara falls to the Picts!"

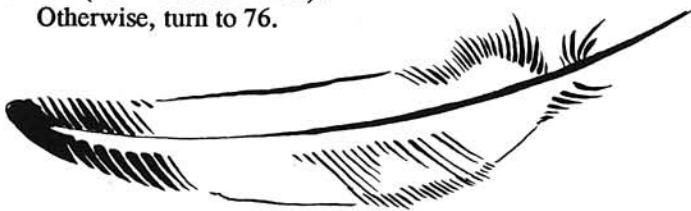
Roll one die, and subtract 2 from the number. This is the number of soldiers who volunteer to join you. There will always be at least one volunteer, no matter what you roll. Stats for the soldiers are given on pp. 60-61. You may accept as many or as few of the volunteers as you like.

Return to 2.

510 If it is 6 p.m. or later Friday night, turn to 167. If you are adjacent to a river hex and wish to cross the river, turn to 65.

If you are adjacent to one of the following hexes, you may enter by turning to: 91 (Gwawela village), 21 (Fort Tuscelan), or 557 ("to Velitrium" hex).

Otherwise, turn to 76.



511 Suddenly the savages are gone — fleeing for their lives after the fall of their war leader. You look down at his body, wondering who he might have been, that his defeat should have so affected his men.

Return to the paragraph you were at when the Pict fell.

512 As your hand seeks your weapon, Glorious' hand descends to the hilt of her shortsword.

"Once drawn," she warns, "this sword will not be sheathed until it drinks of your blood."

If you draw your sword, turn to 546.

If you back down, turn to 461.

If you try an old fighting man's trick to disarm Glorius, turn to 316.

513 The man's thrashings come to an end. He looks dead.

Turn to 383.

514 The gate swings inward. "Been an exciting night for you?" asks the guard chief, an old friend.

"Not really," you say, giving a brief, censored report of your activities. "What about here?"

The chief jerks his head, motioning you toward a side room. "I've got something I think you'll want to see." You follow him to a room normally used for storage. There, lying pallid on the plank floor, is Tiberias' body, without its head.

"Valannus ordered us to bring him down and stow him here," explains your friend. "We just found him, strung up on a pole outside the gate." He lowers his voice. "The governor thinks he can hush this up, but the garrison *knows*. Zogar Sag has his fifth victim — guess who's next."

You grunt. "I'm off to the barracks."

"No, you aren't," says the guard. "Valannus left orders for you to report to him as soon as you returned from patrol."

Turn to 154.

515 *You have the PlotWord RECKLESS.*

As you run through the winding passages of the savages' village, the mob is close behind you — dozens of enraged Picts. You dive around a corner just as a spear grazes your shoulder. An attacker charges from a darkened hut — you parry the blow, knock the man into a refuse pile, and run on. Survival depends on losing your pursuers — *fast*.

If you've been alone, your companions with which you entered Gwawela rejoin you now.

Try a Stealth roll. Your score is modified by your encumbrance and by the number of companions you have (-1 for each).

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 556.

If you score a critical success, turn to 476.

If you fail the roll, turn to 469.

On a critical failure, turn to 439.



516 As the serpent dazedly unloops itself from the altar, your shot strikes home. Blood spurts profusely. The slithering creature jerks, rears up to its full height — then falls back, loop upon loop. Vainly, the creature repeats the process. It is as if the snake were trying to *stand* . . .

The old shaman shrieks, dancing with rage. He cuts the prisoner loose, then stares into the darkness.

Turn to 462.

517 “Stay alone here with this corpse, and Pictish devils running through these woods?” yelps your partner. “I’m coming with you!”

Turn to 452.

518 “I can solve that mystery,” you declare. Valannus eyes you thoughtfully and motions for you to continue. You describe the wounding of Zogar Sag in the Pict village.

“Is he dead?” demands Valannus.

“I couldn’t tell,” you reply. “His braves carried him away before we could finish him.”

“With the witch doctor injured or dead,” says the governor, “the tribes would disperse. No savage in his right mind follows a shaman who can be hurt by common arrows.”

“No one except Zogar Sag’s own tribe,” you say. “The Hawks had to shed blood to regain the honor they lost when my men and I raided their village. It was they who attacked.”

“If you hadn’t wounded him in Gwawela, he’d have had his entire army here,” says Valannus.

Turn to 560.

519 “I’d rather not . . .” you tell Valannus.

“I’m not asking,” says the governor, setting his face like a rock. “If you won’t go voluntarily, I’ll order you to go. If you still won’t go, armed men wait outside this door — so you can go, or rot in Hell!”

There isn’t much choice in this matter.

Turn to 141.

520 A wild elation pours through you — a feeling of oneness with the wilderness, a wild awareness of being a predator full of the power of death, and an energy and alertness that overrules all doubts.

Without the snap of a twig, without exposing yourself to the enemies around you, you turn the tables. The Picts are the hunted. You are now the hunter. You catch the savages in a most deadly error.

Use Combat Map A. Consider the eastern trail edge to be the bank of the river. Place Picts at W6, W9 and W8. If you haven’t already, roll one die to determine the Picts’ tribe (see p. 3).

You are at W12. Your advantage is surprise — the Picts are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

Turn to 8.

521 If you fight it, turn to 555. If you flee into the forest, turn to 449.

522 If you climb the village wall, turn to 256. If you decide to leave Gwawela through the main gate, roll one die. On a 1 or 2, turn to 408; on any other roll, turn to 84.

523 You move silently through the woods, creeping ever closer to your chosen place of concealment. You catch fragments of conversation. Something about Fort Tuscelan . . .

Then your luck runs out. As you come about the great bole of an oak, you find yourself face to face with a brown, waddling bird. You freeze, hoping the fowl will remain silent. Unfortunately, the loon takes to the air, echoing its weird, laughing call throughout the woods. You hear raised voices from the clearing — the call of the bird has alerted them that something stirs in the woods.

If you approach the pair openly, demanding that they surrender, turn to 450.

If you would rather return to the fort, turn to 28.

524 Out of the darkness, dropping from stout tree limbs above, descend Pict braves — intent on a harvest of invader's blood.

Use Combat Map F. Place the characters in your group within the canoe, kneeling, one per hex. Roll on the Random Victim Table (p. 3) for each of the six Pict braves. *If the indicated victim is not in your group, do not roll again — the brave falls overboard instead.* Use the instructions on p. 3 to determine the Picts' tribe. Picts have a single weapon in hand, but it is not ready on the first round.

When you first fell one of your opponents, write down the number of the paragraph where you are, and then turn to 473.

Turn to 297.

525 “No,” you answer. The reply is a growl. To your terror, the girl transforms into a snarling, biting creature that is part human and part ape. Yellow fangs stretch for your neck.

The beast is a chaken (see p. 59). It bites at your neck. Resolve the attack, including any defense you make. Do not set up the Combat Map.

If the chaken injures you, turn to 373. If you are undamaged, turn to 478.

526 If you have the PlotWord *RECKLESS*, turn to 429. There is no time for further climbing.

If you do not this PlotWord, return to 256.

527 The sight which follows makes your blood run cold. The serpent devours your companion in a single bite, taking man and stake in the same gulp. Then, sluggish with its bloated belly, it slithers toward the forest.

The Pict assembly breaks up. Someone spots you and shouts an alarm. You run.

Turn to 429.

528 Something catches your eyes. You turn . . . just as Thorus lunges at you with a knife!

Turn to 427.

529 The smoke clears away. The prisoner and the snake lie limply on the altar. The shaman seizes the neck of the snake, uncoiling the trunk from the altar. The great reptile oozes to the ground. The shaman tumbles the body down to lie at the side of the serpent, cutting the thongs that bind ankle and wrist.

As Zogar Sag commences to dance, snake and prisoner move. You fight an urge to retch. As the man moves away from the fire, he does not walk but *wriggles* on his belly, casting his tongue out and in again — while the serpent, shaking with convulsions, rears itself up again and again only to fall back on its own coils . . . as if it were trying to stand.

By the black, primordial sorcery that spawns and thrives in this primal forest, a feather-bestrewn witch doctor has transferred the soul of a man into the foul body of a serpent.

The shaman, howling like a wolf, slits the throats of man and snake. And, gods! it is the serpent's trunk that quivers, jerks and then lies still, and the man's body that rolls and knots and thrashes like a beheaded snake.

If you attack the shaman with an arrow or similar ranged weapon, turn to 200.

If you wade into the crowd and kill Picts, turn to 170.

If you wait, turn to 471.

530 Gasping, you call on the deep reservoirs of endurance developed in a tough life. There is no time to pick an easy path. You batter through whatever obstacles present themselves. At length the demoniac howling of your pursuers dies away. You've outrun them.

If the settler woman is with you, turn to 331. If not, turn to 385.

531 A lone scout glides through the forest, seeking out strangers within the wilderness realm. You know that tribal scouts are tough, intelligent and brave — they give no quarter.

Your enemy is a single Pict. Use the rules on p. 3 to determine his tribe.

Turn to 421.



532 You charge toward the wooden stake, daring the rows and rows of braves to tangle with you.

Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 87. If you fail, turn to 499.

533 One of the scouts, Jehan, sidles up to you as you devour the dinner slop. “We’ve heard about the raid. You’ve got all the volunteers you’ll need, I think.”

“Thanks,” you grunt.

Roll two dice, and subtract 2 from the result. If you have been given a morale modifier for the scouts, add this score to the number rolled. The result is the number of scouts who volunteer. There will always be at least one volunteer, no matter what you roll. Stats for the scouts are given on p. 61.

Return to 2.

534 The soft witch light moves through the trees faster than you can match. You snarl a savage curse. If you have a thrown weapon, you hurl it ferociously. But the thing glides on without altering its course.

Then it is gone, and the forest crouches in breathless stillness.

Turn to 215.

535 At any time during this battle, you or your companions may try to pick up one of the weapons lying around this barracks. Weapons are found in two places: in wall racks (along the short walls) and benches (along the long walls). No skill roll is needed.

Benches. Grabbing a weapon from a bench takes just one turn. Roll one die and consult the table below to see what weapon you obtain.

Wall racks. It takes two turns to free a weapon from either of the wall racks, but you may select any weapon from the table below — no die roll is needed.

- 1 Shortsword
- 2 Hatchet*
- 3 Throwing Axe*
- 4 Spear
- 5 Short bow**
- 6 Regular bow**

* “cheap” weapon (see p. B59)

** You may substitute two dice worth of arrows instead, in an optional quiver.

Return to 456.

536 This must be a Ligurean, of the race of light-skinned savages who also dwell in these woods — commonly at war with the Picts, but sometimes allied. A Ligurean is as fair as an Aquilonian. The Picts are black-eyed, black-haired and swarthy of skin.

If you have the PlotWord *HEROIC*, turn to 178. If you don't have this PlotWord, turn to 73.

537 You hear a surreptitious footfall, paralleling your own, then a familiar whistle, mimicking the cry of a jay. You return the call.

Stepping into a small clearing, you meet Agajon, one of the scouts from Fort Tuscelan. Feeling some of the same unease that you do, he will accompany you on your patrol until you return to the fort.

He uses the regular scout description on p. 61.

Roll one die. On a 1,2 or 3, turn to 69; on any other roll, turn to 125.

538 "Coward," mutters the warrior woman, diving into the leafy darkness after the pleading victim.

If you follow, turn to 452.

If you stay here, turn to 356.

539 With Valannus' message to the king tucked safely in your belt, you set out from the fort. As Valannus ordered, any men who accompanied you earlier are with you now, as you flee across Conajohara towards Velitrium.

Into the night you stride, as the sky fades. At the top of a hill, you pause, looking back at the western horizon. Though the sky above is dark, the orange glow of sunset has not faded from the west. As you ponder this strange aurora, your men gather around you. One of them speaks.

"The savages have taken Fort Tuscelan," he says glumly. "They have slain our comrades, and put the buildings to the torch."

With a pang of guilt, you realize that the fellow is correct — the glow is the reflected light of the burning fort.

"We must move on," you grunt. "The Picts will soon be on our heels. We must carry our message to Velitrium, and aid in that city's defense." So saying, you turn once again to the east, marching down the Velitrium road.

As you predicted, the savage hordes of the Picts do reach Thunder River. You arrive only a few hours before the fighting comes to Velitrium. Hundreds of settlers from Conajohara pour into the city, fleeing the advance of the Picts — but many more die in the night, their cabins burned down around them because they were not warned of the attack.

In the battle at Velitrium, you and your men fight bravely. Finally, the painted savages are thrown back across Thunder River. But in slaying these Picts, you find no satisfaction, or even consolation. The cost to the men of Fort Tuscelan and the settlers of Conajohara has been too great.

Turn to 147.



540 You launch a flurry of assaults on the traitor, which he parries poorly but adequately. Then he is gone, disappearing in the crowd.

Turn to 121.

541 An enormous bulk crashes into you. The world explodes. Your adventure is over.

542 The creature is gnarled and misshapen, though in form like a man. Thick fur covers its body, and it has the chinless, low-browed head of an ape. Its hands, stretched out toward you, are armed with long black talons.

Your opponent is a chaken (see p. 59).

Turn to 386.



543 As your force sweeps forward, a charge by Pict braves takes your unit in the flank. Gunderman pikemen pile backwards in terror, dying by the score.

You find yourself with your back to the blockhouse. Savages continue to attack and their bodies continue to stack up around you, but your fatigue grows. A thrown javelin at last brings you down. As you gasp your dying breath, howling savages throw your body on top of the heap of dead they plan to incinerate when they fire the fort.

Conajohara has fallen. Fort Tuscelan is destroyed and will never be rebuilt. You are dead. Your adventure is over.

544 Move your party to any non-river hex adjacent to your current hex. Add 2 hours to your Current Time.

Turn to 459.

545 The flames of the creature lap at you, bringing a chill colder than ice. Your eyes are dazzled by the brilliance of the blue-green flames.

You lose 1 ST to fatigue point on any turn in which you are in physical contact with this creature.

Return to the paragraph which sent you here.

546 Try an IQ roll. If you succeed, turn to 493. If you fail, turn to 438.

547 “You’re not leaving me out of this fight!” shouts Glorious, crashing through the branches behind you.

Turn to 452.

548 You travel one river hex to the north. An hour passes — update your Current Time.

Roll one die. If you roll a 6, turn to 357. Otherwise, turn to 484.

549 If you instantly attack the creature, turn to 460. If you assault the fat man, turn to 506.

If you wait and see what happens, turn to 433.

If you turn tail and flee, turn to 326.

550 As you step out of the shadows, your heightened senses collect a faint warning: inhabitants! You catch a whispered conversation, soft voices calling to one another in the Pict tongue. The sounds come from the upper portion of this structure and sound feminine.

Turn to 300.

551 Fight the battle.

Roll two dice at the start of every round. If you roll a 5 and don’t know that Slasher is dead, record the number of this paragraph and turn immediately to 315. If you roll an 11 or 12, are battling Picts, and do not have the PlotWord *COURAGEOUS*, write down the number of this paragraph and then turn immediately to 15.

If you are fighting Picts: when you first fell an opponent, write down the number of this paragraph, and turn to 473.

If you wish to flee, write down this paragraph number, and turn to 508.

If you are unconscious, continue the battle using your companions.

If everyone in your party is unconscious, turn to 100.

If you win the battle, turn to 67.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.

552 You shake your head, standing with your arms folded and head slightly bent — a somber and brooding figure.

“The fort’s doomed,” you say. “The Picts are blood mad and won’t stop until they’re all dead. There are too many braves for the soldiers in the fort to kill. We can’t break through, and if we did, we could do nothing except die with them.”

“So we can only save our own hides,” your companion bitterly concludes.

“And warn the settlers,” you reply. “Do you know why the Picts aren’t burning the fort with fire-arrows? They don’t want a flame that might warn the settlers to flee. They plan to crush the fort, then sweep east before anyone knows of its fall. The Picts may cross Thunder River and take Velitrium before anyone can stop them.

“We failed to warn the fort. It would have done little good — the fort’s too poorly manned. A few more charges, and the Picts will be over the walls.”

Turn to 151.

553 Your blade carves a wide path for escape as you make your way from the battle, leading as many of the surviving pikemen with you as you can. A handful of straggling archers joins you on the fringes of the woods. The fort is burning. It is Pict tradition to burn captured forts, incinerate the dead, and butcher prisoners.

The triumphant braves are not vigilant. It is easy to escape into the countryside. Your goal: Velitrium and safety.

Roll one die and add 3 — this is the number of Gundermen (see p. 60) in your party. Roll one die, and subtract 2 — this is the number of Bossonian archers (see p. 61) who join your party as you flee. To determine each man’s current HT, roll one die — this is the amount of hits he’s taken (but no man is lower than half HT).

Add 2 hours to your Current Time and turn to 557.

554 You draw your weapon, eager for a taste of blood. The men behind you share this lust. Like an avalanche, you descend on the enemy.

In the encounter which follows, your opponents are surprised — though their weapons are ready, they are *mentally stunned* (see p. 3).

If you are in a trail or road hex, turn to 115.

If you aren’t, turn to 455.

555 Use Combat Map C. Place the sabertoothed tiger (see p. 59) at S. Place your characters within four hexes of F.

Fight the battle.

If anyone in your party is dead or unconscious, turn immediately to 503.

If you flee, turn to 449.

If you win the battle, you escape the village. Turn to 153.

If you are killed, your adventure is over.



556 Running will get you nowhere. Sooner or later the primitives will think to search Gwawela systematically — you'll never escape. It's time to hide. You look for a likely shelter.

Roll one die, and divide the number rolled by 2 (round up). Count down the boxes below until you count a number of boxes equal to the number rolled. Cross that box out, and turn to the associated paragraph. If all the boxes are crossed out, begin fresh by erasing all of the marks.

- ☐ Turn to 122.
- ☐ Turn to 182.
- ☐ Turn to 86.

557 If it is midnight Friday or earlier, turn to 441. If it isn't, turn to 216.

558 The Gunderman challenges you with a strong assault, but your defense forces him back. As he reels, sweating and winded, you press your advantage. His reactions unsure, his vision blurred, your enemy gives you an opening — and you score. The contest is over.

The cheering of the soldiers is intense. They close in around you, slapping your back. Your name is chanted over and over.

Try a Vision roll, at a -4 penalty due to the disturbance of the crowd and your own fatigue.

If you succeed at the roll, turn to 528. If you fail, turn to 468.

559 You cleave the air with your blade, daring the spirits to fight. To your regret, the demons of the forest make no reply. Meanwhile, the victim's thrashings end — he's dead.

Turn to 383.

560 The governor looks sheepish. "This ruins everything. I had begun my report to King Numedides, explaining how our staunch defense defeated the Pict hordes. Now I have to rewrite it — and give the credit for saving an entire province to just one person. You're about to be noticed in royal circles, my friend."

You snort. "I'd rather have a stiff drink, my hazard pay and my leave time. I know this place in Velitrium . . ."

THE END

Character Points

At the end of your adventure, award yourself character points as follows:

If you have the PlotWord *MAGNIFICENT* at the end of play, or if you save Fort Tuscelan, you receive 4 character points. If both of these conditions are met, you get 6 character points — well done!

If you survive Gwawela and warn the settlers on the road to Velitrium, give yourself 3 points.

If you get out of Gwawela alive, give yourself 2 points.

If you never reach Gwawela, give yourself 1 point.

If you kill Glorious, or if you are taken prisoner by the Picts, subtract one character point from the amount listed above.

If you rescue your companions from Gwawela, or if you kill Julian, add a bonus character point to the amount listed above.

Total experience given for this adventure should not exceed 8 points — 6 points for saving the fort and having *MAGNIFICENT*, and 1 each for killing Julian and rescuing your companions. Conan himself earned 4 points in the original story — he didn't save the fort, but he did warn the settlers and rescue his companions.



CHARACTERS

Animals

The animals encountered in this adventure are presented here in full *GURPS Bestiary* format, so that they can be easily used in your face-to-face *GURPS* campaigns. For most animals, we offer *ranges* for ST and HT, defining the upper and lower strength and health limits for the species. When an animal is encountered in this adventure, use the ST and HT values in parentheses after the ranges. All sizes are given in hexes.

Anaconda

ST 12-24 (20), DX 13, IQ 3, HT 15/15-30 (25).

Speed 2-4 (3); Dodge 6; Size 5-11 (9).

PD 0, DR 0.

Attacks: Grapple: 1 die crushing.

The preferred tactic of this common Pictland snake is to drop by surprise from the trees on passers-by.

Chaken

ST 16-18 (18), DX 14, IQ 6, HT 14/16-18 (17).

Speed 10; Dodge 6; Size 1.

PD 1, DR 1.

Attacks: Claw: 1 die cutting.

The chaken is vaguely manlike in form, with gnarled, misshapen limbs and a bulky body. It is covered in thick fur. The beast has the chinless, low-browed head of an ape, tapering to a furry peak. Its hands are armed with long black talons. It has flaming red eyes.

These sub-humans have a powerful sense of smell, allowing them to track through the most tangled woods (Smell roll of 16). Pictish shamans sometimes tame young chakens for use as bloodhounds and assassins.

Chaken dwell in nomadic troops of 30-50, dominated by the largest bulls. Fortunately, the beasts dislike men and avoid their settlements.

Some scholars contend that chaken are semi-intelligent. According to some reports, the elusive beasts sometimes adopt ruined structures as holy sites and defend them against all comers.

Forest Snake

ST 12-15 (13), DX 14, IQ 6, HT 14/16-18 (16).

Speed 2-4 (3); Dodge 6; Size 5-11 (8).

PD 1, DR 2.

Attacks: Grapple: 1-1 to 1+1 (1) crushing.

These huge serpents of the forest commonly hang by their tails from strong branches and snare their prey when unlucky creatures brush past them on a trail.

See "Ghost Snake" below for an explanation of how constriction works. Constriction does 1-3 crushing damage per turn — only plate armor protects.

Ghost Snake

ST 27-33 (30), DX 13, IQ 3, HT 16/30-50 (40).

Speed 4; Dodge 4; Size 5-8 (7).

PD 0, DR 0.

Attacks: Grapple: 3-1 to 4+2 (3); Spitting venom — see below.

The only living creature feared by a Pict, legends abound of these giants entering huts and engorging the inhabitants — whole.

These reptiles are pale-colored and nocturnal. While slithering on their bellies, these creatures keep their heads erect; their eyes are just about at human eye-level. They are mute. Ghost Snakes are solitary.

Damage is done by constricting. Once the snake gets a successful "grapple," it starts to squeeze. The squeezing does crushing damage equal to the beast's basic thrust damage, and continues each turn until the victim escapes or the snake is dead. A person caught in its coils must roll a successful Contest of ST to escape. Only plate armor protects against the attack, but it does so at full DR.

Ghost Snakes also have a very potent venom (Type S) which they spit: Max. range = size of spitter (min. 1), -1/hex. It does only 1 HT damage, but blinds its victim (-10 on any combat skill) for 5 minutes if a roll against HT-4 is failed. If the roll is made, the victim is blinded for 3-18 seconds. The venom causes intense pain — 4 to IQ for the duration of its effect. The venom is effective only if it contacts the victim's eyes; to hit the eyes, the snake must aim for the head, taking a -5 to hit.

Jewel Snake

ST 2, DX 13, IQ 3, HT 15/2

Speed 1; Dodge 6; Size <1.

PD 0, DR 0.

Attacks: Venomous bite — see below.

This miniature snake resembles a brightly colored bracelet. Its bite does 1 HT of damage, and delivers a noxious venom (Type X): Anyone injected dies within 3-18 minutes *unless* the venom is removed before it spreads through the bloodstream. The bite is effective against bare skin only.

Removing the venom is easy enough: you must suck out the blood (a trivial task requiring no skill roll — it takes 5 minutes). Once the blood has been sucked, the victim must make a roll against HT-3. The penalty for failure is death — the venom has already reached the heart. If the roll is successful, you are alive but fatigued — take half your ST in fatigue. Roll one die: no strenuous efforts may be made for this number of hours, or a new HT roll is required — unflushed venom can still kill.

Jewel snakes are often used by Pict shamans as the instruments of vengeance and assassination.

Pict Ape

ST 20-24 (24), DX 13, IQ 6, HT 14/16-20 (20).

Speed 7; Dodge 6; Size 1.

PD 1, DR 1.

Attacks: Bite: 1 die cutting; Slap: 1+1 crushing; Strangling: Grappling with both hands to suffocate.

These large primates are known throughout Pictland, while related species are common throughout Hyboria. The male is the "bull ape."

Pict apes form troops of 5-15 animals, usually consisting of a single bull, 3-5 adult females, and 5-10 infant apes. Pict apes are territorial, and will defend their home against intruders. However, troop apes prefer to fight safely, often contenting themselves with throwing stones from a distance.

Bull apes compete for dominance over troops. Patriarchs must often contend with challenges from troopless bulls — the resulting combat is violent, quick and decisive.

Most dangerous to travelers are those bulls too young or old to hold a troop. Young bulls are solitary, often seeking combat against adventurers who trespass within the ape's territory. Old bulls act similarly, and are often insane.

Solitary bulls attack by grappling their victims, and then repeatedly biting (1 die cutting damage). They may also attack with a slap (1+1 crushing up to 1-hex reach — rarely done) or by strangling.

Young apes are sometimes tamed by the Picts, especially for religious rites — the ape is held sacred to the Hairy One Who Lives on the Moon, the gorilla-god of Gullah. Picts avoid slaying Pict Apes.

Sabertoothed Tiger

ST 26-32 (30), DX 12, IQ 4, HT 14/20-24 (23).

Speed 8; Dodge 6; Size 2.

PD 1, DR 1.

Attacks: Bite: 2+1 impaling.

Known scientifically as the *smilodon*, this beast is uncommon except in the remotest reaches of Pictland. Longer and heavier than a tiger and almost as bulky as a bear, the sabertoothed tiger is a *stabbing* rather than a biting cat: its serrated teeth (sometimes a foot long) are adapted for slicing through thick skin to the jugular vein. Mighty muscles in chest and shoulders give it a top-heavy look, while the jaws are disproportionately large in its low-slung savage head.

These great carnivores seldom live in groups larger than two or three. They are diurnal except where men dwell. Man-eaters are common, as sabertoothed tigers enjoy battle and are without fear. They tend to bite repeatedly, rather than bite and hold as other cats do.

Slasher the Dog

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 5, HT 15/12.
Speed 8; Dodge 6; Size 1.
PD 0, DR 0.
Attacks: Bite: 1-1 cutting.

Slasher is a domestic dog reverted to the savage life. He bites in close combat. Once he bites, Slasher will not let go until he is stunned or his victim stops resisting.

Slasher is good at scenting: his Smell roll is 14. If the text says your characters are mentally stunned, immediately make a Smell roll for Slasher — if successful, he warns you, and the “mentally stunned” penalty is cancelled.

Swamp Devil

ST 12, DX 16, IQ 8, HT 12/10.
Speed 12; Dodge 8; Size 1.
PD 2, DR 1.
Attacks: Claw (feet): 2-1 cutting.

The swamp devil is a mysterious creature, common in certain swamps of Pictland. These creatures are never seen in daylight — yet at the instant of nightfall, the air of the swamp is filled with their horrendous caterwauling.

Tall as a man, a swamp devil's upper anatomy is humanoid, but from waist down it is birdlike. A flickering glow envelopes it like a billowing cloud or cloak, dazzling enemies and concealing its limbs. For this reason, swamp devils are -1 to be hit.

Legends tell of swamp devils changing into vapor, and talking (even mimicking others). Some Pict shamans tame individual swamp devils.

Also known as swamp demons.

Conan of Cimmeria

Conan is a barbarian from Cimmeria. He says of himself, “I’ve been a mercenary captain, a corsair, a *kozak*, a penniless vagabond, a general — hell, I’ve been everything except a king of a civilized country, and I may be that, before I die.” (“Beyond the Black River,” in *Conan the Warrior*, p. 198)

You will find a character sheet for Conan on p. 64. This sheet is not intended as a complete character description for Conan the Barbarian — such a list of skills and advantages would take several pages! This description details the abilities Conan uses in *this* adventure.

Note that Conan has already bought off his Social Stigma for being a barbarian — in the original story, Balthus didn’t realize Conan was a barbarian until the Cimmerian tells him.

Aquilonians and their Allies

Glorious

Age 19; auburn hair, olive-tinged skin, delicate face, deep voice; 5’ 9”, 140 lbs.
ST 14, DX 15, IQ 10, HT 10.
Basic Speed 6.25; Move 5.
Dodge 5; Parry 8.

Mail shirt: PD 3 (1 vs. impaling), DR 4 (2 vs. impaling) (torso and arms only); Steel cap: PD 3, DR 4 (head only); Heavy leather boots: PD 2, DR 2 (feet only); Light encumbrance.

Advantages: Appearance (Beautiful); Charisma +1; Strong Will +3; Toughness (DR 1).
Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Overconfidence; Jealousy.

Quirks: Likes to wear chainmail; Respects power; Afraid of being scarred; Likes barbarians.

Skills: Broadsword-16; Knife-16; Shortsword-17; Stealth-16; Swimming-14.

Equipment: Shortsword: 2 dice cutting, 1 impaling; Small knife: 2-3 cutting, 1-1 impaling.

Balthus of Tauran

Age 17; blond hair, open-faced, well-built; 5’ 10”, 155 lbs.

ST 15, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 13.

Basic Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 7.

Soft buckskin boots: PD 1, DR 1 (feet only); No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2; Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (to Aquilonia).

Quirks: Seeks danger; Worries about being “snuck up on”; Hungry; Idolizes scouts; Patriotic.

Skills: Knife-15; Shortsword-14; Stealth-14; Swimming-12; Tracking-12.

Equipment: Shortsword: 2+1 cutting, 1+1 impaling; Large knife: 2-1 cutting, 1+1 impaling.

Balthus wears a coarse tunic, has a soft buckskin pouch, and carries his knife in his boottop.

Tiberias of Velitrium

Late 40s; pale face and thick throat; 5’ 7”, 210 lbs.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 11.

Basic Speed 5.75; Move 4.

Dodge 4; Parry 7.

Gilt-worked heavy leather boots: PD 2, DR 2 (feet only); Light encumbrance.

Advantages: Literacy; Mathematical Ability; Reputation (Merchant) +1; Wealth (Wealthy).

Disadvantages: Enemy (Zogar Sag; appears on 15 or less); Fat (-2 reaction); Greed.

Quirks: Vengeful; Fastidious; Likes expensive furs; Believes bribery makes the world go around; Never admits error.

Skills: Accounting-18; Calligraphy-11; Dancing-13; Detect Lies-12; Fast-Talk-15; First Aid-14; Knife-14; Knife Throwing-13; Merchant-18; Poisons-11; Riding-11; Savoir-Faire-14; Shortsword-14; Sleight of Hand-12; Stealth-14; Swimming-13.

Languages: Gesture-12; Pict-12; Aquilonian-14; Sign Language-15.

Equipment: Shortsword: 1-2 cutting, 1 impaling; Dagger: 1-1 impaling.

Tiberias also carries \$200 worth of trade goods (pelts), and 36 gold coins (each worth \$20) in a leather pouch.

Julian

Late 30s; pale complexion, hawk-like features; 5’ 7”, 140 lbs.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 13.

Basic Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 7 (Shortsword), 6 (Hatchet).

Soft leather shoes: PD 1, DR 1 (feet only); No encumbrance.

Advantages: High Pain Threshold; Intuition; Literacy; Military Rank 5; Status 3 (junior member of obscure noble family); Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Major Delusion (Rival officers are plotting to ruin him); Jealousy; Lecherousness.

Quirks: Walks oddly; Attracted to savage women.

Skills: Acting-12; Administration-10; Axe/Mace-14; Broadsword-14; Diplomacy-12; Gambling-10; Knife-14; Leadership-10; Occultism (Pict)-10; Poetry-10; Politics-10; Sex Appeal-12; Shortsword-15.

Languages: Aquilonian-12; Pict-11; Sign Language-11.

Equipment: Shortsword: 1 die cutting, 1-2 impaling; Hatchet: 1 die cutting; Large knife: 1-2 cutting, 1-2 impaling.

Gunderman

Mid-20s; yellow hair cut square and confined beneath a steel cap, fair skin and steely eyes; compactly built.

ST 13, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 13.

Basic Speed 6.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 6; Block 4.

Mail shirt: PD 3 (1 vs. impaling), DR 4 (2 vs. impaling) (torso and arms only); Steel cap: PD 3, DR 4 (head only); Heavy leather boots: PD 2, DR 2 (feet only); Polished leg-pieces: PD 2, DR 2 (legs only); Small shield: PD 2; Light encumbrance.

Disadvantages: Duty (to Aquilonian army — demanded on 15 or less); Enemy (Picts — large group, appears on 15 or less); Poverty (Struggling).

Quirks: Dislikes magic.

Skills: Axe/Mace-13; Brawling-12; Broadsword-11; Knife-15; Polearm-12; Shortsword-13; Shield-12; Spear-13; Stealth-13; Swimming-9.

Equipment: Shortsword: 2-1 cutting, 1 impaling; Pike: 1+2 impaling; 6 Daggers: 1-1 impaling; Axe: 2+1 cutting; Halberd: 2+4 cutting, 2+3 impaling, 1+3 impaling.

A member of the capable infantry of Aquilonia. He relies on his shortsword and daggers, carrying only one of his other weapons when going into battle.

Bossonian Archer

Mid-20s; dark hair, swarthy complexion; short.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 11.

Basic Speed 6; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 7.

Breastplate: PD 4, DR 5 (torso only); Leather helm: PD 2, DR 2 (head only); Heavy leather boots: PD 2, DR 2 (feet only); Heavy leather breeches: PD 2, DR 2 (legs only); Light encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +1; Common Sense.

Disadvantages: Duty (to Aquilonian army — on 15 or less); Enemy (Picts — large group, appears on 15 or less); Poverty (Struggling); Phobia.

Skills: Bow-15; Carousing-12; Crossbow-15; Gunner (arbalest)-12; Knife-14; Knife Throwing-14; Occultism (Picts)-8; Shortsword-14; Stealth-12; Survival (woods)-12; Swimming-13; Tracking-10.

Equipment: Regular Bow: 1-1 impaling (10 arrows); Crossbow: 1+2 impaling; (10 cross-bow bolts); Small knife: 1-3 cutting, 1-3 impaling.

Determined bowmen, the Bossonians are Aquilonia's buffer against the Picts.

Scout

Late 20s; lean, hardy men of several races.

ST 12, DX 14, IQ 13, HT 10.

Basic Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 7.

Light leather: PD 1, DR 1; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +2; Danger Sense; Toughness (DR 1).

Disadvantages: Duty (to frontier settlers — on 15 or less); Enemy (Picts — large group, appears on 15 or less); Poverty (Struggling); Impulsiveness.

Quirks: Doesn't believe in wearing cumbersome armor; Keeps to his own kind (other scouts).

Skills: Axe/Mace-15; Boating (Canoes)-13; Bow-15; Brawling-14; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-14; Knife-14; Running-9; Shortsword-14; Stealth-15; Survival (Woods)-14; Swimming-14; Throwing-14; Tracking-14.

Equipment: Short Bow: 1-1 impaling (10 arrows); Axe: 1+4 cutting; Hatchet: 1+2 cutting; Small knife: 1-1 cutting, 1-2 impaling.

A typical frontiersman, with a leather shirt and leggings and a fur cap. He also carries flint and steel in a pouch at his waist.

Picts

Hawk Brave

Pict — mid 20s; short and swarthy.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 11.

Basic Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 7.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +3; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

Skills: Bow-13; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-12; Knife-15; Shortsword-15; Stealth-14; Survival (Woods)-12; Tracking-14.

Equipment: Short bow: 1-1 impaling (10 arrows); Shortsword: 1+2 cutting, 1-1 impaling; Large Knife: 1 die cutting, 1-1 impaling.

This is a typical border Pict of the Hawk tribe, accustomed to using captured "civilized" weapons. Residents of the Hawk village at Gwawela are also known as Gwaweli.

Wolf Brave

Mid 20s; short and swarthy.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 10.

Basic Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 6.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +3; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

Skills: Fast-Draw (Knife)-12; Knife-13; Spear-12; Stealth-14; Survival (Woods)-12; Throwing-13; Tracking-14.

Equipment: 4 Javelins: 1+1 impaling; 4 Daggers: 1-1 impaling.

Backwoods Pict, unfamiliar with Aquilonian weapons. The Wolf Confederation of tribes is a powerful nation. Tribe members are sometimes known as Wolfmen.

Turtle Brave

Mid-20s; short and swarthy.

ST 14, DX 10, IQ 9, HT 11.

Basic Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 5.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +3; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

Skills: Fast-Draw (Knife)-10; Knife-10; Knife Throwing-11; Running-10; Shortsword-11; Stealth-11; Survival (Woods)-12; Tracking-14.

Equipment: Shortsword: 2 dice cutting, 1 impaling; 4 small knives: 2-3 cutting, 1-1 die impaling.

A sophisticated border Pict, possibly half-breed, a Turtle brave uses civilized weaponry.

Ferret Brave

Mid-20s; short and swarthy.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 11.

Basic Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 6.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Vision +3; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

Skills: Bow-15; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-12; Knife-12; Running-10; Stealth-14; Survival (Woods)-12; Tracking-14.

Equipment: Regular Bow: 1 die impaling (10 arrows); Large knife: 1-1 cutting, 1-1 impaling.

Archer Pict of the Ferret tribe.

Raven Brave

Mid-20s; short and swarthy.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 11.

Basic Speed 6.25; Move 6.

Dodge 6; Parry 7.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

Skills: Axe/Mace-15; Axe Throwing-17; Knife-14; Stealth-15; Survival (Woods)-13; Tracking-15.

Equipment: 2 Hatchets: 1+1 cutting; Large Knife: 1-1 cutting, 1-1 impaling.

A brave of the Raven tribe will begin combat — when possible — by throwing one hatchet and then readying and closing with the other.

Otter Brave

Mid-20s; short and swarthy.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 8, HT 9.

Basic Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5; Parry 7.

No armor; No encumbrance.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +4; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness; Poverty (Poor); Social Stigma (Barbarian); Fanaticism (Reclaim lost tribal lands).

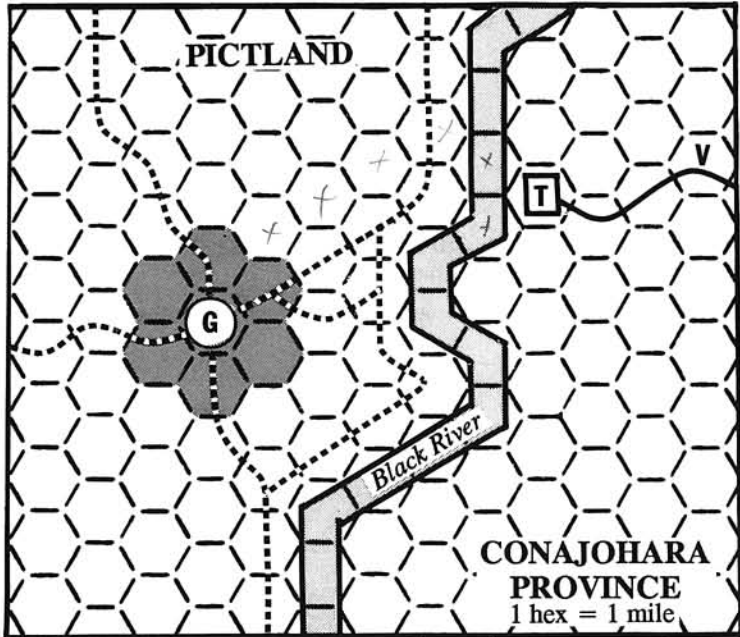
Skills: Axe/Mace-15; Bow-15; Fast-Draw (Arrow)-13; Stealth-15; Survival (Woods)-11; Tracking-13.

Equipment: Short Bow: 1-1 impaling (10 arrows); Hatchet: 1+1 cutting.

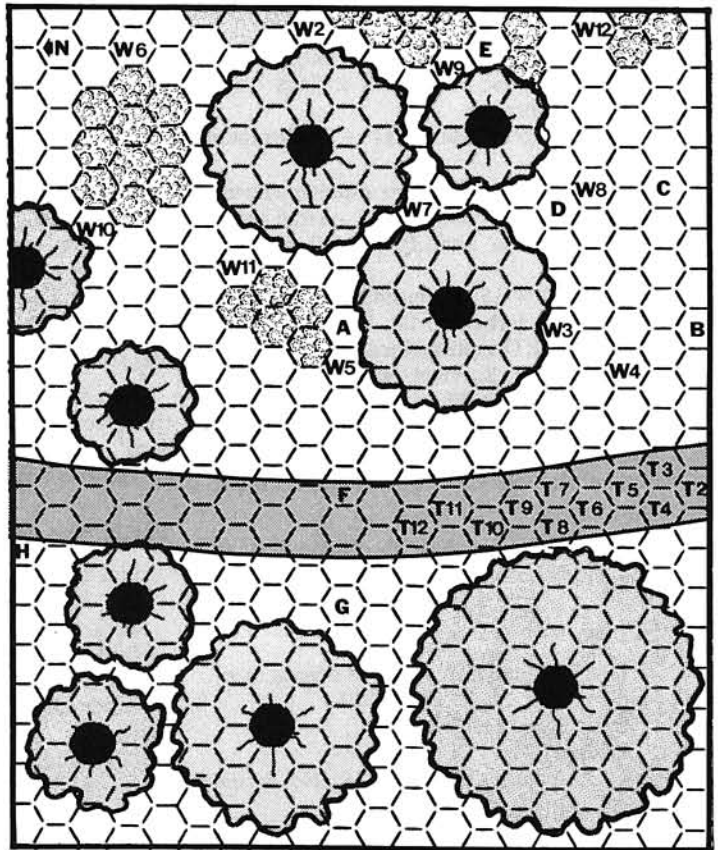
The typical backwoods Pict of the Otter tribe avoids Aquilonian weapons in favor of traditional bow and hatchet.

MAPS

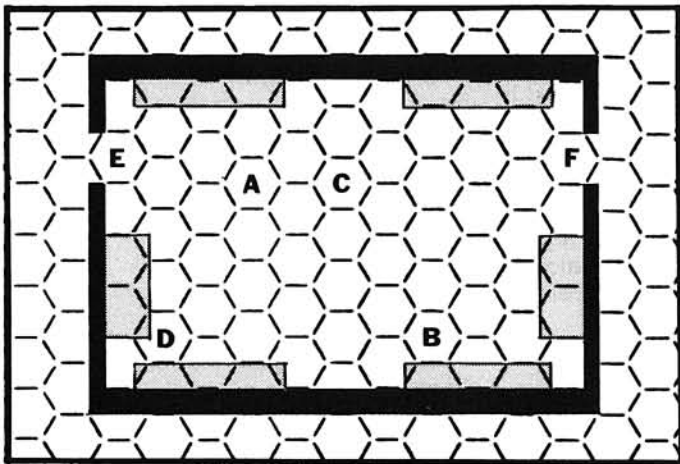
Area Map



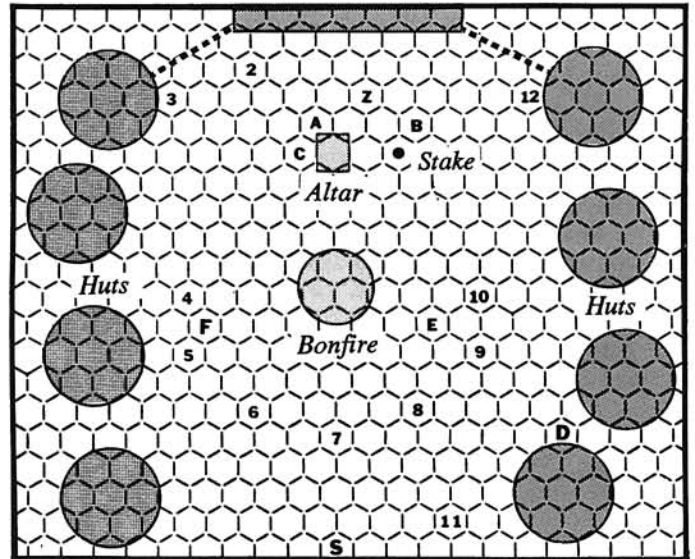
Combat Map A



Combat Map B



Combat Map C



GURPS

CHARACTER SHEET

Name Conan of Cimmeria Player _____
 Appearance 6'2", 220 lbs., black hair, blue eyes, scarred face
 Background barbarian, mercenary, corsair; has held every military rank from common swordsman to general

Date Created

Sequence

Unspent Points

Point Total

521

Pt. Cost

150

45

20

100

ST 19

FATIGUE

DX 14

BASIC DAMAGE

Thrust: 2-1

IQ 12

Swing: 3+1

HT 17

HITS TAKEN

Mvmt

BASIC SPEED
7.75
(HT+DX)/4

MOVE

8

Basic - Enc.

ENCUMBRANCE

None (0) = 2xST 38

Light (1) = 4xST 76

Med (2) = 6xST 114

Hvy (3) = 12xST 228

X-hvy (4) = 20xST 380

PASSIVE DEFENSE

Armor: 3 (1)

Shield: _____

TOTAL

3

(1 vs imp)

ACTIVE DEFENSES

DODGE

8

= Move

PARRY

9

Weapon/2

BLOCK

0

Shield/3

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

Armor Hauberk :4(2)

TOTAL

4

(2 vs imp)

Pt. Cost

2

10

10

15

20

6

10

10

10

-15

-5

-10

-1

-1

-1

-1

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, QUIRKS

Acute Hearing +1

Alertness +2

Combat Reflexes (+6 to recover from mental stun)

Danger Sense

Military Rank 4, Status 1

+1 from lower ranks, frontiersmen

Language Talent +3

Literacy

Night Vision

Duty (Aquilonian army, 15 or less)

Sense of Duty (Comrades)

Sense of Duty (Defenseless)

Enjoys Battle

Dislikes military discipline

Reluctant to discuss his past

Unemotional

Blunt - Says what he thinks

Head:
Helm
PD3, DR4

Torso:
Hauberk
PD3/1
DR4/2



Feet:
Boots
PD2
DR2

REACTION +/- +1 from frontiersmen,
+1 from lower ranks, +3 from scouts

WEAPONS AND POSSESSIONS

Item Damage Skill \$ Wt.
Type Amt. Level

Broadsword cut 3+2 19 \$500 3
cr 2

Throwing Axe cut 3+3 18 \$60 4
thrown cut 3+3 15

Large Knife cut 1+2 18 \$40 1
imp 1+2
thrown imp 1+2 15

Chainmail hauberk \$230 25

Helmet with bull horns \$100 5

Heavy buckskin boots \$80 3

Short silk breeches \$50 -

Totals: \$1060

Lbs.

41

WEAPON RANGES

Weapon PB INC 1/2 DMG MAX

Throwing Axe 2 2 19 28

Large Knife - 1 17 24

(Regular Bow 5 19 285 380)

SKILLS

Pt. Cost Level

Area Knowledge M/E

(Black River environs) 4 14

Axe/Mace P/A 24 18

Boating P/A

(Canoes) 1 13

Bow P/H 4 14

Brawling P/E 32 20

Broadsword P/A 32 19

Fast-Draw P/E

(Broadsword) 1 14

Knife P/E 16 18

Occultism M/A 2 12

Running P/H 2 16

Sex Appeal M/A 2 17*

Shield P/E 4 16

Stealth P/A 8 16

Swimming P/E 1 14

Tactics M/H 6 13

Throwing P/H 8 15

Tracking M/A 8 15

Languages

Cimmerian native 0 15

Aquilonian M/A 1 14

Pict M/A 2 15

Brawling punch (hits on 20) 2+1

Brawling kick (hits on 18) 3+1

x increases Basic Speed by 2

* HT based

SUMMARY

Point Total

Attributes 315

Advantages 83

Disadvantages -30

Quirks -5

Skills 158

TOTAL 521

A SAVAGE HORDE IS OUT FOR BLOOD...

AND ONLY THE MIGHTY CONAN STANDS IN THEIR PATH!

When the army of Aquilonia marched across Thunder River and into savage Pictland, the tribes of the Picts were driven away. To secure his rich new territory, King Numedides built Fort Tuscelan. This powerful outpost, Numedides thought, would keep the barbarian Picts from striking back.

But Numedides' lone fort is not enough to stop the Pict raiders. In recent days, the ruthless natives have burned Aquilonian homesteads, raided merchant caravans, and brutally murdered several soldiers from the fort.

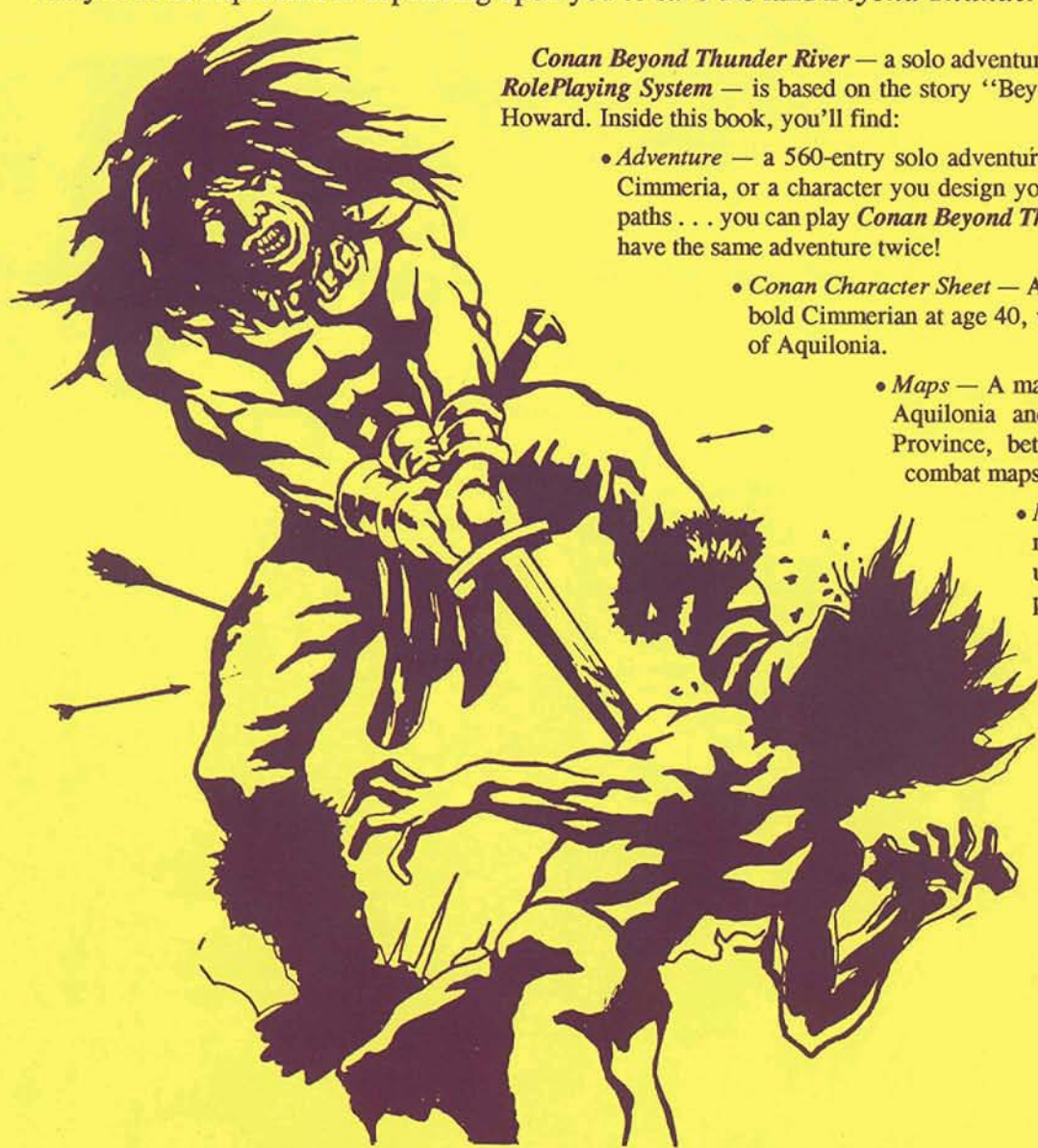
For the Picts have united behind a sorcerous leader. The great witch-doctor, Zogar Sag, has sworn a sinister vengeance upon the Aquilonian invaders. Even now, he is raising a vast Pict horde to crush Fort Tuscelan.

You are Conan of Cimmeria, commander of the scouts at Fort Tuscelan. Can you stop Zogar Sag and his army? All of Aquilonia is depending upon you to save the land *Beyond Thunder River*!

Conan Beyond Thunder River — a solo adventure for *GURPS*, the *Generic Universal RolePlaying System* — is based on the story "Beyond the Black River," by Robert E. Howard. Inside this book, you'll find:

- *Adventure* — a 560-entry solo adventure for Robert E. Howard's Conan of Cimmeria, or a character you design yourself. There are dozens of alternate paths . . . you can play *Conan Beyond Thunder River* over and over and never have the same adventure twice!
- *Conan Character Sheet* — A ready-to-play character sheet for the bold Cimmerian at age 40, when he was an officer in the service of Aquilonia.
- *Maps* — A map of northwestern Hyboria, showing Aquilonia and Pictland; a map of Conajohara Province, between the two nations; and several combat maps, for the battles in this adventure.
- *Monsters* — Complete information on nine Hyborian monsters that you can use in your own face-to-face campaigns.

Written by W.G. Armintrout
Cover art by Denis Loubet
Illustrated by Dan Carroll



Note: You need only the *GURPS Basic Set* to play this adventure.



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