

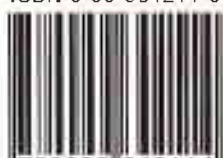
Joe Dever is the prolific author of over 40 fantasy and science fiction adventure books. His award-winning LONE WOLF series has become an international best-seller with more than 8 million copies sold worldwide.

Joe Dever

The *Claw of Naar* is the evil wand of power used by Agarash the Damned during his ancient conquest of Magnamund. Legend held that it had been lost forever in the molten ruins of Naaros, but now it has resurfaced, and its dread return heralds a dawn of disaster for the peaceable nations of Magnamund. Your allies, the wise wizards of the Elder Magi, have the power and the means to destroy the accursed *Claw*. But they do not possess it. In **VAMPIRIUM**, you must venture into the hostile land of Bhanar and snatch the *Claw* from the clutches of the evil Autarch Sejanoz. Can you deliver the *Claw* safely to the Elder Magi... or will you be destroyed by the terrifying wrath of the vampire lord Sejanoz?

The LONE WOLF adventures are a unique interactive fantasy series – each episode can be played separately or you can combine them all to create a fantastic role-playing epic.

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Illustration: Brian Williams

LONE WOLF

27

Vampirium

JOE DEVER

RED FOX

JOE DEVER

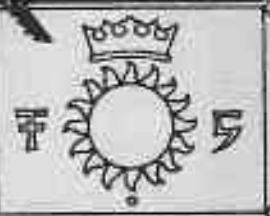
RED FOX



Vampirium



A LONE WOLF INTERACTIVE ADVENTURE



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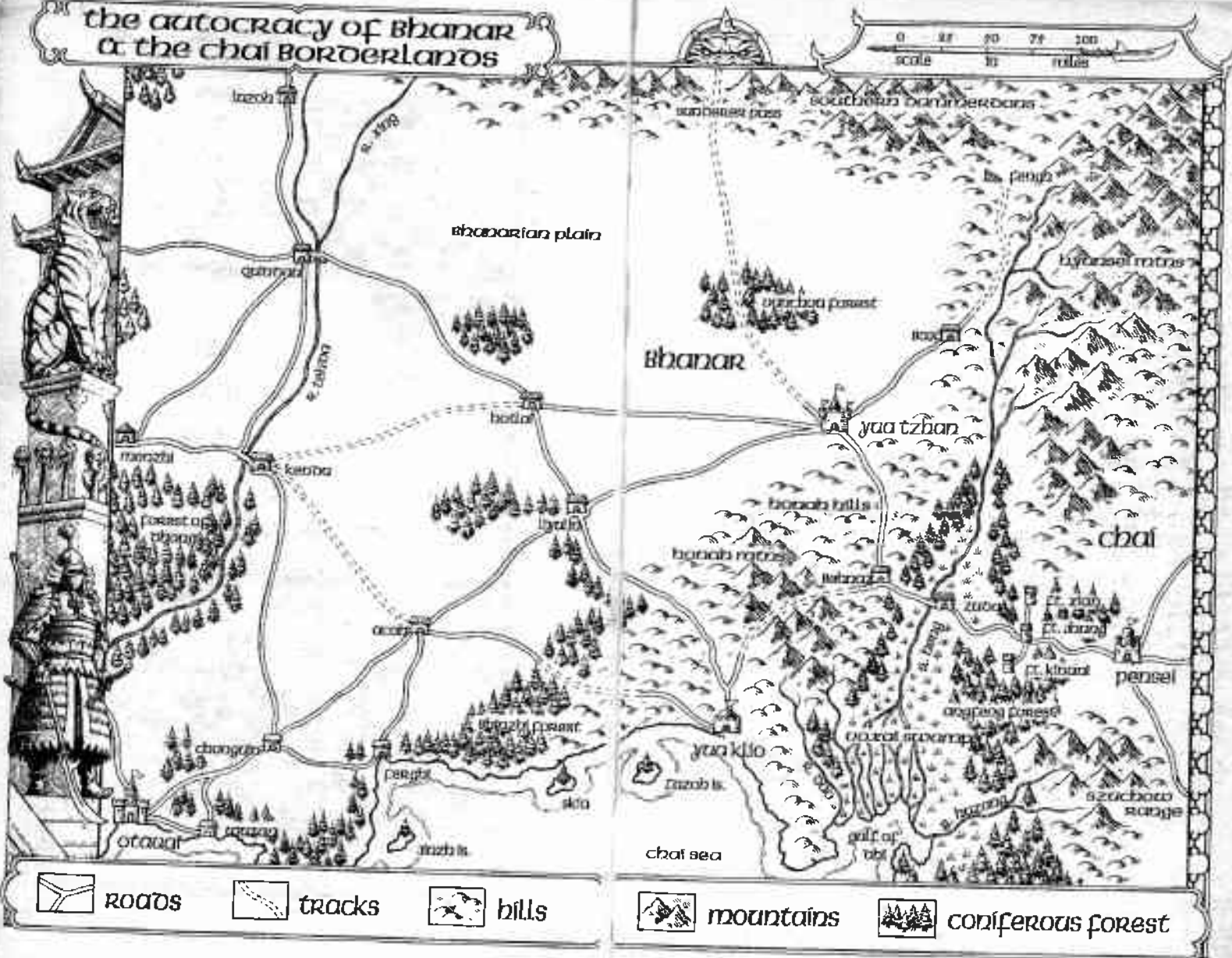
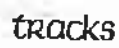
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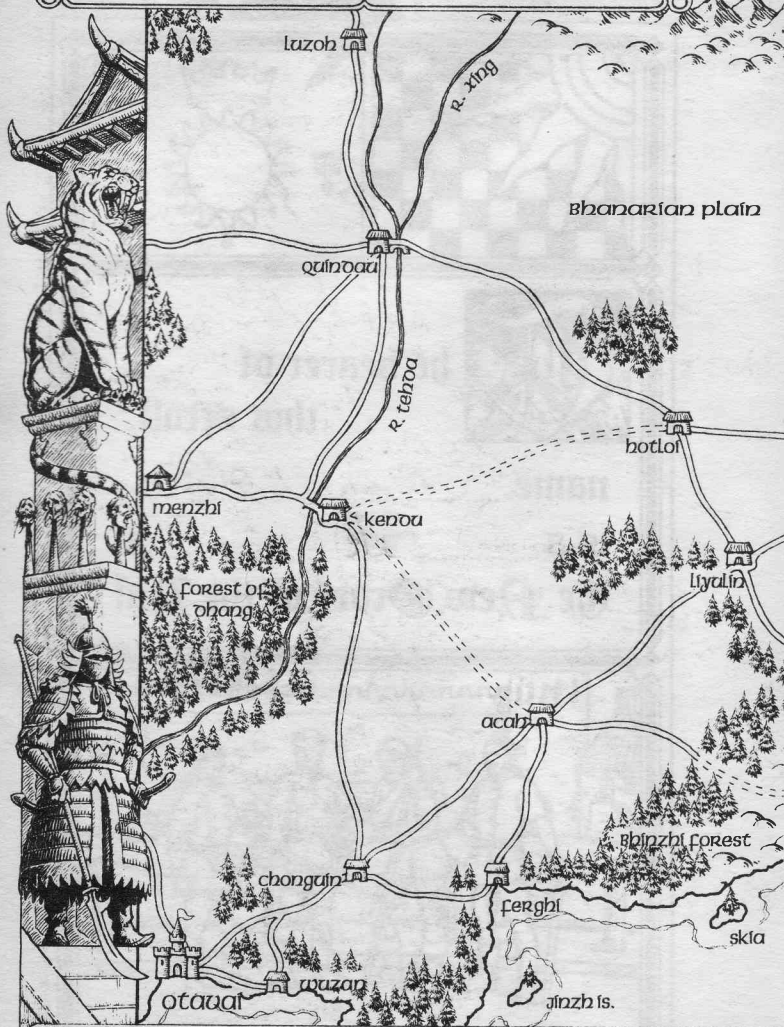
the New Order of the Kai



ROADS



the autocracy of Bhanar & the chái borderlands



VAMPIRIUM

THE AUTHOR

JOE DEVER was born in 1956 at Woodford Bridge in Essex, England. After leaving college he became a professional musician and worked in recording studios in Europe and the USA. While working in Los Angeles in 1977, he discovered a game called 'Dungeons & Dragons' and was soon an enthusiastic player. Five years later he won the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons World Championships in the US, where he was the only British competitor. His award-winning Lone Wolf adventures are the culmination of many years spent creating the myths and legends of Magnamund. They are published in several languages and are sold throughout the world.

Also in Red Fox by Joe Dever

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Wolf's Bane
The Curse of Naar
Voyage of the Moonstone
The Buccaneers of Shadaki
Midnight's Hero
Rune War
Trail of the Wolf
The Fall of Blood Mountain



VAMPIRIUM

Joe Dever

Cover & illustrations by Brian Williams



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For Julian Egelstaff

GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES NOTES

1
2
3
4
5 5th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 1 New Order adventure successfully
6 6th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 2 New Order adventures successfully
7 7th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 3 New Order adventures successfully
8 8th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 4 New Order adventures successfully
9 9th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 5 New Order adventures successfully
10 10th Grand Master Discipline if you have completed 6 New Order adventures successfully

BACKPACK (max. 10 articles)

1	MEALS —3 EP if no Meal available when instructed to eat. BELT POUCH Containing Gold Crowns (50 maximum) 33
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

CS = COMBAT SKILL EP = ENDURANCE POINTS

ACTION CHART

COMBAT SKILL

ENDURANCE POINTS

0 = dead

COMBAT RECORD

ENDURANCE POINTS

ENDURANCE POINTS

GRAND MASTER	COMBAT RATIO	ENEMY

GRAND MASTER	COMBAT RATIO	ENEMY

GRAND MASTER	COMBAT RATIO	ENEMY

GRAND MASTER	COMBAT RATIO	ENEMY

GRAND MASTER	COMBAT RATIO	ENEMY

GRAND MASTER RANK



SPECIAL ITEMS LIST

DESCRIPTION	KNOWN EFFECTS
KAI WEAPON	
Name: _____	
Type: _____	+CS = _____
Unique Property: _____	

+CS = _____	

WEAPONS LIST

WEAPONS (maximum 2 Weapons)

1 _____

2 _____

If holding Weapon and appropriate Grand Weaponmastery in combat +5 CS

GRAND WEAPONMASTERY CHECKLIST

DAGGER		SPEAR	
MACE		SHORT SWORD	
WARHAMMER		BOW	
AXE		SWORD	
QUARTERSTAFF		BROADSWORD	

QUIVER AND ARROWS

Quiver	No. of arrows carried
YES/NO	

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

It is Spring in the year MS 5084 and you are a Grand Master of the New Order of the Kai, the warrior elite of Sommerlund.

Thirty-five years ago, the First Order of the Kai were massacred by the Darklords of Helgedad, a host of powerful creatures sent by the evil God Naar to destroy the world of Magnamund. Lone Wolf, the supreme leader of your illustrious fighting order, was the only survivor of their attack upon the Kai. As a young initiate he stood amid the burning wreckage of the old Kai monastery and vowed to avenge the slaughter of his comrades. Twenty-five years later he kept his pledge when alone he infiltrated the foul domain of the Darklords and destroyed the infernal city of Helgedad, the base of their evil power.

With the destruction of Helgedad, chaos befell the Darklord armies who had, until then, been poised to conquer all Magnamund. Quickly, their disorder escalated into a mutinous civil war, allowing the Free Alliance armies of Magnamund time enough to recover and launch a successful counter-offensive. Against all odds, a swift and total victory was secured over the feuding armies of evil.

Following the demise of the Darklords, peace reigned in your homeland of Sommerlund. Under the direction of Lone Wolf the ruined monastery of the Kai was rebuilt and restored to its former glory, and a New Order was established. You are

one of this new generation of Kai recruits. You were born in Sommerlund in the year MS 5063, during the time of the war against the Darklords. When you were seven years old, you were sent by your father to the Kai Monastery. There, under the tutelage of Lone Wolf, you developed your martial skills and honed the special Kai abilities which lay dormant within you. Your skills were nurtured and sharpened to perfection by years of study and rigorous training. Your exceptional talents helped you to master all of the Kai and Magnakai Disciplines, and swiftly you rose through the ranks of the New Order to become one of only five who now hold the high rank of Kai Grand Master. It is an achievement that has brought great honour upon you and your family.

In the year MS 5077 your skill and courage were put to the test when an attack was launched upon the Kai Monastery during Lone Wolf's absence. By means of a Shadow Gate (an astral corridor between the physical world of Sommerlund and the many ethereal domains which lie beyond it), Naar sent forth a host of dragon-creatures to besiege the monastery and lay waste to all Sommerlund. He had chosen his time well, yet his evil plan was thwarted by the tenacious defence that you and your fellow warriors maintained until the siege was raised by Lone Wolf and the King's Army of Sommerlund.¹

During the seven years since the defeat of his minions, Naar has sought vengeance upon the Kai. He commands many agents of evil upon

¹Lone Wolf 18: *Dawn of the Dragons*

Magnamund, and they wait quietly in the shadows for the chance to serve their fell master.

You have recently returned to the Monastery after successfully completing a dangerous mission in the Kingdom of Bor.² The vast underground realm of Bor is home to the Drodarin dwarves, the oldest allies of the Kai. Forbidden excavations in the lowest levels of the kingdom had awoken and released the Shom'zaa – a supernatural creature entombed by Magnamund's earliest magicians, the Elder Magi, during their ancient war against Naar's legendary champion: Agarash the Damned.

Lord Rimoah, speaker for the High Council of the Elder Magi, travelled with you to Bor aboard a wondrous flying ship called *Cloud-dancer* and, with his help, you were able to defeat the Shom'zaa and save your Drodarin allies from destruction.

Three months after you returned from Bor, Lord Rimoah came to the Kai Monastery aboard *Cloud-dancer*. His visit was unexpected and you sensed at once that something was wrong. Lone Wolf summoned you to his chamber where, with mounting dread, you listened to Lord Rimoah's account of events in Southern Magnamund that threaten to destroy the fragile peace of that continent.

The Elder Magi had received word from King Karvas of Siyen that Autarch Sejanoz, the evil ruler of Bhanar, had secretly despatched a squad of his Imperial Guards into the Doomlands of

Naaros. At first, neither the King nor the Elders could fathom a reason why the Autarch had done this. The Doomlands are one of the most inhospitable regions in all of Magnamund, a barren wasteland of ash and cinders that once was the domain of Agarash the Damned. At its centre stood his mighty fortress-city of Naaros. Yet, following his defeat by the Elder Magi, all that remains of it now is a titanic chasm of molten lava and heat-fused rock.

Fearing for the security of his southern borderlands, King Karvas sent a group of elite Siyene rangers into the Doomlands to spy on the Autarch's men in the hope of discovering their true purpose. When, after six weeks, nothing was heard from the group, the King and his court assumed they had perished. Then a few days later, Karvas received word unexpectedly from his missing men. They had tracked the squad of the Autarch's Imperial Guard deep into the Doomlands, and they had observed them excavating an unmarked burial mound near to the ruins of Naaros. And it was here that they were to witness a chilling discovery, for buried beneath the mound lay the Claw of Naar.

The Claw of Naar is an ancient wand of power that was crafted by the evil God himself, and used by Agarash the Damned during his conquest of Magnamund. Legend held that it had been lost forever in the molten ruin of Naaros, but now it had resurfaced, and its return boded trouble for the peaceable nations bordering upon the autocracy of Bhanar.

The rangers reported that the Autarch's squad

²Lone Wolf 26: *The Fall of Blood Mountain*

were returning to Bhanar with the Claw in their possession. Their chosen route would take them through the Southern Dammerdon mountains, and so the rangers went ahead to hide themselves in Sunderer Pass where they intended to await their arrival. Their plan was to ambush the squad in the narrow confines of the pass and steal away the Claw. However, the ranger leader was fearful that the power of the Claw might overwhelm his small group. He requested of his King that help be sent urgently. Karvas responded to his plea by seeking the aid of the Elder Magi, and upon hearing of the situation, Lord Rimoah readily agreed to assist.

'In turn, Lone Wolf, I have come this day to ask for the help of the Kai,' said Rimoah. 'We of the Elder Magi have the power and the means to destroy the Claw of Naar, but only when we have that accursed object in our possession. To secure the Claw will require skills and courage that only the Kai possess. And so, I come here seeking your aid, Supreme Master.'

'It will not be an easy task,' replied Lone Wolf, thoughtfully, 'but we have the advantage of both speed and surprise. Sunderer Pass is no more than a day's journey away by skyship.'

'Aye,' replied Rimoah, 'but we must depart this afternoon if we are to be certain of reaching the pass before the arrival of the Autarch's squad.'

Lone Wolf slowly turned to face you. 'I am tempted to accept this challenge myself, Grand Master,' he said, as he held you with his unblinking gaze. 'But, alas, I must attend a War Council

tomorrow at the King's Court in Holmgard. Will you journey to Bhanar in my stead and help Lord Rimoah to capture the Claw of Naar?'

'Yes, my Lord,' you replied, without hesitation. 'For the greater glory of Sommerlund and the Kai, I am proud to accept this task.'

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THE GAME RULES

You keep a record of your adventure on the *Action Chart* that you will find in the front of this book. For ease of use, and for further adventuring, it is recommended that you photocopy these pages.

During the years you have spent in training at the Kai Monastery, you have devoted yourself to further developing your fighting prowess (COMBAT SKILL) and physical stamina (ENDURANCE). Before you begin this New Order adventure you need to measure how effective your training has been. To do this take a pencil and, with your eyes closed, point the blunt end of it on to the *Random Number Table* on the last page of the book. If you pick a 0 it counts as zero.

The first number that you pick from the *Random Number Table* in this way represents your COMBAT SKILL. Add 25 to the number you picked and write the total in the COMBAT SKILL section of your *Action Chart* (ie, if your pencil fell on the number 7 in the *Random Number Table* you would write in a COMBAT SKILL of 32). When you fight, your COMBAT SKILL will be pitted against that of your enemy. A high score in this section is therefore desirable.

The second number that you pick from the *Random Number Table* represents your powers of ENDURANCE. Add 30 to this number and write the total in the ENDURANCE section of your *Action*

Chart (ie, if your pencil fell on the number 8 on the *Random Number Table*, you would have 38 ENDURANCE points).

If you are wounded in combat you will lose ENDURANCE points. If at any time your ENDURANCE points fall to zero, you are dead and the adventure is over. Lost ENDURANCE points can be regained during the course of the adventure, but your number of ENDURANCE points can not rise above the number you have when you start an adventure.

If you have successfully completed previous adventures in the Lone Wolf New Order series (Books 21-26), you can carry your current scores of COMBAT SKILL and ENDURANCE points over to this adventure. You may also carry over any Special Items, Kai Weapon, normal weapons and Backpack Items you had in your possession at the end of your last adventure, and these should be entered on your new *Action Chart*.

Playing Tip: You may use a 10-sided die instead of the *Random Number Table* if you find it more convenient.

YOUR KAI NAME

It has long been the tradition of your elite warrior caste to bestow a new name upon each young novice when they complete their first year's training at the Kai Monastery. Kai names are chosen by senior Kai Masters with the aim of reflecting the individual strengths and qualities of each novice.

You may create your own Kai name for yourself, or you can generate a Kai name at random using the name tables below. To generate a Kai name, pick a number from the *Random Number Table* and consult Table A. The name which corresponds to the number you have picked is the first part, or prefix, of your Kai name. Now pick a second number from the *Random Number Table* and consult Table B. The name which corresponds to the number you have picked is the second part, or suffix, of your Kai name. Put the prefix and the suffix together and you have your own personal Kai name. You can record your personal Kai name on the book plate which appears on the inside front cover of this book.

TABLE A

(Kai name prefix)

- 0 = Swift
- 1 = Sun
- 2 = True
- 3 = Bold
- 4 = Moon
- 5 = Sword
- 6 = Wise
- 7 = Storm
- 8 = Rune
- 9 = Brave

TABLE B

(Kai name suffix)

- 0 = Blade
- 1 = Fire
- 2 = Hawk
- 3 = Heart
- 4 = Friend
- 5 = Star
- 6 = Dancer
- 7 = Helm
- 8 = Strider
- 9 = Shield

KAI & MAGNAKAI DISCIPLINES

During your distinguished rise to the ranks of the New Order of Kai Grand Masters, you have

become proficient in all of the basic Kai and Magnakai Disciplines. These Disciplines provide you with a formidable arsenal of natural abilities which will serve you well. A brief summary of your skills is given below:

Weaponmastery

You are proficient with all close combat and missile weapons. You are a master of unarmed combat and suffer no COMBAT SKILL loss when fighting bare-handed.

Animal Control

You are able to communicate with most animals and have limited control over hostile creatures. You can use woodland animals as guides and you are able to block a non-sentient creature's sense of taste and smell.

Curing

You are able to restore ENDURANCE points lost as a direct result of combat. You may restore 1 ENDURANCE point for every numbered section of the book you pass through in which you are not involved in further combat. The maximum number of ENDURANCE points that can be restored in this way is limited to 10 per adventure.

You also possess the ability to heal the wounds of others, and you can neutralize the harmful effects of most poisons, venoms and toxins.

Invisibility

You can hide effectively in most environments, mask any sounds made during movement, and you can cause minor alterations of your own physical appearance. Also you are able to mask your own body heat and scent.

Huntmastery

You are an expert hunter of food in the wild. You possess great physical agility and a keen sense of vision (day and night). Your senses of hearing and smell are especially acute.

Pathsmanship

You are able to understand most languages, magical symbols and hieroglyphics. You are expert at reading footprints and tracks. You have an intuitive knowledge of the compass points and can detect the threat of an enemy ambush up to a distance of 500 metres. You possess an ability to cross terrain without leaving tracks. You can converse with sentient creatures and mask yourself from psychic spells of detection.

Psi-surge

You are able to attack enemies using the powers of your mind. Also you can set up disruptive vibrations in inanimate objects and cause confusion in the minds of unsophisticated enemies.

Psi-screen

You possess strong mental defences against hypnosis, supernatural illusions, charms, hostile telepathy and evil spirits. You are able to divert and re-channel some hostile psychic energy to your own ends.

Nexus

You can move small items by projection of your mind power. You can withstand extremes of temperature and are able to extinguish fire by force of your will alone. You have a limited immunity to flames, toxic gases, and corrosive liquids.

Divination

Your famous Kai sixth sense can warn you of imminent danger. You can detect invisible or hidden enemies, and you are able to communicate telepathically. You can recognize magic-using and/or magical creatures, detect psychic residues, and you have a limited ability to leave your corporeal body ('spirit-walk') for short periods.

NEW ORDER KAI GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES

After years of martial training and study at the Kai Monastery, and by the rigorous practice of the

teachings of your illustrious mentor – Kai Supreme Master Lone Wolf – you have achieved the noble rank of Kai Grand Master Senior.

Following in the footsteps of Lone Wolf himself, you have vowed that one day you will become totally proficient in all sixteen of the New Order Kai Grand Master Disciplines. By doing so successfully you will share with Lone Wolf the responsibility, the honour, and the future glory of leading the New Order Kai as a Supreme Master.

If this is the first New Order adventure you have undertaken, then your present rank is that of Kai Grand Master Senior. This means that you have mastered four of the New Order Grand Master Disciplines listed below. It is for you to decide which four Disciplines these are. As all of the New Order Grand Master Disciplines will be of use to you at some point during your mission, pick these four skills with care. The correct use of a New Order Grand Master Discipline at the right time could save your life. When you have chosen your four Disciplines, enter them in the Grand Master Disciplines section of your *Action Chart*.

1. Grand Weaponmastery



This Discipline enables a New Order Grand Master to become supremely efficient in the use of all weapons. When you enter combat armed with one of your Grand Master weapons, you may add 5 points to your COMBAT SKILL. The rank of Kai Grand Master Senior, with which you begin the

New Order series, means that you are skilled in the use of *one* of the weapons listed in the EQUIPMENT section. For every adventure that you complete successfully in the New Order series, you will gain proficiency with one additional weapon.

2. Animal Mastery



New Order Grand Masters have considerable control over hostile, non-sentient creatures. Also, they have the ability to converse with birds and fishes, and use them as guides.

3. Deliverance (Advanced Curing)



New Order Grand Masters are able to use their healing power to repair serious battle wounds. If, while in combat, their COMBAT SKILL is reduced to 8 points or less, they can draw upon their mastery to restore 20 ENDURANCE points. This emergency ability can only be used once every 20 days.

4. Assimilance (Advanced Invisibility)



New Order Grand Masters are able to effect striking changes to their physical appearance, and maintain these changes over a period of 1 to 3

days. They have also mastered advanced camouflage techniques which make them virtually undetectable in an open landscape.

5. Grand Huntmastery



New Order Grand Masters are able to see in total darkness and they possess great natural speed and agility. They also have a superb sense of touch and taste.

6. Grand Pathsmanship



New Order Grand Masters are able to resist entrapment by hostile plants. Also they have a super-awareness of ambush, or the threat of ambush, in woods and dense forests.

7. Kai-surge



When using their psychic ability to attack an enemy, New Order Grand Masters may add 8 points to their COMBAT SKILL. For every round in which Kai-surge is used, they need only deduct 1 ENDURANCE point. Grand Masters have the option of using a weaker form of psychic attack called Mindblast. When using this lesser attack, they may add 4 points to their COMBAT SKILL without loss of

ENDURANCE points (Kai-surge and Mindblast cannot be used simultaneously). New Order Grand Masters cannot use Kai-surge if their ENDURANCE score falls to 6 points or below.

8. Kai-screen



During psychic combat, New Order Grand Masters are able to construct mind fortresses capable of protecting themselves and others. The strength and capacity of these fortresses increases as a New Order Grand Master advances in rank.

9. Grand Nexus



New Order Grand Masters are able to withstand contact with harmful elements, such as flames and acids, for upwards of an hour in duration. This ability increases as a New Order Grand Master advances in rank.

10. Telegnosis (Advanced Divination)



This Discipline enables a New Order Grand Master to spirit-walk for far greater lengths of time, and with far fewer ill effects. Duration of the spirit-walk, and the protection afforded to his inanimate body, increases as a New Order Grand Master advances in rank.

11. Magi-Magic (Old Kingdom Magic)



Under the tutelage of Lone Wolf, you have been able to master the rudimentary skills of Old Kingdom battle magic. These arcane skills include the use of basic magi-magic spells, such as *Shield*, *Power Word*, and *Invisible Fist*. As you advance in rank, so will your knowledge and mastery of Old Kingdom magic increase.

12. Kai-alchemy (Brotherhood Magic)



Under the tutelage of Lone Wolf and Guildmaster Banedon (the leader of Sommerlund's guild of magicians), you have mastered the elementary spells of the Brotherhood of the Crystal Star. These spells include *Lightning Hand*, *Levitation*, and *Mind Charm*. As you advance in rank, so will your knowledge and mastery of Brotherhood magic increase.

13. Astrology



The celestial bodies which occupy the skies above Magnamund have long been known to affect the lives of its inhabitants. Mastery of this Discipline enables a New Order Grand Master to predict and shape the future by studying the relative positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the myriad planets and stars. The number and accuracy of these predic-

tions increases as a New Order Grand Master advances in rank.

14. Herbmastery



Mastery of this New Order Discipline enables a Grand Master to identify readily any substance derived from living or growing organic material. He is aware of any secret uses to which an organic material may be put, and he is skilled in effecting the release of a substance's medicinal and/or magical properties.

15. Elementalism



This Discipline enables a New Order Grand Master to manipulate the four basic elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. By drawing upon individual (or combinations of) elements that are available, he is able to detach, affix, increase, concentrate, intensify, remove or accelerate this matter to fulfil a specific purpose, eg, create a wall, hurl a rock, spray sand, remove air, intensify fire. The versatility of this Discipline increases as a New Order Grand Master advances in rank.

16. Bardsmanship



Through mastery of this Discipline, a Kai Grand

Master of the New Order becomes a multi-talented performer, proficient in the use of any musical instrument. He is able to sing or chant, recite or compose tales of legend, mimic speech or dialect and stimulate a wide range of emotions among sentient creatures. The effect and power of his bardic abilities will steadily increase as he advances through the Grand Master ranks.

If you successfully complete the mission as set in Book 27 of the Lone Wolf (New Order) series, you may add a further Grand Master Discipline of your choice to your *Action Chart* in Book 28. For every Grand Master Discipline you possess, in excess of the original four Disciplines you begin with, you may add 1 point to your basic COMBAT SKILL score and 2 points to your basic ENDURANCE points score. These bonus points, together with your extra Grand Master Discipline(s), your original four Grand Master Disciplines, your Kai Weapon and any other Special Items that you have found and been able to keep during your adventures, may then be carried over and used in the next New Order adventure, which is called:

The Hunger of Sejanoz

EQUIPMENT

Before you leave the Kai Monastery and begin your quest to capture the Claw of Naar, you equip yourself with a map of Bhanar and the Chai Borderlands and a pouch of gold. To find out how much gold is in the pouch, pick a number from the

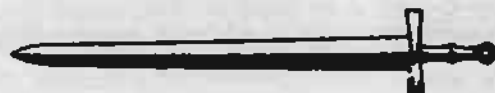
Random Number Table and add 20 to the number you have picked. The total equals the number of Gold Crowns inside the pouch, and you should now enter this number in the 'Gold Crowns' section of your *Action Chart*.

If you have successfully completed previous New Order adventures (Books 21–26), you may add this sum to the total sum of Crowns you already possess. Fifty is the maximum number of Gold Crowns you can carry in your pouch at any time. You may also select five items from the list below, only two of which may be Weapons.

Broadsword (Weapon)



Sword (Weapon)



Quiver (Special Item) This contains six arrows; record them on your Weapons List



Flute (Backpack Item)



Dagger (Weapon)



Axe (Weapon)



Bow (Weapon)



2 Meals (Meals) Each Meal takes up one space in your Backpack



Rope (Backpack Item)



Potion of Laumspur (Backpack Item) This potion restores 4 ENDURANCE points to your total when swallowed after combat. There is enough for only one dose.



List the five items that you have chosen on your *Action Chart*, under the appropriate headings, and make a note of any effect that they may have to your ENDURANCE points and/or COMBAT SKILL.

KAI WEAPONS

Upon reaching the ultimate rank of Kai Supreme Master, Lone Wolf received as a reward from the God Kai many new skills and abilities. One of these skills was Kai Weaponcraft. Using his new-found mastery, Lone Wolf forged ten weapons of magical power in the armoury furnaces of the Kai Monastery. These magical weapons are reserved for the elite of the New Order Kai who attain the rank of Grand Master.

In recognition of your rank and achievement, you may choose your own Kai Weapon from the table below or, if you prefer, you can generate one at random. To generate a Kai Weapon, pick a number from the *Random Number Table* and consult the first column. The magical axe, sword,

or broadsword which corresponds to the number you have picked will be your own personal Kai Weapon. Record this magical weapon and its unique properties in the Kai Weapon section of the Special Items List at the front of the book.

Example

Say you choose the number 1 from the *Random Number Table*, your Kai Weapon will be the axe 'Alema'.

When using this Kai Weapon in normal combat you may add +5 points to your COMBAT SKILL. Each Kai Weapon has a unique property. When you use your Kai Weapon in combat against the type of enemy that matches its unique property, or use it at the optimum time or location, then you may add the higher bonus to your COMBAT SKILL.

Example

If you were to use 'Alema' in combat against an undead enemy, you could add the higher bonus of +7 to your COMBAT SKILL. If you were to fight a living enemy using this weapon then the bonus to your COMBAT SKILL would remain at +5.

Equipment – How to use it

Weapons

The maximum number of weapons that you can carry is two. Weapons aid you in combat. If you have the Grand Master Discipline of Grand Weapon-mastery and a correct weapon, it adds 5 points to your COMBAT SKILL. If you find a weapon during your adventure, you may pick it up and use it.

Bows and Arrows

During your adventure there will be opportunities

KAI WEAPON TABLE

RN	Weapon type	Weapon Name	CS	Unique Properties	CS
0	Axe	'Spawnsmite	+5	versus reptilian enemies	+6
1	Axe	'Alema'	+5	versus undead enemies	+7
2	Axe	'Magnara'	+5	versus rock or stone	+8
3	Sword	'Sunstrike'	+5	when used in daylight	+6
4	Sword	'Kaistar'	+5	when used at night	+7
5	Sword	'Valiance'	+5	when used versus magicians	+8
6	Sword	'Unarias'	+5	when used underwater	+9
7	Broadsword	'Raumas'	+5	versus winged enemies	+6
8	Broadsword	'Illuminatus'	+5	when used underground	+7
9	Broadsword	'Firefall'	+5	versus fire-emitting enemies	+8

RN = Random Number

CS = COMBAT SKILL

to use a bow and arrow. If you equip yourself with this weapon, and you possess at least one arrow, you may use it when the text of a particular section allows you to do so. The bow is a useful weapon, for it enables you to hit an enemy at a distance. However, a bow cannot be used in hand-to-hand combat, therefore it is best to equip yourself also with a close-combat weapon, such as a sword or an axe.

In order to use a bow you must possess a quiver and at least one arrow. Each time the bow is used, erase an arrow from your *Action Chart*. A bow cannot, of course, be used if you exhaust your supply of arrows, but the opportunity may arise during your mission for you to replenish your stock of arrows.

If you have the Discipline of Grand Weaponmastery with a bow, you may add 3 points to any number you choose from the *Random Number Table*, when using the bow.

Backpack Items

These must be stored in your Backpack. Because space is limited, you may keep a maximum of ten articles, including Meals, in your Backpack at any one time. You may only carry one Backpack at a time. During your travels you will discover various useful items which you may decide to keep. You may exchange or discard them at any point when you are not involved in combat.

Any item that may be of use, and which can be picked up on your adventure and entered on your *Action Chart*, is given either initial capitals (eg, Silver Mirror, Gold Key), or is clearly identified as

a Backpack Item. Unless you are told that it is a Special Item, carry it in your Backpack.

Special Items

Special Items are not carried in the Backpack. When you discover a Special Item, you will be told how or where to carry it. The maximum number of Special Items that can be carried on any adventure is twelve.

Kai Weapon

Your Kai Weapon is a Special Item and it can be carried and used in addition to two normal weapons. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Weaponmastery for a weapon type which is the same as your unique Kai Weapon, you may add the Grand Weaponmastery bonus of +5 to your COMBAT SKILL. This is in addition to the bonus gained when you use your Kai Weapon in combat.

Food

Food is carried in your Backpack. Each Meal counts as one item. You will need to eat regularly during your adventure. If you do not have any food when you are instructed to eat a Meal, you will lose 3 ENDURANCE points. However, if you have chosen Grand Huntmastery as one of your four Disciplines then you will not need to tick off a Meal when instructed to eat.

Potion of Laumspur

This is a healing potion that can restore 4 ENDURANCE points to your total when swallowed after combat. There is enough for one dose only. If you discover any other potion during the adventure, you will be informed of its effect. All potions are Backpack Items.

RULES FOR COMBAT

There will be occasions during your adventure when you will have to fight an enemy. The enemy's COMBAT SKILL and ENDURANCE points are given in the text. Your aim in the combat is to kill the enemy by reducing his ENDURANCE points to zero while losing as few ENDURANCE points as possible yourself.

At the start of a combat, enter your own and the enemy's ENDURANCE points in the appropriate boxes on the Combat Record section of your Action Chart.

The sequence for combat is as follows:

1. Add any extra points gained through your Grand Master Disciplines and Special Items to your current COMBAT SKILL total.
2. Subtract the COMBAT SKILL of your enemy from this total. The result is your Combat Ratio. Enter it on the Action Chart.

Example

You, Grand Master (COMBAT SKILL 32), are attacked in a forest by a pack of Wild Dogs (COMBAT SKILL 31). You are taken by surprise and are not given the opportunity of evading their attack. You possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-surge to which the Wild Dogs are not immune, so you add 8 points to your COMBAT SKILL. You also possess the Kai Weapon 'Ulnarias', so you add an additional 5 points to your COMBAT SKILL. This gives you a total COMBAT SKILL of 45.

You now subtract the Wild Dogs' COMBAT SKILL from your own, giving a Combat Ratio of +14 ($45-31=+14$). +14 is noted on your Action Chart as the Combat Ratio.

3. When you have your Combat Ratio, pick a number from the Random Number Table.
4. Turn to the COMBAT RESULTS TABLE on the inside back cover of this book. Along the top of the chart are shown the Combat Ratio numbers. Find the number that is the same as your Combat Ratio and cross-reference it with the random number that you have picked (the random numbers appear on the side of the chart). You now have the number of ENDURANCE points lost by both yourself and your enemy in this round of combat. (E represents points lost by the enemy; GM represents points lost by yourself - Grand Master)

Example

The Combat Ratio between you and the Wild Dogs has been established as +14. If the number picked from the Random Number Table is 1, then the result of the first round of combat is:

You (GM) lose 3 ENDURANCE points (plus an additional 1 point for using Kai-surge. This loss is in addition to the loss suffered as a result of combat)

Wild Dogs lose 9 ENDURANCE points.

5. On the Action Chart, mark the changes in ENDURANCE points to the participants in the combat.
6. Unless otherwise instructed, or unless you have

an option to evade, the next round of combat now starts.

7. Repeat the sequence from Stage 3.

This process of combat continues until the ENDURANCE points of either your enemy or yourself are reduced to zero, at which point the one with the zero score is declared dead. If you are declared dead, the adventure is over. If the enemy is dead, you can proceed but with your ENDURANCE points reduced.

A summary of Combat Rules appears on the page after the *Random Number Table*.

Evasion of combat

During your adventure you may be given the chance to evade combat. If you have already engaged in a round of combat and decide to evade, calculate the combat for that round in the usual manner. All points lost by the enemy as a result of that round are ignored, and you make your escape. Only you may lose ENDURANCE points during that round (such is the risk of turning tail and running away during combat)! You may only evade if the text of the particular section allows you to do so.

LEVELS OF NEW ORDER KAI GRAND MASTERSHIP

The following table is a guide to the rank and titles you can achieve at each stage of your journey along the road to Kai Grand Mastership. As you complete successfully each adventure in the New Order series, you will gain an additional Grand Master Discipline and progress towards the pinnacle of Kai perfection – to become a Kai Supreme Master.

No. of Grand Master Disciplines acquired	Grand Master Rank
4	Kai Grand Master Senior (<i>You begin the New Order adventures at this level of Kai Grand Mastery</i>)
5	Kai Grand Master Superior
6	Kai Grand Sentinel
7	Kai Grand Defender
8	Kai Grand Guardian
9	Sun Knight
10	Sun Lord
11	Sun Thane
12	Grand Thane
13	Grand Crown
14	Sun Prince
15	Kai Supreme Master

IMPROVED GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES

As you rise through the higher levels of Kai Grand Mastery you will find that your Disciplines will steadily improve. If you are a New Order Kai who has attained the rank of Sun Lord, you will now benefit from improvements to the following Grand Master Disciplines:

Grand Weaponmastery



Sun Lords with this Discipline are able to cause the metal edge of any non-magical weapon to ignite and burn fiercely. When a weapon thus affected is used in combat, it inflicts an additional 1 ENDURANCE point loss upon an enemy in every successful round of combat. This ability cannot be used with a wholly wooden weapon such as a quarterstaff.

Herbmastery



Sun Lords who possess this Discipline are able to cause living plants, eg, grasses, bushes, flowers, weeds, rushes etc, to entwine themselves around the limbs of hostile creatures, thereby hampering their free movement. Sun Lords are able to target

only one creature in this way. An additional creature can be affected for every level a Grand Master rises above the rank of Sun Lord.

Assimilance



Sun Lords who possess this skill are able to cause the outline of their bodies to become blurred and indistinct. By so doing, they can greatly increase their chances of avoiding magical and/or non-magical missiles directed at them.

Grand Huntmastery



Kai Sun Lords with this skill are able to see, with acute accuracy, light in the infrared spectrum, ie, they can see the complex patterns generated by heat in near or total darkness. They can also see light in the ultraviolet spectrum.

Kai Surge



Sun Lords who possess mastery of this Discipline are able to launch a Kai Blast – a pulse of intense psychic energy which is capable of affecting both psychically active and inactive enemies. This form of psychic attack is very effective, more so than a usual Kai-surge, Psi-

surge or Mindblast. It can cause an enemy to lose between 2 and 18 ENDURANCE points in one attack. However, use of a Kai Blast will reduce a Sun Lord's ENDURANCE POINTS total by 4. It cannot be used in conjunction with any other form of psychic attack.

Telegnosis



Sun Lords who possess this Discipline are able to alter their body weight in order to walk successfully upon different kinds of surface, eg. water, mud, lava and quicksand. Time duration and degree of surface difficulty increases as a Grand Master rises in rank.

Magi-magic



Grand Masters who have reached the rank of Sun Lord are able to use the following battle-spells of the Elder Magi:

Penetrate – This increases the penetrative energy of any arrow, or arrow-like missile, launched by a Sun Lord.

Energy Grasp – This spell enables a Sun Lord to discharge a powerful electrical force into anything he or she touches. It is similar in effect to the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand*. It differs in that it is easier to control and channel the resulting

energy. It also requires the actual touching of an object or enemy to effect the spell.

Bardsmanship



Kai Sun Lords with this skill are able to direct their musical abilities to disrupt the structure of inanimate breakable objects, eg. glass, ceramics, urns, flasks etc, causing them to explode violently. Any person or creature in close proximity to the destroyed object risks injury from flying fragments.

The nature of additional improvements and how they affect your existing Grand Master Disciplines will be noted in the 'Improved Grand Master Disciplines' section of future Lone Wolf New Order books.

NEW ORDER WISDOM

Grand Master, you are about to embark upon a vital mission to deny Autarch Sejanoz the *Claw of Naar*, an ancient yet deadly artefact of evil. During your quest to distant Bhanar you will encounter many strong and cunning adversaries, and your mission will be fraught with danger at every turn, so remain on your guard at all times.

Some of the material items that you find will be of use to you, but others may be red herrings of no real value at all. If you discover items during your

mission, be selective in what you choose to keep. Pick your initial four Grand Master Disciplines with care for a wise choice will enable anyone to complete the quest, no matter how weak their initial COMBAT SKILL and ENDURANCE scores may be. Completion of previous Lone Wolf adventures (Books 1-26) may be advantageous, but it is not essential for the successful completion of this New Order adventure.

May the gods Kai and Ishir guide and protect you during your mission in the sinister realm of Bhanar.

For Sommerlund and the Kai!

1

Within the hour, you find yourself standing beside Lord Rimoah at the deck-rail of the sleek flying ship *Cloud-dancer*, watching the Kai Monastery melt away into the distance as the craft soars into an azure sky. The weather is fresh and clear, and you are blessed with a strong tail wind that will assist your long journey south to the land of Bhanar.

Rimoah has already charted a course for Sunderer Pass, and as his young Toranese crew attend to the running of the skyship, you settle back into the plush comfort of the Captain's cabin and discuss with him the details of your mission. After a delicious supper, you retire early and rise late in order to be best prepared for the task ahead.

By noon of the next day, you have already crossed the Tentarias and entered into Southern Magnamund. You spend much of the early afternoon standing at the bow rail, lost in your thoughts as an endless panoply of rolling hills and grasslands pass silently beneath *Cloud-dancer's* gleaming keel.

When the forbidding peaks of the Darkwall Mountains are sighted on the horizon, Rimoah takes charge of the helm and steers the skyship on a south-easterly bearing to avoid them. These mountains mark the northern boundary of the Doomlands of Naaros, and Rimoah is anxious to avoid this notoriously stormy region. Skilfully, he navigates a course around the eastern boundary of the Doomlands until, late in the afternoon, you see the snow-capped tips of the

Southern Dammerdon Mountains soar into view.

Rimoah passes the helm back to his bo'sun, then he hurries to join you at the bow rail. 'Keep your eyes peeled, Grand Master,' he says. 'Sunderer Pass is a narrow gorge. It'll be hard to spot from here.' Aided by your ability to magnify your vision, you are the first one to see the tiny pass. Rimoah praises your keen sight and he signals to the bo'sun to bring *Cloud-dancer* around to the southern slopes of the Dammerdons, to a place where the pass emerges from the mountain range. Here, you notice a pale cross of sun-bleached boulders laid out on the dark, dusty ground. It is a sign Rimoah has been hoping for, and excitedly he calls for the bo'sun to steer the skycraft towards it.

Cloud-dancer is brought to hover directly above the cross. You leave the rail and accompany Rimoah into a boarding cage located at the stern, and together you are winched to the ground. As the cage touches down, you push open its iron gate and step out. Your pulse quickens when suddenly you see four shadowy figures emerging from the surrounding rocks.

To continue, turn to 225.

2

You make a wide detour around the encampment before continuing your ride south. It is mid-afternoon when you see a settlement in the distance, one of many that can be found on the fringes of the Yua Tzhan province. As you are passing through this ragged plains village, you see a busy market in operation. The traders and their

customers stop to stare as you ride past; their eyes drawn by the unusual cut and colour of your tunics.

Gildas points to a clothes stall that is heaped with simple straw-coloured robes, much favoured by these Bhanarian plains-dwellers. 'Maybe a wise purchase, Sir Kai?' he mutters. 'I fear our tunics may arouse yet more suspicion the further south we venture.' You nod in agreement and halt to ask the trader how much he wants for four of his robes.

'One hundred and fifty Ren,' he replies, breezily.

The trader's price is the equivalent to 15 Gold Crowns. The rangers do not have any money, so if you wish to purchase these garments you must pay the full price.

If you can afford to pay the trader's price, turn to 218.

If you do not have sufficient Gold Crowns to pay for these robes, turn to 83.

3

Your tracking skills tell you that this hut was abandoned by its owner earlier this morning. Its log stove is still warm, and a plate of food lies untouched on the table. You share out the food and dry your clothes by the stove. Sergeant Paviz keeps watch at the window in case a patrol should come by to search the hut.

As midnight approaches, the enemy activity in Zuda decreases. Gildas suggests you should leave

during the night to minimize the risk of discovery; the darkness provides invaluable cover. You agree, and after midnight you set out for the town.

Bhanarian soldiers are billeted in most of the shops and houses. You keep to the back streets to avoid the patrols, but every alley and avenue leads to the market square at the centre of the town, and you cannot avoid passing through this area. In the middle of the square a magnificent tent has been erected. High above flies a scarlet flag emblazoned with a gold tiger's head. This is Sejanoz's personal flag and it signifies that the Autarch is here in person. A dozen of his best soldiers guard his tent, and parked beside its entrance are two strange machines.

The first is an elaborate shrine. It is fashioned from gold and jewels and has been crafted into the likeness of a tiger's head. Two huge ivory fangs protrude from its jaw and its jewelled eyes glow with a flickering scarlet fire.

The second is a golden chariot. This vehicle has no team of horses to pull it, for it needs no animals to cause it to move. It is a sky chariot, powered by the same magical forces that enable *Cloud-dancer* to soar through the air.

You are observing the shrine from the cover of a doorway when suddenly the head slowly rotates in your direction, and two pencil-thin beams of red light shoot from its eyes. You duck back, but it is too late – the shine has detected your presence. The guards at the tent raise the alarm and a troop of Bhanarians come running from the doorway of a nearby hall.

'Run!' cries Gildas, as the soldiers come rushing towards you.

To continue, turn to 86.

4

Upon your safe return, you tell Paviz and Yalin of what you observed at the copse.

'They're unaware we've caught up with them,' says Captain Gildas, smiling slyly.

'Yes, and we must exploit our advantage to the full,' you reply. 'You and your men must untie their horses and scatter them so that they cannot pursue us when I snatch the Claw of Naar, literally, from beneath their leader's nose.'

The rangers approve of your plan and they are eager to put it into action. Gildas and his men mount up and skirt around the copse in a wide arc until they are in position on the far side, within sight of the enemy's unguarded mounts. They take your horse in tow, for your plan is to rejoin them and make a speedy escape as soon as you have retrieved the Claw. Meanwhile, you approach the



copse and halt within sight of the campfire. Only one of the Imperial Guardsmen is still awake, and although he has been posted to stand watch, you see that he is having difficulty keeping his eyes open. The squad leader is tossing and turning in his sleep, as if he is having a bad dream, and as you inch closer to him you fear that he could awaken at any moment.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **158**.

If you do not, turn to **116**.

5

Quickly you retrieve the potion from your backpack, flip open the stopper, and down it all in one gulp.

Instantly, the nausea subsides and you feel a wave of strength coursing through your veins: restore 4 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **48**.

6

Before you release your bowstring, you recite the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Flameshaft* and a magical blue flame engulfs your arrow's tip. Then you send your fiery missile arcing towards a pool of oil on the ground in front of the charging Xanon. It plunges into the black puddle and ignites with a terrific *Whoomph!*, exploding a searing ball of flame and black smoke into the air. The heat of the fireball forces the Xanon to retreat, but as they pull back, you become aware of a new threat.

Some Xanon have ridden in a wide arc around the ruins and have come up behind your position. You hear their leader snorting gruffly as he leaps into the ruined hall, and quickly you spin around to face him. Shouldering your bow, you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and leap forward to block him before he can launch a surprise attack upon the backs of your three companions.

To continue, turn to **270**.

7

Skilfully you land your blow upon the centre of the falling rock and it explodes into a harmless cloud of dust.

To continue, turn to **339**.

8

You are halfway around the perimeter of the hall when suddenly you are seen by the soldiers at the table. Some grab their weapons and come rushing at you, while others leave the hall to raise the alarm. You fight well and slay those who attack you, but the hall is soon awash with reinforcements and you are forced to surrender.

The rangers are also captured, and together you are taken before the Sergeant of the Guard. He denounces you as would-be thieves, out to steal provisions, and he orders that your weapons and equipment be confiscated before you are led away and thrown into the dungeons.

As the heavy door to your cell slams shut, you immediately look for a way out of this grim prison.

chamber. You try to pick the lock, but your attempt is thwarted when the Sergeant and his guards return. With them is the squad leader of the Imperial Guard, the same man from whom you took the Claw of Naar. He is carrying the accursed artefact, and when the iron door is opened, he points it at you and triggers a fearsome blast of raw energy. In the cramped confines of the cell there is no hope of escaping from its terrible power. In the blink of an eye, you and your brave companions are engulfed and consumed by a terrifying ball of white-hot fire.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in the barracks dungeon of Yua Tzhan.

9

As the nausea subsides, you see the Autarch come stalking forwards, slashing and scything at you with his needle-claws. He is like an angry tiger. As you duck below one sweeping attack, he catches you in the back with a lightning-fast following strike. His needle-claws become embedded in your backpack, and it is wrenched from your back when he sends you crashing headlong against the chamber wall: lose 2 ENDURANCE points. (You must now erase everything in your Backpack.)

To continue, turn to 94.

10

You call upon your Grand Mastery of the Kai healing skills to deaden the pain of the old man's wound before you draw out the arrow. Then you lay your right hand upon his chest and transmit the

power of your healing Discipline into the open wound. Within seconds the wound is sealed, leaving no trace of its existence.

To continue, turn to 76.

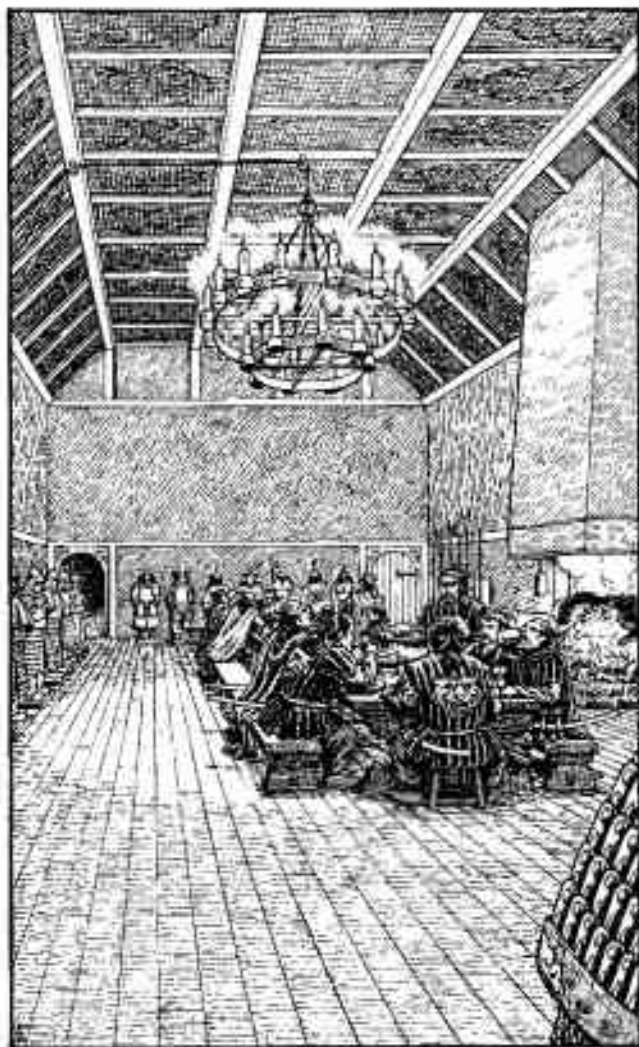
11

Beyond the door you discover an empty chamber with a flight of spiral steps. You check your compass and then you lead the rangers up these iron stairs to a wide corridor on the floor above.

You instruct Gildas and his men to wait at the top of the staircase while you make sure the way ahead is clear. Tall arched windows march past on either side as you approach a door at the end of the passageway. You detect the aroma of roasting meat and hear the sounds of feasting, and when you peep through the door's keyhole, you see a soldier's mess hall beyond.

Carefully you twist its spherical handle and push open the heavy oak door just a few inches. Peering around the door, you see a dozen Bhanarian soldiers sitting at a large table set before a blazing log fire. A side of beef is roasting on a spit above this fire, and the soldier's plates are heaped high with meat and vegetables. Stands of antique armour are positioned around the walls of the hall, and its panelled ceiling is decorated with the portraits of famous Bhanarian generals of old.

Some of the soldiers dining here are Imperial Guards from the squad that you encountered in Sunderer Pass. You scrutinise their faces, yet you



Peering round the door, you see a dozen Bhanarian soldiers feasting at a long table.

cannot see their leader among them. Your compass indicates that the Claw of Naar is nearby; its needle is pointing to a door on the far side of the mess hall. You sense that the Claw is in the room beyond this door, and you resolve to find a way of reaching it without being seen.

If you possess Grand Nexus, and wish to use it, turn to **222**.

If you possess Assimilance, and wish to use it, turn to **98**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **178**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **289**.

12

The dial emits a loud *Click!* and the heavy door swings inwards without a sound. Quickly you step inside, then beckon the rangers to follow: 'This way!'

When all three are safely inside, you push the heavy door closed and slide its drawbolt across, locking it securely.

To continue, turn to **136**.

13

'Wait here, Captain,' you say to Gildas, 'I must go to the ravine. I will return soon, I promise.'

And with these words you leave the rangers and

make your way to the steep gully where *Cloud-dancer* lay concealed before it was attacked. As you approach the ravine, your Kai tracking skills direct you towards a small metallic tube that lies hidden among the boulders.

Hurriedly you scoop up the tube, flip open its hinged lid, and shake a rolled piece of papyrus on to your palm. On this scrap of material is a hastily-written message from Rimoah, telling you that the Claw of Naar must not be allowed to fall into the hands of Autarch Sejanos. He urges you to find and destroy it.

'If this should prove impossible, you must take it to the city of Pensei. There you should make contact with Lord Ghadra, the Dessian envoy, and he will see to its destruction. He will also help you to return home to Sommerlund.'

Having memorised its contents, you tear the scrap of papyrus into small pieces and swallow them to ensure that Rimoah's message will never be discovered by the enemy. Then you return to the mountain pass to rejoin Captain Gildas and his men.

You inform them that Lord Rimoah has been forced to flee in order to save *Cloud-dancer* and his crew from the attacking horde. On hearing this they bow their heads in disappointment, fearing that they may never again see Rimoah, or their homeland of Siyen. Then you tell them about the message that Rimoah left behind and, despite their sadness, they each vow to help you capture the Claw of Naar.

Suddenly Ranger Yalin shouts a warning: the flying creatures are returning. Hurriedly you take cover among the rocks and watch as they circle above the pass. Your Kai instincts tell you that these beasts cannot survive for long beyond the mountain borders of the Doomlands, and soon your suspicions are confirmed when you see them returning north to Naaros. When the last of the creatures has disappeared, you beckon Gildas and his men to follow you down on to the mountain trail. Here you discover the bodies of two Imperial Guards who were caught by the rockslide ambush and crushed to death.

If you wish to search their pockets and backpacks, turn to **80**.

If you choose to ignore their bodies, you may leave the pass by turning to **291**.

14

The street is filled with parked wagons, anxious troops, and irate delivery drivers who have been barred entrance to the barracks. An alarm bell continues to toll as you wend your way through the crowds, and your sixth sense tells you that the Claw has now been discovered missing.

You turn a corner and ride along an unobstructed avenue that takes you to a far quieter quarter of the city. Guided by your pathsmanship and tracking skills, you lead the rangers to the South Gate of Yua Tzhan. Here you are able to depart the city along a road that passes through outlying settlements before climbing gently into the Honah Hills.

Pick a number from the Random Number Table.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **202**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **194**.

15

You nod in agreement to Gildas' suggestion, then you push back your chair and stand up. The fortune-teller protests and demands that you pay him for the card reading.

If you wish to give the man 1 Gold Crown, turn to **316**.

If you refuse to give him anything, turn to **283**.

16

You do not recognize the tree-like shrub and you are wary of any properties its leaves or bark may possess. Rather than risk testing it in case it should prove to be poisonous, you advise Yalin to step away from the strange-looking plant.

To continue, turn to **240**.

17

You call upon your improved Kai mastery to project a noise beneath the first arch of the bridge. Amplified by the water, and the arch itself, this sudden rumbling noise startles the soldiers on the river bank. Fearing that a monster is set to rise up and consume the bridge at any moment, they turn tail and flee in panic from the water's edge.

Turn to **127**.

18

The death of their leader forces the other winged horrors to break off their attack. They swoop out of the pass and veer away to the east, towards the ravine where *Cloud-dancer* is hidden. There they muster their numbers and, with a hellish chorus of cackling shrieks, they launch an attack upon the grounded skyship and its crew.

You cast a glance down into the pass and see that the squad of Imperial Guards has now halted on the narrow mountain trail. You sense that they are waiting for their winged escorts to return before they dare to venture a step further.

If you wish to hurry back to *Cloud-dancer* and help Lord Rimoah repel the aerial assault, turn to **345**.

If you choose to stay with Captain Gildas and the rangers, turn to **302**.

19

Unfortunately, your ploy fails. The squad leader overhears you and he raises the alarm. Suddenly the door to the antechamber is kicked open and a dozen soldiers burst in, armed and eager to protect their esteemed commander.

You fight bravely and slay most of those who attack you, but the antechamber is soon awash with reinforcements and you are forced to surrender. During the mêlée, the rangers are also captured, and together you are taken before the Sergeant of the Guard. He denounces you as would-be thieves, out to steal provisions, and he

orders that your weapons and equipment be confiscated before you are led away and thrown into the dungeons.

As the heavy door to your cell slams shut, you immediately look for a way out of this grim prison chamber. You try to pick the lock, but your attempt is thwarted when the Sergeant and his guards return. With them is the squad leader, freshly bathed and sporting a fine new uniform. He is carrying the Claw of Naar, and when the iron door is opened, he points it at you and triggers a fearsome blast of raw energy. In the cramped confines of the cell there is no hope of escaping from its terrible power. In the blink of an eye, you and your brave companions are engulfed and consumed by a terrifying ball of white-hot fire.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in the barracks dungeon of Yua Tzhan.

20

You warn the others that a storm is imminent, and that you will need to find shelter before it breaks. Less than a mile further on, you discover an abandoned cottage that overlooks the hill road. A dirt track ascends to its door, and when you reach it, you discover that there is sufficient room inside to shelter you and your horses. Barely minutes after arriving here, the storm breaks and the surrounding countryside is swept by torrential rain.

While you are sheltering from the storm, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 303.

21

When you crest the ridge, you rein in your horse and stop to look back at the trap you have set. After several minutes, you see your enemy enter the valley and gallop along the trail. You magnify your vision in order to observe them as they approach the pillars, but as they pass by the obstruction, you detect no sudden release of power.

The enemy have failed to trigger your trap and now you have lost a precious advantage. Cursing your ill luck, you urge your stallion to the gallop and speed away from the ridge with your ranger companions following closely on your horse's heels.

Turn to 309.

22

You reach the end of the roof and climb down the trunk of the tree. Gildas and his men follow your lead, and when all of you are safely on the ground, you pause for a few moments to assess the situation. From beneath the leafy boughs of the young oak, you look out across the parade ground and scan the buildings that border upon it. Bhanarian soldiers are running everywhere, seemingly in confusion. Then you realize that they all have a purpose: they are rushing to secure every entrance and exit from the barracks.

Gildas points to a building on the west side of the

parade ground. Its doors are open and unguarded. You magnify your vision and see that it is part of the barracks stables. Its well-lit interior is busy with troopers who are preparing their mounts for tomorrow's ceremonial parade through the city. Beyond its rows of stalls is an archway that opens on to one of the city's streets. You inform the rangers of what you have seen and you decide that the stables offer you your best hope for an escape from the barracks. Using the perimeter trees for cover, you skirt around the parade ground and make your approach to the stables. You are less than 20 metres from its open doors when you are suddenly called upon to halt. Three Bhanarian guards come weaving through the line of trees towards you, their spears held at the ready. 'Stay where you are,' barks the tallest of these soldiers, 'and all of you – raise your hands!'

If you possess Herbmastery, and have attained the rank of Sun Lord, turn to **229**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Guardian, turn to **111**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you have yet to attain the required level of Kai Mastery, turn to **274**.

23

You snatch an arrow from your quiver and place it to your bow. As the leading creature comes swooping down towards your hiding place, you pull back your bowstring and take aim at the beast's open jaw.



Three Bhanarian guards come rushing towards you, their spears held at the ready.

If you possess Magi-magic, and have attained the Kai rank of Sun Lord, turn to **284**.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you have yet to attain this level of Kai Mastery, turn to **172**.

24

You draw your Kai Weapon and Gildas unsheathes his sword, and together you attack the Autarch. Your heaviest blows fail to mark his armour and you are forced to retreat for fear of striking your companions.

The Autarch swivels his helm towards you. 'Give me the Claw!' he demands, his voice booming around the chamber. 'Give me the Claw and I shall spare all your worthless lives!'

If you choose to obey his command, turn to **35**.

If you choose to refuse his command, turn to **338**.

25

The woman launches a bolt of psychic energy that pierces your mind and engulfs your head with a fiery, agonising pain: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Slowly your innate mental defences knit together to repair the damage you have sustained from this opportunistic attack, and gradually the pain in your head recedes.

To continue, turn to **96**.

26

You exasperate yourself attempting to pick this lock by the use of your Grand Mastery of Nexus alone (lose 1 ENDURANCE point), and after thirty minutes of futile effort, reluctantly you concede defeat. The mechanism is formidable: you may have to resort to force to get it to open.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **65**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **263**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn to **324**.

27

You inform Gildas and the others of your discovery, and tell them to rest awhile beneath the wooden bridge while you attempt to lure a distant group of stallions towards the stream. By the use of your Animal Mastery, you are soon able to entice four horses to approach the bridge. At first they are nervous, for they can detect the vile stench of the Doomlands' dust which impregnates the rangers' tunics. But they are also thirsty and they cannot resist the temptation of the sparkling stream.

You allow them to drink at the stream for several minutes and, as they settle, you use your Kai mastery to subdue their natural instincts. At your command, Gildas and the others emerge from beneath the bridge and each man chooses a stallion. They are all expert horsemen, and they are able to make bridles and saddlecloths from

ropes and blankets that they carry in their packs. Within the hour, all four of you are ready to leave the bridge and ride south in pursuit of the Imperial Guards.

Before you set off, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **130**

28

You place your mouth close to the door and use your Magnakai Disciplines of Pathsmanship and Divination to help you mimic the sound of the squad leader's voice. 'Go away!' you say, tersely. 'I've no wish to be disturbed.'

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, add 1 to the number you have picked. If you possess Telegnosis, add 2.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **19**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **162**.

29

Your arrow causes the cannon's pressure cylinder to erupt like a geyser, and it sprays the Bhanarians with deadly pieces of jagged iron shrapnel. Those who are not felled instantly by the force of the explosion are blinded and blistered by jets of scalding steam.

Turn to **47**.

30

As the dust settles, you see that the avalanche of rocks has blocked the mountain pass. Two of the enemy warriors have been crushed by the deluge, and three others can be seen staggering away wounded. Most of the squad appear to have survived the rockfall and you cannot help but begrudgingly admire the swiftness of their reactions. At first you cannot see their leader, then you notice him crawling along a channel which runs alongside the mountain trail. He jumped into this shallow gully to avoid the tumbling rocks and now he is climbing back towards the track.

You command Captain Gildas and his rangers to cover you as you leave your hiding place and go after this squad leader. He is clutching the Claw of Naar in his right hand and you are determined to seize the chance to capture it before he can rally his scattered men. Swiftly you traverse the mound of rocks that now block the pass, and as you leap into the gully behind the squad leader, you draw your Kai Weapon in readiness to strike. Your adversary hears the slick swish of your weapon



leaving its scabbard and instantly he spins on his heel. Shock blanches his sallow, moustachioed face and his almond eyes widen with alarm, but he quickly recovers his composure.

He raises the mace-like Claw of Naar defensively and, with a terse laugh, he levels its taloned tip at your chest. There is a crackling hum of power and a bolt of black fire leaps from this evil artefact. You act on reflex and dive to the bottom of the trench as the supernatural bolt of dark flame comes streaking through the dusty air towards you.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 1 or lower, turn to **308**.

If it is 2-6, turn to **278**.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to **147**.

31

Only the swiftness of your reactions saves you and your companions from a watery death. You race back along the hill road, through the blinding rain, with a surging torrent of mud and debris chasing you all the way. Trees are uprooted and loose boulders are sent hurtling into the air by the destructive force of this merciless flow. You are struck by pieces of debris and you suffer cuts to your head and back: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

You succeed in out-running the mudslide but at some cost. Your horses are so drained by the

ordeal that two of them die of exhaustion, and a third becomes too lame to continue. You are forced to abandon them and continue your journey on foot. You head east, and take shelter in a wooded hillside while you wait for the rains to abate.

While you are resting, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **59**.

32

You detect that the woman is attempting to ensnare you with a powerful mind charm. You draw upon your psychic defences to block the effects of her spell, and you are able to resist her mesmeric command. Unfortunately, your companions do not possess your formidable mental defences and they continue to ride along the track, drawn by her hypnotic voice. You call out to them to halt but they are oblivious to your presence. You must act quickly if you wish to save them from her sinister spell.

If you possess a Bow, and wish to use it, turn to **312**.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **151**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **53**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **124**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **281**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, or a Bow, turn instead to **164**.

33

Your spell fails to split the iron skin of the cannon's pressure cylinder. Alerted now to your presence, a handful of Bhanarians leave the fight at the archway and come running towards the antechamber with their swords and axes raised to strike. You offer up a short prayer to Ishir to protect you as you draw your Kai Weapon ready to meet their determined attack. With your battle cry upon your lips, you pull open the door and flail at the first Bhanarian who comes within striking distance of your deadly blade.

Bhanarian Guards:

COMBAT SKILL 37 ENDURANCE 40

If you win this combat, turn to **144**.

34

As the fearsome Xanon charges towards the ruins, you suddenly realize that the sticky brown-black oil that coats its hide is highly inflammable.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **221**.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you choose not to use it, turn to **253**.

35

You tug the Claw from your pack and toss it on to the floor.

'No! He'll not have it!' screams Gildas, and he leaps forward to kick the artefact away. It skitters across the floor, and its clawed tip embeds itself in the base of the log fire. The Captain's actions have angered the Autarch. He storms forward and deals him a crushing blow with his armoured forearm, sending him crashing against a bookcase on the far side of the chamber. His head drops limply to his chest and he slithers to the floor.

Turn to **344**.

36

Your killing blow severs the creature's head from its body. For a few moments its dismembered torso stands erect, then slowly it keels over backwards and tumbles into the mountain pass.

To continue, turn to **18**.

37

The moment you step outside the tavern, you and your companions are set upon by the one-eyed man and his brutish cohorts. They are armed with knives and clubs, and they are determined to show you no mercy. You must fight them.

Bhanarian Roughriders:

COMBAT SKILL 38 ENDURANCE 41

You may add +2 to your COMBAT SKILL for the

duration of this fight, for Gildas and his men are helping you to fight off these enemies.

If you win the combat in five rounds or less, turn to **256**.

If you win the combat and it takes six rounds or more, turn to **105**.

38

You call out to the rangers to follow your lead, then you urge your horse to the gallop and race him towards the barrier. The guards scatter as you bear down on them, but their corporal is made of sterner stuff and he refuses to move. He snatches up his spear and gets ready to lunge as you come thundering towards him.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Animal Control, add 2 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 0-1, turn to **142**.

If it is 2-4, turn to **198**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **44**.

39

The Autarch's men react swiftly to their squad leader's call, and soon they are following closely on your heels as you race through the copse. When you break from the cover of the trees, the nearest enemy warrior hurls his dagger at your fleeing back. Your Kai sixth sense alerts you to the flying missile and you dodge aside, but the tip of the knife grazes your side and makes you stumble

and fall into the long grass: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to **85**.

40

You catch up with the fleeing rangers at a clearing in the forest. The swiftness of your flight has outpaced the fearsome shape-changer, yet no sooner have you recovered your composure and rallied your companions, than you find yourself confronted by a new threat.

At the far side of the clearing is a large mound of packed earth, with a cave-like entrance that is adorned with bones and skulls. From out of the mouth of this cave there emerges a hulking form. Its body resembles a great grey egg supported by a cluster of pale, spindly legs. Two bloodshot eyeballs wobble atop stalks that protrude from its swollen head, and a vile-smelling green bile drips unceasingly from its gap-toothed maw.

Gildas raises his bow and draws an arrow in readiness to fire at the advancing beast. You raise your Kai Weapon, but suddenly you sense that this abomination is surrounded by a benign, magical aura. Your Kai sixth sense tells you that, despite its gruesome appearance, this creature poses no real threat to you and your companions, and hurriedly you command Gildas to hold his fire. Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 3 or lower, turn to **213**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **176**.



A strange, hulking form emerges from the mouth of the cave.

41

You hurry away from the trees and enter the busy stables. Dozens of troopers are grooming their mounts in stalls which are set facing each other. They form a long corridor that runs all the way to a pair of open green doors at the far end of the building. Through this open doorway you glimpse the enticing sight of a city street, and you and your companions have to struggle to overcome an almost overwhelming urge to run headlong towards it.

Most of the horses that are standing in the stalls are saddled-up in preparation for tomorrow's ceremony. The troopers are part of the mounted guard detailed to escort the Autarch through the city. You whisper to the others to look for some unattended horses, but as you approach the stalls, you are challenged by a suspicious trooper. Roughly you barge him aside and leap into the saddle of a chestnut mare. The rangers are all close behind you when you dig in your heels and urge your mount to gallop along the central corridor that leads to the exit. The troopers wave their fists as you speed past them, and hurriedly two of them attempt to shut the green doors before you can make good your escape into the street.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **319**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **214**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **180**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **71**.

42

As you make the jump, your horse strikes his forelegs on the barrier and you are jolted out of the saddle. You twist as you fall and strike the back of your skull when you hit the ground: lose 5 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this heavy fall, turn to **108**.

43

The squad leader advances along the trench with the Claw of Naar poised to fire a second blast, yet a timely volley of arrows from the rangers forces him to abandon his attack and dive for cover. When he scrambles to his feet, he commands his scattered squad to rally to his cry. They come running forward and he scrambles out of the trench to meet them. Then an arrow skewers the sleeve of his tunic, and he spins around and looses off the second flame-bolt in reply. It explodes among the rocks above and you hear Sergeant Paviz cry out in pain. The crackling hum of the Claw rises to an almost deafening pitch when the leader allows the supernatural weapon to recharge to maximum power. Turning towards the rocks that block the mountain pass, he points the Claw at the base and lets loose a third blast of dark flame which blows a big hole in the heaped debris. With a wild cheer, the Bhanarians race through the smouldering gap and make good their escape along the trail beyond.

Turn to **220**.

44

As you make the jump, the corporal's nerve breaks and he throws himself to the ground. Your horse sails across the barrier, and the rangers follow with consummate ease. The angry cries of the corporal quickly fade into the distance as you leave the bridge and follow the road into the hills beyond.

Turn to **272**.

45

The old man frowns. He does not want to lose a sale, at any price. After some thought, he says that he will accept 1 Weapon, 3 Gold Crowns, and 1 Backpack Item in exchange for the robes.

You agree to the man's offer and you hand over the items he requests (remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly). Then you and your companions each take one of the loose-fitting robes and slip them on over your tunics. The thin, hooded garments are large enough to conceal your backpacks and weapons, and you are pleased to discover that they do not hamper your movement.

Having concluded your business, you thank the old man and bid him farewell. Then you leave his tent and go to collect your horses.

Turn to **118**.

46

There is a blinding flash of scarlet light upon the instant that your blade strikes the shaft of the Claw, and a searing wave of energy sends

you crashing backwards to the ground: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

Dazed and gasping for breath, you drag yourself to your feet and approach the stone block which is now wreathed with trails of grey smoke. To your dismay, you discover that the Claw is still intact. Despite the huge burst of energy that your blow released, you discover no mark or blemish upon its gnarled shaft.

The blade of your Kai Weapon, however, is notched and discoloured at the point where it struck the shaft of the Claw. (The damage to your Kai Weapon has caused a permanent reduction of 2 points to its COMBAT SKILL bonus. You should now adjust the bonus on your Special Items list.)

To continue, turn to 228.

47

You pull open the door to the antechamber and sprint across the body-strewn hall towards the distant archway. Your Magnakai Discipline of Huntmastery enables you to see through the dissipating clouds of steam, but your ranger allies are not so gifted. As you pass through the archway and rush into the corridor, they mistake you for a Bhanarian attacker and they let loose a volley of arrows at your fleeting form.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 9, turn to 163.

If it is 4-8, turn to 209.

If it is 0-3, turn to 77.

48

The Autarch curses your resourcefulness. He is frustrated by your continued resistance and finally his patience snaps. With a wild cry he comes stalking forwards, slashing and scything at you with his needle-claws like an angry tiger. As you duck below one sweeping attack, he catches you in the back with a lightning-fast following strike. His needle-claws become embedded in your backpack, and it is wrenched from your back when he sends you crashing headlong against the chamber wall: lose 2 ENDURANCE points. (You must now erase everything in your Backpack.)

To continue, turn to 94.

49

You draw upon your improved Discipline of Grand Huntmastery and focus your vision upon the advancing squad, but you cannot detect anything unusual there. It is not until you cast your eyes to the blanket of cloud above that you discover the cause of your disquiet. Hidden from plain sight yet clear to your improved infravision, you see a host of flying creatures soaring overhead. The sight makes you swallow hard. They have lean and sinewy bodies that are studded with hundreds of spikes, and their slitted eyes emit a cold, billous light.

You warn the rangers of their presence and swiftly they take cover among the boulders, hiding themselves from above. Your swift action saves you from being detected by the winged beasts, but as the last of their number passes overhead, you

witness something that makes your heart skip a beat.

Turn to **296**.

50

A blinding white light obliterates your vision. Then a terrifying numbness spreads rapidly from your neck to the soles of your feet, and you feel yourself tumbling forwards into a fathomless abyss.

One of the steam-gun projectiles has pierced the back of your skull and penetrated your brain. Mercifully, your death is swift and painless.

Sadly, your life and your mission end here, at the Crimson Tower of Zuda.

51

You draw upon your mastery of Elementalism to cause a sudden gust of air to strike the falling rock.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. For every level of Kai rank you have achieved, above the rank of Kai Grand Master Superior, add an additional 1.

If your total score is now 0-5, turn to **259**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **216**.

52

The tavern-keeper's blast of buckshot peppers your shoulder (lose 2 ENDURANCE points) and damages one of the items in your backpack.

You must now erase the second item that you have recorded on your list of Backpack Items.

To continue, turn to **287**.

53

You intone the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Invisible Fist* and hold out the palm of your right hand, directing it towards the body of the sinister young woman. You feel a surge of tingling power leap from your palm and shoot towards her, but this power is deflected away when suddenly a translucent wall of energy appears before her.

Fearing that you may be facing a powerful sorceress, you abandon your attack and try to think of a more effective weapon to use against her.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **151**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **281**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn instead to **164**.

54

For a few anxious moments your target is obscured by the Bhanarian gunners, and you bite your lip as you wait for them to move out of the line of fire. The instant they do, you release your straining bowstring and send your arrow arcing across the mess hall towards its mark.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If you possess Grand Weaponmastery with Bow, add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **326**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **29**.

55

You tell the sergeant that you have lost your pass, and suddenly his face turns bright red with anger. You sense that you must act quickly if you are to prevent him from raising the alarm.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **182**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **235**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn to **141**.

56

You call upon your Magnakai Discipline of Animal Control to command the deadly Conda not to attack Gildas, and instantly it obeys your silent order.

Unfortunately, you neglect to instruct the snake not to attack you instead. As it pulls away from the Captain's face, it turns its head and fixes you with its red eyes. Moments later, it launches itself at your throat like a speeding arrow!

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the

number you have picked. For every level of Kai rank that you have attained above Kai Grand Sentinel, add 1. If your current ENDURANCE score is lower than 16, deduct 2.

If your total score is now 5 or less, turn to **161**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **210**.

57

Through one of the tall windows that line this corridor, you see the flat tarred roof of the barracks kitchens and the upper boughs of a line of trees that encircle the parade ground beyond. Shielding your face with your free arm, you strike the leaded glass repeatedly with your Kai Weapon and then command the rangers to follow as you leap through the shattered pane and jump down on to the tarred roof, just a few feet below the window's ledge.

You are running across the roof towards a tree that stands near to the kitchens, when you suddenly hear the loud peeling of an alarm bell echoing from a tower on the northern side of the barracks.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **22**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **196**.

58

The old man is disappointed by your refusal to trade and he shakes his head wearily. When you

ask if any Bhanarian soldiers and Xanon have passed this way, he looks at you quizzically.

'Why yes!' he says. 'They rode by during the night. They didn't want to trade either.'

You thank the old man and bid him good health, but before you can continue your ride, he steps in front of your horse and insists that you and your companions rest for a short while. He offers to share some bread and wine with you.

If you wish to accept the old man's hospitality, turn to **258**.

If you choose to decline his offer of refreshments, turn to **343**.

59

You manage to sleep for a few hours while the rains continue unabated. Gildas wakes you shortly after dawn, and you are relieved to discover that the rain has stopped.

You set off across the hills and, during your trek, you discard your plains-herder robes for they offer you little protection. At noon you halt to prepare a meal of roots and wild vegetables. While you are eating, you resolve to attempt to cross the River Heng and enter the friendly realm of Chai. You will then make your way to the city of Pensei, and try to contact the Dessian envoy - Lord Ghadra.

Despite difficult terrain you make very good progress. You leave the Honah Hills and enter the dark pines of the Angfeng Forest, covering 30 miles by sunset. As darkness casts its black shroud

upon this untamed land, you stop to set up camp for the night on the fringe of a cold marsh. The night sky is clear, and before you settle down to sleep, you take time to observe the stars.

If you possess Astrology, turn to **257**.

If you do not, turn to **155**.

60

Quickly you pull the bolt and, as you move away from the door, you hear the squad leader calling out in response to the knock: 'Enter!'

The door shudders and the handle turns as an attempt is made to enter the antechamber.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, turn to **247**.

If you do not, turn to **28**.

61

The impact of your spell splits the cannon's pressure cylinder and it erupts like a geyser, spraying the Bhanarians with deadly pieces of jagged shrapnel. Those who are not felled instantly by the force of the explosion are blinded and blistered by jets of scalding steam.

Turn to **47**.

62

Your mind is set upon the task of finding and retrieving the Claw of Naar before Autarch Sejanos arrives, and impatiently you dismiss the fortune-teller with a wave of your hand. Gildas and

his men follow as you hurry out of the inn and stride across the main square. In the light of a street lantern you consult your Siyenese compass once more before setting off in the direction that it indicates. It leads you towards the military quarter located on the east side of the square. You follow a broad avenue lined with closed shop doorways and soon arrive at a busy barracks. The compass, and your Kai sixth sense, both tell you that the Claw of Naar is located somewhere inside this troop-infested building.

If you wish to try to find a way to enter the barracks undetected, turn to **81**.

If you decide to observe this building from the cover of an unlit doorway, turn to **242**.

63

You have travelled less than a mile when it begins to rain. At first it is just a few drops that spot the shoulders of your robe, but within minutes it has become a deluge that soaks you through to the skin. The land bordering this road is steep and impossible to climb on horseback, and through the sheeting rain you can see little of the way ahead. The thunder grows steadily louder. When this rumbling becomes almost deafening, you suddenly realize that it is not thunder at all: it is a terrifying sound of a mudslide. Frantically you signal to the rangers to turn back. As the torrent of earth and water comes crashing down the hillsides, you urge your horses to a blind gallop in a desperate attempt to out-run this merciless river of mud.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If you possess Animal Mastery, add 1 to the number you have picked. If your current ENDURANCE score is 20 or higher, add 1. If it is 10 or lower, deduct 1.

If your total score is now 2 or lower, turn to **160**.

If it is 3-7, turn to **31**.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to **322**.

64

For over three hours you ride south across the rolling grasslands, guided on your way by your tracking skills and the light of a waxing moon. It is not until you see the outline of a derelict temple silhouetted on the crest of a ridge that you slow your pace and point your tired horse towards it. Upon reaching the ruined temple you discover that it stands beside a well brim-full with fresh water. You let the horses drink their fill, and as they recover their strength, you and your companions explore the ruin.

The temple is empty and overgrown. Its only feature of note is an altar stone engraved with ancient designs. It is illuminated by a solitary stream of moonlight that filters down through a hole in the shattered slate roof. While the horses are resting, you take the opportunity to examine the Claw and, as you unfold its covering blanket on the altar, you find yourself both fascinated and repulsed by the intricacies of its evil design. The head of the Claw resembles a petrified vulture's foot, cast in a black metal that is flecked with



You are repulsed and yet fascinated by the evil Claw of Naar.

shimmering scarlet specks. Its shaft is twisted, like a length of gnarled root, and it is perforated along its length with pea-sized hollows.

A palpable aura of evil radiates from this dread artefact, and you feel an overwhelming compulsion to destroy it. You warn the rangers to stand clear, and then you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and deal the shaft of the Claw a mighty blow.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is even (ie, 0, 2, 4, 6, or 8), turn to **323**.

If it is odd (ie, 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9), turn to **248**.

65

You recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and point the index finger of your right hand at the keyhole. A tingling sensation runs the length of your arm, and then a crackling bolt of blue energy leaps from your fingertip and tears open the iron lockplate. The doors to the stables shudder and then fly open amid a cloud of smoke.

Turn to **152**.

66

You leap from the wagon to land upon the flagstoned ground. Gildas signals to you from the shadows of a doorway and quickly you scurry towards him and his men.

The doorway is blocked by a stout iron portal, but

when you try its handle, you discover that it is unlocked. You slip inside and beckon the rangers to follow. When all of you are safely in, you close the heavy door and draw its bolt.

To continue, turn to **11**.

67

As you fall, you kick your heels hard against the wall of the ravine and propel yourself towards the slate outcrop. Your quick wits and natural agility save you, and you survive the fall unharmed. Quickly you retrieve the steel tube and tuck it into your belt. Then you climb back to the top of the ravine before you examine what the tube contains.

Turn to **140**.

68

You grab the chariot's guide rail as you thrust your right hand forwards on the glittering sphere. The sky-chariot surges forwards, and as you leave the courtyard and tower, you hear Autarch Sejanos scream a vow that he will take vengeance upon you for the defeat you have dealt him this day.

You steer the sky-chariot away to the east and flee towards the friendlier skies of Chai. As the wind whips your face, you feel the sweet exhilaration of victory. Yet it is tempered by the memory of the brave men you had to leave behind.

Turn to **150**.

69

You recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and raise your right hand, pointing your outstretched fingers towards the distant steam-cannon. A bolt of radiant energy leaps from your fingertips and speeds across the mess hall, striking its iron cylinder with a blinding flash of blue-white sparks.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. For every level of Kai rank you have attained above Kai Grand Sentinel, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now is 4 or lower, turn to **33**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **61**.

70

You draw upon your Kai mastery to command the snake to hold its attack. The Conda hesitates, and Gildas reaches for his sword. With one swift and deadly swipe, his blade decapitates the serpent and sends its fanged head spinning through the air, trailing a stream of greenish-yellow venom.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Gildas wipes his blade on the grubby sleeve of his tunic before slipping it silently into his scabbard.

Turn to **335**.

71

As you gallop through the stables, Gildas draws level with your speeding horse. Simultaneously you unsheathe your weapons, and as you approach the

closing doors, you lash out at the troopers who are attempting to bar your way. They are forced to dive aside to save themselves from your deadly blades, and you are able to pass through the narrowed exit and make good a speedy escape into the street beyond. As you gallop from the open doorway, you steer your horses to the right and then race away along a dark, cobblestoned street.

Turn to **14**.

72

Quickly you remove your pack and, to your dismay, you discover that it has been torn open by the blow you received just prior to your escape from the ruins.

(In addition to the Claw of Naar, you have also lost 3 Backpack Items. You must now erase from your Backpack Items List the Claw of Naar, plus any three Backpack Items of your choosing.)

Cursing your bad fortune, you see the Xanon leave the ruins and join with the Autarch's Imperial Guards who have been observing your battle from the safety of a nearby ridge. You see a Xanon deliver the Claw to the squad leader, and it galls you to see him raising it defiantly. With a whooping cry, the Bhanarians and their Xanon allies leave the ridge and ride south across the open grasslands.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 4 or lower, turn to **327**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **128**.

73

You pull open the door and quickly stand aside. A Bhanarian guard strides into the antechamber, and when he looks at your face, his eyes go wide with shock. You lash out and fetch him an uppercut to the jaw, knocking him unconscious. Before he hits the floor, you move forward and grab him to prevent his body from making a sound. You are placing him down gently when the squad leader shouts out: 'Who's there?'

You push the door shut and bolt it. Then you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and enter the main chamber to confront the squad leader in his bath.

Turn to **260**.

74

Suddenly you hear a startling shriek from the blanket of dark cloud that has enveloped the pass.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-2, turn to **271**.

If it is 3-9, turn to **167**.

75

Quickly you speak the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and raise your right arm. You point your outstretched fingers at the Autarch's helm and a crackling bolt of blue fire leaps from your fingertips. It strikes his helm, and the force of the impact makes him shudder. He releases his grip and the rangers fall limply to the floor.

Then he turns to face you. 'Give me the Claw!' he demands, his voice booming around the chamber. 'Give me the Claw and I shall spare all your worthless lives!'

If you choose to obey his command, turn to **35**.

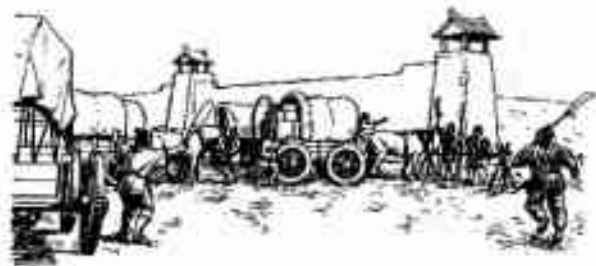
If you choose to refuse his command, turn to **338**.

76

The old man thanks you for having lifted the curse that was placed upon him by the shape-changer. Your courageous act has not saved his life, but it has saved his soul from the clutches of Naar's fell servant.

'I am . . . Juanphor,' he says, struggling to speak his name. 'I am a Chai herbalist . . . from Zuda. I came to the Vanchou a year ago in search of rare herbs and I fell under the curse of the shape-changer.'

The old man draws from the pocket of his robe a small pouch containing some powdered yellow petals, and a rusty red key. He insists that you keep them, as a gift for your kindness. 'The powder is Poghlam - it shall protect you from evil,' he says in a whisper, ' . . . and the key will open the door to my home in Zuda. It is called the Crimson Tower. Whatever you wish to take . . . it is yours.'



You offer to carry the old man away from the forest but he refuses to leave. 'My days are numbered. I shall only be a burden to you. You must leave me and go. Do not delay . . . the shape-changer is approaching. I . . . can feel . . . her anger.'

Your Kai sixth sense confirms that the old man is correct. The shape-changer is approaching the clearing, and you must leave immediately if you are to avoid another deadly confrontation with her.

Reluctantly you bid farewell to this brave old man, and then you cross the clearing hurriedly and remount your horse. Gildas beckons you to follow as he and his rangers make good a hasty escape into the trees.

(If you choose to keep the Poghram and the Red Key, record them on your *Action Chart* as Backpack Items.)

To continue, turn to **346**.

77

You dive to the ground as the rangers' feathered shafts come streaking along the corridor. The swiftness of your reflexes saves you from being hit, and the arrows flash past to skitter harmlessly along the floor of the mess hall beyond.

To continue, turn to **269**.

78

You cross the valley and, as you crest a distant ridge, you see the first rays of dawn sunlight brightening the eastern horizon. You continue to

ride at a swift pace for you are anxious to put distance between your company and the Imperial Guards. But as the sun rises into a cloudless sky, you note a dense forest stretching like a dark wall along the southern horizon.

'That's the Vanchou,' calls out Gildas. 'They say it's haunted.'

The trail continues due south towards the centre of this forbidding timberland. As you draw steadily closer, you feel an unnatural chill radiating from its tangle of sickly-coloured pines. You are inclined to disbelieve that it is haunted, yet you do not relish the thought of riding through it. Then a sudden sense of unease makes you glance over your shoulder, and your heart skips a beat when you see a column of dust on the track less than three miles distant. You magnify your vision and your worst fears are confirmed; the Imperial Guards have caught up and are fast gaining ground.

If you wish to leave the trail and ride east across grasslands, turn to **250**.

If you choose to stay on the trail and enter the Vanchou Forest, turn to **143**.

79

You are trying to think of a way to draw the soldiers away from the water's edge, when Captain Gildas comes up with a crude yet effective solution to the problem. He draws an arrow to his bow and picks off a lone Bhanarian soldier who is washing his tunic upstream. The luckless soldier topples into the river and is carried towards the

bridge by the strong current. Lookouts on the bridge spot his body and they pass word to those along the river bank. As the body is swept beneath the bridge, they leave their canteens and their washing and go running along the bank in the hope of recovering his body downstream.

To continue, turn to **127**.

80

Your search of the guards' pockets and packs uncovers the following weapons, money and Backpack Items:

- Dagger
- Sword
- Spear
- 50 Ren (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)
- Mirror
- Rope
- Food (enough for 2 Meals)
- Comb

You also discover a gleaming talisman that is engraved with the tiger's head emblem of Autarch Sejanos. It is strung upon a braided cord. (If you wish to keep this Gold Talisman, record it on your *Action Chart* as a Special Item. You may wear it around your neck.)

To continue, turn to **291**.

81

There is a great deal of activity going on at the main entrance to the barracks. Columns of Bhanarian spearmen, clad in black quilted

uniforms with wide silk leggings, go marching through its gate every few minutes with an almost clockwork regularity. You suspect that they are mustering in preparation for the arrival of the Autarch, although they seem too heavily armed to be gathering for ceremonial parade duties. You also catch sight of some Xanons, and you sense that these creatures were among those whom you fought at the ruins earlier today.

You signal to Gildas and his men to follow as you skirt around the barracks and approach one of several smaller entrances that punctuate its northern flank wall. A line of wagons are parked here, awaiting their turn to enter. While they wait, the drivers and their civilian helpers busy themselves by checking the food and provisions they are delivering to the barracks' kitchens. One driver is struggling to recover the contents of a crate that has fallen from the tailgate of his wagon and broken open.

If you wish to offer to help the driver recover his spilled load, turn to **227**.

If you wish to attempt to hide in the rear of one of the wagons that is queuing to enter the barracks, turn to **301**.

82

Captain Gildas lets out a shrill cry of pain as the musket ball strikes his right thigh. He clutches at the wound and you see blood oozing through his fingers. Fortunately, the lead ball has passed cleanly through his limb without striking bone, and you are able to staunch the flow of blood and seal his punctured skin by the use of your Magnakai

healing skills alone. (The hurried use of your healing skills costs you 1 ENDURANCE point.)

To continue, turn to **290**.

83

The trader frowns. He is loathe to lose a sale, at any price. After some thought, he says that he will accept 1 Weapon, 4 Gold Crowns, and 1 Backpack Item in exchange for the robes.

You agree to the man's price and you hand over the items he requests (remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly). Then you and your companions each take one of the loose-fitting robes and slip them on over your tunics. The thin, hooded garments are large enough to conceal your backpacks and weapons, and you are pleased to discover that they do not hamper your movement.

Having concluded your business, you thank the trader and bid him farewell. Then you leave this village and continue your ride south across the plain.

Turn to **118**.

84

When the last of the bridge guards has fallen to your blows, or thrown down his spear and fled from the fight, you circle around and then charge your horse towards the barrier.

He sails across the bar and, one by one, the rangers follow your lead. Without looking back, you canter across the bridge and along the road that winds into the hills beyond.

Turn to **272**.

85

You struggle to your feet and push yourself on towards the waiting rangers. Gildas and his men are ready to take off the moment you reach them, and, as you haul yourself on to your mount, you hear the anguished screams of the squad leader echoing across the plain. With a cry of triumph on your lips, you dig in your heels and gallop away from the copse as fast as your steed can carry you.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **293**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **64**.

86

The soldiers chase you through the back streets of Zuda until you are cornered in the courtyard of a tall crimson-coloured tower. Desperately you scan the walls of the courtyard but there is no way out, except by way of the narrow passageway that led you here.

Marching along this passage come a squad of the Autarch's Imperial Guard. They are carrying what appear to be hollow stubby spears, connected by metallic piping to cylindrical back-packs. One of the advancing soldiers raises his spear and a puff of bubbling steam gushes from the tip. In the next instant, a solid projectile smashes into the wall behind you, spraying you with slivers of stone.



An advancing soldier fires at you with his terrifying steam-gun.

If you possess a Red Key, turn to **166**.

If you do not have this Special Item, turn to **226**.

87

You pull out the talisman that you wear on a cord around your neck, and show it to the sergeant. He inspects it carefully before nodding his approval. Believing that you and your companions are Imperial Guards from the Autarch's court in Otavai, he steps aside and allows you to enter the barracks.

Turn to **110**.

88

The rock hits the edge of your shield spell and is deflected away from your body, but as it tumbles past it strikes your shoulder with a painful blow: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **339**.

89

You hurl your blade and it whirls through the air to strike the squad leader in the chest, dealing him a deep and mortal wound. The force of the impact tips him out of his tub and sends a torrent of water cascading into the fire. His dying cries mingle with a loud hiss of steam as the bath water extinguishes the fire and sizzles on the red-hot grate.

You rush forward and tug your Kai Weapon from the dead man's chest. Then you turn aside the

bath tub to see what he was reaching for. Lying among the soap suds you discover a Bor pistol, its flint and firing powder now waterlogged and useless.

Your Kai senses tell you that you are very close to the Claw of Naar. You look at your Siyenese compass once again, and now you see that its needle is pointing to a painting which hangs above the fireplace.

To continue, turn to **137**.

90

Your horse sails across the barrier, and the rangers jump their mounts over it with consummate ease. Then you gallop across the bridge and follow the road as it wends its way up into the hills beyond.

Turn to **272**.

91

You retrace your route back to the perimeter of the forest and turn eastwards, leaving the trail. You soon discover that the tall plains' grass makes the going increasingly difficult. It binds around your horses' hooves and frustrates your attempts to hasten their pace. For five miles you force your mounts to wade through this sea of verdant vegetation until you catch sight of some stone ruins on the slope of a distant hill. It is the remnants of an ancient village, and it is bisected by a dried-up watercourse. You scan the site and notice dark pools of liquid scattered throughout

the area. The pungent aroma of crude oil can be smelt wafting on the breeze.

Your Kai sixth sense tells you that the ruins are deserted. Captain Gildas is anxious to press on for fear of being caught by the pursuing Bhanarians, but you command him to pause for a moment. Your instincts are warning you of a hidden danger.

If you wish to enter the ruins of the ancient plains village, turn to **138**.

If you decide to make a detour around them, turn to **109**.

92

You speak the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Invisible Fist* and thrust your right arm stiffly towards the distant steam-cannon. A wave of energy surges from your clenched fist and speeds across the mess hall to strike its iron cylinder with a resounding *Clang!*

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. For every level of Kai rank you have attained above Kai Grand Sentinel, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **33**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **61**.

93

You strike the falling rock and it explodes, showering you with razor-sharp shards of stone. One

sliver cuts your cheek and another tears open the shoulder of your tunic: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to **339**.

94

The contents of your backpack are scattered across the floor, including the Claw of Naar which skitters towards the fire. The tip of its haft hits the grate and spears a burning log. The Autarch moves towards the fire, but you are too dazed from your collision with the wall to attempt to stop him. Painfully, you drag yourself to your feet.

To continue, turn to **344**.

95

You tell the rangers to raise their hoods, then you lead them across the crowded street towards the barracks entrance.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **207**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **331**.

96

You press home your attack and lash out at the woman with your Kai Weapon to prevent her from launching another psychic assault. Your blow misses her by inches, yet she collapses upon the ground like a dying beast. You bring your horse

around in readiness to make a second strike, but you do not follow it through. Before your disbelieving eyes the woman's body begins to change. Her marble-smooth skin becomes criss-crossed with a net of a thousand wrinkles and her abdomen swells like an over-inflated balloon. Then there is a terrible sound, like the rending of bone and flesh, and suddenly the illusion of her beauty is dispelled forever when this fell vampiric shape-changer reverts to its true form.

Confronting you now is a leprous horror with a huge, fang-filled maw. It roars with anger and a gust of its putrid breath wafts over you, turning your stomach with its vile stench. The rangers and their horses are snapped out of their hypnotic trance by the sound of its fearsome cry and, gripped by a sudden panic, they turn and flee into the trees. Hurriedly you follow them, forcing your mount to battle its way through a tangle of barb-toothed briar in your desperation to evade the wrath of the demonic forest creature.

Turn to 40.

97

The creature sinks beneath the surface. Then you see a trail of bubbles come speeding towards you. Fearing an imminent attack, you tug your Kai Weapon from its scabbard and stab blindly about you. Suddenly the water surrounding you seethes and boils. You feel your blade cut through the creature's jelly-like flesh, and in the next instant it erupts through the surface and launches itself upon you.



The creature erupts through the surface and launches itself towards you.

Sligza:

COMBAT SKILL 49 ENDURANCE 20

This enemy is immune to Mindblast (but not Kai-surge).

If you win the combat, turn to **328**.

98

You use your Grand Mastery to camouflage yourself before you enter the mess hall, and once inside you take cover behind the nearest stand of armour. Moving from one suit to the next, you make your way quickly towards the far door.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is 1 or lower, turn to **8**.

If it is 2 or higher, turn to **211**.

99

You pull away from the stallion's scrabbling hooves just in time to avoid being struck on the head. But as you back off, you trip and fall and graze your shoulder on a rock at the water's edge: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

Determinedly, you rise to your feet and draw upon your Kai powers of Animal Control to subdue the frightened horse. Your efforts are quickly rewarded; the lead stallion walks towards you and nestles his head apologetically against your shoulder. When you sense that all of the horses are calm, you call to the rangers to come out from

under the bridge and take a look at their fine new mounts.

Turn to **314**.

100

Shortly after dark, you and your companions make your approach to the river bank a mile upstream from the stone bridge. The rangers have tied their ropes together to provide a length that will reach to the opposite bank. The plan is for you to swim across and secure the rope on the far side. The rangers will then follow you across, using the rope to prevent themselves from being swept away by the strong currents.

You tie the rope about your waist and wade into the cold dark river. Then you strike out for the opposite bank, swimming diagonally upstream to counter its swift flow. You are halfway across when your rope snags on something below the surface. Furiously you tug at it but to no avail. Then you see a glistening mound begin to rise up from the water. Two slits open, revealing the pupils of two monstrous eyes. Then a wider slit appears below them, filled with jagged fangs. Your rope disappears into the corner of this ghastly maw, and as the mouth opens and closes, so you are pulled ever closer to these deadly fangs.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **224**.

If you do not, turn to **97**.

101

The woman launches a bolt of psychic energy that

strikes at the core of your mind (lose 1 ENDURANCE point), yet your mental defences are strong enough to save you from sustaining any lasting damage from this opportunistic assault.

To continue, turn to 236.

102

Ranger Yalin lets out a yelp of pain as the musket ball strikes his left arm. He clutches at the wound with his right hand and you see blood oozing through his fingers. Fortunately, the lead ball has passed cleanly through his limb without striking bone, and you are able to staunch the flow of blood and seal the punctured skin by the use of your Magnakai healing skills alone. (The hurried use of your healing skills costs you 1 ENDURANCE point.)

To continue, turn to 290.

103

You are dismayed that your attempt to destroy the Claw has failed, yet you refuse to abandon all hope of ridding your world of this evil artefact. You resolve to deliver it to the Elder Magi, for you know that it is within their power to obliterate this weapon of darkness.

Captain Gildas consoles you, and from a pocket of his tunic he produces a small crimson gemstone which he cups in his palm, inviting your inspection. Without saying a word, he fixes this gem into one of the hollows in the shaft of the Claw, and then he hands you a seemingly ordinary compass.

'Look at the compass needle, Sir Kai,' he says,

and he picks up the Claw and begins to walk. As he circles around you, the point of the needle follows his every move.

'It's a Siyene tracker-gem,' he says. 'The needle of the compass is tuned to its vibrations. It's just a precaution, in case you should be parted from the Claw before you deliver it to the Elder Magi. So long as the gem remains embedded in its shaft, you'll be able to track it using the compass.' Gildas hands you the Claw and you compliment him for his prudence.

'A very wise precaution, Captain,' you say, as you slip the compass into your tunic pocket. 'Somehow I feel sure that we have not yet seen the last of the Autarch's squad.'

(You can record the Siyene Compass on your Action Chart as a Special Item. You should also record the Claw of Naar as a Special Item which you carry in your pack. You must discard two items in their favour if you already have the maximum number of Special Items permissible.)

You sheathe your Kai Weapon and follow Gildas as he returns outside to the horses. As you walk towards them, Ranger Yalin beckons you over to look at a strange shrub that is growing around the base of the well.

If you possess Herbmastery, turn to 205.

If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to 16.

104

A second volley of projectiles comes streaking

across the courtyard, forcing Gildas and his men to throw themselves to the ground to avoid being struck. One of these missiles hits the door's dial and completely destroys the lock. Moments later, the heavy door swings inwards without a sound. You thank Ishir for this momentous stroke of good fortune as you scramble to your feet. Quickly you step inside the tower, then you turn and beckon the rangers to follow.

When all three are safely inside, you push the heavy door closed and slide its drawbolt across, locking it securely.

To continue, turn to **136**.

105

The noise of the fighting has drawn a crowd of curious onlookers. Their cries of encouragement and outrage have in turn alerted the City Guard. As the last of your attackers falls to your blows, a patrol of the Guard comes rushing into the main square.

Their officer sees you attempting to escape into an



adjacent alleyway, and he orders his men to open fire with their bows.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 2 to the number you have picked. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1.

If your total score is now 5 or lower, turn to **189**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **348**.

106

Your fall is brought to an abrupt halt when your boot becomes wedged firmly in the cleft of a boulder. Suddenly you find yourself suspended upside down, dangling by your left foot, with the dizzying sight of the gully floor slowly rotating below: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

If you possess the Kai Weapon 'Magnara', turn to **325**.

If you do not, turn to **154**.

107

You rush towards the man with your Kai Weapon poised to strike at his head, but before you can land your blow, you find yourself staring into the muzzle of a Bor pistol. The squad leader gives an evil grin as he squeezes the trigger.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

108-109

If your total score is now 2 or lower, turn to **279**.

If it is 3-8, turn to **307**.

If it is 93 or higher, turn to **190**.

108

The rangers quickly dismount and come running to your aid. Sergeant Paviz retrieves your horse, and you use your Magnakai curing skills to repair his gashed forelegs. Then Ranger Yalin warns you that he can hear the bridge guards stirring from their sleep. Before they emerge from their shacks, you remount your horse and lead your companions away at the gallop.

Turn to **272**.

109

You skirt around the ruins to the north and happen upon the remnants of an old track, overgrown with shorter vegetation. You are following this trail when suddenly you hear a sound like thundering hooves. The noise is approaching from the north and you command your companions to halt. To get a better view, you stand upon your horse's back and magnify your vision. A tingle of shock runs down the length of your spine when you catch sight of a group of strange creatures speeding through the tall grassland at a terrific pace.

They have black bull-like bodies, yet their heads are crocodilian in shape, and a spiky mane of hair runs the entire length of their muscular backs.



Through the tall grass, a group of creatures speed towards you at a terrific pace.

They possess four legs and two forelimbs, tipped with claws, in which they cradle cumbersome lances crudely pared from the trunks of Vanchou pines.

You inform Gildas of what is approaching and he gasps with fear. 'Xanon!' he exclaims. 'Ishir preserve us!' Before you can stop them, the rangers turn their steeds about and take off at a gallop along the track that leads back towards the site of the ancient village.

Turn to 299.

110

Beyond the main gate is a courtyard where several wagons, filled with provisions, are being unloaded. You and your companions each take a box from the rear of the nearest wagon and join a line of men who are delivering their goods to a kitchen storeroom located near the middle of the barracks complex. You leave your boxes here and then return to the courtyard to collect some more. As you are making your way back, you pass a door that your Kai senses tell you is unlocked. Quickly you slip inside and then signal to the rangers to follow. When all of you are safely inside, you shut the door and draw its bolt.

Turn to 298.

111

You draw upon your improved mental skills to launch a powerful volley of psychic bolts at the three guards. Paralysed by your unexpected

attack, they drop their spears and clutch their hands to their heads in agony. The rangers seize this chance to attack, and they quickly overpower them, leaving the men propped unconscious against the base of the nearest tree.

Turn to 41.

112

You magnify your vision and see that the approaching group are Bhanarians. Each of the twelve warriors is armed with a sword and spear, and all are clad in black quilted tunics edged with gold braid. Emblazoned boldly upon their chests is the tiger's head emblem of Autarch Sejanos, denoting them to be Imperial Guards from the Autarch's court in Otavai.

As the squad draws nearer, you note with surprise that this elite unit of bodyguards have neglected to place any scouts at the head of their marching column. You are about to mention this fact to Captain Gildas when suddenly you hear a startling shriek echoing from out of the clouds above.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to 271.

If it is 5-9, turn to 167.

113

Your improved Kai Mastery warns you that a heavy rainstorm is about to break over the Honah Hills.

If you wish to seek shelter from the coming storm, turn to **20**.

If you choose to press on along the road, turn to **63**.

114

You are wary of the creature's request and secretly you suspect that it is some kind of elaborate trap. You back away from the cave mouth and signal to the rangers to leave the clearing. The beast pleads with you to return, but you ignore its plaintive cries and hurriedly you remount your horse. Gildas beckons you to follow as he and his rangers make good their escape into the trees.

To continue, turn to **346**.

115

You draw an arrow to your bow and take aim at the iron cylinder that is fixed on top of the barrel. You pray to Ishir that by puncturing this part of the steam-cannon, you will cause the weapon to explode.

If you possess Magi-magic, and have attained the rank of Kai Sun Lord, turn to **173**.

If you do not possess this Discipline, or if you have yet to attain this level of Kai Mastery, turn to **54**.

116

Carefully, you creep forward and stretch out your right hand to take hold the blanket roll containing

the Claw. The leader is oblivious to your presence, but as your fingers close around his pillow, your stomach heaves and your pulse begins to race. You feel a tremendous concentration of evil radiating from the artefact, and its sudden assault upon your senses makes you gasp with shock.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 2 to the number you have picked. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **262**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **288**.

117

Gildas falls unconscious at your feet, and you hear the Autarch's thin laughter echoing around the chamber. He has enjoyed watching the two of you fight, but now he wants what he has come all the way from Otavai for.

'You have the Claw - I sense it,' he growls, in a menacingly quiet tone. 'Give it to me and you shall be rewarded. Deny me, and you will perish in agony.'

Your Kai senses detect that the evil aura which surrounds the Autarch is growing stronger. Suddenly you feel a strong wave of nausea rising in the pit of your stomach, and you feel unable to prevent it from overwhelming your senses.

If you possess some Poghlan, turn to **175**.

If you do not possess this potion, turn to **285**.

118

The sun has nearly set by the time you reach Yua Tzhan. Even at this late hour, the roads that approach the city's four gates are busy with the traffic of travelling merchants. Some have come from the gold-rush town of Bajo in the foothills of the Hyunsei Mountains, but most are arriving from Hotloi and Liyulin, their wagons laden with exotic wares.

As you approach the north gate you consult your Siyeneese compass, and its steady needle confirms that the Claw of Naar is here, somewhere, in this grand walled city. You and your companions pass through the arched gateway without challenge, and follow a broad lantern-lit avenue towards the city's main square. Many open-fronted shops line this thoroughfare, their display tables laden with goods to entice its citizens to part with their hard-earned Ren.

Upon entering the main square, you notice that small crowds have gathered on each corner. They are reading proclamations which have been pasted upon the walls by the city's officials. Using your Magnakai Discipline of Pathsmanship, you are able to translate the Bhanarian script for the benefit of your companions. The posters declare that tomorrow shall be a holiday. This is to celebrate a visit to the city by Autarch Sejanoz himself. He will arrive at noon tomorrow, and every citizen is expected to be present to honour their ruler when his entourage passes through the streets.

Your Kai senses tell you that the Autarch is visiting

the city for one simple reason: he is coming here to collect the Claw of Naar. The news of his imminent arrival re-ignites your resolve to find the artefact, and swiftly.

As you and your companions are riding across the main square, you scan the surrounding buildings in search of an inn where you may stable your horses for the night. The houses and hovels of Yua Tzhan are densely-packed, and your search for the Claw will best be conducted on foot. There are several inns bordering the square, but only two have stables: the Prairie Princess and the Golden Trough.

If you wish to visit the Prairie Princess, turn to **273**.

If you choose to visit the Golden Trough, turn to **149**.

119

You draw upon your advanced camouflage skill for protection and then you command Captain Gildas and his rangers to wait while you leave your hiding place and go in search of the squad leader. You suspect that he may be one of the two warriors who have been killed by the rockfall. Mindful that the Claw of Naar was sheathed in his belt, you are determined to seize this opportunity to capture it before the dazed Bhanarians recover their senses and regroup.

Swiftly you traverse the mound of rocks that now block the pass, and as you leap on to the trail unseen, you note that neither of the slain warriors

is the squad leader. Then you notice a drainage channel which runs alongside the mountain trail and your Kai sixth sense tells you that the leader has escaped the rockfall by rolling into this trench. Without a moment's hesitation, you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and jump into the trench after him.

As your feet hit the bottom of the shallow gully, you see your adversary crouching less than a couple of metres away. For a moment you stare at each other in silence. Shock blanches the man's fallow, moustachioed face and his almond eyes widen with alarm, but he suddenly recovers his composure and springs to his feet. Tugging the mace-like Claw of Naar from his belt, he utters a terse laugh as he levels its taloned tip at your chest. There is a crackling hum of power. It precedes a bolt of black fire which leaps from the evil artefact like a living entity. Fearing for your life, you dive to the ground as this supernatural bolt of dark flame comes streaking along the trench towards you.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 2 or lower, turn to **308**.

If it is 3-7, turn to **278**.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to **147**.

120

Silently you recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Mind Charm* and direct its power at the

fortune-teller. Under the influence of your spell, he suddenly becomes susceptible to your mental commands. You tell him to take off his signet ring and give it to you. Meekly he complies. Then you tell him to forget that he ever set eyes on you and your companions. Dumbly he nods his head, and then he drifts off into a deep sleep.

(On your *Action Chart*, record the Tiger Ring as a Special Item that you wear on the index finger of your right hand. You need not discard any other Special Item in its favour if you already possess the maximum number of items permissible.)

To continue, turn to **295**.

121

Slowly they lower their spears, and the taller of the guards smiles and nods his head to indicate that he believes your story. He points to the stables and tells you to leave the barracks by this route. As you approach the open doors, he commands the troopers to let you and your companions use the far doors which open out on to the street. You offer up a silent prayer of thanks to Ishir for your good fortune as you and your companions weave your way through the busy stables towards the exit.

Turn to **347**.

122

There is a blinding flash of scarlet light upon the instant that your blade strikes the shaft of the Claw, and a searing blast of energy sends you

crashing backwards to the ground: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Painfully, you stagger to your feet and approach the stone block which is now wreathed with trails of grey smoke. To your dismay, you discover that the Claw is still intact. Despite the huge burst of energy that your blow released, you discover no mark or blemish upon its gnarled shaft.

The blade of your Kai Weapon, however, is notched and discoloured at the point where it struck the shaft of the Claw. (The damage to your Kai Weapon has caused a permanent reduction of 1 point to its COMBAT SKILL bonus. You should now adjust the bonus on your Special Items list.)

To continue, turn to **228**.

123

A blinding white light obliterates your vision and a terrifying numbness spreads rapidly from your neck to the soles of your feet. Helpless to resist, you feel yourself tumbling backwards into a fathomless abyss.

One of the steam-gun projectiles has pierced the side of your skull and penetrated your brain. Mercifully, your death is swift and painless.

Sadly, your life and your mission end here, at the Crimson Tower of Zuda.

124

You draw upon your elemental powers to whip up a whirling cloud of dust that engulfs the sinister

woman. The dust obscures her from view, yet it does not break the hypnotic hold she has over your companions.

Fearing that you may be facing a powerful sorceress, you abandon your elemental attack and try to think of a more effective weapon to use against her.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **151**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **53**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **281**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn instead to **164**.

125

You return to the antechamber, but while you are unbolting the door to the mess hall, you hear an alarm bell and the sound of gruff Bhanarian voices. You listen to their cries and your heart sinks when you suddenly realize that your companions have been discovered.

Turn to **239**.

126

You tug your Kai Weapon from its scabbard and draw it back in readiness to strike out as one of the winged horrors closes in for the kill. The creature swoops down and alights upon a nearby boulder

where it swiftly folds its wings behind its pallid torso. Your stomach churns as you look upon its lean and sinewy body, which is studded with hundreds of horny spikes. Frothing drool drips from its fanged jaw as it flexes its talons and prepares to attack. You will have to fight it.

Bavazanur Leader (Winged Agarashi)

COMBAT SKILL 42 ENDURANCE 40

This enemy is immune to Mindblast (but not Kai-surge).

If you win the combat, turn to **36**.

127

You move quickly to seize this chance to cross the river before the soldiers return. You are the first to wade out into the water. You strike out against the current and reach the first stone pillar. Once you have a secure handhold, you signal to Gildas to follow. Soon you are all in the water, linked together by your hands and secured by the stone pillars, like a human chain. Gradually you work your way across to the far side, and together you approach Zuda under cover of darkness.

The road into the town is heavily patrolled by Bhanarian soldiers. When you nearly collide with one of these patrols, you are forced to seek cover in an empty woodcutter's hut.

To continue, turn to **3**.

128

'Come! We must pursue the enemy without delay,'

says Gildas, excitedly. 'They must not be allowed to steal away the Claw.'

'Hold, Captain,' you retort. 'The enemy is too strong. They outnumber us, and they possess a weapon that can slay us all but with one bolt. Do you not recall what happened at Sunderer Pass? You have lost one good man already. Surely you have no wish to risk our lives in a reckless pursuit.'

'Are you abandoning your mission, Sir Kai?' he asks, reproachfully. 'No, Captain,' you reply. 'My vow to retrieve the Claw and oversee its destruction remains true. I merely propose we pursue the enemy at a safe distance. They may run with the Claw of Naar, but they cannot keep it from us forever. The tracker-gem that you placed in the haft will lead us to it, no matter where they may choose to carry it.'

'You are right, Sir Kai,' says Gildas, apologetically.

'Firstly, we shall rest and recover our strength,' you say. 'Then we shall hunt down our enemies and claim back that accursed artefact before it can be delivered to Autarch Sejanos.'

Unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **201**.

129

After several minutes and a great deal of effort, the lock disengages and the doors of the stables swing open.

To continue, turn to **168**.

130

For most of the day you ride across a seemingly endless expanse of grassland without once catching sight of the enemy you are pursuing. It is nearly dusk before your keen eyes detect a column of woodsmoke on the horizon, rising vertically in the still evening air. You call the rangers to a halt and then magnify your vision to take a closer look at the source of the smoke. It rises from a small copse of trees and you suspect that the enemy have set up a camp there for the night. The smoke tells you that they are cooking food, confident in the false belief that they have safely outdistanced you and your companions.

You inform the others of what you have seen before continuing your ride along the plains road. When you are within a mile of the copse, you leave the trail and dismount. Sergeant Paviz and Ranger Yalin are told to stay and hold the horses while you and the Captain go forward to scout the enemy encampment.

Together you crawl towards the copse, side by side, concealed by the approaching darkness and the waist-high grass. You are within 100 metres of the enemy campfire when Gildas makes a sharp intake of breath. You glance at him and your blood freezes when you see that his face is inches from a Grey Conda – a deadly Bhanarian plains snake. The serpent's neck is raised and its wedge-shaped head is drawn back in readiness to strike at your companion's eyes.



The deadly Grey Conda is only inches away from his face.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **70**.

If you do not, turn to **56**.

131

The tavern-keeper's blast of buckshot peppers your side (lose 2 ENDURANCE points) and damages your quiver. You must now erase half of all the arrows you carry, rounding the figure up to the nearest whole number where appropriate.

To continue, turn to **287**.

132

You lead your company off to the east, but to your dismay you soon discover that the route ahead is blocked by a dozen fearsome Xanon. Reluctantly you are forced to turn about and return to the ancient ruins for fear of being run down and trampled beneath their pounding hooves.

As you are nearing the outskirts of the ruins, a volley of iron darts comes whistling past your head. They have been hurled by the leading Xanon in an attempt to slay you before you reach the cover of the ancient stone walls.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **145**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **193**.

133

You pay the toll, but the corporal becomes suspicious when he examines the two gold coins. Sommlending mintage is a rarity in this part of Magnamund.

If you wish to ask the corporal to raise the barrier and let you cross, turn to **231**.

If you decide to give him another 2 Gold Crowns, to help him allay his suspicions, turn to **280**.

134

You tell your companions to raise the hoods of their robes to keep their faces hidden, then you beckon them to follow as you approach the rear of a canvas-covered wagon that is queuing outside the main entrance. Swiftly you clamber over its tailgate and hide yourselves among its load. Several minutes later, the wagon begins to move. You tear a hole in its canvas cover through which you can see the inner buildings of the barracks complex as they pass. The wagon trundles along a passageway towards a parade square, beyond which lies its final destination – the kitchen store-rooms. You clamber to the rear of the wagon and crouch beside the tailgate. Then, at the moment the vehicle emerges from the passageway, you signal to your companions to leave. One after the other, you leap from the back of the moving wagon.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **165**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **66**.

135

You quickly recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Invisible Shield*. As the last spell-word leaves your lips, a translucent disc shimmers into being and the falling rock slams into it with a loud *Thwack!* The rock shatters into hundreds of stone splinters, some of which pepper your legs and abdomen: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to **339**.

136

You follow Gildas and the others as they climb a wide flight of spiral stairs to the top of the tower. As you ascend, lanterns set at intervals in the wall spontaneously ignite, bathing the stone steps with a warm, yellow light.

A sumptuous chamber occupies the top floor of the tower. By the time you arrive there, its many lanterns are aglow, and its great log fire is blazing warmly in the grate. The light and heat make for a welcoming arrival, but they give a false impression. Dust lies thickly on the surfaces of every bookshelf, table, and chair. This chamber is well-appointed, but it has lain neglected for more than a year.

One entire half of the great circular room is dominated by a huge latticed window, through which you can see every rooftop in Zuda. You

hurry across the chamber and peer down through the glass at the courtyard below. It is teeming with Bhanarians and you fear that they now have you trapped like rats in a very comfortable cage. You raise your eyes and look towards the market square. The Autarch's tent can clearly be seen, with the tiger's head shrine standing near. You see its head slowly rotating towards the tower. In the next instant, two pencil-thin beams of red light come shooting from its eyes. Before you can look away, they hit the window, and you are blinded by their terrific glare.

If you possess Deliverance, turn to **171**.

If you do not, turn to **188**.

137

Behind the portrait you discover a safe embedded in a granite wall. There is a dial set near the middle of its iron door, and it is ringed with numerals ranging from 0 to 9. Your sixth sense reveals to you that by turning the dial consecutively to the correct three numbers, you will cause the lock to disengage and the door to the wall safe will open.

The first number in the sequence is equal to the levels of Kai rank a Sun Prince is superior to a Grand Thane.

The second number is equal to the original total of rangers in Gildas's command, including the captain himself.

The third number is equal to the number of islands in the Northern Gulf of the Chai Sea.

When you think you know the three-digit answer, note down the figures in order and turn to the section of this book which is the same as your answer.

If you are unable to determine the correct solution, turn instead to **294**.

138

The tall grass gives way to shorter vegetation as you draw closer to the ruins. You are riding along the dried-up river bed that divides this ancient site when suddenly you hear a sound like thundering hooves. The noise is coming from the north and you command your companions to rein their mounts to a halt. To get a better view, you stand upon your horse's back and magnify your vision. A tingle of shock runs down the length of your spine when you catch sight of a group of strange creatures approaching the ruins at a terrific pace. They have black bull-like bodies, yet their heads are crocodilian in shape and a spiky mane of hair runs the length of their muscular backs. They possess four legs and two forelimbs, tipped with claws, in which they cradle cumbersome lances crudely pared from the trunks of Vanchou pines.

You inform Gildas of what is approaching the ruins and he gasps with fear. 'Xanon!' he exclaims. 'Ishir save us!'

If you wish to stand and fight these fearsome creatures, turn to **245**.

If you wish to attempt to flee from them, turn to **132**.

139

The mounted patrol approaches and encircles you. The officer is an aristocratic-looking soldier with a pencil-thin moustache, and he looks at your dishevelled robes with disdain. 'What are four lowly plains-herders doing abroad in the city tonight?' he asks.

'We came to deliver horses to the barracks,' you reply. He shakes his head slowly; he does not believe your story. 'You are all under arrest,' he says, and with a flick of his riding crop he motions his men to dismount and detain you. Gildas is the first to react. He grabs the officer by his sword-belt and pulls him out of the saddle. You and the others follow Gildas's lead, and quickly you unhorse and overpower the officer's men. Then you mount their horses and gallop away along the street, leaving the patrol lying unconscious in the gutter.

To continue, turn to **212**.

140

You flip open the tube's hinged lid and shake a rolled piece of papyrus into your palm. On this



scrap of material is a hastily-written message from Rimoah, telling you that the Claw of Naar must not be allowed to fall into the hands of Autarch Sejanoz. He urges you to find and destroy it. If that should prove impossible, you must take it to the city of Pensei. There you should make contact with Lord Ghadra, the Dessian envoy, and he will see to its destruction. He will also help you to return home to Sommerlund.

To continue, turn to **310**.

141

The sergeant raises the alarm and you and your companions are quickly surrounded. The gate guards encircle you with a ring of spears, forcing you to surrender. Then the sergeant denounces you as would-be thieves, out to steal their provisions, and he orders that your weapons and equipment be confiscated before you are led away and thrown into the dungeons.

As the heavy door to your cell slams shut, you immediately look for a way out of this grim prison chamber. You try to pick the lock, but your attempt is thwarted when the sergeant and his guards return. With them is a squad leader of the Imperial Guard, the same man from whom you took the Claw of Naar. He is carrying the accursed artefact, and when the iron door is opened, he points it at you and triggers a fearsome blast of raw energy. In the cramped confines of the cell, there is no hope of escaping from its terrible power. In the blink of an eye, you and your brave companions are engulfed and

consumed by the searing ball of white-hot fire.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in the barracks dungeon of Yua Tzhan.

142

As you make the jump, the corporal side-steps and thrusts at you with his spear. Its sharpened steel tip penetrates your rib-cage and you are knocked out of the saddle by the force of the blow. As you fall, you strike the back of your head on the road and lose consciousness.

Sadly, you never awaken. Before the rangers can come to your aid, the corporal stabs again with his spear and its tip punctures your heart. Your death is painless, and instantaneous.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here.

143

With a mounting feeling of dread, you follow the trail into the Vanchou Forest. Upon entering this chill timberland it becomes strangely silent, as if the beasts and birds who dwell here can sense the presence of intruders.

You have penetrated little more than a mile into this unwholesome forest when you come upon the wreckage of a wagon abandoned by the side of the trail. A large black crow is perched on its rot-infested tailgate, and it caws angrily as you approach.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **329**.

If you do not possess this Grand Master Discipline, turn to 170.

144

You leap over the bodies of your slain enemies and rush across the mess hall towards the archway. As you draw closer, you shout out to the rangers that you are coming through. They lower their bows and give a rousing cheer when they see you rushing through the archway and along the corridor towards them.

Upon rejoining them, you have good and ill news to impart. 'I have retrieved the Claw of Naar, yet I fear our troubles have only just begun. We must make a speedy escape. I sense the enemy are closing upon us from every side.'

Your instincts are correct. News of the light in the mess hall is spreading like wildfire, and groups of armed Bhanarians are rushing towards this corridor from every quarter of the barracks. Your situation is beginning to look increasingly desperate until you suddenly see a way to escape from the corridor, a way that promises more than just a glimmer of hope.

Turn to 57.

145

A dart thuds into your thigh and you scream with pain: lose 3 ENDURANCE points. Gritting your teeth, you take hold of the rusty missile, wrench it from your leg, and cast it aside with revulsion.

To continue, turn to 304.

146

You quickly lose yourselves in a maze of passageways that take you deep into the heart of the city's Merchant Quarter. An hour slips away before you stop to catch your breath outside a tavern located near the city's South Gate. You are now a long way from the Main Square, and you fear the risk of capture if you should return to the inn to collect your horses. Mindful that you will need mounts for the long journey to Pensei, you resolve to find some new horses before leaving the city.

Gildas draws your attention to the lowly tavern before which you stand. There is a narrow alley that leads to stables located at the rear. Stealthily you approach the stable doors, and when you test them with the sole of your boot, you discover they are firmly locked.

If you possess Grand Nexus, turn to 237.

If you do not, turn to 313.

147

As you hit the ground, the crackling arc of black flame roars over your head and gouges a deep furrow along the wall of the trench. You cover your head with your arm to protect yourself from falling debris, and you hear the squad leader utter a curse as he prepares to finish you with a second burst of dark fire.

To continue, turn to 43.

148

You muster your psychic powers and launch a

Mindblast at the Autarch. The terrific force of your spell makes him shudder. He releases his grip, and the rangers fall limply to the floor. Then he turns to face you. 'Give me the Claw!' he demands, his voice booming around the chamber. 'Give me the Claw and I shall spare all your worthless lives!'

If you choose to obey his command, turn to 35.

If you choose to refuse his command, turn to 338.

149

You leave your horses in the stable and walk through an arched corridor that opens into the taproom of the Golden Trough Inn. A warm fire and the welcoming smell of roasting meat greets your entry. The patrons of this establishment cast you no more than a cursory glance as you make your way to the counter and attempt to attract the innkeeper's attention.

The owner of the tavern is a rotund man with freckled cheeks and an easy smile. You ask him the cost of stabling and quickly add that you and your friends will not be requiring rooms for the night. 'Five Ren each,' he says, 'including their feed. You can pay in the morning when you come back to fetch 'em.'

As you are leaving the inn, you are approached by a dark-skinned man wearing a turban. He introduces himself as Fanshalla and says that he is a fortune-teller of some renown. He produces a pack of cards from his robe and offers to use them to predict your future.



You are approached by Fanshalla, the fortune-teller.

If you wish to accept the man's offer, turn to 197.

If you wish to decline his offer, turn to 62.

150

As the sun rises over the eastern horizon, you catch your first glimpse of the formidable Chai Wall. You cast your eye along its entire length and observe the three great forts of Xian, Kinani, and Jhung. The tall crenellated walls of Fort Jhung lie directly ahead and, as you speed near to them, you observe something else, something unexpected and greatly welcome, which makes your spirits soar.

Turn to 350.

151

You recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Counterspell* and direct its power at the sinister young woman. You see her shudder and recoil as the power of your spell washes over her and, for a short while, the rangers are spared the effect of her hypnotic voice. But the use of this spell leaves you vulnerable to a sudden psychic attack. Sensing this, the woman quickly seizes her chance to retaliate.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Kai-screen, add 3 to the number you have picked. If your current ENDURANCE score is 15 or lower, deduct 2.

If your total score is now 4 or less, turn to 337.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to 101.

152

You enter the stables and find that it shelters seven horses and a mule. Gildas uses his expertise to choose the best mounts, and you help the rangers to equip them with saddles and bridles. When the horses are ready to ride, you mount up and lead your companions in single file along the alley.

Unfortunately, the noise that you made upon entering the stables has alerted the tavern-keeper. When you pass his bedchamber window, he opens fire at you with his Bor musket.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to 52.

If it is 5-9, turn to 131.

153

You draw upon your lyrical skills to dampen the man's anger with the soothing, hypnotic sound of your voice. Under the influence of your bardsmanship, he suddenly becomes calm and susceptible to your commands. You prompt him to tell his cohorts that he has made a grave error, that you are not the plainsman who swindled him after all, and meekly he complies with your suggestion.

His accomplices are embarrassed by their friend's mistake, and they offer to buy you and your companions some ale. Politely you decline their

offer and make your way quickly towards the door.

Turn to **295**.

154

You are struggling to free your trapped foot when suddenly one of the winged creatures comes swooping down from out of the clouds. It is clasp- ing a large rock in its foreclaws, and as it glides overhead, it releases its grip and lets the rock hurtle towards your helpless form.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **266**

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **135**

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **51**

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **230**

155

You sleep well and wake feeling refreshed and revitalized: restore 3 ENDURANCE points. Shortly after dawn, you break camp and set off across the marshlands, heading east. At first the spongy ground is a welcome relief from the jagged rocks and twisted roots that litter the Angfeng Forest. Then the marshy soil degenerates into a treacher- ous swamp, and you are forced to head south in search of firmer terrain.

For two days and nights you trek across wetlands,

living as best you can off the flora and fauna of this inhospitable region. By noon of the third day you catch sight of a stone bridge across the River Heng, on the outskirts of a town called Zuda. The rangers are excited at the prospect of escaping at last from the mosquito-infested wetlands, but their enthusiasm is dampened when you magnify your vision and take a closer look at this Chai border town.

Turn to **206**.

156

Upon entering the tented encampment, you are greeted by dozens of laughing children. They run alongside your horses and feed them with small handfuls of hay. As you approach the largest tent, an old man in a sweat-stained robe emerges and bids you good-day. He holds up a wizened hand to shield his pale eyes from the glare of the midday sun, and he asks if you and your companions wish to trade with him.

If you trade with the old plains herder, turn to **181**.

If you choose to decline his offer, turn to **58**.

157

The cannon's pressure cylinder erupts like a geyser, spraying the Bhanarians with deadly pieces of jagged shrapnel. Those who are not felled instantly by the force of the explosion are blinded and blistered by jets of scalding steam.

To continue, turn to **47**.

158

You whisper the words of the Brotherhood spell *Silence* and cast it upon the area around the campfire to help you reach the sleeping squad leader undetected. Then, with great care, you stalk forward and stretch out your hand to take hold of the blanket roll containing the Claw. The leader is oblivious to your presence, but as your fingers close around his pillow, your stomach heaves and your pulse begins to race. You feel a tremendous concentration of evil radiating from the artefact, and its sudden assault upon your senses makes you gasp with shock. Suddenly the *Silence* spell is broken and the squad leader awakes with a start. Before he can react, you snatch the blanket roll from beneath his head and leap forwards.

Your heart is pounding wildly in your chest as you race towards the rangers on the far side of the copse. They have dispersed the Bhanarians' horses and they are waiting anxiously for you to appear. As you rush through the trees, you hear the squad leader screaming at his men to wake up and give chase.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 3 or lower, turn to **195**.

If it is 4-6, turn to **39**.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to **275**.

159

You rein your horse to a halt before the sleepy-

eyed corporal, and he demands that a toll be paid before he will allow you and your companions across the bridge.

'The price is 5 Ren per rider, that's 20 Ren for you all.'

If you have 20 Ren and wish to pay the toll, turn to **241**.

If you have no Ren, but you are willing to pay the equivalent price in Gold Crowns (20 Ren = 2 Gold Crowns), turn to **133**.

If you cannot or will not pay the bridge toll, turn to **297**.

160

Your reactions have been dulled by the fatigue of your long journey. You fall behind the rangers and get caught by the full force of the mudslide as it comes thundering along the hill road. You lose consciousness the moment you are swept from your horse, and you are spared the pain of drowning in this merciless river of mud.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in the Honah Hills.

161

You roll aside but fail to avoid the Conda's fangs that graze your neck. Gildas reaches for his sword and, with one swift and deadly swipe, he decapitates the serpent and sends its fanged head spinning through the air, trailing a stream of greenish-yellow venom.

With a trembling hand, you touch your neck and then look to your fingertips. They are smeared with blood. Nausea wells up from the pit of your stomach and your vision blurs as the serpent's deadly venom begins to take hold. You draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Curing to counter the poison, but before your innate defences win the battle, you suffer agonising muscle spasms throughout your body: lose 5 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **335**.

162

Your bold ploy works. The soldier on the other side of the door obeys your command, believing you to be his squad leader.

You allow yourself a silent chuckle as you turn away from the antechamber door. Then you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and enter the main chamber, determined now to confront the squad leader in his bath.

Turn to **260**.

163

Suddenly a blinding white light obliterates your vision. A terrifying numbness spreads rapidly from your neck to the soles of your feet, and you feel yourself tumbling backwards into a fathomless abyss.

One of the rangers' arrows has pierced your forehead and penetrated your brain. Mercifully, your death is swift and painless.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in the barracks of Yua Tzhan.

164

You unsheathe your Kai Weapon and spur your horse to the charge. Swiftly you gallop past your hypnotised companions, but as you thunder along the track towards the sorcerous woman, you are hit by a sudden blast of psychic energy.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Kai-screen, add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 6 or lower, turn to **25**.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to **208**.

165

You leap from the wagon and hit the flagstoned ground, spraining your ankle as you land awkwardly: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

The rangers come hurrying to your aid. Gildas and Paviz take hold of you under the arms and carry you to the cover of a darkened doorway. Here you use your Kai healing skills to mend the torn ligaments in your foot, then you turn your attention to the door against which you are leaning. You try the handle and discover that it is unlocked. Quickly you slip inside and beckon the rangers to follow. When all of you are safely in, you close the door and draw its sturdy bolt.

To continue, turn to **11**.

166

Suddenly you recall the dying words of the old herbalist you encountered in the Vanchou Forest:
'... and the key will open the door to my home in Zuda. It is called the Crimson Tower.'

You retrieve the key from your backpack and insert it into the dial. It fits, and when you twist it, the heavy door swings inwards without a sound. Quickly you step inside, then beckon the rangers to follow: 'This way!'

When all three are inside, you push the heavy door closed and slide its drawbolt across, locking it securely.

To continue, turn to 136.

167

Your Kai sixth sense warns you that a host of flying creatures are soaring overhead, obscured by the thick blanket of cloud. Hurriedly you warn the rangers of their presence and they take cover among the boulders. Your swift action saves them from being detected by the winged beasts, but as the last of their number passes overhead, you see something that makes your skin prickle with dread.

Turn to 296.

168

You enter the stables and discover seven horses and a mule. Gildas uses his expertise to choose the best mounts, and you help the rangers to equip them with saddles and bridles. When the horses are ready to ride, you leave the stables and make your

way to the South Gate. It is open, and the sleepy guards pay you no attention as you canter through its tall arch and depart the city. The road beyond passes through several outlying settlements before it begins a gentle climb into the Honah Hills.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **202**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **194**.

169

You rush towards the man and draw back your right leg in readiness to kick over the bath tub. But before you can land your kick, you find yourself staring into the muzzle of a Bor pistol. The squad leader gives you an evil grin as he squeezes the weapon's trigger.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 2 or lower, turn to **279**.

If it is 3-8, turn to **307**.

If it is 9 or higher, turn to **190**.

170

You continue along the trail until you see a distant figure standing in the middle of the rutted track. As you draw closer, your skin prickles with a sudden premonition of danger when you see that the figure is

a beautiful young woman. She has milky white skin and a mane of glistening hair that cascades around her slender body. She is wrapped in a flowing gossamer robe and her dark eyes glimmer as she beckons you to come closer with a soft, hypnotic voice.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to 32.

If you do not, turn to 223.

171

A burning pain shoots from the front of your eyes to the rear of your head: lose 2 ENDURANCE points. You reel back in shock and quickly you muster your Kai curing skills to numb the pain and restore your injured sight. But as your vision is returning, you hear a loud crash of breaking glass, and your companions cry out in shock and alarm. You fear a steam-gun projectile has smashed through the tower's great glass window, but when your vision clears, you see that it is something far larger . . . and far worse!

Turn to 200.

172

You release the straining bowstring and send your arrow whistling towards the beast's open jaw. Desperately it twists its loathsome head away from the on-rushing missile, but it cannot escape your unerring aim. The arrow enters the beast's left eye-slit and sends the creature somersaulting head over tail, out of control. You dive aside to avoid being crushed beneath its plummeting body, but you are grazed by its body-spikes when it hits and



A beautiful young woman beckons you closer with her soft, hypnotic voice.

bounces off the rocks: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, to **18**.

173

Before you release your arrow, you intone the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Penetrate*. Then you send your missile whistling across the mess hall towards the distant steam-cannon. It strikes the cylinder and it punctures its iron skin with devastating effect.

Turn to **29**.

174

You and your companions race along the alleyway and lose yourselves in the maze of passages and tunnels that infest this quarter of Yua Tzhan. When you are sure that the City Guard have lost your trail, you halt beneath the light of a tavern lantern, heal your wounds, and consult your Siyenese compass. Your mind is now focused upon the task of finding and retrieving the Claw of Naar before Autarch Sejanos arrives in the city. You set off in the direction indicated by the compass needle, and it leads you towards the military quarter located to the east of the main square. Here you follow a broad avenue lined with closed shop doorways and soon arrive at a busy barracks. The compass, and your Kai sixth sense, both tell you that the Claw of Naar is located somewhere inside this troop-infested building.

If you wish to try to find a way to enter the barracks undetected, turn to **81**.

If you decide to observe this building from the cover of an unlit doorway, turn to **242**.

175

Quickly you retrieve the potion from your backpack, flip open the stopper, and down it all in one gulp. Instantly, the nausea subsides and you feel new strength coursing through your aching limbs: restore 4 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **48**.

176

Gildas obeys your command and reluctantly he returns the arrow to his quiver. Cautiously you dismount and approach the misshapen creature on foot, for you sense your horse is too frightened to venture any closer to its lair. Using your Magnakai Discipline of Divination, you attempt to communicate with the creature telepathically. Your patience and your effort is soon rewarded when you hear its true voice speaking to you in your mind.

You learn that this 'creature' is human. It is the victim of an evil spell cast by the vampiric shape-changer that you encountered on the forest track. You ask if there is anything you can do to alleviate its wretched condition, and you are shocked when you hear its plaintive reply.

'Strike me with your blade, kind sir. Deal me a mortal wound so that my soul may be freed from this hellish torment.'

If you wish to strike the creature with your Kai Weapon, turn to **321**.

If you choose not to strike the creature, turn to **114**.

177

You force the doors back to allow enough room for a horse to pass through, then you enter the stables and search the upper and lower floors. You discover seven horses and a mule, and tack enough to equip them all. Gildas uses his expertise to choose the best mounts, and you help the rangers to fit them with saddles and bridles. When the horses are ready to ride, you leave the stables and make your way to the South Gate. It is open, and its sleepy guards pay you no attention as you canter through its tall arch and depart the city. The road beyond passes through several outlying settlements before it begins a gentle climb into the Honah Hills.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **202**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **194**.

178

You draw upon your mastery of Elementalism to cause the fire to flare wildly. The sudden flash of flames scatters red hot coals across the floor, and some ignite a leg of the dining table. Gripped by a sudden panic, the soldiers leap from their seats and attempt to put out the fire with cloaks and mugs of ale.

In the confusion, none of them see you enter the mess hall. You take cover behind a stand of armour, then you draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility to help keep you hidden before you attempt to reach the far door.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 3 to the number you have picked. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1.

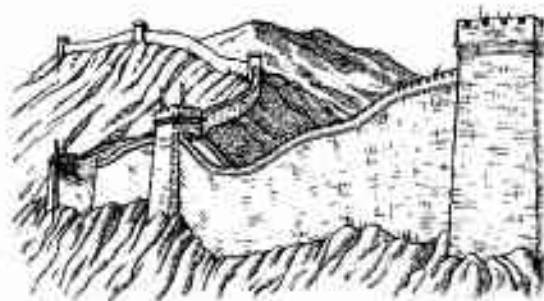
If your total score is 2 or lower, turn to **8**.

If it is 3 or higher, turn to **211**.

179

You rise at daybreak and ready yourself for a long march south across the vast Bhanarian Plain. Using your Kai tracking skills, you have no difficulty following the trail that has been left by the Imperial Guards. Their footprints can clearly be seen upon the surface of a dusty track that cuts across the rolling grasslands.

As you march along this derelict plains road, you are bathed by the warm rays of the rising sun. It is a beautiful day, yet you notice that your companions are in a sad and sombre mood. They are mourning the loss of their comrade, Durasso, and they do not feel much like talking.



Fifteen miles from the Dammerdon foothills, you come to a wooden bridge that crosses a stream of sparkling water. Here you lose your enemy's trail for the track has been freshly churned by dozens of hoof prints. You magnify your vision and scan the far horizon, but all that you see are a few roving black Bhanarian stallions. You check the trail once more, and then your heart sinks when suddenly you realize that your enemy must have captured some of these fine wild horses. If they are now travelling on horseback, your only hope of catching them will rest on your ability to capture four wild stallions for yourselves.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to 27.

If you do not, turn to 349.

180

As you gallop through the stables, you draw upon your Kai Mastery of Elementalism to stir up the straw that litters the floor around the exit. The troopers who are attempting to bar your escape are blinded by this sudden whirlwind of debris. They are forced to abandon their attempt to close the doors, and you are able to make good a speedy escape into the street beyond. As you gallop through the open doorway, you steer your horse to the right and then race away along a dark, cobblestoned street.

Turn to 14.

181

The old man invites you and your companions to enter his tent. You dismount, and the children look

after your horses while you examine the wares and trinkets that are stored inside. Gildas nudges you and points to a rickety table that is heaped with simple straw-coloured robes, much-favoured by Bhanarian plainsmen. 'Maybe a wise purchase, Sir Kai?' he mutters. 'I fear our tunics may arouse suspicion the further south we venture.' You nod in agreement and ask the old man how much he wants for four robes.

'One hundred and twenty Ren, kind sir,' he replies, cheerfully.

The old man's price is the equivalent to 12 Gold Crowns. The rangers do not have any money, so if you wish to purchase these garments you must pay the full price.

If you can afford to pay the man's price, turn to 286.

If you do not have sufficient Gold Crowns to pay for the robes, turn to 45.

182

Quickly you recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Mind Charm* and direct its power at the angry sergeant. Under the influence of your spell, he calms down and becomes susceptible to your mental commands. You tell him that you and your companions are agents from the Autarch's court in Otavai, sent here to check the barracks before his arrival tomorrow. Without questioning your claim, he steps aside and allows you to enter the barracks.

Turn to 110.

183

You signal to the rangers to halt and dismount. Then you request them to help move one of the pillars into the middle of the track. They look at you quizzically, but they do not question your command. When you have completed this task, you call upon your improved Kai Mastery of Elementalism to surround the pillar with a powerful electrical charge. You sense that the Autarch's squad are now little more than five miles distant, and it is your hope that this trap may delay them when they pass through the valley.

Gildas questions your actions and you explain them to him as you remount your horses and ride along the valley trail towards a distant ridge.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **342**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **21**.

184

You decide to wait until nightfall before making your attempt to cross the River Heng. During the day you scout the river bank and you determine that there are only two ways to cross. Both are hazardous.

You can swim across the river, but the current is fast and treacherous. Or you can attempt to cross at the bridge. The road is blocked by soldiers, making a crossing by that way impossible. But you can attempt a crossing below the bridge. Its supporting stone pillars are closely spaced and

they slow the river's flow. However, the enemy guarding this bridge is especially vigilant. They are expecting and watching for your approach.

If you wish to attempt to swim across the river, turn to **100**.

If you choose to attempt a crossing beneath the bridge, turn to **261**.

185

The rock hits your shield spell and explodes in pieces, showering you with razor-sharp shards of stone. One sliver of rock cuts your cheek and another tears open the shoulder of your tunic: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to **339**.

186

The guards are unconvinced by your charade. They have been ordered to search out four intruders, and they are convinced that they have found who they are looking for. As they advance upon you with their spears levelled menacingly at your chests, Gildas draws his sword and attacks the taller of the guards. Immediately, you and the others support his attack and a desperate struggle ensues.

Parade Ground Guards:

COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 39

You may add +2 to your COMBAT SKILL for the duration of this fight due to the support you receive from your ranger companions.

If you win the combat, turn to **41**.

187

When the Xanon are only 20 metres from the wall, you command the rangers to open fire. All three arrows find their mark and the leading beasts stagger and fall. Shocked by the sudden death of their brothers, the following creatures turn to retreat from the rangers' deadly bows. But as they pull back to the outskirts of the ruins, you suddenly become aware of a new threat.

Some of the Xanon have left the main group and ridden in a wide arc around the ancient site in order to come up behind your position. You hear their leader snorting gruffly as he leaps into the ruined hall and quickly you spin around to face him. You raise your Kai Weapon and courageously you leap forward to block him before he can launch a surprise attack upon the backs of your three companions.

Turn to 270.

188

A searing pain shoots from the front of your eyes to the rear of your head: lose 4 ENDURANCE points. You reel back in agony and quickly muster your Kai curing skills to numb the terrible pain, and restore your damaged sight. But as your vision is returning, you hear a loud crash of breaking glass, and your companions cry out with shock and alarm. You fear a steam-gun projectile has smashed through the tower's great glass window, but when your vision returns, you see that it is something far larger . . . and far worse!

Turn to 200.



The attacking Xanon are surprised by your volley of arrows.

189

An arrow hits you in the left arm barely moments before you reach the safety of the darkened alleyway: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 174.

190

You dodge to the right, and all at once there is a flash and a deafening bang. You feel the lead ball from the squad leader's pistol rip through your loose robe. It passes beneath your armpit and strikes the far wall without causing you any injury.

To continue, turn to 204.

191

Your sweeping blow misses and, in the next instant, a blinding flash of white light engulfs your vision as the rock slams into your jaw. A numbness engulfs your senses and you feel yourself tumbling head-first into a deep, dark abyss.

The rock has shattered your jaw and knocked you unconscious. Upon seeing your limp and helpless form, the flying creature swoops in for the kill. Mercifully, you are spared the agony of death as this ruthless denizen of the Doomlands rends your body in two.

Sadly, your life and your mission end here.

192

One of the steam-gun projectiles grazes your left leg: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this wounding, turn to 68.

193

The tip of a dart grazes your thigh, making you grit your teeth against the stinging pain: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to 304.

194

Shortly before midnight, you approach a toll bridge that traverses a deep gorge. The entrance to this bridge is blocked by a single-pole barrier, and on either side of the obstruction are painted wooden shacks, adorned with flickering lanterns. The soldiers who guard this bridge are asleep inside the shacks and they fail to hear you approaching. You decide to jump your horse over the barrier and you call to Gildas and the others to follow your lead.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Animal Control, add 2 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 0-1, turn to 42.

If it is 2 or higher, turn to 90.

195

The Bhanarian guardsmen react quickly and soon they are following closely on your heels as you race through the copse. When you break from the cover of the trees, the nearest enemy warrior hurls his spear at your fleeing back. Your Kai sixth sense

alerts you to the flying missile and you dodge aside, but the tip of the spear gouges your shoulder and sends you tumbling head-first into the long grass: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **85**.

196

Above the clanging of the alarm bell, you hear a gruff command to halt. You glance over your shoulder and see a Bhanarian guard framed in the jagged window through which you have made your escape from the mess hall corridor. He is armed with a Bor musket, and when you and your companions ignore his order to stop, he raises his cumbersome weapon to his shoulder and discharges a shot at your fleeing backs.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 2 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 0, turn to **336**.

If it is 1-4, turn to **102**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **82**.

197

The man invites you to sit at his table and then he proceeds to shuffle and deal out twelve cards from his deck and place them face up before you. They each feature intricate designs and symbols that you have never seen before. Predictably, he assures you in a syrupy tone that you shall enjoy health, wealth, and great happiness. As he is pointing to

the cards, you notice he is wearing a distinctive black signet ring engraved with a tiger's head. You suspect this man is secretly one of Sejanoz's agents. When he asks why you have come to Yua Tzhan, Gildas places his hand on your shoulder and suggests that it is time you should be leaving.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, turn to **120**.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you choose not to use it, turn to **15**.

198

As you make the jump, the corporal side-steps and thrusts at you with his spear. Its sharpened steel tip grazes your rib-cage (lose 2 ENDURANCE points).

Your horse sails across the barrier, and the rangers jump their mounts over it with consummate ease. The angry cries of the corporal quickly fade into the distance as you leave the bridge and follow the road up into the hills beyond.

Turn to **272**.

199

You speak the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and level your right arm at the creature's head. A crackling arc of electrical power leaps from your hand and connects with the beast's jaw, its raw power causing the creature to lose all control. With a sickening crunch, the helpless creature collides with the rocky wall of the mountain pass and then tumbles out of view.

To continue, to **18**.

200

You see the fearsome figure of Autarch Sejanoz come stepping through the chamber's shattered window. He alights from the platform of his golden sky-chariot which hovers silently beside the tower. Sheathed from neck to toe in black and golden armour, this warrior stands an arm's length taller than you and your companions. A great tiger helm conceals his face and behind him swirls a voluminous scarlet cloak. Only his hands are visible and they seem strangely at odds with the grand scale and design of his armour. They are withered and twisted like claws, the skin wrinkled and cracked like burnt parchment. Hanging over them are four long, curved, needle-like claws of steel that sprout from the back of the golden bracers which encase his wrists.

Gildas and his men reach for their bows and fire repeatedly at the Autarch, yet every arrow they send against him ends shattered. From the visor of his helm there issues a thin, chilling laugh: 'You cannot kill me with your sharpened sticks, you fools!' Upon hearing this, Paviz and Yalin drop their bows and unsheathe their blades. Paviz shouts a much-practiced cue, and together they attack the Autarch, striking simultaneously from either side.

With stunning swiftness, Sejanoz retaliates. He reaches out and grabs each man by the throat with his cadaverous hands, and raises them several inches from the floor. With a series of metallic clicks, the needle-claws extend and turn inwards, puncturing their jugular veins. Their faces blanch as their blood is drained, and not a drop is spilt.



Gildas' men are powerless in the grip of the mighty Autarch Sejanoz.

You are shocked by the spectacle of the Autarch's vampiric attack, and your senses scream at you to act to save your brave companions before it is too late.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **75**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **233**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **148**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **24**.

201

Dusk soon approaches and you resolve to return to the ancient ruins to set up a camp for the night. At first light you begin a long ride south, guided by your Siyenese compass. Judging by the steady course that you follow, you hazard a guess that the enemy are heading towards the city of Yua Tzhan.

If you possess Astrology, turn to **332**.

If you do not possess this Grand Master Discipline, turn to **232**.

202

Shortly before midnight, you approach a toll bridge that traverses a deep gorge. The entrance to this bridge is blocked by a single-pole barrier, and on either side of the obstruction are painted wooden shacks, adorned with flickering lanterns. The soldiers who guard this bridge are awoken by

the sound of your horses' hooves. Fearing you to be a surprise inspection by their commanding officer, they grab their spears and stumble out of the shacks. As they draw themselves up in an untidy line before the barrier, their corporal raises his hand, commanding you to halt.

If you wish to stop before the barrier, turn to **159**.

If you wish to attempt to jump your horse over the barrier and ride across the bridge beyond, turn to **38**.

203

Patiently, you watch and wait until the skyship and its attackers have disappeared from view before you break cover and search for the metallic tube. After several minutes, you discover it lodged in a jagged outcrop protruding from the wall of the ravine, some 6 metres below the rim.

Aided by your tracking skills and natural agility, you descend the steep gully wall and retrieve the steel tube. You tuck it into your belt and then climb back to the top of the ravine before you examine what the tube contains.

Turn to **140**.

204

With surprising agility, the squad leader leaps from his bath tub and attacks you with the butt of his empty pistol. In the ensuing struggle, you deal him a deep and mortal wound to the chest. The force of your blow sends him tumbling backwards to collide

with the tub. It tips over and a torrent of water cascades into the fire. His dying cries mingle with the loud hissing of steam as the bath water extinguishes the fire and sizzles on the red-hot grate.

You sheathe your blade and your Kai senses tell you that you are now very close to the Claw of Naar. You look at your Siyenese compass once again, and you see that its needle is pointing to a painting which hangs above the fireplace.

To continue, turn to **137**.

205

You stoop to examine the curious, tree-like shrub and your Grand Master Discipline enables you to recognize its red and yellow leaves.

'This is a Klorva tree,' you say, confidently. 'Its leaves contain a powerful healing agent that is stronger than Laumspur.'

There are sufficient leaves on this small Klorva tree for 1 dose. If you wish to pick and keep them, record the Klorva on your *Action Chart* as a Backpack Item. When swallowed after sustaining an injury, Klorva will restore 6 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **240**.

206

You observe that the bridge at Zuda is occupied by Bhanarian soldiers. Their tented encampments are dotted around the approach road and river bank, and the line of their supply wagons stretches away to the west.

The tiger's head flag of Autarch Sejanos now flies over Zuda. This border town has been overrun by his army within the last 24 hours. At first you suspect that this could be the start of a war between Bhanar and Chai, but your Kai senses tell you that this is no ordinary military operation. This army has come here for one purpose – to ensure the recovery of the Claw of Naar.

You hold sombre council with the rangers and try to determine how best to proceed from here. 'I propose we try to reach the Chai Wall,' says Gildas, and his men readily agree. Having never heard of this edifice, you ask Gildas to explain. 'The Chai Wall is a line of forts and military defences that lies 60 miles to the east of Zuda,' he says. 'Invasion from Bhanar has long been a threat to Chai, but its ancient ruler – Khea Khan Xo – had remarkable foresight. He constructed a formidable wall to deter Autarch Sejanos from invading his peaceful realm. It has served Chai well for many centuries.'

You thank Gildas for this history lesson, but you question its accuracy. 'I was taught at the Kai



Monastery that the reign of Khea Khan Xo was more than a thousand years ago. Surely his enemy then was not the same Autarch Sejanoz who rules Bhanar now?'

'Ah, but he is!' replies Gildas. 'Sejanoz has ruled this land for 3,000 years. Legend says that he entered into a pact with Agarash the Damned. In return for his soul he received . . . immortality.'

As you look upon the flag of Autarch Sejanoz fluttering high above the buildings of Zuda, a growing sense of foreboding creeps upon you and it leaves a chill in your blood.

To continue, turn to **184**.

207

You are making your way through the crush of soldiers and wagon drivers when suddenly a Guard Sergeant blocks your path.

'Hey, you!' he growls, pushing you forcefully in the chest with the heel of his hand. 'Where's your pass?'

If you possess a Tiger Ring, and wish to show it to the menacing sergeant, turn to **320**.

If you possess a Gold Talisman, turn to **87**.

If you possess neither of these items, turn to **55**.

208

The woman launches a bolt of psychic energy that strikes at the core of your mind. Fortunately, your mental defences prove strong enough to save you

from sustaining any serious damage from this opportunistic assault: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **96**.

209

You shout at the rangers, commanding them to hold their fire, but it is already too late. Desperately you throw yourself to the ground as their feathered shafts come streaking towards you. Two of their arrows clip and gouge your flesh as you strike the stone floor and roll to a halt: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

If you have survived this wounding, turn to **269**.

210

You roll aside and your quick reflexes save you from the Conda's deadly fangs. Gildas reaches for his sword and, with one swift and deadly swipe, he decapitates the hissing serpent and sends its fanged head spinning through the air, trailing a stream of greenish-yellow venom.

You whisper your thanks to Gildas as he wipes his blade on the grubby sleeve of his tunic and slips it silently back into its scabbard.

Turn to **335**.

211

You reach the far door without being seen. Silently you twist its copper handle and enter a small ante-chamber that is hung with tapestries. Beyond this small room is an archway through which you catch

212-213

sight of part of a sumptuous bedchamber. You detect the sound of splashing water and the sweet aroma of perfumed bath oils. You can also detect the powerful aura of evil which radiates from the Claw of Naar.

Cautiously you approach the archway and peer around its carved frame. Bathing in a large tub of soapy water set before a blazing log fire, you see the squad leader. You sense that the Claw is somewhere close to him, but you cannot see it. Suddenly you are startled by a loud knock on the door behind you.

If you wish open the door, turn to **73**.

If you decide to lock the door, you can draw its bolt by turning to **217**.

212

Guided by your pathsmanship and tracking skills, you lead the rangers to the South Gate of Yua Tzhan. Here you are able to depart the city unchallenged, along a road that passes through outlying settlements before climbing gently into the Honah Hills.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **202**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **194**.

213

Your command comes too late to prevent Gildas from letting slip his bowstring. His arrow arcs



You discover the squad leader bathing in a tub of soapy water.

towards the creature and strikes it in the centre of its bulbous body. With a chilling cry, the beast crumples to the ground and begins to shrink and change. Within the space of a few fleeting seconds the transformation is complete, and you find yourself staring with disbelief at the wounded body of a frail old man.

Instinctively, you leap from your horse and rush to the old man's side. Cradling his greying head in the crook of your arm, you attempt to relieve the pain of his chest wound by the use of your Kai healing skills.

If you possess Deliverance, turn to 10.

If you do not, turn to 264.

214

As you gallop through the stables, you quickly intone the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Power Word* and shape your mouth in readiness to utter it: *Gloar!*

The concussive energy of your spell-word strikes one of the troopers who is attempting to bar your escape, and it sends him cartwheeling across the straw-covered ground. His companion slams shut his door, blocking half of the archway, but there is still space enough for you and your companions to make good your escape into the street beyond. As you gallop through the narrowed exit, you steer your horse to the right and race away along a dark, cobblestoned street.

Turn to 14.

215

Silently you recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Mind Charm* and direct its power at your angry accuser. Under the influence of your spell, he suddenly becomes calm and susceptible to your mental commands. You prompt him to tell his cohorts that he has made an error, that you are not the plainsman who swindled him after all, and meekly he complies with your psychic suggestion.

His accomplices are embarrassed by their friend's mistake, and they offer to buy you and your companions some ale. Politely you decline their offer as you make your way towards the door.

Turn to 295.

216

The rock is deflected by the gust of air, but as it tumbles past, it glances your right shoulder and rips open the sleeve of your tunic: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to 339.

217

Quickly you draw the bolt and, as you step away from the door, you hear the squad leader call out in response to the knock: 'Enter!'

The door shudders and the handle turns as an attempt is made to enter the ante-chamber.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, turn to 247.

If you do not, turn to 28.

218

You hand over the gold crowns and the trader slips the coins into the pocket of his apron. Then you and your companions each take one of the loose-fitting robes and slip them on over your tunics. The thin, hooded garments are large enough to conceal your backpacks and weapons, and you are pleased to discover that they do not hamper your movement.

Having concluded your business, you thank the trader and bid him farewell. Then you leave this village and continue your ride south.

Turn to **118**.

219

You smash the head of the Claw against the floor to remove the burning log, and then tuck the artefact in your belt. Below, you can hear the door to the tower being blown off its hinges and an old fear returns to chill your blood. The Autarch's guards are storming up the stairs; it is only a matter of seconds before they enter the chamber. Your instincts tell you to save your unconscious companions, but your rational mind tells you that this is now impossible; there is only time enough to save yourself. You bid them a sad farewell as you run towards the open window and leap out on to the platform of the Autarch's sky-chariot. Below, you glimpse the Imperial Guards gathered around the body of the Autarch. To your amazement, you see that they are helping their leader to his feet. Sejanoz is still alive.

Quickly you look to the controls of the sky-chariot

and they seem vaguely familiar. They are similar in design and purpose to those found at the helm of *Cloud-dancer*, albeit on a smaller, simpler scale. You place your right hand on a sparkling sphere, but as you are pushing it forward to make the chariot advance, a handful of the Imperial Guards in the courtyard below fire a volley of projectiles at you.

The Autarch has given the order; he is determined not to let you get away.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 2 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 0, turn to **123**.

If it is 1-3, turn to **300**.

If it is 4-7, turn to **254**.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to **192**.

220

Quickly you return to Captain Gildas and discover that Ranger Durasso has been killed, and Sergeant Paviz badly wounded by the Claw's second blast of power. You use your Magnakai healing skills to staunch the flow of blood from the sergeant's wounded arm, and then you scan the trail leading south from the pass for signs of the escaping enemy squad. In the failing light you glimpse their black-clad forms hurrying away along the trail which heads towards the Bhanarian Plain.

Gildas and his rangers are too shaken to attempt an immediate pursuit and so you allow them to rest and recover their strength. When you cast

your eye towards the ravine where *Cloud-dancer* was hidden, before it was attacked by the flying horde, your sixth sense suddenly informs you that there is something waiting for you there.

To continue, turn to **13**.

221

You shoulder your bow, then you speak the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and point your right hand at a pool of oil on the ground in front of the charging Xanon. An arc of crackling blue energy hits the black puddle and ignites the oil with a terrific *Whoomph!*, sending a searing ball of flame and black smoke soaring into the air. The heat of the fireball forces the Xanon to retreat, but as they pull back, you suddenly become aware of a new threat.

Some Xanon have ridden in a wide arc around the ruins and have come up behind your position. You hear their leader snorting gruffly as he leaps into the ruined hall, and you spin around to face him. Hurriedly, you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and leap forward to block his path before he can launch a surprise attack upon the backs of your three companions.

To continue, turn to **270**.

222

You use the power of your Grand Mastery to dislodge the spit that supports the roasting side of beef. It collapses into the fire, scattering red hot coals across the floor. Some of the coals ignite a

leg of the table and, gripped by a sudden panic, the soldiers leap from their seats and attempt to put out the flames with their cloaks and their mugs of ale.

In the confusion, none of them see you enter the mess hall. You take cover behind a stand of armour, then you draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility to help keep you hidden before you attempt to reach the far door.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 3 to the number you have picked. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1.

If your total score is 2 or lower, turn to **8**.

If it is 3 or higher, turn to **211**.

223

You detect that the woman is attempting to ensnare you with a powerful mind charm. You draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Psi-screen to block her spell and you are able to resist her mesmeric commands, but the effort drains your mental energy: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

Unfortunately, your companions do not possess your strong psychic defences and they continue to ride along the track, lured on by her hypnotic voice. You call out to them to halt but they seem oblivious to your presence. You must act quickly if you wish to save them from her sinister spell.

If you possess a Bow, and wish to use it, turn to **312**.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to 151.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to 53.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to 124.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to 281.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, or a Bow, turn instead to 164.

224

You use your Kai Mastery to command the ghastly creature to spit out your rope and swim away.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. For every level of Kai rank you have attained above the rank of Kai Grand Guardian, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 6 or lower, turn to 315.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to 276.

225

Instinctively you reach for the hilt of your Kai Weapon, but Rimoah stays your hand. 'Hold, Grand Master. These are not our enemies - they're our friends.'

The four gaunt, grey, grime-encrusted figures leave their hiding places and move slowly towards

the cage. It is not until their leader smiles and reveals his white teeth that you realize they are human. The many weeks that these Siyeneese rangers have spent in the hell of the Doomlands have exacted upon them a heavy toll.

'Greetings, Lord Rimoah,' says the leader. 'I am Captain Gildas of the King's Ranger Regiment, and these are my men - Sergeant Paviz, Ranger Durasso, and Ranger Yalin. We're glad you've arrived before the enemy, though by no more than a few hours at best.'

Captain Gildas looks at you and bows his head reverently. 'We're honoured by your presence, Sir Kai. I was lucky to be in Seroa last year when Karvas was crowned King, and I witnessed your knighthood in the Palace Square. We Siyeneese will be forever in your debt for ridding us of that usurper - Baron Sadanzo.'

You thank the Ranger Captain for his compliment and tell him that you have come here with Lord Rimoah to help capture the Claw of Naar. 'It is vital that Sejanoz be denied the Claw,' you say earnestly, '... at all costs.'

'Fear not, Sir Kai,' he replies with confidence. 'We have laid a trap to ensnare the enemy and their foul relic. They'll not get out of Sunderer Pass. Come, we shall show you what we have prepared, but first you must conceal your skyship before the enemy arrive. Look over there, Lord Rimoah,' says Gildas, pointing to a distant ravine, 'that gully is deceptively deep. It will swallow your ship without trace. You must hide it there. But first, may I ask a favour?' Rimoah nods in reply.



Four gaunt, grime-encrusted figures leave the cover of the rocks and move towards you.

'Our provisions are exhausted. We have some water, but we've had nothing to eat for days. Can you spare some food before you depart?'

'Of course, Captain,' replies Rimoah. 'I'll have the bo'sun drop provisions this instant.'

Rimoah climbs into the boarding cage and is winched up to the rear deck of *Cloud-dancer*. Within minutes, the cage descends once more, laden with food and water. With a gleeful cry, Gildas throws open the cage door and he and his men leap upon the provisions like ravenous wolves. What little they fail to consume immediately they stow away in their empty backpacks for later.

As *Cloud-dancer* moves off to seek cover in the distant ravine, Captain Gildas leads you to the mouth of Sunderer Pass and shows you the preparations that he had his men have made in readiness to ambush the enemy squad.

To continue, turn to **334**.

226

You retreat before the advancing Imperial Guardsmen until your backs are pressed against the base of the crimson tower. Gildas calls for you to look behind, and when you glance over your shoulder, you see that there is a red door set flush into the tower wall. Forcefully you push the door but it will not open. Then you notice a dial set in the middle of its surface, and in the centre of the dial is a small keyhole. The rangers load their bows and fire repeatedly at the advancing guardsmen as

you attempt to unlock the door to the crimson tower.

The dial is surrounded by numerals numbering from 0 to 100. Using your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus, you determine that by turning the dial to one of these numbers, you will cause the lock to disengage and the door will open.

While examining the dial, you recall the wall safe in the barracks at Yua Tzhan. That lock required 3 digits to open it. This requires only one. The number that will open this lock is equal to the total you get when you add together the three digits that opened the wall safe.

When you think you know the answer, turn to the section of this book which is the same as your answer.

If you are unable to determine the correct solution, turn instead to **244**.

227

Thinking that you are provisioners from one of the other wagons, the driver is glad to accept your offer to help gather up the vegetables that lie strewn across the paved street. The raised hoods of your robes help keep your faces in shadow, and he fails to recognize that you are not native Bhanarians. Then one of the iron doors in the northern wall creaks opens, and a barracks guard barks an order to the waiting drivers to begin delivering their loads by hand. A collective groan arises from the line of parked wagons, but for you and your companions it proves to be a perfect opportunity to enter the barracks undetected.

Each of you takes a box of provisions from the rear of the wagon and joins in the line of drivers as they file through the iron door. You follow this line to a kitchen storeroom, located near the middle of the barracks complex, where you deposit your delivery and then return to the street to collect another box. As you are making your way back, you pass a door that your Kai senses tell you is unlocked. Quickly you slip inside and then signal to your companions to follow. When all of you are safely inside, you close the door and draw its bolt.

Turn to **298**.

228

You are dismayed that your attempt to destroy the Claw has failed, yet you refuse to abandon all hope of ridding your world of this evil artefact. You resolve to deliver it to the Elder Magi, for you know that it is within their power to obliterate this weapon of darkness.

Captain Gildas consoles you, and from a pocket of his tunic he produces a small crimson gemstone which he cups in his palm, inviting your inspection. Without saying a word, he fixes this gem into one of the hollows in the shaft of the Claw, and then he hands you a seemingly ordinary compass.

'Look at the compass needle, Sir Kai,' he says, and he picks up the Claw and begins to walk. As he circles around you, the point of the needle follows his every move.

'It's a Siyeneese tracker-gem,' he says. 'The needle

of the compass is tuned to its vibrations. It's just a precaution, in case you should be parted from the Claw before you deliver it to the Elder Magi. So long as the gem remains embedded in its shaft, you'll be able to track it using the compass.' Gildas hands you the Claw and you compliment him for his prudence.

'A very wise precaution, Captain,' you say, as you slip the compass into your tunic pocket. 'Somehow I feel sure that we have not yet seen the last of the Autarch's squad.'

(You can record the Siyenesse Compass on your *Action Chart* as a Special Item. You should also record the Claw of Naar as a Special Item which you carry in your pack. You must discard two items in their favour if you already have the maximum number of Special Items permissible.)

You sheathe your Kai Weapon and follow Gildas as he returns to the horses. As you walk towards them, Ranger Yalin beckons you over to look at a strange shrub that is growing near the ruins.

If you possess Herbmastery, turn to 305.

If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to 255.

229

You use your improved Grand Mastery to cause the overhanging boughs of the trees to lash out at the Bhanarian guards. Startled by this unexpected attack, they drop their spears and raise their hands to protect their faces. The rangers seize this chance to attack and overpower them, leaving the

guards lying unconscious beneath the leafy trees.

Turn to 41.

230

You tug your Kai Weapon from its scabbard and attempt to strike the falling rock as it plummets towards your torso.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked. If you possess the Kai Weapon 'Magnara', add 3.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to 191.

If it is 4-7, turn to 93.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to 7.

231

The corporal orders you to wait while he returns to his shack for a few moments to check his records. You sense that something is wrong, and you communicate this to Captain Gildas with a subtle shake of your head.

When the corporal disappears, you circle your horse around and then make a sudden charge at the barrier. The guards scatter as you bear down on them. Your horse sails across the barrier, with the rangers following closely behind. Without looking back, you gallop across the bridge and along the road that winds into the hills beyond.

Turn to 272.

232

Your journey south is favoured by a cooling breeze which sweeps down across the plain from the Hyunsei Mountains. Shortly before noon, you see a tented encampment in the far distance. Small crimson pennants flutter from its striped awnings, and groups of women and children can be seen walking along the banks of a nearby stream.

'Plains-herder families,' says Gildas. 'Their menfolk are out on the grasslands rounding up groups of wild stallion. They train the horses and sell them at auction in Yua Tzhan.'

If you wish to visit the herder encampment, turn to **156**.

If you choose to avoid the encampment and continue your ride south, turn instead to **2**.

233

You intone the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Power Word* and shape your mouth in readiness to utter it: *Gloar!*



The concussive energy of your spell-word slams against the Autarch's helm, and the force of the impact makes him shudder. He releases his grip and the rangers fall limply to the floor. Then he turns to face you.

'Give me the Claw!' he demands, his voice booming around the chamber. 'Give me the Claw and I shall spare all your worthless lives!'

If you choose to obey his command, turn to **35**.

If you choose to refuse his command, turn to **338**.

234

You pull away from the stallion's scrabbling hooves, but your reflexes are too slow to save you from being struck twice on the head and knocked down: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Dazed but still determined, you stagger to your feet and draw upon your Kai powers of Animal Control to subdue the frightened horse. Your efforts are soon rewarded. As the lead stallion nestles his head against your shoulder, you call to the rangers to come out from under the bridge and take a look at their fine new mounts.

Turn to **314**.

235

You launch a mindblast at the angry sergeant and he reels back, clutching his head in pain. Your sudden psychic attack soon renders him unconscious, but you catch him before his limp body crumples to the ground.

You call out to the gate guards to come and help you. You say their sergeant has been taken ill, and quickly they respond. As they lift him out of your arms, you motion to your companions to follow as you slip away into the barracks.

Beyond the main gate is a courtyard where several wagons, filled with provisions, are being unloaded. You and your companions each take a box from the rear of the nearest wagon and join a line of men who are delivering their goods to a kitchen storeroom located near the middle of the barracks complex. You leave your boxes here and then return to the courtyard to collect some more. As you are making your way back, you pass a door that your Kai senses tell you is unlocked. You quickly step inside and then signal to the rangers to follow. When all of you are safely in, you shut the door and draw its bolt.

Turn to **298**.

236

When the woman senses that her psychic attack has failed, she collapses upon the track, bent over on all fours like a dying beast. She twitches and wriggles uncontrollably, and, before your disbelieving eyes, her body begins to change. Her marble-smooth skin becomes criss-crossed with a net of a thousand wrinkles and her abdomen swells like an over-inflated balloon. Then there is a terrible sound, like the rending of bone and flesh, and suddenly the illusion of her beauty is dispelled forever when this fell vampiric shape-changer reverts to its true form.

Confronting you now is a leprous horror with a huge, fang-filled maw. It roars with anger and a gust of its putrid breath wafts over you, turning your stomach with its vile stench. The rangers and their horses are snapped out of their hypnotic trance by the sound of its fearsome cry and, gripped by a sudden panic, they turn and flee into the trees. Hurriedly you follow them, forcing your mount to battle its way through a tangle of barbed-toothed briar in your desperation to escape from the wrath of this demonic creature.

Turn to **40**.

237

You tell Gildas and his men to keep a lookout, then you kneel in front of the doors and attempt to pick the lock.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If your current ENDURANCE score is 25 or higher, add 1 to the number you have picked. If it is 15 or lower, deduct 1.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **252**.

If it is 4-6, turn to **26**.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to **129**.

238

The avalanche of rocks has blocked the mountain pass. Two of the enemy warriors have been crushed by the deluge, and three others can be seen staggering away wounded. However, most of

the squad appear to have survived the rockfall and you cannot help but begrudgingly admire the swiftness of their reactions. You magnify your vision and scan their scattered ranks, but you are unable to locate the squad leader.

If you possess Assimilance, turn to **119**.

If you do not, turn to **251**.

239

You inch open the door to witness a fight taking place on the far side of the mess hall. The Bhanarians have abandoned their feasting and are now attempting to storm the archway. Four of their number lie dead or wounded on the ground, hit by ranger arrows. Your companions are putting up a brave fight, but they face the danger of being surrounded on both sides and trapped in the corridor.

Then a new threat to their survival arrives. Three Bhanarian guards enter the hall pushing a strange, cannon-like contraption towards the distant archway. Fixed above its barrel is a large iron cylinder. It is studded with heavy rivets and fitted with a springed valve that bubbles and hisses like an angry serpent. You surmise this device is a steam-powered cannon, and you fear that if it is fired along the corridor it could slay your companions with one blast. As the Bhanarian gunners begin loading their weapon with handfuls of rusty nails and lead shot, you know you must find some way to stop them from firing this devilish device.

If you possess a Bow, and wish to use it, turn to **115**.



They load the steam-cannon with rusty nails and lead shot.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **92**.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **69**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **267**.

If you possess none of the above, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **282**.

240

You mount your horse and lead the rangers away from the ruins, heading south. Soon you come upon a track and you steer your horse on to it so that he can travel at a faster pace. Your Kai sixth sense and your pathsmanship skills warn you that the Autarch's squad have recovered their stallions and are now in hot pursuit.

You follow the track into a shallow valley where a corridor of weather-worn pillars line the trail. These man-sized pinnacles of rock are engraved with the likenesses of ancient Bhanarian rulers dating back to a time long before Autarch Sejanos seized control of this land. As you pass between them, you notice that each one has been defaced by axe and hammer blows.

If you possess Elementalism, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Sentinel, or higher, turn to **183**.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you have yet to attain this level of Kai Mastery, turn to **78**.

241

You hand the money to the corporal and he orders his men to disperse. The barrier is raised, and as you trot your horses on to the bridge, he waves farewell and wishes you a swift and safe journey.

Turn to **272**.

242

You observe the main entrance to the barracks building and note a great deal of activity despite the lateness of the hour. Columns of Bhanarian spearmen, clad in black quilted uniforms with wide silk leggings, go marching through its main gate every few minutes with an almost clockwork regularity. You suspect that they are mustering in preparation for the arrival of the Autarch, although they appear too heavily armed to be gathering for ceremonial duties. You also catch sight of some Xanons, and you sense that these creatures were among those whom you fought at the ruins earlier today.

During the time you spend observing the barracks, several wagons arrive laden with weapons and supplies. When seven of these army transports converge upon the main gate at the same time, it creates chaos for the Gate Guards. As they try desperately to untangle the ensuing chaos, you see an opportunity to enter the barracks.

If you wish to attempt to hide in the rear of one of the army wagons that is queuing to enter the barracks, turn to **134**.

If you choose to try to slip through the main entrance on foot, turn to **95**.

243

You scurry to the edge of the ravine and search for Rimoah's metallic tube. After several frantic minutes, you finally discover that it is lying on a jagged outcrop of slate which protrudes from the wall of the ravine, some 6 metres below the rim.

Quickly you descend the steep gully wall, but in your haste to retrieve the tube, you lose your footing and fall.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 2 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **106**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **67**.

244

While you are examining the lock and dial, the advancing enemy discharge a volley of projectiles from their steam-guns. These missiles pepper the wall of the tower, tearing away fist-sized chunks of masonry that fly in all directions.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 0-1, turn to **50**.

If it is 2-5, turn to **265**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **292**.

245

Gildas leads his men off the trail and you follow as he enters the walled ruins of an ancient hall. Hurriedly you dismount and corral your horses in a corner of this site before drawing your weapons in readiness to confront the approaching Xanon. The rangers prepare their bows and take up positions along the north-facing wall. You choose a place close to Gildas and watch with mounting fear as the Xanon come charging out of the tall grassland. As you watch their approach, your sixth sense detects that these fearsome creatures have been spawned by evil sorcery.

If you possess a Bow, and wish to use it, turn to **317**.

If you do not possess a Bow, or if you choose not to use it, turn to **187**.

246

The third tumbler clicks into the correct position and the door of the wall safe swings open to reveal the Claw of Naar. You take the accursed artefact and place it in your pack, then you close the safe and re-hang its covering portrait.

You should restore the Claw of Naar as a Special Item on your *Action Chart*. You must discard one item in its favour if you have the maximum number of Special Items permissible.

If you now wish to search the chamber, turn to **311**.

If you decide to leave the chamber and return to the rangers, turn to **125**.

247

You recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Silence* and cast its effect upon the door. Outside, the soldier who is trying to gain entry starts to bang repeatedly on the door with his fists, but inside the antechamber not a sound can be heard.

You unsheathe your Kai Weapon in silence and enter the main chamber to confront the squad leader in his bath.

Turn to 260.

248

There is a blinding flash of scarlet light upon the instant that your blade strikes the shaft of the Claw, and a searing wave of heat sends you spinning backwards to the ground: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Stunned and gasping for breath, you drag yourself to your feet and stagger to the altar stone which is now wreathed with trails of grey smoke. To your dismay, you discover that the Claw is still intact. Despite the huge burst of energy that your blow released, you discover no mark or blemish upon its gnarled shaft.

The blade of your Kai Weapon, however, is notched and discoloured at the point where it struck the shaft of the Claw. (The damage to your Kai Weapon has caused a permanent reduction of 1 point to its COMBAT SKILL bonus. You should now adjust the bonus on your Special Items list.)

To continue, turn to 103.

249

You force the doors open just wide enough to allow a horse to pass, then you enter the stables and search its upper and lower floors. You discover seven horses and a mule, and tack enough to equip them all. Gildas uses his expertise to choose the best mounts, and you help the rangers to fit them with saddles and bridles. When the horses are ready to ride, you mount up and lead your companions in single file along the alley.

Unfortunately, the noise that you made upon entering the stables has alerted the tavern-keeper. When you pass by his bedchamber window, he leans out and opens fire at you with his Bor musket.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to 52.

If it is 5-9, turn to 131.

250

The tall plains' grass makes the going increasingly difficult. It binds around your horses' hooves and frustrates your attempts to hasten their pace. For five miles you force your mounts to wade through this sea of verdant vegetation until you catch sight of some stone ruins on the slope of a distant hill. It is the remnants of an ancient village, and it is bisected by a dried-up watercourse. You scan the site and notice dark pools of liquid scattered throughout the area. The pungent aroma of crude oil can be smelt wafting on the breeze.

Your Kai sixth sense tells you that the ruins are deserted. Captain Gildas is anxious to press on, but you command him to pause for a moment. Your instincts are warning you of a hidden danger.

If you wish to enter the ruins of the ancient plains village, turn to **138**.

If you decide to make a detour around them, turn to **109**.

251

You call upon your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility for protection, and then you command Captain Gildas and his rangers to wait while you go in search of the squad leader. You suspect that he may be one of the two warriors who have been killed by the rockfall. Mindful that the Claw of Naar was sheathed in his belt, you are determined to seize this opportunity to capture it before the dazed Bhanarians can recover their senses and regroup.

You swiftly traverse the mound of rocks that now block the pass, and as you leap on to the trail



beyond, you note that neither of the slain warriors is the leader. Then you notice a drainage channel which runs alongside the mountain trail, and your Kai sixth sense tells you that the leader has escaped the rockfall by rolling into this trench. Without a moment's hesitation, you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and jump into the trench after him.

As your feet hit the bottom of this shallow gully, you see your adversary standing less than 2 metres away. For a moment you stare at each other in shocked silence, then the almond-eyed warrior tugs the mace-like Claw of Naar from his belt and levels its taloned tip at your chest. There is a crackling hum of power and a terrifying bolt of black fire leaps from the tip and comes streaking towards your body.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **308**.

If it is 4-8, turn to **278**.

If it is 9 or higher, turn to **147**.

252

You exhaust yourself attempting to pick this lock by the use of your Grand Mastery of Nexus alone (lose 2 ENDURANCE points), and after thirty minutes of futile effort, you concede defeat. The mechanism is formidable: you may have to resort to force to get it open.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **65**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **263**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn to **324**.

253

When the Xanon are only 6 metres from the wall, you command the rangers to open fire. All four of your arrows find their mark and the leading beasts stagger and fall. Shocked by the sudden death of their brothers, the following creatures turn to retreat from your deadly bows. But as they pull back to the outskirts of the ruins, you suddenly become aware of a new threat.

Some Xanon have ridden in a wide arc around the site and have come up behind your position. You hear their leader snorting gruffly as he leaps into the ruined hall, and quickly you spin around to face him. Shouldering your bow, you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and leap forward to block him before he can launch a surprise attack upon the backs of your three companions.

Turn to **270**.

254

One of the steam-gun projectiles grazes the back of your right calf: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

If you survive this wounding, turn to **68**.

255

You do not recognize the shrub and you are wary of any properties it may possess. Rather than risk testing it in case it should prove to be poisonous, you advise Yalin not to touch the strange-looking plant.

To continue, turn to **240**.

256

The noise of the fighting has drawn a crowd of curious onlookers. Their cries of encouragement and outrage have in turn alerted the City Guard, and as the last of your attackers falls to your blows, you hear the sound of their iron-shod boots echoing along an adjoining avenue. Anxious to avoid them, you rally Gildas and his men together and then make a hurried escape from the square, along a dimly-lit alley.

When you are sure that the City Guard have lost your trail, you halt beneath the light of a tavern lantern and consult your Siyenese compass. Your mind is now focused upon the task of finding and retrieving the Claw of Naar before Autarch Sejanoz arrives in the city. You set off in the direction indicated by the compass needle, and it leads you towards the military quarter located to the east of the main square. Here you follow a broad avenue lined with closed shop doorways and soon arrive at a busy barracks. The compass, and your Kai sixth sense, both tell you that the Claw of Naar is located somewhere inside this troop-infested building.

If you wish to try to find a way to enter the barracks undetected, turn to **81**.

If you decide to observe this building from the cover of an unlit doorway, turn to **242**.

257

Aided by your Kai mastery, you study the night sky and try to predict the future from the relative position of the planets, moons, and stars. But your observations unsettle you and fill you with a sense of foreboding. You learn from the night sky that your flight to Chai will be fraught with many dangers and disappointments.

You resolve not to tell your companions what you have foreseen for fear of lowering their morale. Later, when you are asleep, your predictions return to haunt your dreams.

Turn to **341**.

258

The old man invites you all to come into his tent. You dismount, and the children look after your horses while you file into his spacious dwelling. He gives each of you a glass of mulled wine and a piece of unleavened bread, and while you are enjoying the plain fare, he invites you to examine the wares and trinkets that lie strewn about the tent.

Gildas nudges you and points to a rickety table that is heaped with simple straw-coloured robes, much-favoured by Bhanarian plainsmen. 'These may be a wise purchase, Sir Kai?' he mutters. 'I fear our tunics may arouse suspicion the further south we venture.' You nod in agreement and ask the old man how much he wants for four of his robes.

'One hundred and twenty Ren, kind sir,' he replies, cheerfully.

The old man's price is the equivalent of 12 Gold Crowns. The rangers do not have any money, so if you wish to purchase these garments you must pay the full price.

If you can afford to pay the man's price, turn to **286**.

If you do not have sufficient Gold Crowns to pay for the robes, turn to **45**.

259

The rock is deflected by the gust of air, but as it tumbles past, it strikes your left shoulder with a painful blow: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **339**.

260

The squad leader gasps with shock when he sees you come walking into his chamber. He glances to a knotted rope that is hanging beside the blazing fireplace, but it is just beyond reach. You detect that the rope is connected to an alarm bell, and you shake your head as a warning to him not to try to make a grab for it.

'Where is the Claw?' you say, raising your Kai Weapon to reinforce your demand. The sallow-skinned man narrows his eyes until they become like slits in his face, and he shakes his head slowly from side to side. He refuses to answer your question.

Suddenly he reaches over the side of his bath tub and attempts to grab something that is lying on the floor, hidden from view.

If you wish to rush forward and strike the squad leader with your Kai Weapon, turn to **107**.

If you wish to rush forward and tip him out of his bath tub, turn to **169**.

If you wish to throw your Kai Weapon at the squad leader, turn to **89**.

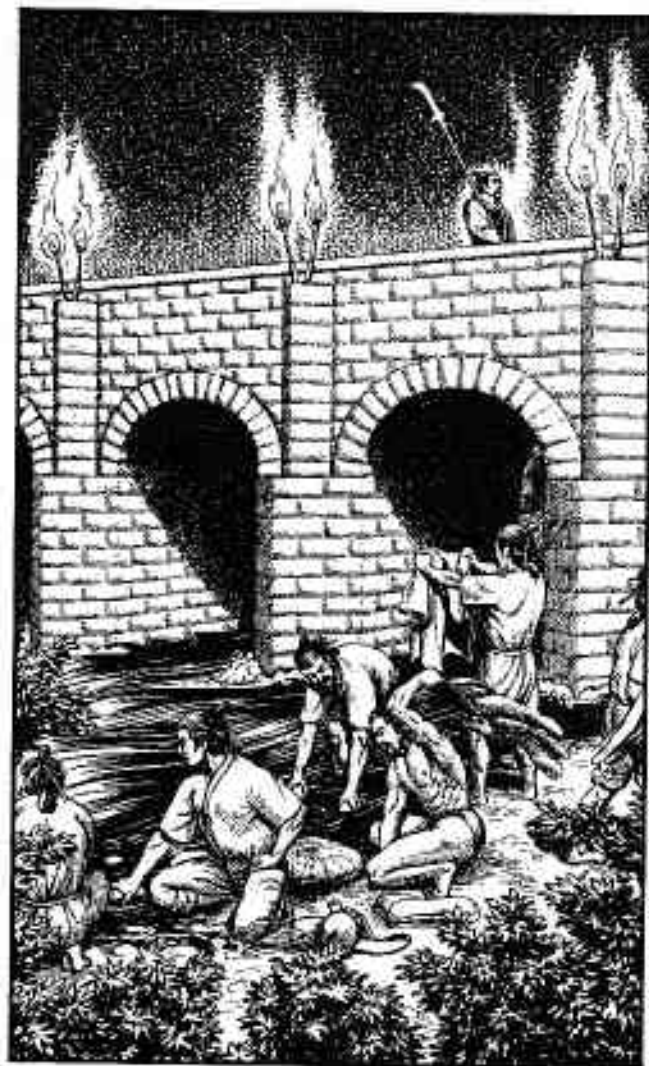
261

Shortly after dark, you make your way towards the stone bridge, keeping close to the river to avoid the enemy encampments on either side of the road which crosses into Zuda. You get to within 6 metres of the bridge itself before you are forced to stop when you see enemy soldiers at the river's edge. They are filling their canteens and washing clothes. If you are to make a successful crossing below the bridge, you will first have to distract them, or lure them away.

If you possess Assimilance, and have attained the Kai rank of Grand Master Superior, turn to **17**.

If you possess Elementalism, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Defender, turn to **333**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you have yet to attain the required levels of Kai Mastery, turn to **79**.



Bhanarian soldiers at the river's edge.

262

The squad leader awakes with a start and reaches for his sword but, before he can unsheathe it, you snatch the blanket roll from beneath his head and leap over his prone body.

Your heart is pounding wildly in your chest as you race towards the rangers on the far side of the copse. They have dispersed the Bhanarians' horses and they are waiting anxiously for you to appear. As you rush through the trees, you hear the squad leader screaming at his men to wake up and give chase.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 4 or lower, turn to **195**.

If it is 5-7, turn to **39**.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to **275**.

263

You recite the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Invisible Fist* and thrust your right arm stiffly towards the lock. A wave of energy surges from your clenched fist and strikes the lockplate, smashing its internal mechanism. The doors shudder and then they swing slowly open.

Turn to **152**.

264

You draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Healing to numb the pain of the old man's wound before drawing out the arrow. Then you lay your

right hand upon his chest and transmit the power of your healing skills into the open wound. You feel some of your energy draining from your body (lose 2 ENDURANCE points) as the healing process takes place, but when finally you remove your hand from his chest, you discover that no trace of his wound remains.

To continue, turn to **76**.

265

A chunk of jagged masonry hits you in the neck and knocks you sideways to the ground: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

If you have survived this wounding, you can continue by turning to **104**.

266

You quickly recite the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Shield* and make a circle in the air with your right hand. A translucent disc shimmers into existence, and the falling rock slams into it with a loud *Crack!*

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. For every level of Kai rank you have achieved, above that of Kai Grand Sentinel, add an additional 1.

If your total score is now 0-3, turn to **88**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **185**.

267

You focus the power of your Discipline upon the

iron cylinder and you cause a rapid rise in the temperature of the steam. Moments later, the valve fails and the cylinder explodes with devastating effect.

Turn to **157**.

268

A fight is on the verge of breaking out when suddenly the innkeeper intervenes to break it up. You hear the distinctive metallic click of crossbows being cocked, and when you look to the taproom bar, you see the innkeeper holding two of these weapons, one in either hand.

'I'll drop the first man to draw a blade,' he growls. 'You!' he shouts, directing his ire towards your accuser. 'Get out, and take your friends with you.'

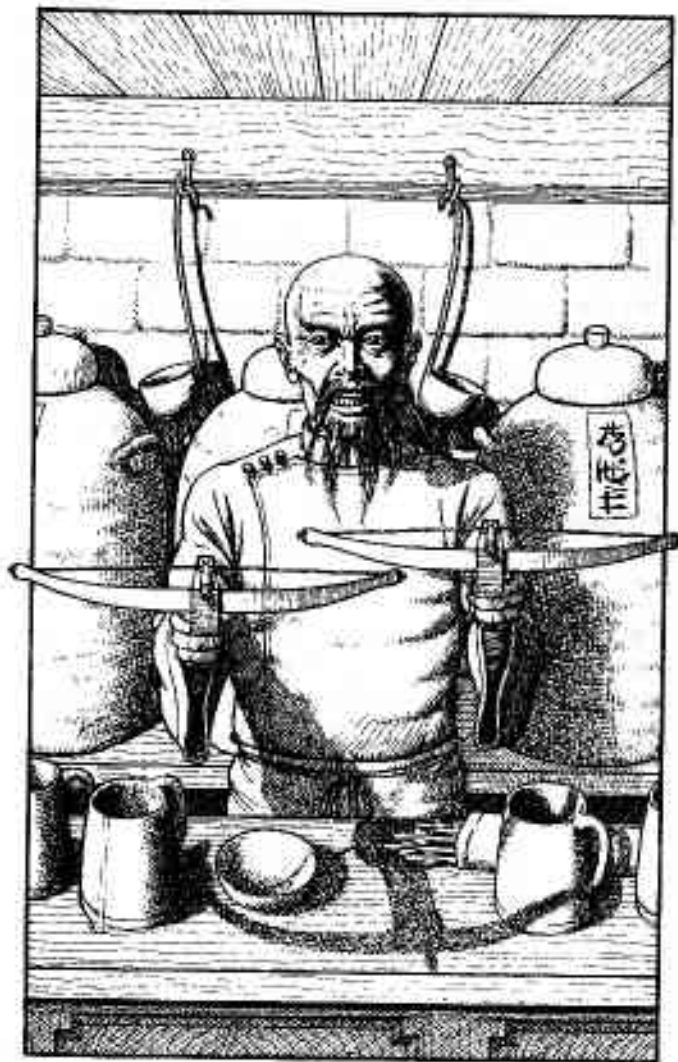
The one-eyed man curses under his breath, then he turns on his heel and leaves with his motley cohorts following in his wake. You thank the innkeeper for his timely action but he does not reply. You can tell by his stony silence that he would prefer it if you and your companions left as well.

If you possess Telegnosis, or Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **340**.

If you possess neither of these skills, turn instead to **37**.

269

The rangers are mortified that they came so near to slaying you. They help you to your feet and beg



The Innkeeper holds two cocked crossbows, one in either hand.

you to forgive their reckless bowfire. 'There's no time for reproach,' you reply, stoically. 'I have retrieved the Claw of Naar, yet I fear our troubles may have only just begun. We must make a speedy escape. I sense the enemy are closing upon us from every side.'

Your instincts are correct. News of the fight in the mess hall is spreading like wildfire, and groups of armed Bhanarians are rushing towards this corridor from every quarter of the barracks. Your situation is beginning to look increasingly desperate until you suddenly spy a way to escape from the corridor that promises more than just a glimmer of hope.

Turn to **57**.

270

The Xanon leader roars with excitement as he comes galloping across the floor of the ancient hall. His amber eyes gleam with murderous intent, for he has set his mind on skewering you upon the tip of his crude wooden lance.

Xanon Leader:

COMBAT SKILL 46 ENDURANCE 42

If you win this combat, turn to **277**.

271

From the dense blanket of cloud there descends a host of winged horrors. They have sinewy bodies studded with hundreds of horny spikes, and a cold yellowy light radiates from slits in their faces where one could expect there to be eyes. Bubbling drool

streams from their fanged jaws as they circle once around the pass and then come swooping down to attack you and your companions.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **199**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **330**.

If you possess a Bow, and wish to use it, turn to **23**.

If you possess neither of these skills, nor a Bow, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn instead to **126**.

272

You are a few leagues to the south of the toll bridge when you pass a signpost that says: BEHNAZ - 70 miles. Beyond this point, the hill road begins to twist like a swimming serpent. You are passing around one of its seemingly endless bends when you hear a loud rumble of thunder echoing through the hills.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Sentinel, turn to **113**.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you have yet to reach this level of Kai Mastery, turn to **63**.

273

You stable your horses and enter the taproom of the Prairie Princess. As the door creaks open, a

gust of ale-soaked air and the jingle of bells interrupts the hubbub. The denizens of this tavern cast your party a suspicious glance or two, then they return to their conversations. The innkeeper approaches, wending his way nimbly through the closely-packed tables. He is a lean man with dark skin and a shaven head. You ask the cost of stabling and add that you shall not be requiring rooms for the night.

'Seven Ren each,' he says, brusquely. 'You can pay tomorrow when you collect your nags.'

You turn to leave the crowded taproom, but your way to the door is blocked by a stout, one-eyed man with a roughly-trimmed beard. 'You plains-nomads have got some nerve t'come in here,' he spits. 'You swindled me, near on stole all my herd o' stallions. Well I vowed I'd make you pay and now I'm going to collect!'

With a flick of his hand he signals to his cohorts to bar the tavern door. You tell the man that he is mistaken, that he is confusing you for somebody else, but he pays no heed to your explanation.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **215**.

If you possess Bardsmanship, and wish to use it, turn to **153**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn to **268**.

274

You draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of

Pathsmanship to mimic a Yua Tzhanian accent, and boldly you speak to the wary guards. You tell them that you and your companions are delivery drivers who have become lost. Brazenly you ask if they would kindly show you the way out of the barracks so that you can return to your wagons parked in the street outside.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, add 1 to the number you have picked. If you possess Assimilance, add 2.

If your total score is now 7 or lower, turn to **186**.

If it is 8 or higher, turn to **121**.

275

The Autarch's men react swiftly to their squad leader's call, but you increase your pace and flee the copse before they can prevent your escape. Gildas and his men are ready to take off the moment you reach them, and, as you jump on to your mount, you hear the anguished screams of the squad leader echoing across the plain. With a cry of triumph on your lips, you dig in your heels and gallop away from the copse as fast as your steed can carry you.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **293**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **64**.

276

The sinister river beast obeys your mental command. It spits out your rope and then disappears below the surface. You watch, and when you see its trail of bubbles moving rapidly downstream towards the stone bridge, you strike out with renewed vigour for the opposite bank.

Upon reaching the far side, you tie your rope around a sturdy tree trunk and signal to the rangers to begin crossing. All three cross the river safely, and together you approach Zuda under cover of darkness.

The road into the town is heavily patrolled by Bhanarian soldiers. When you nearly collide with one of these patrols, you are forced to seek cover in an empty woodcutter's hut.

To continue, turn to 3.

277

As the Xanon bellows its death-cry and crumples to the ground, you see six of its kin come galloping along beside the west wall of the ruin. Fearful that these determined creatures could overwhelm your position if they chose to attack simultaneously, you command Gildas and the rangers to abandon their positions and escape to the east. Together you leap on to your horses and, as the captain leads his men away at the gallop, you stay and fight a brave rearguard action to delay the battling Xanon.

With ice-cool nerve and deadly grace, you wield your Kai Weapon to deadly effect. Your blows

shatter Xanon skulls and smash their lances, forcing them to abandon any hope of following the rangers as they make good their escape across the plain. But when the time comes for you to follow your fleeing companions, a thrusting lance blow to the middle of your back nearly unhorses you. You hang on desperately to the mane of your frightened mount as he leaps over the wall and carries you away.

You rejoin the rangers at the top of a grassy rise that overlooks the ancient ruins. The triumphant cries of the Xanon are carried to you on the wind, and when you magnify your vision, you see they have gathered in a group in the ruins of the hall. One of their number appears to be holding aloft a short staff. You focus upon it and your heart sinks when you see that it is the Claw of Naar!

Turn to 72.

278

As you hit the ground, a black funnel of flame roars over your head and strikes you in the back of your legs. A searing pain runs the length of your spine and explodes in your head, making you scream with anguish: lose 6 ENDURANCE points.

If you have survived this wounding, turn to 43.

279

There is a fiery flash and a loud bang, and suddenly a white light obliterates your vision. A terrifying numbness spreads rapidly from your

neck to the soles of your feet, and you feel yourself tumbling backwards into a fathomless abyss.

The lead ball from the squad leader's pistol has pierced your forehead and penetrated your brain. Mercifully, your death is swift and painless.

Your life and your mission end here, in the barracks of Yua Tzhan.

280

The corporal smiles broadly when you place two more gold coins into his hand. Immediately he orders the barrier be raised, and as you trot your horses on to the bridge, he waves farewell and wishes you a swift and safe journey.

Turn to **272**.

281

You draw deeply upon your psychic powers and construct a glowing ball of mental energy which you launch at the sorcerous woman. You see her shiver uncontrollably as the power of your



mindblast penetrates her defences and, for a short while, the rangers are spared the effect of her hypnotic voice. But the use of this attack leaves you vulnerable to a sudden psychic assault. Sensing this, the woman quickly seizes her chance to retaliate.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Kai-screen, add 3 to the number you have picked. If your current ENDURANCE score is 15 or lower, deduct 2.

If your total score is now 4 or less, turn to **337**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **101**.

282

You unsheathe your Kai Weapon and you offer up a prayer to Ishir to protect you as you get ready to launch yourself into the fray. With your battle cry upon your lips, you pull open the door and rush headlong across the mess hall, flailing your deadly blade at any Bhanarian who dares to stand in your way. Your sudden attack from the rear diverts the gunners' attention away from the rangers. As you cut a bloody swathe through their comrades, they are forced to abandon the steam-cannon and face you with cold steel.

Bhanarian Guards & Gunners:
COMBAT SKILL 40 ENDURANCE 40

If you win this combat, turn to **144**.

283

The fortune-teller become irate. He stands up and

stabs at the air with his index finger as he threatens to report you to the City Guards. Gildas takes hold of his wagging finger and bends it back, forcing him to his knees. The man whimpers like a frightened puppy and says he has changed his mind. He will forget all about your supposed debt. You leave the table, and as you walk towards the tavern door, Gildas releases the trickster. He motions his rangers to accompany him as he follows you to the door.

To continue, turn to **295**.

284

You intone the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Penetrate* moments before you release the straining bowstring and send your arrow whistling towards the beast's open jaw. The missile sinks deeply into the roof of its foaming mouth and its magic-hardened tip penetrates the creature's brain, killing it instantly.

Turn to **18**.

285

You draw upon your psychic defences, but to no avail. In this instance they fail to protect you from the concentration of ancient evil that is present within this chamber: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Turn to **9**.

286

You hand over the gold crowns and the old man slips the coins into his pocket with a contented

grin. Then you and your companions each take one of the loose-fitting robes and slip them on over your tunics. The thin, hooded garments are large enough to conceal your backpacks and weapons, and you are pleased to discover that they do not hamper your movement.

Having concluded your business, you thank the old man and bid him farewell. Then you leave his tent and collect your horses.

Turn to **118**.

287

With the tavern-keeper's curses ringing in your ears, you urge your startled horse on to the end of the alley and then turn him towards the South Gate. Fortunately the gate is open, and its dozing guards pay you scant attention as you ride through its tall arch and depart the city. The road beyond passes through several outlying settlements before it begins a gentle climb into the Honah Hills.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 0-4, turn to **202**.

If it is 5-9, turn to **194**.

288

The squad leader awakes with a start. But before he can react, you snatch the blanket roll from beneath his head and set off at a sprint. With your heart pounding wildly in your chest, you race towards the rangers on the far side of the copse.

They have dispersed the Bhanarians' horses and they are waiting anxiously for you to appear. As you rush through the trees, you hear the squad leader screaming at his men to wake up and give chase.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 3 or lower, turn to **195**.

If it is 4-6, turn to **39**.

If it is 7 or higher, turn to **275**.

289

You call upon your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility to help keep you hidden as you enter the mess hall. You take cover behind the nearest stand of armour, and by moving quickly from one suit to the next, you make your way steadily towards the far door.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is 4 or lower, turn to **8**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **211**.

290

Before the guard can reload his musket and fire again, you reach the end of the roof and climb down the trunk of the tree. Gildas and his men follow your lead, and when all of you are safely on the ground, you pause for a few moments to assess

the situation. From beneath the leafy boughs of the young oak, you look out across the parade ground and scan the buildings that border upon it. Bhanarian soldiers are running everywhere, seemingly in confusion. Then you realize that they all have a purpose: they are rushing to secure every entrance and exit from the barracks.

Gildas points to a building on the west side of the parade ground. Its doors are open and unguarded. You magnify your vision and see that it is part of the barracks stables. Its well-lit interior is busy with troopers who are preparing their mounts for tomorrow's ceremonial parade through the city. Beyond its rows of stalls is an archway that opens on to one of the city's streets. You inform the rangers of what you have seen and you decide that the stables offer you your best hope for an escape from the barracks. Using the perimeter trees for cover, you skirt around the parade ground and make your approach to the stables. You are less than 6 metres from its open doors when you are suddenly called upon to halt. Three Bhanarian guards come weaving through the line of trees towards you, their spears held at the ready. 'Stay where you are,' barks the tallest of these soldiers, 'and all of you - raise your hands!'

If you possess Herbmastery, and have attained the rank of Sun Lord, turn to **229**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Guardian, turn to **111**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you have yet to attain the required level of Kai Mastery, turn to **274**.

291

You leave Sunderer Pass and follow the trail through the foothills to the edge of the Bhanarian Plain. Shortly before midnight, you stop and make camp for the night. Sergeant Paviz volunteers to sit watch, and before you settle down to sleep alongside the others, you resolve to set off after the Imperial Guards at first light.

Unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 179.

292

A sliver of masonry hits you in the shoulder and knocks you sideways to the ground: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 104.

293

For three hours you ride across the rolling grasslands, guided on your way by your infallible Kai tracking skills and the light of a waxing moon. It is not until you see the outline of a broken stone watchtower silhouetted on the southern horizon that you slow your pace and point your tired mount towards it. Upon reaching the derelict tower you discover that it stands beside a pond of fresh water. You let the horses drink their fill and, as they recover their strength, you and your companions explore the lower levels of the ruin.

The tower is empty and overgrown with weeds.

All that it contains are several blocks of stone, engraved with ancient designs, which are illuminated by streams of moonlight filtering down through the holes in the shattered roof. You take the opportunity to examine the Claw, and as you unfold its covering blanket on one of the blocks, you find yourself both fascinated and repulsed by the intricacies of its evil design. The head of the Claw resembles a petrified vulture's foot, cast in a black metal that is flecked with shimmering scarlet specks. Its shaft is twisted, like a length of gnarled root, and it is perforated along its length with pea-sized hollows.

A palpable evil radiates from this dread artefact and you feel an overwhelming compulsion to destroy it. You tell the rangers to stand clear, and then you unsheathe your Kai Weapon and deal the shaft of the Claw a mighty blow.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is even (ie, 0, 2, 4, 6, or 8), turn to 46.

If it is odd (ie, 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9), turn to 122.

294

By twisting the dial of the wall safe to an incorrect setting you unwittingly set off an alarm in a distant barracks guardroom. Suddenly the door to the antechamber is forced open and in burst a dozen soldiers, armed with spears and axes.

You draw your Kai Weapon and fight bravely, slaying most who dare come within a sword's length, but the chamber is soon awash with

reinforcements and ultimately you are forced to drop your weapons and surrender. During the mêlée, the rangers are also captured, and together you are taken before the Sergeant of the Guard. Upon learning of the death of the squad leader, he denounces you as assassins and he orders your immediate execution.

Under heavy guard, you are led out into the centre of the barracks parade ground and tied to wooden stakes. A troop of crossbowmen arrive and form up in a line before you. Then the Sergeant marches to the head of their line, and promptly he gives the order to fire. The crossbowmen release their volley of deadly missiles and your deaths are mercifully swift.

Tragically, your life and your mission ends here, upon the parade ground of the Yua Tzhan barracks.

295

With your mind set upon the task of finding and retrieving the Claw of Naar before Autarch Sejanos arrives, you hurry out of the inn and stride across the main square. In the light of a street lantern you consult your Siyeneese compass once more before setting off in the direction that it indicates. It leads you towards the military quarter located on the east side of the square. You follow a broad avenue lined with closed shop doorways and soon arrive at a busy barracks. The compass, and your Kai sixth sense, both tell you that the Claw of Naar is located somewhere inside this troop-infested building.

If you wish to try to find a way to enter the barracks undetected, turn to **81**.

If you decide to observe this building from the cover of an unlit doorway, turn to **242**.

296

As the host of flying creatures emerges from the pass, the leading beast veers away to the east and draws its foul brethren towards the ravine where *Cloud-dancer* is hidden. They swarm above the steep gully and emit a hellish chorus of cackling shrieks as they prepare to attack the skyship.

You cast a glance down into the pass and see that the squad of Imperial Guards has now halted on the narrow mountain trail. You sense that they are waiting for their winged escorts to return before they dare to venture a step further.

If you wish to hurry back to *Cloud-dancer* and help Lord Rimoah repel the aerial assault, turn to **345**.

If you choose to stay with Captain Gildas and the rangers, turn to **302**.

297

The corporal orders you and your companions to turn back. When you do not obey his command immediately, one of the bridge guards steps out of the line and jabs Captain Gildas in the ribs with the haft of his spear. The Captain retaliates by kicking the guard in the shoulder, sending him spinning to the ground. A brawl ensues, and despite your best



The guards at the bridge are quick to anger.

efforts to stop it, it quickly deteriorates into an all-out fight.

Bhanarian Bridge Guards:
COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 30

You may add +2 to your COMBAT SKILL for the duration of this combat, for the rangers are supporting you during this fight.

If you win the combat, turn to **84**.

298

Beyond the door you discover a narrow passage that leads to a flight of stone steps. You check your compass and then you lead the rangers up the stairs to a wider corridor on the floor above.

You instruct Gildas and his men to wait at the top of the stairs while you make sure the way ahead is clear. Tall arched windows march past on either side as you approach a door at the end of the passageway. You detect the aroma of roasting meat and hear the sounds of feasting, and when you peep through the door's keyhole, you see a soldier's mess hall beyond.

Carefully you twist its spherical handle and push open the heavy oak door just a few inches. Peering around the door, you see a dozen Bhanarian soldiers sitting at a large table set before a blazing log fire. A side of beef is roasting on a spit above this fire, and the soldier's plates are heaped high with meat and vegetables. Stands of antique armour are positioned around the walls of the hall, and its panelled ceiling is decorated with the portraits of famous Bhanarian generals of old.

Some of the soldiers dining here are Imperial Guards from the squad that you encountered in Sunderer Pass. You scrutinise their faces, yet you cannot see their leader among them. Your compass indicates that the Claw of Naar is nearby; its needle is pointing to a door on the far side of the mess hall. You sense that the Claw is in the room beyond this door, and you resolve to find a way of reaching it without being seen.

If you possess Grand Nexus, and wish to use it, turn to **222**.

If you possess Assimilance, and wish to use it, turn to **98**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **178**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use any of them, turn to **289**.

299

You gallop along the trail after the fleeing rangers, shouting desperately for them to stop, but they are deaf to your pleas as they speed for the cover of the ruins. As you enter the ancient site, you glance over your shoulder to see that the fearsome Xanon are gaining on you at a terrific pace.

To continue, turn to **245**.

300

One of the steam-gun projectiles gouges your shoulder: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this wounding, turn to **68**.

301

Using the shadows to conceal your approach, you climb over the tailgate of a canvas-covered wagon that is standing in the line, and hide yourselves among its load. Patiently you settle down and wait for it to enter the barracks. Several minutes pass before the wagon begins to move. You tear a hole in its canvas cover through which you are able to see the inner buildings of the barracks complex. The wagon trundles along a narrow passage towards a parade square, beyond which lies its final destination - the kitchen storerooms. You clamber to the rear of the wagon and crouch beside the tailgate. Then, at the moment the wagon emerges from the passage, you signal to your companions to leave. One after the other, you leap from the back of the wagon.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is now 4 or lower, turn to **165**.

If it is 5 or higher, turn to **66**.

302

You watch with mounting fear as the horde of winged creatures circle and dive repeatedly into the ravine. They are met by intermittent flashes of magical energy which illuminate the gloom; Lord Rimoah and his young crewmen are putting

up a spirited defence of their grounded skyship. Then you see an unexpected sight: *Cloud-dancer* rises out of the gully and ascends rapidly into the darkening sky. You magnify your vision and witness a bloody battle raging along her decks as the winged beasts attempt to wrest control of the helm. You watch helplessly as the beleaguered skyship powers away towards the east, pursued by the flying swarm of ravening beasts.

When the squad of Imperial Guards catch sight of *Cloud-dancer* fleeing eastwards, their leader raises his hand and signals his men to advance. Using your enhanced vision, you focus on the leader and your Kai senses reel at the aura of evil surrounding him. You sense that this power does not emanate from him directly; it flows around a mace-like weapon which he carries sheathed in his belt. It is the Claw of Naar, and even at a distance its malignant power fills you with unease and foreboding.

With bated breath, you watch the Autarch's men come marching along the narrow trail. Captain Gildas gives the signal to Durasso to spring the ambush, and the ranger tugs hard on the rope in his hands. There is a moment of silence, then a thunderous rumble reverberates through the mountains. A billowing cloud of thick dust engulfs the trail and you lose sight of the squad as a thousand tons of rock and rubble cascade towards them.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 1 to the number you have picked.



The skyship is swathed in a blanket of attacking beasts.

If your total score is now 5 or lower, turn to **238**.

If it is 6 or higher, turn to **30**.

303

You take the opportunity to get some sleep while the storm continues unabated. Gildas wakes you shortly after dawn and you peer out of the cottage window to see that the rain is now no more than a fine drizzle. You mount up and return to the road, but soon you discover that the way south is impassable. The road has been blocked during the night by the debris of a torrential mudslide.

Reluctantly, you are forced to abandon your horses and set off across the hills on foot. During your trek, you discard your plains-herder robes for they offer no protection from the rain. At noon you halt to prepare a meal of roots and wild vegetables. While you are eating, you resolve to attempt to cross the River Heng and enter the friendly realm of Chai. Once you are across the border, you will make your way to the city of Pensei, and try to make contact with the Dessian envoy - Lord Ghadra.

Despite difficult terrain you make good progress. You leave the Honah Hills and enter the dark pines of the Angfeng Forest, covering 30 miles by sunset. As darkness casts its black shroud upon this untamed land, you stop to set up camp for the night on the fringe of a cold marsh. The night sky is clear, and before you settle down to sleep, you take time to observe the stars.

304-305

If you possess Astrology, turn to **257**.

If you do not, turn to **155**.

304

Gildas raises his arm and signals to his men to follow as he jumps his horse across the stone wall of an ancient hall. You follow his lead and, once you are inside, you dismount and corral your horse with the other in a corner of this site. Then you draw your weapon in readiness to confront the approaching Xanon. The rangers prepare their bows and take up positions along the north and east-facing walls. You choose a place close to Gildas and watch with mounting fear as the Xanon come charging out of the surrounding grassland. As you watch their approach, your sixth sense detects that these fearsome creatures have been spawned by an evil sorcery.

If you possess a bow, and wish to use it, turn to **317**.

If you do not possess a bow, or if you choose not to use it, turn to **187**.

305

You examine the strange, fern-like shrub and your Grand Master Discipline enables you to recognize its pale blue berries.

'This is Omaldro,' you say, confidently. 'These berries contain a powerful stimulant that can sharpen a man's reflexes, especially in combat.'

There are sufficient berries on this small Omaldro

shrub for 1 dose. If you wish to pick and keep them, record the Omaldro on your *Action Chart* as a Backpack Item. When swallowed, Omaldro will boost your COMBAT SKILL by 2 points for the duration of one combat.

To continue, turn to **240**

306

You turn on your heel and walk speedily towards the end of the street, ignoring the officer's repeated commands to halt. You tell Gildas and his men to get ready to run the moment you reach the corner, but before you arrive there, you hear a shrill whistle and the sound of iron-shod hooves clattering on stone. A glance over your shoulder confirms your fears: the patrol are chasing after you. Gildas points to a narrow alleyway on the opposite side of the street, and upon your command, you sprint towards it.

Turn to **146**.

307

You dodge to the left, and immediately there is a flash and a deafening bang. You feel the lead ball from the squad leader's pistol strike your right forearm with numbing force, but you sustain only a flesh wound and you are able to keep a grip upon your Kai Weapon: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **204**.

308

As you hit the ground, you glimpse the black

funnel of flame come rushing towards you. Then, in the blink of an eye, your vision is obliterated by a vivid scarlet flash. Instantly you are plunged into a dark and fathomless void as the power of the Claw leeches your life-force.

Tragically, your life and your mission end here in Sunderer Pass.

309

As you gallop over the crest of the ridge, you see the first rays of dawn sunlight brightening the eastern horizon. You continue to ride at a swift pace for you are anxious to put as much distance as possible between yourselves and your pursuers, but as the sun illuminates the way ahead, you catch sight of a dense forest stretching across the southern horizon like a long dark wall.

'That's the Vanchou,' calls out Gildas. 'I've heard tell it's haunted.'

The trail continues due south towards the centre of this forbidding timberland and, as you draw steadily closer, you feel an unnatural chill radiating from its tangle of sickly-coloured pines. You are inclined to disbelieve that it is haunted, yet you do not relish the thought of riding through it. Then a sudden sense of unease makes you glance over your shoulder, and your heart skips a beat when you see that the Imperial Guards are gaining fast; they are now less than three miles distant.

If you wish to leave the trail and ride east across grasslands, turn to **250**.

If you choose to stay on the trail and enter the Vanchou Forest, turn to **143**.

310

You tear the scrap of papyrus into small pieces and swallow them to ensure that Rimoah's message will not be discovered by the enemy. Then you return to the mountain pass to rejoin Captain Gildas and his men, but upon arriving there you discover that his ambush has failed. Gildas triggered a rockfall to block the pass, but the Autarch's men used the Claw of Naar to blow their way through the resulting obstruction. In the ensuing fight, Ranger Durasso was killed and Sergeant Paviz was wounded in the shoulder. You use your Magnakai healing skills to numb the sergeant's pain, and then you scan the trail leading south from the pass for signs of the enemy squad. In the failing light you glimpse their black-clad forms hurrying away along the trail which leads towards the Bhanarian Plain.

Gildas and his rangers are too shocked after their deadly encounter with Autarch Sejanoz's guards to attempt an immediate pursuit. You inform the dazed captain that Lord Rimoah was forced to flee in order to save *Cloud-dancer* and his crew from the attacking horde, and he nods his head in silence. You also tell him of the message that Rimoah left behind. Then you hear Ranger Yalin shouting a warning: the flying creatures are returning. Hurriedly you take cover among the rocks and watch as they circle above the pass. Your Kai instincts tell you that these beasts cannot survive for long beyond the mountain

borders of the Doomlands, and soon you see them returning north to Naaros. When the last of the creatures has disappeared, you beckon Gildas and his men to follow you down on to the mountain trail. Here you discover the bodies of two Imperial Guards who were caught by the rockslide ambush and crushed to death.

If you wish to search their pockets and backpacks, turn to **80**.

If you choose to ignore them, you may leave the pass by turning to **291**.

311

A swift search of this chamber uncovers the following items:

Dagger

Axe

Laumspur (sufficient for 3 doses. Each dose is an individual Backpack Item. One dose will restore 4 ENDURANCE points when swallowed after combat)

Food (enough for 3 Meals)

Bow

Bar of Soap

5 Arrows

Sword

100 Ren (equivalent to 10 Gold Crowns)

If you wish to keep any of the above items, make the necessary adjustments to your *Action Chart*.

To leave the chamber and return to the rangers, go to **125**.

312

Hurriedly you draw an arrow to your bow and take aim at the woman. She sees you but she seems undaunted by your threat. You release your arrow and send it arcing through the air, but as it falls towards her it passes through a shimmering wall of heat and erupts into flame.

Fearing that you could be facing a powerful sorceress, you shoulder your bow and try to think of a more effective weapon to use against her.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **151**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **53**.

If you possess Elementalism, and wish to use it, turn to **124**.

If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, turn to **281**.

If you possess none of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn instead to **164**.

313

You tell Gildas and his men to keep a lookout, then you kneel in front of the doors and examine the keyhole. You discover that the doors are fitted with a formidable lock, and you suspect that you may have to resort to force to open it.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **65**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **263**.

If you possess neither of these skills, or if you choose not to use them, turn to **324**.

314

Gildas and his men emerge from beneath the bridge and they each choose a stallion. They are all expert horsemen, and they are able to make bridles and saddlecloths from ropes and blankets that they have stored in their packs. Within the hour, all four of you are ready to leave the bridge and ride south in pursuit of the enemy.

Before you set off, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **130**.

315

The creature spits out your rope, but it is angered by your mental commands and it comes speeding towards you, its jaw agape in readiness to swallow you whole. You must fight it.

Sligza:

COMBAT SKILL 49 ENDURANCE 22

This enemy is immune to Mindblast (but not Kai-surge).

If you win the combat, turn to **328**.

316

You take a single gold crown from your belt pouch and toss it on to the floor (remember to erase this crown from your *Action Chart*). The fortune-teller scurries after the coin like a cat after a mouse. While he is searching for it, you leave the table and stride towards the tavern door with Gildas and his men following close behind.

To continue, turn to 295.

317

You draw an arrow to your bow and take aim at one of the leading Xanon as it comes charging through a puddle of crude oil.

If you possess Magi-magic, and have attained the rank of Kai Grand Guardian, or higher, turn to 6.

If you do not possess this skill, or if you have yet to attain this level of Kai Mastery, turn to 34.

318

You magnify your vision and see that the approaching figures are Bhanarians. Armed with swords and spears, they are all clad in black quilted tunics edged with gold braid and emblazoned with the tiger's head emblem of Autarch Sejanos. They are clearly a unit of Imperial Guards from the Autarch's court in Otavai. As the squad of twelve guardsmen draws nearer, your Kai sixth sense tells you that something is wrong. These are elite soldiers of the Autarch's personal bodyguard, yet

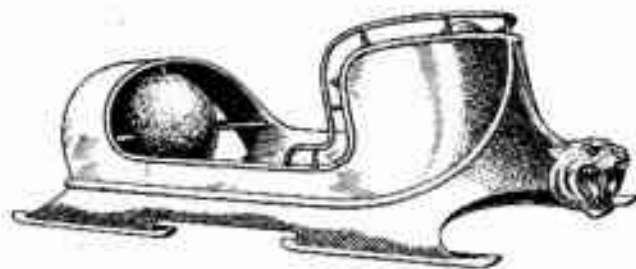
they seem to have forgotten basic military practice: they have placed no scouts at the head of their squad to check that the way ahead is clear.

If you have attained the Kai rank of Sun Lord, turn to 49.

If you have yet to attain this level of Kai rank, turn instead to 74.

319

As you gallop through the stables, you quickly recite the words of the Brotherhood spell *Lightning Hand* and raise your right arm. You point your outstretched fingers towards the closing doors and a crackling bolt of blue fire leaps from your fingertips. It strikes one of the troopers who is attempting to bar your escape, and it sends him cartwheeling across the straw-covered ground. His companion slams shut one door, blocking half of the doorway, but there is still space enough for you and your companions to make good your escape into the street beyond. As you gallop through the narrowed exit, you steer your horse to



the right and race away along a cobblestoned street.

Turn to 14.

320

You show the ring to the sergeant and he nods his approval. Believing that you and your companions are the Autarch's secret agents, he steps aside and allows you to enter the barracks.

Turn to 110.

321

You steel yourself for the act you are about to commit, then you draw back your Kai weapon and deal the creature a stabbing blow to its chest. With a chilling cry, the beast crumples to the ground and begins to shrink and change. Within the space of a few fleeting seconds the transformation is complete, and you find yourself staring with disbelief at the wounded body of a frail old man.

Instinctively, you rush to his side and cradle his greying head in the crook of your arm. Then you attempt to relieve the pain of his chest wound by the use of your Kai healing skills. You lay your right hand upon his chest and transmit the power of your healing into the wound. You feel some of your energy draining from your body (lose 2 ENDURANCE points) as the mending process takes place, but when finally you remove your hand, you discover that no trace of the wound remains.

To continue, turn to 76.

322

Only the swiftness of your reactions saves you and your companions from a watery death. You race back along the hill road, through the blinding rain, with a surging torrent of mud and debris chasing you all the way. Trees are uprooted and loose boulders are sent hurtling into the air by the destructive force of this merciless flow.

You succeed in out-running the mudslide but at some cost. Your horses are so drained by the ordeal that two of them die of exhaustion, and a third becomes too lame to continue. You are forced to abandon them and continue your journey on foot. You head east, and take shelter in a wooded hillside while you wait for the rains to abate.

While you are resting, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 59.

323

There is a blinding flash of scarlet light upon the instant that your blade strikes the shaft of the Claw, and a searing wave of energy sends you crashing backwards to the ground: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

Dazed and gasping for breath, you drag yourself to your feet and approach the altar stone which is now wreathed with trails of grey smoke. To your dismay, you discover that the Claw is still intact. Despite the huge burst of energy that your blow

released, you discover no mark or blemish upon its gnarled shaft.

The blade of your Kai Weapon, however, is notched and discoloured at the point where it struck the shaft of the Claw. (The damage to your Kai Weapon has caused a permanent reduction of 2 points to its COMBAT SKILL bonus. You should now adjust the bonus on your Special Items list.)

To continue, turn to **103**.

324

You instruct the rangers to unsheathe their swords and insert the tips of their blades in the gap in the door, close to the hinges. You detect that the hinges are rusty, and they are far weaker than the lock. On your signal, the rangers push against the flats of their blades and lever the doors open.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have picked is 3 or lower, turn to **177**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **249**.

325

You unsheathe your axe and strike the boulder a mighty blow that shatters the rock and frees your trapped foot. You fall to the base of the ravine, but your natural agility enables you to twist in mid-air and land safely on your feet without further injury.

Quickly you ascend the steep gully wall and retrieve the steel tube. You tuck it into your belt

and then climb back to the top of the ravine before you stop to examine what the tube contains.

Turn to **140**.

326

Your arrow strikes the cannon's pressure cylinder, but it fails to penetrate the thick iron skin and it ricochets away. Your failed attempt to destroy the cannon betrays your presence, and a handful of the Bhanarians leave the fight at the archway and come running towards the antechamber with their swords and axes raised to strike.

You shoulder your bow and offer up a short prayer to Ishir to protect you as you get ready to meet their determined attack. With your battle cry upon your lips, you pull open the door and flail your Kai Weapon at the first Bhanarian who comes within striking distance.

Bhanarian Guards:

COMBAT SKILL 37 ENDURANCE 40

If you win this combat, turn to **144**.

327

'Come, brave rangers. We must pursue the enemy without delay,' you plead, in an effort to rally your exhausted companions. 'They must not be allowed to steal away the Claw.'

'Hold, Sir Kai,' retorts Captain Gildas. 'The enemy is too strong. They outnumber us, and they possess a weapon that can slay us all but with one bolt. Do you not recall what happened

at Sunderer Pass? I have lost one good man already. I have no desire to risk any more in a reckless pursuit.'

'Are you breaking your vow to help me, Captain?' you ask, reproachfully.

'No, Sir Kai,' he retorts. 'My vow remains true. I simply propose we pursue the enemy at a safe distance. They may run with the Claw of Naar, but they cannot keep it from us forever. The tracker-gem that I've placed in the haft will always lead us to it, no matter where it may be hidden.'

'You are right, Captain,' you reply, apologetically. 'Firstly we shall rest and recover our strength. Then we shall hunt down our enemy and claim back that accursed artefact before they can deliver it to Autarch Sejanos.'

Unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to 201.

328

You quickly recover from the shock of your watery encounter, and you strike out with renewed vigour for the opposite bank. Upon reaching the far side, you tie the rope around a sturdy tree trunk and signal to the rangers to begin crossing. All three cross the river safely, and together you approach Zuda under cover of darkness.

The road into the town is heavily patrolled by Bhanarian soldiers. When you nearly collide with

one of these patrols, you are forced to seek cover in an empty woodcutter's hut.

To continue, turn to 3.

329

You halt beside the wrecked wagon and use your Animal Mastery to converse with the belligerent bird. To your surprise, you discover that the crow is not angry at all - he is trying to warn you. You learn that the forest is dominated by an evil shape-changer that feeds on human blood. The bird tells you that it has claimed many victims, including the poor souls who once ventured here long ago in this wagon. You are about to ask the crow where this shape-changer can be found, but something disturbs him. He takes fright and quickly flies away.

If you wish to turn back towards the north and leave the forest, go to 91.

If you decide to continue southwards along the trail, turn to 170.

330

You utter the words of the Old Kingdom spell *Invisible Fist* and project your clenched right hand towards the on-rushing creature.

The power of your spell hits the beast squarely in the chest and sends it somersaulting sideways, out of control. With a sickening thud, it impacts against the rocky wall of the mountain pass and disappears from view.

To continue, to 18.

331

You thread your way through the crush of soldiers and enter the barracks unchallenged. The raised hoods of your robes keep your faces in shadow, and the guards fail to recognize that you are not native Bhanarians.

Beyond the entrance is a courtyard where several wagons, filled with provisions, are being unloaded. You and your companions each take a box from the rear of the nearest wagon and join a line of men who are delivering their goods to a kitchen storeroom located near the middle of the barracks complex. You leave your boxes here and then return to the courtyard to collect some more. As you are making your way back, you pass a door that your Kai senses tell you is unlocked. Quickly you slip inside and then signal to the rangers to follow. When all of you are safely inside, you shut the door and draw its bolt.

Turn to **298**.

332

By the combined use of your map and your Grand Master Discipline of Astrology, you are able to determine that the ruins lie 75 miles due north of Yua Tzhan. If you can maintain a steady pace throughout the day, you feel confident that you can reach the city by nightfall.

To continue, turn to **232**.

333

You call upon your improved Kai mastery to conjure up a mist beneath the first arch of the

bridge. Made eerie by the light of the torches that the soldiers are carrying, the sudden appearance of this mist startles the soldiers on the river bank. Fearing that a monster is set to rise up and consume the bridge with its fiery breath, they turn tail and flee in panic from the water's edge.

Turn to **127**.

334

Above the narrowest section of the mountain pass, the rangers have rigged a great wooden platform heaped with boulders and rocks. A length of rope has been tied to a prop which supports this platform, and it trails back to a hiding place overlooking the pass. 'One pull on this rope,' says Sergeant Paviz, flashing a wicked grin, 'and the whole lot'll come tumblin' down on their heads!'

Captain Gildas tells you that the enemy squad are expected to traverse the pass before nightfall. He posts Ranger Durasso as lookout atop a high peak, and while you wait for the enemy to show, you pass the time in conversation with the Captain.

Slowly the sun sets beyond the western horizon and a blanket of cloud rolls across the sky from the north, bringing with it a chill night wind. Then you hear Durasso whistling: it is the signal that the enemy have been sighted. Quickly you look down into the pass below and notice a group of dark figures moving along the mountain track.

If you possess Grand Huntmastery, or Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **318**.

If you have neither of these Grand Master Disciplines, turn instead to 112.

335

Cautiously you continue your approach towards the enemy encampment. Upon reaching the edge of the copse, you catch sight of the Imperial Guards gathered around a campfire. They are eating the remnants of a roasted fanji, and their horses are tethered by silken ropes to the bough of a chestnut tree some distance away from the crackling fire. A few of the warriors are already asleep, including their leader. You observe him carefully and your Kai sixth sense tells you that the Claw of Naar is wrapped in the blanket roll he is using as a pillow. Having committed the details of the encampment to memory, you signal to Captain Gildas to follow as silently you slip away and return to your waiting companions.

Turn to 4.

336

You hear the musket's loud report, then a blinding white light obliterates your vision. A terrifying numbness spreads rapidly from your neck to the soles of your feet, and you feel yourself tumbling forwards into a fathomless abyss.

The lead ball from the guard's musket has pierced the back of your skull and penetrated your brain. Mercifully, your death is swift and painless.

Sadly, your life and your mission end here in the barracks of Yua Tzhan.



Imperial Guards gathered around their campfire.

337

The woman launches a bolt of psychic energy that lances your mind and fills your head with a fiery, agonising pain: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

Fortunately, your mental defences knit together to repair the damage you have sustained from this opportunistic attack, and the pain in your head quickly recedes.

To continue, turn to 236.

338

Your refusal angers the Autarch.

You sense a sudden surge of psychic power, and you brace your mental defences in preparation to meet an expected attack. The Autarch launches a stream of psychic pulses but they are not directed at you; Captain Gildas is the target.

Gildas shudders as the pulses impact deep in his mind. His eyes open widely, but his pupils rise to the ceiling. He is in a trance. He draws his sword and, like a mindless automaton, he swings around and comes marching stiffly towards you. You shout his name repeatedly, but all he can hear are the Autarch's psychic commands to attack and slay you with his sword.

At first his blows are clumsy and easy to dodge, but the speed of his movements increase until you are backed against the chamber wall with nowhere to go. You have no desire to fight Gildas, but he will slay you unwittingly if you do not defend yourself from his relentless blows.

Captain Gildas (*Psychically possessed*):

COMBAT SKILL 48 ENDURANCE 40

Conduct this combat as normal. All blows that you land upon Gildas are with the flat of your blade. You are attempting to subdue him, not kill him. He is immune to all psychic attacks.

If you win this combat, turn to 117.

339

As the flying creature disappears over the lip of the ravine, you wrench your foot free from the cleft in the boulder. Instantly, you fall towards the base of the steep gully, but your natural agility enables you to twist in mid-air and land safely on your feet without sustaining any further injuries.

You quickly ascend the steeply sloping wall and retrieve the steel tube from the slate outcrop. You tuck it into your belt, then you climb back to the top of the ravine where you pause to examine what the tube contains.

Turn to 140.

340

Your Kai sense warns you that the one-eyed man and his cohorts are waiting outside in the main square. They are determined to ambush you and your companions the moment you step from the inn. Wary of their intentions, you ask the innkeeper if there is another exit from the taproom and he points to a curtained archway. It conceals a door which opens on to an alleyway running alongside the inn. You leave by this door.

and walk to the end of the alley, taking care to avoid the main square. Your mind is now focused upon the task of finding and retrieving the Claw of Naar before Autarch Sejanos arrives, and when you consult your Siyenese compass, you set off in the direction it indicates. It leads you towards the military quarter of the city, located on the east side of the main square. You follow an avenue lined with closed shop doorways, and soon you arrive at a busy barracks. The compass, and your Kai sixth sense, both tell you that the Claw of Naar is located somewhere inside this troop-infested building.

If you wish to try to find a way to enter the barracks undetected, turn to **81**.

If you decide to observe this building from the cover of an unlit doorway, turn to **242**.

341

You sleep poorly and wake feeling drained and disheartened: lose 2 ENDURANCE points. Shortly after dawn, you break camp and set off across the marshlands, heading east. At first the spongy ground comes as a welcome relief after the jagged rocks and twisted roots that litter the floor of the Angfeng Forest. Then the marshy soil degenerates into a treacherous swamp, and soon you are forced to head south in search of firmer terrain.

For two days and nights you trek across wetlands, living as best you can off the flora and fauna of this inhospitable region. By noon of the third day you catch sight of a stone bridge across the River Heng, on the outskirts of a town called Zuda. The

rangers are excited at the prospect of escaping at last from the mosquito-infested wetlands, but their enthusiasm is dampened when you magnify your vision and take a closer look at this Chai border town.

Turn to **206**.

342

As you reach the crest of the ridge, you rein in your horse and halt to look back at the trap you have set. After several minutes, you see your enemy entering the valley and come galloping along the trail. You magnify your vision in order to observe them as they approach the pillars. Suddenly there is a vivid flash of blue-white light when one of the Imperial Guards brushes past the column of stone in the middle track. You let out a cheer when you see the leading riders tumble from their saddles, and your companions echo your cry when you tell them what you have witnessed.

Seizing the advantage, you urge your stallion to the gallop and speed away from the ridge with your ranger companions following closely on your heels.

Turn to **309**.

343

The old man is deeply hurt by your refusal to take bread and wine with him. It is considered a grave insult in Bhanar to refuse such basic hospitality. Some of the young men who have gathered outside the tent to watch you, now begin to reach

for their daggers. Anxious to avoid any needless bloodshed, Captain Gildas intervenes and accepts the old man's offer on your behalf. 'He's a Northlander,' he says, by way of an apology on your behalf. 'He knows nothing of your customs.'

The old man smiles and nods his head, then he invites you all to come into his tent. You dismount, and the children look after your horses while you file into his spacious dwelling. He gives each of you a glass of mulled wine and a piece of unleavened bread, and while you are enjoying this plain fare, he invites you to examine the wares and trinkets which lie strewn about his tent.

Gildas nudges you and points to a rickety table that is heaped with simple straw-coloured robes, much-favoured by Bhanarian plainsmen. 'These may be a wise investment, Sir Kai?' he mutters. 'I fear our tunics may arouse suspicion the further south we venture.'

You nod in agreement and ask the old man how much he wants for four of his robes.

'One hundred and sixty Ren, kind sir,' he replies, cheerfully.

The old man's price is equivalent to 16 Gold Crowns. The rangers do not have any money, so if you wish to purchase these garments you must pay the full price.

If you can afford to pay the man's price, turn to **286**.

If you do not have sufficient Gold Crowns to pay for the robes, turn to **45**.

344

Sejanos approaches the fire and stoops to retrieve the Claw, but then he hesitates. His skeletal hand trembles and he seems powerless to control it. You sense that he is afraid of the flames: it is his one vital weakness.

You rush towards him and land a kick to his side, toppling him over. Before he can rise again, you grab the haft of the Claw and tug it from the fire. A burning log is skewered upon its tip. It flares brightly when you thrust it at the Autarch's helm and rolls away, towards the shattered window. You follow up and jab it at his hands, and he shrieks with fear. Then he tries to stand, and as he is levering himself up from the floor, you leap into the air and land a two-footed kick to his chest that sends him somersaulting backwards. With a wailing cry, he tumbles out of the window and plummets into the courtyard below.

Turn to **219**.

345

'Stay here, Captain,' you whisper, 'I will return soon.'

With these words, you slip away from your hiding place and make your way back to the rocky mouth of the pass, using your Kai camouflage skills to keep yourself hidden from the enemy. As you approach the ravine, you hear the sounds of fierce fighting and see intermittent flashes of magical energy piercing the gloom. The winged horde are making a determined attack upon the grounded skyship, but Lord Rimoah and his

young crewmen are putting up a spirited defence.

When you reach the edge of the ravine, you are confronted by the unexpected sight of *Cloud-dancer* rising rapidly into the darkening sky. A bloody battle is raging along her decks as the winged beasts attempt to wrest control of the skyship from the crew. You magnify your vision and catch sight of Lord Rimmoah standing at the craft's stern, near to the boarding cage. For a few moments your eyes meet and you make a telepathic link. He hurls a metallic tube in your direction and you hear his voice in your mind, urging you to retrieve it. Then the link is broken when he is forced to defend himself from a determined attacker. You watch the tube strike a rock at the edge of the ravine, and then it disappears from sight. With fear running cold in your veins, you watch helplessly as the beleaguered skyship powers away towards the east, pursued by the flying swarm of ravening beasts.

If you wish to stay hidden among the rocks at the edge of the ravine, turn to **203**.

If you wish to attempt to retrieve the metallic tube, turn to **243**.

346

You steer your horse through the trees that border the clearing, and follow an easterly bearing that soon brings you to the edge of the forest. Without daring to look back, you leave the Vanchou and set off across the vast, open plains.

Turn to **250**.

347

Once you are safely outside the barracks, you hurry away along a cobblestoned street that is crowded with parked wagons, anxious troops, and irate drivers. The barracks' alarm bell continues to toll, and you sense that the theft of the Claw has now been discovered.

As you turn a corner, you see a mounted patrol of four guardsmen come cantering along the street towards you. The officer regards you with suspicion and he orders you and your companions to halt.

If you wish to obey his command, turn to **139**.

If you wish to try to evade this patrol, turn to **306**.

348

As you rush into the ill-lit alleyway, one of the City Guard's arrows ricochets off the wall and gouges a furrow of skin from your calf: lose 1 ENDURANCE point.

To continue, turn to **174**.

349

You tell the rangers what you have discovered, and suggest that they rest awhile under the wooden



bridge while you attempt to lure a distant group of stallions towards the stream. By the use of your Magnakai Discipline of Animal Control, you are able to entice four horses to approach the bridge. At first they are nervous, for they can detect the vile stench of the Doomlands' dust which impregnates the rangers' tunics, but they are also thirsty and they cannot resist for too long the temptation of the sparkling stream.

You allow them to drink at the stream for several minutes and, as they settle, you slowly approach the leading stallion. You are reaching out to take hold of his mane when he suddenly rises up on his hind legs and flails at you with his hooves.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 2 to the number you have picked. If you possess Assimilance, add 1.

If your total score is now 3 or lower, turn to **234**.

If it is 4 or higher, turn to **99**.

350

You see the unmistakable shape of *Cloud-dancer* silhouetted against the rising sun. It hovers above the central keep of Fort Jhung, and with the wind in your hair and a cry of victory on your lips, you bank your sky-chariot towards it.

Lord Rimoah and Lord Ghadra are among the many on deck who are anxiously watching and praying for you to appear, though no one is expecting your arrival will be by air. The crew can

hardly believe their eyes when you bring the sky-chariot down to land upon the deck. Within seconds of touching down, you are surrounded by a mass of cheering countrymen.

Lord Rimoah appears among the excited throng. With tears of joy in his eyes, he embraces you and then offers up a prayer of thanksgiving to Goddess Ishir for your safe return. You deliver to him the Claw of Naar and he vows that this accursed artefact will be destroyed by the Elder Magi to prevent it from ever falling into the hands of Autarch Sejanoz.

Congratulations, Grand Master. You have met this difficult challenge and you have triumphed. Your brave and daring exploits will long be remembered in the legends of the New Order Kai. Yet the fight against Evil goes on. Soon your courage and Kai skills will be tested anew. The nature of the quest and the dangers that await you will be revealed in the next exciting Lone Wolf adventure entitled:

The Hunger of Sejanoz

RANDOM NUMBER TABLE

1	3	9	3	2	7	5	0	2	5
5	6	2	5	1	3	8	4	3	5
7	6	7	8	1	4	3	1	4	5
4	0	8	7	3	0	8	7	2	5
7	4	0	0	9	6	2	0	8	1
1	6	7	9	6	9	0	3	3	9
8	9	2	8	1	3	4	9	7	1
6	3	0	7	5	0	5	4	6	6
7	2	1	4	2	9	6	4	2	6
0	9	6	4	8	2	8	5	8	3

COMBAT RULES SUMMARY

1. Add your COMBAT SKILL to any bonus points given to you by your Kai Weapon, Special Items or Grand Master Disciplines.
2. Subtract the COMBAT SKILL of your enemy from this total. This number = Combat Ratio.
3. Pick number from the *Random Number Table*.
4. Turn to the Combat Results Table.
5. Find your Combat Ratio along the top of the chart and cross-reference to random number you have picked. (E indicates loss of ENDURANCE points to Enemy. GM indicates loss of ENDURANCE points to yourself.)
6. Continue the combat from Stage 3 until one character is dead. This is when ENDURANCE points of either combatant falls to 0.

TO EVADE COMBAT

1. You may only do this when the text of the adventure offers you the opportunity.
2. You undertake one round of combat in the usual way. All points lost by the enemy are ignored; only you lose ENDURANCE points.
3. If the text offers you the chance to take evasive action in place of combat, it can be taken in the first or any subsequent round (unless specifically stated otherwise).

COMBAT RESULTS TABLE

Combat Ratio

Random Number

	-11 OR GREATER	-10/-9	-8/-7	-6/-5	-4/-3	-2/-1
1	E-0 GM K	E-0 GM K	E-0 GM -8	E-0 GM -6	E-1 GM -6	E-2 GM -5
2	E-0 GM K	E-0 GM -8	E-0 GM -7	E-1 GM -6	E-2 GM -5	E-3 GM -5
3	E-0 GM -8	E-0 GM -7	E-1 GM -6	E-2 GM -5	E-3 GM -5	E-4 GM -4
4	E-0 GM -8	E-1 GM -7	E-2 GM -6	E-3 GM -5	E-4 GM -4	E-5 GM -4
5	E-1 GM -7	E-2 GM -6	E-3 GM -5	E-4 GM -4	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3
6	E-2 GM -6	E-3 GM -6	E-4 GM -5	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -2
7	E-3 GM -5	E-4 GM -5	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -2	E-8 GM -2
8	E-4 GM -4	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -2	E-8 GM -1	E-9 GM -1
9	E-5 GM -3	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -2	E-8 GM -0	E-9 GM -0	E-10 GM -0
0	E-6 GM -0	E-7 GM -0	E-8 GM -0	E-9 GM -0	E-10 GM -0	E-11 GM -0

E = ENEMY GM = GRAND MASTER

0/0	+1/+2	+3/+4	+5/+6	+7/+8	+9/+10	+11 OR GREATER	
E-3 GM -5	E-4 GM -5	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -4	E-7 GM -4	E-8 GM -3	E-9 GM -3	1
E-4 GM -4	E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -3	E-8 GM -3	E-9 GM -3	E-10 GM -2	2
E-5 GM -4	E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -3	E-8 GM -3	E-9 GM -2	E-10 GM -2	E-11 GM -2	3
E-6 GM -3	E-7 GM -3	E-8 GM -2	E-9 GM -2	E-10 GM -2	E-11 GM -2	E-12 GM -2	4
E-7 GM -2	E-8 GM -2	E-9 GM -2	E-10 GM -2	E-11 GM -2	E-12 GM -2	E-14 GM -1	5
E-8 GM -2	E-9 GM -2	E-10 GM -2	E-11 GM -1	E-12 GM -1	E-14 GM -1	E-16 GM -1	6
E-9 GM -1	E-10 GM -1	E-11 GM -1	E-12 GM -0	E-14 GM -0	E-16 GM -0	E-18 GM -0	7
E-10 GM -0	E-11 GM -0	E-12 GM -0	E-14 GM -0	E-16 GM -0	E-18 GM -0	E K GM -0	8
E-11 GM -0	E-12 GM -0	E-14 GM -0	E-16 GM -0	E-18 GM -0	E K GM -0	E K GM -0	9
E-12 GM -0	E-14 GM -0	E-16 GM -0	E-18 GM -0	E K GM -0	E K GM -0	E K GM -0	0

K = AUTOMATICALLY KILLED

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In the next split second Richards glimpsed an enormous skull-like face with horrifying, deep, huge eye sockets. The impact ripped his legs from the ladder and hurled his body against the ceiling beams. He was aware of being turned by great clawed hands locking him like pincers, and he was ashamed to find himself screaming. He stared helplessly down into the skull-face, saw it open its mouth. A huge, gnashing spray of twisted, razor-sharp fangs spiralled upwards and began to penetrate his throat. He felt a deep unspeakable pain, saw the burst of his own blood in front of him. In his last conscious moments on earth, he knew he was being devoured alive.

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The explosion from the water came quickly. The camera fell from Erdon's hands as he glimpsed a pair of huge, horrifying yellow eyes and a gorge rimmed by jagged, dagger-sized teeth. The horror happened so fast – as if Erdon had been struck by the hood of a racing car, his feet torn from the rope webbing – he had an instant to feel the impact on his face and chest. He was aware of a brief sensation of being turned, positioned, when a godless, fiery pain crashed simultaneously into his back and groin.

At first, Sarah didn't have time to scream. Instinctively, she reached for the ignition key, but as her arm and hand went out she felt warm, thick drops spotting her skin. When she looked at her arm she knew it was raining blood. Now she screamed.

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'Ye've run yourself into a real nest of adders, here, lad,' Sammy whispered.

'I know they are smugglers,' I began protesting. 'That was why the fee was low. But I could take care of my —'

'They are worse than smugglers, lad — they are Comprachicos,' he breathed into my ear.

'Comprá — c-comprachicos?'

At first I thought I could not have heard him aright. Then I could not believe him. The I *did* believe him — Sam would not make up such a tale — and, despite myself, my teeth began to chatter.

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Shipwrecked, imprisoned and then haunted by a ghoulish premonition — brave Felix may be down on his luck but he'll never, ever give up...

'Oh, but I don't want to die!'

And then, a second time, putting the fear of death, such as I had not felt, even through the shipwreck, into my own heart, 'Oh — but — I don't — want — to — die!'

Petrified, I stared all around me. From where could the voice possibly come?

Trembling uncontrollably, I looked upward, and now, just for a moment, it seemed to my dazed senses that I could see something — some *body* — suspended from one of the arching boughs overhead, that I could see a thin form swinging, dangling at the end of a rope not three feet above me... It faded, melted, and was gone.

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Pulses race when brave Felix leads a rescue mission with his sweetheart, Juana. It's a deadly dangerous task – will Felix keep his head and return a hero? Here's a tingling taster...

'Juana! Keep very still!' I called hoarsely.

My heart seemed to fall clean out of my body into the gorge below. There she was, defenceless, in deadly danger, and here I was, strung on two ropes over the gulf, with my gun strapped out of reach, useless on my back; however fast I moved, I would never be able to get back in time to save her if the bear flew at her.

The massive bear turned, at the sound of my voice, and eyed me intently. I joggled frantically on the rope, to hold its attention.

'Bear! Bear!' I yelled, 'Look at me! Look at me on the bridge. Come and get me, bear! Here I am!'

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The Candle Man

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An eerie tale of the supernatural...

Meurig the fiddler is a haunted man. The evil water spirit, Hafren, has captured his soul – and now possesses the key... to his life.

The Severn was grey and purple; huge, a shifting, breathing mass of water, swollen right up to the base of the wall, lapping quietly.

About half a mile down the wall was the watchtower, tall and built of black stone, its windows blank eyes that watched them come.

Conor hesitated. Then he said, 'Do you think it will be... safe?'

Meurig turned, 'Safe?'

'Yes. You know.'

The fiddler glanced out at the estuary. 'You mean from the water?'

'Yes.'

They looked at each other for a moment. Then the fiddler smiled a bitter smile. 'I doubt it. For me, nowhere is safe.'

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Some say he's a monster, others hope he is dead, and no one has seen him for many, many years. Until now...

'I'm sending you to live with my son,' the Jarl said.

For a moment they couldn't realize what he meant. Then Jessa felt sick; cold sweat prickled on her back.

Thorkil was white. 'You can't send us there,' he breathed.

'Hold your tongue and let me finish,' Ragnar was looking at them now, with a hard, amused stare.

'Call it exile, and think yourselves lucky. At least you'll have a sort of life. You leave tomorrow for Thrasiirshall, at first light.'

Jessa saw Thorkil was trembling. She knew he couldn't believe this; he was terrified. It burst out of him in a wild despairing cry.

'I won't go! You can't send us out there, not to that creature!'

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Hakon turned, clutching the sword that felt hot and heavy in his hand. And then, among the undergrowth, among storm-stirred leaves and snow, something shifted, and he knew he was looking at a face, a narrow, inhuman face among splintered branches and shadow. It watched him, its small eyes pale as ice, a big, indistinct shape, and he swore for a moment that the snow drifted through its body.

Like a man, but bigger. Like a bear, but... not. Hakon felt a sudden pulse of terror that he squashed at once, deep down.

Barely opening his lips he said, 'It's here. Don't move. Don't speak. Whatever happens don't make a sound.'

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Kari raised the cup to drink and stopped, so still that Jessa looked at him. He was staring into the wine as if something had poisoned it, and when he looked up his face was white with terror.

'She's here,' he breathed.

Alarmed, Wulfgar leaned forward. 'Who is?'

But Kari had spun round, quick as a sword-slash. 'Close the doors!' he yelled, his voice raw and desperate over the hubbub. 'Close them! NOW!'

Jessa caught Kari's arm and the red wine splashed her dress.

'What is it?' she gasped. 'What's happening?'

'She's here.' He stared over her shoulder. 'Gods, Jessa. Look!'

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