

Quest Journal

FIRE*WOLF'S LIFEPOINTS

Strength Speed Stamina Courage

Luck Charm Attraction = **LP**

Starting:

Current:

Power:

Skill:

BATTLE SCORES

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

Damage done:

Result:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

About the author

Damage done:

Damage done:

J. H. Brennan has always been interested in magic, spells and wizardry, and among his many books has written a number on magic. He is also the author of two Fantasy Role-Playing Games -*Man, Myth & Magic* and *Timeship*, and of Armada's *Grailquest* series of Solo Fantasy Gamebooks. He lives in an old thatched cottage in Ireland.

Result:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

Damage done:

Result:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:
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Damage done:

Damage done:

Result:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done

Damage done:

Result:

Result:

Sagas of the Demonspawn

Book One FIRE*WOLF

Book Two THE CRYPTS OF TERROR

Book Four ANCIENT EVIL

J. H. Brennan

DEMONDOOM

SAGAS OF THE
DEMONSPAWN

BOOK 3

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IMPORTANTNOTE

This is the most difficult of the first three adventures in the Sagas of the Demonspawn. The trials which face Fire*Wolf are convoluted and certain of the puzzles he meets are extremely tricky.

If you find yourself totally unable to proceed in the adventure, even though you have carefully mapped and checked your actions, there may be some help in the special Hints Page at the back of the book. The clues presented there are written backwards so you will not inadvertently read one while consulting another.

For your own enjoyment, you should only use the Hints Page in dire emergency!

GETTING STARTED

To play this fantasy gamebook, you will need two dice. One will do if you can't find two, although the pair is certainly easier to use. You'll also need paper and a pen or pencil. A pocket calculator, while not strictly necessary, could be handy.

Creating a Character

Since this is not a novel in the usual sense, its central character is not created by the author. Rather he is generated by you, the reader. Study the following for a moment:

STRENGTH
SPEED
STAMINA
COURAGE
* SKILL *

These are the fundamental characteristics of a fighting man, the hero of the Sagas, a curious and complex individual named Fire*Wolf.

He has, of course, non-martial characteristics as well. These are:

LUCK
CHARM
ATTRACTION

Take your pair of dice and roll them against the first heading in the list: STRENGTH. When you've rolled the dice, multiply the result you got by 8. Write down the answer in the space opposite STRENGTH in the table. In fact, it is probably best to use the Quest Journal at the front of the book to record your scores.

Now make double dice rolls against each of the other headings on the table except SKILL and in each case multiply the result by 8 before writing it down. The SKILL heading you should leave blank for the moment.

Each figure you've written down represents the *percentage* of the particular quality Fire*Wolf has at this moment in time. Because the percentages were derived at random, you can see you've gone a long way towards creating a unique personality for your character.

If you roll two six-sided dice and multiply the result by 8, the highest possible answer you can get is 96 - 4 short of 100 per cent. This means that only Allah is perfect - Fire*Wolf must fall short. However good they are, nobody achieves the absolute maximum.

The heading of SKILL has been left blank so far. If you have already run Fire*Wolf through any earlier books of the Sagas, you will have a SKILL figure carried forward to insert here. If not, make SKILL an arbitrary 10. In either case, remember that SKILL increases as an adventure continues. Each time Fire*Wolf survives a fight or solves a particularly difficult puzzle, you should add 1 to the SKILL figure, up to the magic maximum of 96.

The next thing you need to know is how he fights.

Fighting

Whether your character lives or dies depends ultimately on how well you manage to conserve his LIFE POINTS. Calculate Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS (LP for short) as follows:

STRENGTH+SPEED+STAMINA+COURAGE+
LUCK+CHARM+ATTRACTION=LIFEPOINTS.

In the course of the adventure as your character develops SKILL, total LIFE POINTS will increase as SKILL points are added on.

LIFE POINTS are not static. Fire*Wolf will lose them in fights and other situations and regain them through rest, healing and so on. At no time, however, will his LIFE POINTS ever rise above the figure you started off with, except for the additions given by SKILL development.

In combat, there is one cardinal rule:

If your character's LIFE POINTS ever drop to zero (or below) he's dead.

When that happens, you go back to the beginning and roll up another incarnation for your character.

Rules of Combat

1. *First Strike*

Unless otherwise stated, you start by deciding who gets in the first move. This is done by rolling two dice for your character and two dice for the enemy he's facing. Add your SPEED, COURAGE and LUCK figures to the result of your character's roll. Add the enemy's SPEED, COURAGE and LUCK

figures to his result. Compare the final figures. Whoever has the highest gets his move in first.

2. *Beginning Combat*

Once First Strike has been decided, you and your enemy take it turn and turn about to hack away at one another until the combat is resolved by death, defeat, retreat or some other factor.

3. *Successful Hit*

For each blow *aimed* in combat, roll two dice. A score of 7 or better indicates that the blow has landed. Anything less than 7 counts as a miss. But this figure will always be modified by your SKILL and, to some extent, by your LUCK. For every 10 points of SKILL you acquire, you can take 1 point off the score you need to hit. If, for example, you find yourself with 20 SKILL points, then you only need a 5 to hit. But it must be 10 *full* SKILL points. Until your SKILL reaches 10, there is no SKILL modification. Even when it reaches 19, you still modify only by 1. And so on. Naturally, your enemy's ability to hit you is modified in exactly the same way. The LUCK modification is easier and you can work it out right now. If your LUCK figure stands at 72 or better, you can subtract 1 from the score you need to hit. In other words, if your LUCK is 72 or higher, you need only throw a 6 or better to indicate your blow has been successful. And again, the same goes for your opponent.

4. *Damage*

Once the dice and modifications show you've successfully struck your opponent, the time comes to calculate the damage you may have caused him.

First, take note of how many points *more than* your hit figure were shown on the dice roll. (If you need, say, a modified 5 to hit because of your SKILL and LUCK and you actually roll 10, then you have rolled 5 more than your hit figure.) Multiply this figure by 10 to show the basic damage scored.

But damage too is always modified. For every 8 points of STRENGTH you have, you can add 1 point to any damage you score. Furthermore, if you hit your opponent with a weapon, you will obviously do more damage than if you simply used your fist, so various weapons also add to damage scored. You'll find an easy-reference table opposite, showing the additional damage associated with various weapons. Equally obviously, the use of armour or a shield *subtracts* from any damage caused. On the same table, you will find the figures related to various types of armour. Unfortunately, you cannot take with you weapons found on earlier *Demonspawn* adventures.

Once you have calculated and modified the damage, the final figure is subtracted from your enemy's current LIFE POINTS. (And the same goes for damage scored against your character.) As we said earlier, once the LIFE POINTS total reaches zero, death sets in.

WEAPONS/ARMOUR DAMAGE MODIFICATION TABLE

Arrow	+10
Axe	+15
Club	+8
Dagger	+5
Flail	+7
Halbert	+12
Lance	+12
Mace	+14
Spear	+12
Sword	+10
Chain mail	-8
Leather armour	-5
Plate mail	-12
Shield	-7

An armoured fighter using a shield will benefit from both, but the value of the shield in this situation drops to —5 since the wearing of armour slows down its usage.

All figures given refer to standard weapons and armour only. Magical weapons and armour give additional damage and protection if you are lucky enough to find them, as you will certainly discover if the situation arises.

If, as is usually the case, Fire*Wolf is using the Doomsword, a magical weapon of considerable but treacherous potency that he acquired on an earlier adventure, an additional factor comes into play. The blade actually absorbs an opponent's LIFE POINTS and transfers them to Fire*Wolf. This means there is a tendency for Fire*Wolf to become

stronger as a fight progresses, but he cannot, of course, absorb LIFE POINTS to such a degree that it takes him beyond his initial roll figure. You will find more information on the Doomsword on page 188.

5. *Avoiding Death*

There is only one slim chance of avoiding death should you find your LIFE POINTS have dropped to zero or below. This is associated with your LUCK. Should you find your character has apparently been killed, you are permitted one (only) roll of two dice, the result of which should be multiplied by 8. If the final figure is *less* than your LUCK percentage, then you may rerun the fight from the beginning, with both you and your enemy starting at your full natural LIFE POINTS total. Should your enemy kill you the second time around, you do *not* have another opportunity to test your LUCK.

6. *Endurance*

How long you can continue fighting blow for blow depends on your STAMINA figure. Divide this figure by 10 (rounding *down* to the nearest whole number) to discover how many combat rounds you can go without a rest. Once you reach that figure during a fight, you must rest for two combat rounds to get your breath back. This means, in effect, that your enemy gets two free chances to strike at you without your being able to strike back.

Magic

Fire*Wolf doesn't like magic at all, but he's stuck with it as a matter of sheer survival (rather like the Doomsword, really). His father, the sorcerous Lord Xandine, insisted that he learned certain spells for his own protection. Those spells are as follows:

ARMOUR
FIREBALL
INVISIBILITY
PARALYSIS
POISON NEEDLE
RESURRECTION
RETRACE
TIMEWARP
XENOPHOBIA

Their effects and POWER are shown on page 185.

The use of any spell requires POWER expenditure.

During his early adventures, Fire*Wolf built up a store of POWER by facing up to a number of tests. Any POWER which remained unused at the end of these adventures *cannot* be carried through into this one. Allocate an arbitrary 50 POWER POINTS to his statistics (but do *not* add this to his LIFE POINTS).

In Fire*Wolf's use of magic, certain rules apply:

1. Before Fire*Wolf can use any spell, you must make a check roll to determine his natural inclination. Roll two dice. If *our hero fails to score 4 or better, he will not use ANY sorcery in the current section, however hard pressed he may be.*

However much POWER Fire*Wolf has at his dis-

posal, he will never use the same spell twice in a single section. He may use different spells in the same section or the same spell in different sections.

3. Every spell has its Fundamental Failure Rate. There is a 50 per cent chance it won't work. This means that when Fire*Wolf casts a spell, he must throw a 6 or better on two dice before it succeeds. The problem with this is that it's spell *casting* which uses up the POWER, so even when a spell doesn't work, the POWER used to cast it is gone for good.

POWER Renewal

Fire*Wolf may renew used POWER in different ways.

He may trade off LIFE POINTS for POWER on a point for point basis. In other words, he can sacrifice (say) 10 of his LIFE POINTS for 10 POWER POINTS by an act of will.

Or circumstances may arise in the course of his adventure which permit him to add to the total POWER available.

Gaining Skill

SKILL is gained only by experience. For every fight you undertake (and survive!) you may add 1 point to your SKILL total. This adds to your overall LIFE POINTS and will eventually begin to add to your chances of making a successful hit during combat.

Any SKILL you pick up in this way stays with you if you survive your current quest. That means you can

begin your next adventure in this series with a certain amount of SKILL to your credit. It may not be a lot, but it could mean the difference between life and death.

Check Rolls

At intervals throughout the adventure, you will be required to make check rolls on Fire*Wolf's behalf to determine whether or not he succeeds in a particular venture. These rolls are used to check his LUCK, STRENGTH, SPEED or whatever in relation to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

A check roll is made in the following way:

Roll two dice and add the figures shown.

Multiply the result by eight.

Compare your final total with the characteristics stat being checked.

If the check roll is *higher* than the stat, then Fire*Wolf has failed.

If the check roll is *lower* than the stat, then Fire*Wolf has succeeded.

THE SAGAS

The Sagas of the Demonspawn are an epic of a different sort - an epic in which YOU create the history. If you have already read Books One and Two of the Sagas, you will already know something of their central character, Fire*Wolf. He was brought up (but not born) in a subterranean stone village of a Barbarian tribe in the Wilderness of Harn. As a youth, he was exiled for an unspecified - but all too guessable - misdemeanour involving the attractive daughter of the Village Headman. And in exile, Fire*Wolf discovered his Destiny.

Through a series of near lethal adventures which began with his meeting with the hermit Baldar, Fire*Wolf discovered his bloodline was that of a noble house in the neighbouring Kingdom of Kaandor, and that his father was the sorcerous Lord Xandine.

It was not a discovery which gave him much pleasure, for Fire*Wolf abhorred sorcery and to this day practises it only reluctantly, despite his birthright. But reluctant or not, he has had to use it on occasion, for his Fateline determined that he became instrumental in repelling attacks on his adopted land by a nightmare race of creatures known as the Demonspawn.

The Spawn are ancient evil. They were created millennia ago by a long-dead band of Kaandor sorcerers who locked the souls of demonic entities into artificial

bodies to produce a race of monsters. In the event, so legends tell, these creatures proved too dangerous, too unpredictable to control and turned against their masters. Since that great rebellion in prehistory, the Demonspawn have lived in a labyrinth no man has ever visited, somewhere near the mountain range which separates the neighbouring Kingdoms of Harn and Kaandor.

From time to time, the Spawn have emerged from their lair to mount attacks on Harn and it was one such attack which Fire*Wolf diverted, establishing his lasting claim to fame.

Those were troubled times, but today, a decade after, Harn is a noticeably more peaceful place. King Voltar the Magnificent, awakened by Fire*Wolf from a mystic sleep of centuries, once more rules the realm and, as a sorcerer of considerable power, has managed to prevent any further occurrence of the intermittent Spawn invasions.

Fire*Wolf, for his part, has matured, curbing the fiery passions of his youth and, as the present Lord Xandine, taking a respectable place in the Councils of Harn and enjoying a close personal relationship with King Voltar. It is many years since he has practised sorcery, many years since he has raised a weapon outside of the training grounds where he exercises for fitness twice a week. He has retained the Doomsword, a semi-sentient blade of hellish power, only because he remains unable to break the spell which binds him to it. But the sword has drunk no life force for a decade.

In recent months, only one matter has seriously disturbed the tranquillity of Harn: the mysterious disappearances of no fewer than five well-known

members of its Ruling Houses. But today even this mystery is distant from the mind of Fire*Wolf. His thoughts now, as so often in the recent past, are filled with sweeter things . . . the haunting image of the Lady Freya, whom he is soon to marry.

DEMONDOOM

THE ADVENTURE

There was a smell of jasmine in the air.

Fire*Wolf wrapped his heavy cloak a little tighter against the night chill and walked slowly, savouring the pleasant images which scurried through his mind like cotton clouds across a crescent moon. He was replete with splendid fare, relaxed - perhaps a little too relaxed, if truth be told - from several golden goblets of the rich, dark purple wine Olric had served. The banquet, true to the stature of the former Knight Regent, had been sumptuous, a fitting celebration of the eighteenth birthday of Olric's daughter.

Ah, Freya! It was of Olric's daughter that Fire*Wolf thought now and of the fact that, with her coming of age, no further obstacle stood in the way of their marriage. Olric's blessing had been given privately near on a year ago, and now formally tonight at the banquet. Fire*Wolf had had to endure a great deal of good-natured banter when the announcement was made, but that, if anything, merely added to the occasion.

Now, walking homewards to his mansion on the Pelimandar outskirts, he could think only of his betrothed — a woman now, and a woman of unsurpassed beauty and charm. The long year of denial was taking its toll. His body ached for her.



The black-garbed Assassin in the night

Fire*Wolf turned from the road into the unlit alleyway which was the familiar shortcut to his home. He had not the slightest intuition of impending danger until the assailant dropped on him from above.

*Although a man of peace these days and dressed for a social occasion to boot, Fire*Wolf fortunately retains his Doomsword which can never, by its very nature, remain far from his side. His attacker, a black-garbed figure almost invisible in the starlight, is an opponent whose lethal 'abilities brook no half-hearted defence. Fire*Wolf is facing a professional Assassin, a Guildsman of trained reflexes whose statistics are:*

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	95
STAMINA	70
COURAGE	80
SKILL	70
LUCK	20
CHARM	15
ATTRACTION	25
LIFEPOINTS	385

*The Assassin carries the usual Guild dagger, a blade which does +10 damage in its own right and is treated with a virulent poison which will prove instantly lethal on a throw of six. He also carries a garotte, which comes into play automatically on a throw of 12 and removes half Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS.*

*In this encounter, it is kill or be killed. Should Fire*Wolf die so soon in his adventure, go to **13**. If he survives, turn to **10**.*

2

Afireball? Why you thought that would help is a mystery. Go to 13.

3

There was a full folder of documents relating to the Power reserve and forcefield, many of them filled with calculations in Voltar's familiar hand. Fire*Wolf began to sift through them with a profound sense of loss. As he did so, his eye fell upon an envelope sealed with the King's own ring. To his surprise, the name 'Lord Xandine' was scrawled across it.

Some half-buried Barbarian instinct caused his hand to tremble as he opened it. The penmanship was unmistakable.

'My dear Fire*Wolf,' the letter said. 'I have left instructions that this missive must reach you in the event of my death. But since the death of a King often creates confusion, it is left here in the certain knowledge that with your obsession about the welfare of our arid regions, you must find it sooner rather than later, even if my instructions are temporarily overlooked.'

Though I am dead, you must not grieve for me. I know your loyalty and your love and that is enough. Grief is a luxury neither you nor the realm can readily afford at this time.

'You and I have long argued about the diversion of power to agricultural ends. Doubtless you thought me both stubborn and misguided in my opposition. But that was only because I had hidden something from you.'

'In the years of my reign since you awakened me, Harn has not been troubled by our ancient enemies the De-

monspawn. It has long been recognized, of course, that my personal abilities in sorcery had something to do with this happy situation, but I have never been asked the details of the situation, nor have I taken pains to tell anyone of the magic which has kept us free of invasion.

'But tell I must now. Shortly after I regained my throne, I diverted almost all the Kingdom's Power reserves into the construction of a subtle field of energy around our borders. The field is permeable to mortal creatures - trading caravans pass through it every day without even realizing its existence. But by its nature, it acts as a potent barrier against the Spawn.

'It is this energy field which has kept Harn safe and therein lies the problem you, my dear friend, must now face. The protection field cannot survive my death. Residual power may possibly maintain it for some hours or days, even, in certain circumstances, a few weeks. But without me it will crumble eventually. Nothing is more certain than that.

'You will find among these papers fuller details of the field. They will quickly convince you that neither you nor anyone else in Harn can maintain it after I have died. I have to tell you that the only thing which can regenerate it is a marvellous artifact created in ancient times and called the Golden Orb of Chakran Dis. I have also to tell you that I do not know where this artifact now lies, only that you must find it - and quickly.'

'My studies suggest the secret of the Orb is in the keeping of the Gegum Sisterhood, but whether the witch-nuns will help you find it is a different matter - their view of Destiny differs greatly from our own. However, you must try: that is all I ask of you and all I can ask of you.'

'Fire*Wolf the Lord Xandine, you have, in many ways, been as a son to me. I know you well enough to realize you have no need - and little desire - for wealth, property or titles additional to that which your real father gave you. But it is my wish to leave you a reminder of the affection I hold towards you. Consequently, I bequeath you the great ring you have so often admired upon my finger. May it remain with you forever.'

The letter was signed simply, 'Voltar'.

Fire*Wolf set it down with tears in his eyes as Olric entered.

'I have personally questioned the guards,' the Regent began, 'and have no doubt about their -'

But Fire*Wolf cut him short with a gesture. 'Forgive me, Olric,' he said quietly, 'but I think you should read this.'

Olric took the letter and scanned it hurriedly, then paused and began to read more carefully. When he had finished he looked up. 'This is dire news indeed, Fire*Wolf. Will you seek the Orb?'

'Aye,' Fire*Wolf nodded. 'I wish to take one last look at my friend's remains, then I shall beard the Gegum in their lair.'

And if the witches refused to help, he thought, he would throttle the secret from them with his bare hands.

They walked together, Fire*Wolf and the Knight Regent Olric, to the throne room where the body of King Voltar lay in state. Even the stillness of death could not diminish him, although as Fire*Wolf stared down

sorrowfully at the body, he noticed the great ring which adorned the folded fingers was now dull and lifeless.

*The same ring which the King bequeathed to Fire*Wolf. But should Fire*Wolf take it now, so soon? If he does decide to take it, go to 23. If, however, he goes directly to the Gegum, turn to 45.*

4

Like the Palace of King Voltar, the Temple of Minerva which housed the Offices of the State Oracle, lay on the outskirts of Pelimandar, but to the south of the city where the Pontime Parkland swept in a vast green crescent. Consequently, it was late morning before Fire*Wolf reached his destination.

As he approached the marble temple on its landscaped hill, his mind turned to the day, so long ago now, when he had last sought the assistance of the Oracle. It had produced no great benefit to him then and he frankly doubted that his present visit would be any more successful. There was still much of the Barbarian beneath the stately veneer of the noble Lord Xandine. For the Barbarian, the gods were to be feared, placated . . . and avoided. While he never doubted that oracular utterances originated from the gods, such utterances were, in his experience, usually too obscure to be useful. Still, it was the King's command . . .

He turned away from the Temple itself and circled around the belt of pines which half hid the interlocking sandstone offices of the State Oracle. The Vestals knew him instantly and guided him with obsequious speed along the colonnaded corridor to the Chamber of the Sibyl. He smiled wryly as he entered. On the last occasion only a generous donation had taken him so far.

The chamber was as he recalled it, a tortuous structure raised above a natural fissure in the rock from which curled a perpetual, sulphurous plume. Beyond the smoke was the Sibyl's granite throne and seated on it the Sibyl herself, Selena, as lovely today as she was the first day he set eyes on her ten years ago. For the briefest instant, he felt that curious pang which afflicts so many men as they approach the state of matrimony. But he suppressed it savagely.

The Vestals stepped back deferentially as Fire*Wolf moved towards the throne. Selena looked at him and smiled. She was Gegum trained, so they said, which possibly accounted for her agelessness and serenity. (And certainly accounted for the feline sensuality of her movements.) 'I have waited long for your return, Barbarian,' she said lightly.

'Ten years,' Fire*Wolf acknowledged, wondering what the Vestals thought of this salutation to the great Lord Xandine. 'You have changed little, My Lady.'

'But you have, My Lord,' Selena replied ironically. 'Perhaps even for the better. I can scarcely see the savage Fire*Wolf beneath the courtly trappings now. Had I not been gifted with the Sight, I might not have recognized him at all.'

'I often think there is little of him left,' Fire*Wolf agreed, 'although it proved enough to save my life last night.'

If the Sibyl was surprised, she did not show it. 'So someone tried to kill you - is that why you are here?'

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'That-and the King's command.'

'In that case,' said Selena, 'I shall not keep you waiting.' And she leaned forward to inhale deeply of the curling plume.



Fire*Wolf before the Oracle

Fire*Wolf watched with horrified fascination as her body convulsed, then grew rigid as if she had been poisoned. It was merely the Prediction Trance he knew, but a terrifying state nonetheless. She straightened abruptly, her face contorted.

'Attend me, Mortal! Death stalks the Kingdom!'

It was Lilethus! Two gods spoke through the Sibyl's lips - Minerva, the goddess of erotic love, and the Shaman god Lilethus, who spoke of harsher things. It was Lilethus now, of that Fire*Wolf was certain. The grating voice, so inconsistent with the soft lips which formed the words, boomed miraculously throughout the chamber.

'I have escaped death so far,' Fire*Wolf murmured. 'I come to inquire who sent it.'

'You?' boomed the god. 'You? You are Xandine in your sorceries and Fire*Wolf in your swordplay - what stranger is death to you? Think not on your own peril, but beware the greater doom. The sands of time are running out for he whose name is Harn!'

Fire*Wolf stared, uncomprehending. He whose name is Ham? It meant nothing. But before Fire*Wolf had time to ask a question, the Sibyl Selena began to writhe as if in pain. The great voice died away to be replaced by her own more gentle tones. 'It is useless, Fire*Wolf. The power is too strong and I can never hold Lilethus for long - he is too foreign to my own nature.' Her eyes cleared and she looked directly at him. 'Was the Oracle of benefit to you?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head in bewilderment. 'I don't know. I shall need time to think about what was said.'

But time was not granted him. The messenger met him as he left the Temple grounds. 'My Lord! My Lord! The Lord Olric, Knight Regent, commands your presence at a meeting of the Council!'

Knight Regent? The Lord Olric had ruled Harn as Knight Regent for years during King Voltar's magical sleep, but abandoned the title at once when Voltar was awakened. Fire*Wolf gripped the messenger fiercely. 'The King!' he exclaimed. 'What has happened to the King?'

'Dead!' gasped the man. 'The guards killed his assassin, but were too late to save him!'

Fire*Wolf gave a howl of purest anguish. The Oracle was all too clear now ... and all too late.

*Oracles apart, Fire*Wolf remains torn. He has a summons from Olric, his prospective father-in-law and now ruler of the realm; and the urgency of that summons is not to be brooked. There is much for the Council to do — and quickly. But half-buried Barbarian instincts also call him towards the scene of the heinous crime to examine the body of the assassin for clues as to what is going on. If Fire*Wolf goes directly to Olric, go with him to **32**. Should he decide first to examine the assassin's corpse, go instead to **40**.*

5

He had to wait almost an hour for Olric, who was in conference with his army generals. When the meeting finished, Fire*Wolf was ushered in with profuse apologies, but could see how strained Olric had become. His years as Knight Regent must have prepared him thoroughly for the exercise of power, yet

something had changed in him during the ten years when Voltar had resumed control. Olric looked tired and old.

With no need to stand on ceremony, Fire*Wolf called for wine and insisted Olric drink. Only when the goblet had instilled some colour into his cheeks did Fire*Wolf come to the point of his visit.

'They tell me,' he said slowly, 'that there was a time when you met with the Gegum Abbess.'

Olric nodded. 'A strange woman. Ancient beyond belief, yet with a mind as sharp as my own. Sharper indeed, for she obtained more concessions from me than I from her and I was at the time Knight Regent.' He regarded Fire*Wolf shrewdly. 'I take it you have not seen the witches yet?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head. 'Not yet,' he said easily, seeing no reason to trouble Olric with his difficulties in entering the Convent. 'I was wondering if you could advise me on the protocol of meeting with her.'

Olric looked at him blankly. 'Protocol?' he echoed. 'The Gegum have no protocols. Those they wish to see they summon.'

'And those who wish to see them?' Fire*Wolf asked.

Olric shrugged. They will be seen or not, as the Gegum determine. One simply presents oneself. But never fear, Fire*Wolf — you are the noble Xandine: they cannot fail to see you.'

Fire*Wolf lowered his eyes, but said nothing.

Delicately done, since he has no wish to add to Olric's burdens. But it now seems the Gegum are barred to him. What next? That Power which has

*kept the Demonspawn at bay for a decade is waning and time is short. Fire*Wolf must find the Golden Orb and quickly. Does he search for further information in the old King's papers at 59? Or has the legacy of the King's ring a deeper significance than he suspected? Should he take it from the body? If Fire*Wolf decides to take the ring and this is his first attempt to do so, turn to 18. If he has already tried and failed, but wishes to try again, turn to 26.*

6

So, sorcery it is, but which spell?

If ARMOUR go to 37.

If CRYPT go to 15.

If FIREBALL go to 2.

If INVISIBILITY go to 25.

If PARALYSIS go to 20.

If POISON NEEDLE go to 7.

If RESURRECTION go to 10.

If RETRACE go to 41.

If TIMEWARP go to 31.

If XENOPHOBIA go to 17.

7

He's already poisoned. The Needle will hurry him on his way to 13.

8

Wearily, Fire*Wolf dragged himself from his bed and returned shivering to the outhouse. Lifting the torch from its wall-bracket, he examined the body closely. But there was nothing, no clue to the attack.

Fire*Wolf returned to his bed.

And after a fitful night awakened in 29.

9

The decision was made on the instant, but its implications were complex. Velda was between him and the beast on a ledge so narrow that the slightest misjudgement could mean tragedy. Fire*Wolf hesitated.

*As well he might. His Barbarian instincts drive his hand towards the Doomsword, already howling in anticipation. And should he decide to fight with sword, you must follow his decision to 74. But perhaps this is a time for spells, given that he has sufficient power and can overcome his old revulsion against sorcery. If this is Fire*Wolf's decision, go to*

14

10

Fire*Wolf stared down at the corpse in a flamestorm of emotions. It was his first kill in ten years and the Doomsword in his right hand howled and throbbed with hellish satisfaction. For Fire*Wolf himself, the old joy of battle, which had risen unbidden in him while the fight was on, was now muted by the almost forgotten touch of horror which had always attended the use of the Doomsword in the old days . . . and by the dawning realization that this was no casual vagabond or thief but a hired assassin sent to kill.

Who had hired the man?

Fire*Wolf had, so far as he was aware, no enemies in Harn - at least none who felt so strongly that they would pay the bloodprice to a Guildsman. Yet a Guildsman this certainly was, or so Fire*Wolf was convinced. Since it was too dark in the alley to search the body, he hefted it across his broad shoulders and carried it, with no thought for the bloodstains on his cloak, the short remaining distance to his home.

The gateguards passed him through with that stoic indifference of men who had known Fire*Wolf's fearsome reputation when he first reached this city and who now found little unusual in the sight of a body slung across his back.

Fire*Wolf deposited the corpse unceremoniously in an outhouse, lit one of the wall torches and set to searching. As he had half expected, he found nothing. It was a point of honour of the Assassins' Guild that none of its members should carry aught which might identify the man who hired them.

With a resigned shrug, Fire*Wolf left the body for the morning Death Detail and returned to the house where he bathed and retired immediately to his chamber. But sleep was slow to claim him. For more than an hour he tossed and turned, brooding on the mystery of his attacker.

Is our hero so concerned that he might actually leave his bed and search the body again? Roll one die. Score 1 or 2 and go to 24. Score 3 to 6 and go to 8.

11

ranting, Fire*Wolf squatted on the ledge holding the shivering girl to his breast. When she was a little calmer he pushed the corpse of the Leopard from the ledge and watched, with a certain grim satisfaction, as it tumbled downwards.

Now, Little One,' he said, 'the danger is no more. Can you lead me onwards?'

Dumbly, courageously, the girl nodded.

*But perhaps Fire*Wolf was a little hasty in his judgement. The danger of the Leopard is certainly*

*no mote, but this wretched mountain still has its surprises. One of them is rockfalls. Roll two dice now for both Fire*Wolf and the girl to determine whether they will reach their destination safely. Score 5 or below and the person you are rolling for has been struck by a falling rock. If struck, roll two dice and multiply the result by 4 to determine the amount of damage. The child has 30 LIFE POINTS.*

*If Fire*Wolf is killed in this way, go to 13. If the girl is killed, go to 43. If both survive, go to 33.*

12

The private quarters of King Voltar were almost as familiar to Fire*Wolf as his own bedchamber. The King had been a man of simple tastes and while he valued spectacle on State occasions, his private surroundings were spare, even spartan. The little study, lined with books and scrolls, was a workroom devoted in the main to the sorcerous sciences at which the late King had excelled.

Fire*Wolf felt like an intruder as he searched for the papers relating to the forcefield, but his discomfort was short lived. A discreet knock heralded the appearance of a messenger bearing a summons from Olric.

*Fire*Wolf left the papers and followed the messenger to 34.*

13

So it was that Fire*Wolf died.

But if our hero is no more, it is but a temporary hiatus in the great cycle of his Destiny. For Fire*Wolf may reincarnate, with freshly rolled LIFE POINTS and statistics, ready once again to face the foe.

But where he faces that foe is a matter of chance. Roll two dice. Score 5 or below- and he must begin his adventure from the beginning. Score 6 or more and he may return directly to the section where he was killed.

14

An interesting choice and perhaps a wise one. . . assuming Fire Wolf has sufficient POWER.*

The Rock Leopard, which will not sit still waiting to be zapped, has the following stats:

STRENGTH	75
SPEED	98
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	90
SKILL	65
LUCK	35
CHARM	10
ATTRACTION	8
LIFEPOINTS	431

Fang and claw damage give it a natural +5.

*Now that he has made his choice, Fire*Wolf is precluded from using the Doomsword or any other weapon (although he may fight with bare hands if his POWER runs out). Should the Leopard kill him, go to 13. Should he kill the Leopard, turn to 11.*

15

*Since ten years have elapsed since Fire*Wolf received his sorcerous initiation, the CRYPT spell which formed part of his magical armoury in the first two books of the Sagas can no longer be used.*

*Even if Fire*Wolf could return to the Crypts for a power renewal, the poison would put paid to him long before he moved a hundred yards. Go to 13.*

16

The Doomsword howled in triumph as he drew it from its scabbard and raced down the hill to aid the hard-pressed villagers.

But we may, perhaps, be a shade less confident than the hellish sword. There are, in the village, some dozen Spawn engaged in doing what they do best - pillage, arson, loot and slaughter. Each has the following stats:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	92
STAMINA	95
COURAGE	80
SKILL	50
LUCK	70
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	467

*Each Spawn carries a +10 sword and has call on a single, special spell: a FIREBOLT. To use this spell, the Spawn must sacrifice a double dice roll of LIFE POINTS and throw a 9 or better on two dice. If the spell succeeds, a bolt of green lightning will strike Fire*Wolf for the loss of 75 LIFE POINTS.*

*Naturally, not all these vicious opponents will attack Fire*Wolf simultaneously. While the villagers are losing their battle, they are certainly keeping some of the Demonspawn otherwise en-*

*gaged. Throw two dice to discover how many of the hellish horde will attack Fire*Wolf. (And be thankful that they will, by nature, attack singly.) If Fire*Wolf succumbs to their assault, go to 13. If he survives, any remaining Demonspawn will flee, permitting him to stagger off to 28.*

17

So his enemies are terrified - that doesn't affect the poison. Go to 13.

18

As he stared, again at the body of his friend and King, Fire*Wolf felt a sudden surge of emotion. The ring on the dead hand was more than just a bauble: it was more like a mystic bond between one still concerned with the problems of Harn and one who has lain down the burden at last. Fire*Wolf reached out to take the ring, then started back violently.

In a silent, shocking instant, he had been drained of POWER and lost 15 of his LIFE POINTS to boot.

*If this unexpected development kills him, turn to 13. If not, Fire*Wolf is faced with a dilemma. Should he make another attempt to take the ring? If so, go to 26. If not, his mind must naturally return to the problem of the Golden Orb, so that he has the further choice of seeking advice from Olric on how to gain audience with the Gegum at 5 or searching for further information in the King's papers at 59.*

19

A sad ending for a hero - pale, shivering, his abdomen wracked with spasms and the dawning realization in his mind that he had reached the wrong decision. The

poison, it seemed, was in his blood not his stomach and the pains were growing greater.

*A scene on which we need not linger. Fire*Wolf may only be followed to one place now. . . the dreaded*
13.

20

Nope, the poison is still eating out his vitals. Go to
13.

21

His hand closed on the ring and this time, incredibly, there was no further drain. Quickly Fire*Wolf slipped it from the dead King's finger and placed it on his own. A surge throughout his entire body told him instantly something magical had again happened. And the ring was glowing now, not so brightly as it had done when the King lived, but definitely glowing nonetheless.

*Fire*Wolf will soon discover the ring has gifted him 101 POWER POINTS, although his LIFE POINTS remain depleted by a total of 86. What then of his next action? Should he seek the services of the Palace Healer at **38**? Or call on the Gegum at **54**? Or possibly search the King's papers again at **30**?*

22

The streets of Pelimandar were so choked with sorrowing mourners that it took Fire*Wolf nearly two hours to reach his home. He went directly to the outbuilding and discovered Lamarand was correct: there was no body here. A peculiar smell of must hung in the air, but otherwise there was nothing to indicate a corpse had ever lain on the cold stone floor. Since it was unthinkable that the servants had moved it con-

trary to his instructions, he began to wonder if the man had been truly dead. The Assassins' Guild taught its members all manner of strange tricks and it was just possible he had been deluded by one of them. Was it possible that the same man who had tried to kill him was the man responsible for the King's death?

He left the outhouse and walked slowly to the main building where a message awaited him to say that Olric desired his presence at once. Sighing, Fire*Wolf called for a fresh horse.

*And rode to meet the Regent at **34**.*

23

Fire*Wolf reached out to take the ring. As his fingers gripped it, the gemstone flared briefly then dulled. Fire*Wolf staggered back in momentary alarm. His POWER reserves were drained and 15 of his LIFE POINTS gone!

*A nasty shock. If the loss of 15 LIFE POINTS kills him, go to **13**. If not, he must pull himself together and decide whether he should make a second attempt to take the ring. If so, go to **26**. If, alternatively, he decides to go immediately to the Gegum, turn to **45**.*

24

Wearily, Fire*Wolf dragged himself from his bed and returned shivering to the outhouse. Lifting the torch from its wall-bracket, he examined the body closely. The only unusual thing was a half-inch-long scar hidden under the hairline. Nothing in his experience told him whether or not this might have significance.

Fire*Wolf returned to his bed.

*And after a fitful night awakened in **29**.*

25

*Fire*Wolf sinks invisibly all the way to 13.*

26

More cautiously this time, Fire*Wolf reached out for the ring. Again he reeled back in alarm. A further 15 LIFE POINTS have been drained from him!

If this drainage kills him, go to 13. If not, consider the mystery and decide whether or not he should risk a third attempt. If so, go to 36. If not, he may proceed directly to the Gegum at 45.

27

So it was. The servant lad Jahaan, happening close, answered his master's frantic call. And the boy ran - oh, how he ran - and the residence of the apothecary was not far.

But when the two returned, the apothecary still woolly from sleep, it was to find Fire*Wolf's twisted body cold on the bedroom floor. The old apothecary knelt to examine him and slowly shook his head ...

As well he might, faced with a corpse first thing in the morning. Jahaan and the apothecary roused the remaining servants who carried their master in stately procession to the charnel pit at 13.

28

Fire*Wolf watched exhausted as the villagers set about to collect their dead. Even with his timely assistance, it had been a disaster - and an omen of things to come if he did not quickly find the Orb.

'We are grateful to you, stranger.'

Fire*Wolf turned wearily. The voice belonged to a stocky, grey-haired man in his sixties, presumably the village headman. Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'It is nothing.'

'It was everything. Without you, many more would have died. Have you come from Pelimandar?'

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'Is it true the great King is dead?'

'True enough,' Fire*Wolf sighed. 'He was murdered.'

'Bad times are come on us,' the man said philosophically. He gave a wan smile. 'You must stay a while with us, Warrior. Our hospitality will be small repayment for your courage, but -'

Fire*Wolf waved a hand. 'I require no repayment and in any case I cannot tarry. I seek the Lake of Serpentine Deep on a -'

It was a woman's voice which interrupted him. 'The Lake of Serpentine Deep? You must not go there: it is a place of ill omen from which no one returns.'

Fire*Wolf glanced at her, a sturdy peasant woman with an air of common sense about her. 'Nonetheless,' he said gently, 'I must go there.' A thought occurred to him. 'Perchance one of you might have sufficient knowledge to guide me on the way?'

A small crowd had collected and he could see at once the mixed emotions his words had roused. They looked from one to another fearfully and in silence, shifting uncomfortably. Then -suddenly a new voice came. 'I shall guide you, sir. We owe you our lives, those of us who remain.'

To his astonishment, it was a little girl who pushed

through the crowd, no more than nine years old, but with the eyes and carriage of someone far older. 'My name is Velda,' she said simply.

Despite himself, Fire*Wolf smiled. 'I doubt your parents would allow you to accompany me,' he said gently.

But the girl merely shrugged. 'My parents are dead.'

The man he had taken to be the village headman drew him to one side and spoke quietly. 'Do not dismiss her for her years, stranger. She is the best of our people. Her parents were Healers and she has her own store of witch-lore, despite her age.' The voice dropped even lower. 'They say she may one day become Gegum, although the witch-nuns choose their own from what I have heard.'

'But does she know the way to the Lake of Serpentine Deep?' Fire*Wolf frowned.

'Better than any of us. She was with her parents at that accursed place when they were killed.'

Fire*Wolf glanced at the girl Velda who was watching them coolly, then made up his mind abruptly. The situation was too critical to permit scruples. He bowed formally in her direction. 'Very well, Velda - you shall guide me.'

Despite Fire*Wolf's protestations, the villagers insisted he remained overnight, but dawn saw him and his young companion preparing to set off.

'I know a short cut,' Velda told him. 'It is difficult and you cannot take your horse, but it will shorten the journey by almost two days.'

'You think we can manage it on foot?' Fire*Wolf asked diplomatically.

Velda gave him a look far in advance of her years, then shrugged and said, 'I don't see why not - you look fit enough to me.'

The route she took him led directly up the stony mountain and was, as she predicted, difficult. But if he had had any worries about his companion they soon faded. She was tough and sure-footed as a mountain goat.

They slept rough the first night, curled together for warmth, and late morning of the following day saw them negotiating a narrow ledge with a sheer drop to the left. Velda was in the lead, as unconcerned as if she were strolling along a country road.

Neither had the slightest premonition of danger until the Rock Leopard emerged from a cave on the right no more than ten feet from the girl, blocking their passage with a sleek snarl of fury.

*Fight or run - the options are obviously limited. If Fire*Wolf elects to fight, turn to 9. Should he decide, uncharacteristically, to run, go to 53.*

29

Fire*Wolf awoke with a start, his mind full of the incident of the night before. But Wilderness habits deeply engrained surfaced now, and with an effort of will he dismissed the whole thing from his mind. No action could be taken, no immediate solution found, thus no time should be wasted on the matter when there were other, more pressing, interests.

He arose naked from his bed and selected an apple from

the bowl, absently peeling it with the ceremonial dagger he had worn the night before while his mind drifted over the agenda for the day. When he had eaten, bathed and dressed, he must prepare himself for the morning meeting with Voltar. He wished to persuade the King to use some of the realm's Power reserves to create an energy reserve which should improve the crop yield of a particularly arid region. The King -

Fire*Wolf sucked his breath in sharply. He had managed to cut his thumb with the ceremonial dagger. He examined the wound, but it was too minor even to require a bandage. His mind drifted again as he bit into the apple.

The King might prove difficult to convince, for he maintained that Power must always be conserved to protect the Kingdom against possible Spawn activity. Fire*Wolf, by contrast - possible Spawn activity. . . possible Spawn .. possible .. .

Fire*Wolf's mind was reeling his vision blurred. He doubled in sudden agony as violent cramps erupted in his stomach and turned his legs to rubber.

Poison! Poison in the fruit! The symptoms were all too obvious and their intensity suggested he had little time to take action.

But what should he do?

*If Fire*Wolf makes himself vomit in hopes of voiding the poison, go to 19.*

Should he call for the servants to fetch an apothecary? If so turn to 27.

Will he — in this extremity - use one of his sorcerous spells; and if so, which one? If the decision is sorcery, go to 6.

Or perhaps he might bleed the wound from the ceremonial dagger lest that was how the poison entered him. If so, go to 39.

One thing is certain: he has time for just one option..

30

The ring glowed brightly on Fire*Wolf's finger as he began the monumental task of sifting the old King's papers yet again. And perhaps something in the jewel added to his luck, for in less than fifteen minutes his eye caught something he had previously missed — a passing mention of the Lake of Serpentine Deep in connection with a mysterious Golden Orb.

The reference intrigued him, for somewhere in the back of his mind was a memory of the location of Serpentine Deep: not a definite location to be sure, but a definite direction at least - a place to go to start his search.

But should he in fact attempt to find Serpentine Deep on such slim evidence? If his decision is to do so, go to 79. If, on the other hand, he decides to visit the Gegum Convent, turn to 54.

31

It was an unusual and imaginative usage of a spell usually reserved by sorcerers for combat situations. But unusual or not in this instance, Fire*Wolf's perceptions of success were accurate. Returned in Time to the point of his waking, but with foresight of his danger, he ignored the fruit, bathed and dressed thoughtfully, then called for the steed which would bear him to the Palace for his meeting with the King.

He rode without retinue, as was his habit, despite the

conviction that he was, for reasons unknown, the target of a determined attempt at assassination.

Something of his mood must have shown on his face as he entered the private audience chamber which the King used when meeting with his closest advisers, for Voltar said at once, 'Lord Xandine, what ails you?'

Briefly, Fire*Wolf outlined the events of the night and morning. King Voltar listened with growing consternation, then laid his hand on Fire*Wolf's arm. The assassin is dead,' he remarked, 'but when a warrior breaks his sword, it is a small thing to buy another. We must determine who is behind these things. Have you enemies?'

Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'All men have enemies,' he said philosophically. 'But I had not thought to have any who might want to kill me.'

'Have you thought perhaps of Braaster?' asked the King.

Fire*Wolf frowned. Braaster? He had not thought of the man — indeed he scarcely knew him. Braaster was the son of Noble Lamarand, Captain of the Guardians who I I policed the realm. Neither father nor son had any overt quarrel with Fire*Wolf or the policies he stood for, but there was one thing ...

'Freya?' asked Fire*Wolf.

The King nodded. 'Freya and Braaster were affianced as children. An outmoded custom now, to be sure, and one I have been glad to dismiss from Harn. But might not Braaster have taken it more seriously than Freya? And might he not now nurse a grievance that the Lord Xandine has stepped between him and a useful marriage?'

'I doubt it,' Fire*Wolf said. 'I scarcely know the man, but if he has been harbouring a grievance, then surely Freya would know and would have told me.'

This time it was the King's turn to shrug. 'Who can say?' he asked, 'In matters of the heart many things are unpredictable. But whether or not it is Braaster, it is certainly someone - and it is certainly vital to discover who that someone might be. You have had no hint from any quarter?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head.

'In that case,' said the King, 'you must seek advice from the State Oracle.' He held up a hand to still Fire*Wolf's half-uttered protest. 'Take it,' he added smiling slightly, 'as a Royal Command.'

*Put like that, it becomes difficult to resist.
Fire*Wolf bows gravely and makes his way to 4.*

32

Fire*Wolf entered the Council Hall to discover he was the last to arrive. Olric was seated at the head of the Great Table of State and the only seat unoccupied was Fire*Wolf's own. He noticed Lamarand, the Captain of the Guardians was there, pale and drawn.

The meeting was tense, sorrowful and brief. Olric's succession to power was formally confirmed and the remainder of the time was devoted to arrangements for the State funeral. The question of Power reserves for the arid agricultural region arose briefly and Olric, more sympathetic to the idea of establishing a force-field in that region, instructed Fire*Wolf to proceed with a technical investigation as soon as possible.

Then the Councillors sat, heads bowed in silent tri-

bute, and it was done. The King was dead, but the business of the realm still moved on.

As he was leaving the chamber, Fire*Wolf found Lamarand at his side. 'Sad times, Xandine,' he remarked.

Fire*Wolf nodded, too choked in his own grief to speak.

'Sad and dangerous,' said Lamarand. 'I had a report of the attempt on your own life last night.' He hesitated briefly, then added, 'The body of the assassin you killed - where is it now?'

Surprised, Fire*Wolf said, 'In an outbuilding at my home. My servants were instructed to file the usual report with your department.'

'So they did,' said Lamarand. 'Except that when my men called to inspect it, the body was no longer there.'

Fire*Wolf stared at him for a moment, then said, 'I shall investigate the matter.'

*But when? Fire*Wolf's emotional needs are drawing him to work in order to forget the tragedy of the fate which has befallen his friend the King. Until Lamarand spoke, he had planned to begin immediately his investigation of the Power reserve and forcefield. And with Olic's instruction, it would be politic to do so at once. If Fire*Wolf follows his inclination, turn to 12. If, on the other hand, he decides to check on the disappearance of the assassin's body, go to 22.*

33

It was a strange experience for Fire*Wolf to be guided by so frail a waif, yet her frailty, as he quickly came to discover, was appearance only, for at times she moved so swiftly as to leave him panting.

The going was far from easy. On two occasions they had near misses from rockfalls, and once Fire*Wolf almost lost his footing completely to tumble over a thirty-foot crevasse. Wilderness instincts and a stubborn determination kept him going, while the temperature dropped to a biting chill and mist roiled around them both to confuse the senses.

Despite it all, the child remained certain of her way, and despite it all, Fire*Wolf trusted her. And as it transpired, his trust was justified. When they reached a narrow gap between two towering rocks, the girl stepped through and pointed downwards.

'There,' she said: 'There is your destination.'

Fire*Wolf followed her finger. The tortuous path plunged steeply downwards into a solid wall of fog which curled impatient tendrils up towards them.

'That is Serpentine Deep?' he asked, bewildered.

'It lies beyond the mist. But you must go from here alone.'

Fire*Wolf glanced at her. 'Why? Will you not continue to guide me?'

She shook her head dumbly. 'I fear the mist. It is a beast which kills slowly, without warning and none can fight it; only endure. They say only the strongest can survive its chill embrace, but I know of none who have returned from it alive.'

Fire*Wolf stared down into the fog, wondering if this was some village superstition. Although dense, it seemed a natural enough mist to him. He turned to question the girl further, but she was gone.

*Which actually leaves the brave Fire*Wolf little option but to press on into the mist, which he may do at 57.*

34

A single glance at Olric's face told Fire*Wolf a new crisis had arisen. 'What is it, old friend?' he asked quietly.

For answer, Olric led him to the King's own chamber, past stone-faced guards and into the room itself. A distinct smell of must hung in the air. Fire*Wolf looked around, but could see nothing to explain Olric's consternation.

'Voltar was slain here,' Olric said.

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'The King's body has been removed, of course,' Olric went on. 'But the body of his assassin was left so that Lamarand's men could examine it. The room was guarded and I am assured the guards did not leave their post.'

'Then where is the body?' Fire*Wolf asked.

'Missing,' Olric told him tersely. 'It is impossible, yet it has happened. Lamarand tells me the body of the man who attempted to kill you has also disappeared.'

'So it seems,' said Fire*Wolf drily.

Olric sighed. 'You are Xandine bloodline, Fire*Wolf, and have studied sorcery, though I know you do not like it overmuch. I sent for you to find out whether sorcery might have done this thing.'

'Spirited away the body?' Fire*Wolf shook his head slowly. 'I know of no spell to do so. In sorcery, any-

thing is theoretically possible, but the power expenditure on something of this sort would be immense. I know of no one in Harn who has such reserves.'

It was a deeply disturbing situation. When Olric dismissed him, Fire*Wolf went brooding to the late King's study. Despite the mystery, he still had work to do.

Which he may begin at 3.

35

The old Wilderness habits reasserted themselves as Fire*Wolf moved carefully to search the plateau. For a time he found nothing, then some instinct carried him to a narrow gap between two towering rocks. Squeezing through with difficulty, he found himself on a winding track leading down into a dense, swirling mist.

The route to Serpentine Deep? Perhaps, but the mist looks anything but inviting, a roiling maelstrom in which a man could all too easily get lost forever. Will our hero take the path? If so, turn to 57. If not, go to 47.

36

Like a stallion forced to walk on ice, Fire*Wolf touched the ring again. And again the drainage came - 16 LIFE POINTS this time.

Much less than before, but enough perhaps to kill him: if so, go to 13. If not, you will find him, alive but shaken, at 21.

37

*No amount of magical armouring will slow the poison. Fire*Wolf, well protected from his enemies, sinks slowly to 13.*

38

Archimandine, the Palace Physician, was a man of skill and eccentricity. He was not native-born Harn, as the colour of his skin attested, but had lived so long in the Kingdom that few had any real idea of his birthplace. Fire*Wolf found him in his private chambers, brooding over something quite repulsive in a glass jar.

He glanced up as Fire*Wolf entered. 'You look unwell, Xandine,' he remarked in his curiously accented guttural tones. 'You have need of my services?'

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'My life force has been weakened.' 'A wound or poison?' Archimandine asked, rising. His grey eyes travelled quickly over Fire*Wolfs body. 'There is no indication of a wound.'

'Neither wound nor poison,' Fire*Wolf told him. 'A type of sorcery.'

Archimandine nodded sourly. 'Always the most difficult for a healer. A question of counter-magic usually, which can be risky.'

Fire*Wolf, who had little experience of healing other than the hellish restoration brought about by the use of his Doomsword, frowned and asked, 'How great a risk?'

Archimandine shrugged. 'With counter-magic there is an even chance you may be drained even further. If that happens, there is an unquantifiable chance the cure might actually kill you.'

Which is heavy news from one's doctor. If Fire Wolf decides to risk the healing process, turn to 62. If he prefers to soldier on in his present depleted state, he*

has the choice of searching the King's papers again at 30 or visiting the Gegum at 54.

39

With no blade convenient other than the one which might have poisoned him, Fire*Wolf reverted in his extremity to the Wilderness Way of his Barbarian upbringing and sank strong teeth into his own flesh to rip open a wider wound.

Blood flowed copiously, but the convulsive spasms wracking his body in no way diminished.

When the convulsions cease, you will find our hero resting gratefully - if only momentarily - at 13.

40

He found the Palace in an uproar, servants and guards racing hither and yon in such confusion that he had considerable difficulty discovering where the body of the assassin had been placed. But he found it eventually and while the clothing yielded nothing, as he had expected, the body itself had a tiny half-inch scar almost hidden by the hairline. It told Fire*Wolf nothing. He left the chamber and its grisly contents and hurried to the meeting of the Council.

Which he can enter at 32.

41

*Fire*Wolf returns to the section of his choice . . . in which comfortable surroundings he dies in agony from the poison. Go to 13.*

42

Although it almost wrenched his fiery spirit from his body, Fire*Wolf realized his quest for the Orb was

ultimately more important than the fate of a few villagers. For the greater good to prevail, he must take no unnecessary chances with his life.

But the path he had taken lay through the village itself, which meant he must now find somewhere to hide himself until the danger had passed. Moving cautiously to avoid attracting attention from below, he eventually discovered a convenient cave-mouth and secreted himself inside. He waited, listening with pounding heart to the distant screams.

Eventually, an eternity later, all was silence. Still Fire*Wolf did not stir. His Wilderness upbringing had long taught him to make no precipitate move in a situation of this sort. He listened, patiently, and eventually his patience was rewarded. The first faint distant whine of the greenship engines reached him, certain indication that the Demonspawn were in the process of taking their leave.

The vibrations of the greenship grew greater, more pronounced, as the craft swept up and out in his direction. Fire*Wolf moved back cautiously, deeper into the cave, determined he should not be spotted now. The noise of the greenship filled the cavern. . . then was drowned abruptly by a louder, threatening rumble.

He had just time to glance upwards as the cave roof cracked apart.

A nasty way to go, buried under tons of rock. But go he must - to 13.

43

Fire*Wolf followed the path with difficulty. The going was far harder than he had anticipated. On four separate

occasions only his Wilderness instincts saved him from serious injury in sudden rockfalls.

But he persevered and eventually, still uninjured, reached the top, a mist-enshrouded plateau where his forward visibility was reduced to a few feet.

He glanced back and found he could still see the village clearly, far below. But ahead, dense fog hid everything. Was this really where the girl was leading him? He did not know. But he did know he had little option other than press on. He had to find a path downwards, a route that would take him safely through the mist and down the other side of the mountain.

*He had to... but will he succeed? As Fire*Wolf diligently searches the plateau for a path, you must roll one die to determine the result of his endeavours. Score 1 or 2 and go to 35. Score 3 to 6 and go to 64.*

44

As Fire*Wolf collected breath and emotions, he realized abruptly that the villagers were clumped some distance from him, watching him warily.

The danger is over!' he called. But still no one moved and the unease was clear on their faces. The thought struck him that they might be frightened by the Doomsword and he quickly put away the humming blade, but it made no difference to their attitude. If anything, they seemed to be more interested in Voltar's ring, now glowing brightly since the battle.

Impatient with the mystery, Fire*Wolf approached the villagers. The Spawn will not return,' he said with, perhaps, more confidence than he felt. When no one

answered, he shrugged and asked, 'Is there any here who knows the route to the Lake of Serpentine Deep?'

If they had seemed uneasy before, they appeared positively fearful now. For a moment he thought there would be none to answer him, but then an ancient crone pushed forward. 'Shame on you!' she chastised her fellow villagers. 'Can you not see this one bears the sign of Ancient Power?' Then to Fire*Wolf she said, 'The way is dangerous, but I will guide you.'

'You, Mother?' asked Fire*Wolf in surprise, unable to hide the concern in his voice.

She favoured him with a cynical glance. 'I shall try to set a pace that will not tire you overmuch,' she said.

By the time they set out an hour later, Fire*Wolf had learned the woman's name was Llanda and old or not, she was tough and enduring as shoe-leather. She led him to the base of the mountain then began to climb a broad pathway winding upwards. As he followed, he lost his earlier concern. Years of hard living had obviously toughened her to a degree where she could indeed set a hard pace.

They rested once and shortly after resuming their climb reached the entrance of a looming cave. Llanda led him in without a word.

Fire*Wolf paused. He had spent his formative years in underground caverns and passageways — the Stone Village of his childhood was one such labyrinth - but nothing in his previous experience had prepared him for this. Eerie lights flickered everywhere and dense shadows writhed and curled all around him. Underfoot was dry sand, with no indication of footprints other than their own.

He started to speak, but the old woman quickly gestured him to silence. There was tension on her face now, as if they had reached a particularly perilous part of their journey. She led him from the cave down a descending tunnel, moving far more slowly, silently and cautiously now than she had done on the mountain path. A dozen questions pressed in on Fire*Wolf's tongue, but he remained silent.

They had descended what seemed several hundred feet when a fetid gust of air assailed them with the foulest smell he had ever experienced. Llanda swung round, eyes wide. 'It is awake!' she hissed in sudden alarm.

'What is awake?' Fire*Wolf asked. But there was no need for her to answer. In a rush of sullen fume, the creature which had caused the stench roared up towards them from the depths.

With no opportunity to hide or flee, Fire*Wolf drew the Doomsword. Strain though he would, he could not quite determine the true shape of the monster as patches of luminosity seemed to flicker and fade across its entire body.

'Satzensquash!' Llanda screamed, pointing. The stench flooded the air and she turned to the wall retching.

*This overgrown skunk is a creature to be reckoned with . . . and its 900 LIFE POINTS may yet prove the least of Fire*Wolf's worries. It will strike successfully on a 5 or better, doing him +20 damage with rending claws. Relevant stats for the beast are: SPEED 90; COURAGE 200; LUCK 50; STAMINA 400. Bad though this is, the most fearsome aspect of the Squash is its smell, which will increase dramatically each time Fire*Wolf makes a success-*

*ful strike against it, draining 8 points of Fire*Wolf's STRENGTH in the process. If Fire*Wolf can defeat this malodorous creature, proceed to 49. If not, he will have to breathe the clean sweet air of 13.*

45

There were two Gegum Convents in Pelimandar. One was situated somewhere in the endless warrens of the ancient inner city and received no visitors whatsoever of the male sex in any circumstances - or so the common gossip had it. The other, known as the Exoteric Convent, lay, like so many important buildings, on the outskirts, a forbidding structure of grey granite which discouraged visitors, but did not absolutely forbid them.

Nonetheless, Fire*Wolf approached it with a certain trepidation. Despite his high office and easy familiarity with the ruling establishment of Harn, the Gegum were almost as much an uneasy mystery to him as they were to the meanest peasant.

Official histories of the Kingdom suggested the Order had been founded not in Harn, but in distant Arcadia, although the Gegum had reached Harn so many centuries ago that no one could be certain when (or even where) their first Convent had been established in the Kingdom. They professed no allegiance to the nation's ruler and remained strictly neutral in conflicts - even the bitter historical conflicts with the invading Demonspawn. Yet through wars and natural disasters, the Order remained untouched. There was a reason for this, the common people said; and the reason was witchcraft.

Fire*Wolf shuddered at the thought. If he was a reluctant sorcerer by force of circumstance, there re-

mained enough of the Barbarian in his soul to abhor witchcraft completely. Yet it was impossible to pretend the Gegum did evil, just as it was difficult to maintain they did good. The plain fact was that no one, outside the Order itself, knew exactly what they did. The nuns trained in arts forbidden to men and engaged in pursuits that were utterly incomprehensible.

From time to time their activities were of benefit to the Kingdom. The Order had, for centuries, trained the State Oracle. It made occasional - and sometimes remarkably generous - donations to certain State projects, notably those concerned with education. There were even instances in which the ruling Abbess of the day offered advice on political questions, although without the least concern about whether or not it was followed. But it was all erratic, unpredictable and rare, Fire*Wolf himself had never, to his knowledge, even seen a Gegum. And he was not entirely looking forward to seeing one now.

The building was unguarded. The witch-nuns had no need for mundane weapons, for legend had it that any attack on their cloister - in Harn or any other kingdom - was doomed to failure before it even began. And whether by witchcraft or the power of this belief, no Attack had succeeded for none had been attempted within living memory or historical investigation.

The Convent was walled, its only entrance barred by a solid wooden doorway lacking ornamentation or even handle. Fire*Wolf hesitated, then raised his hand and firmly knocked. The sound reverberated hollowly.

Almost as if someone had been waiting for him on the far side of the door, a small panel slid back. He had a brief impression of cool grey-blue eyes regarding him,

then a soft voice murmured, 'We acknowledge you, Lord Xandine. What is your business with our Order?'

Despite himself, he felt a shiver crawling down his spine. The voice was young, melodious, not at all what he had expected and with considerable erotic undertones. But dalliance was the last thing on his mind. He took a deep breath to steady himself, then said calmly enough, 'I seek audience with your Abbess on a matter of vital concern to the Kingdom.'

'I would see your hands, Lord Xandine.'

His hands? Fire*Wolf stared down at his hands, still hard and calloused from the weapons training.

Through the opening, if you please, My Lord.'

It was phrased politely enough, but he thought he detected a hint of irony in the tone. On sudden impulse, he thrust both hands through the opening.

After the briefest instant, the voice said, 'Thank you.' And as he withdrew his hands, the panel slid shut. But the door remained firmly closed. He waited, then knocked again, impatiently. There was no answer, no explanation, and the Convent remained barred against him.

Why did they want to see his hands? Why did they not admit him? He had no answer, but he knew his case was not unique. The Gegum went their own way without explanation. Aristocrat and commoner were treated with equal disdain.

*For a man of action such as Fire*Wolf, this is a situation of almost intolerable frustration. But what can he do? If the Gegum represent a blind alley, perhaps he should search the old King's papers more*

*thoroughly to see if he can discover any further information on the Golden Orb. Should he follow this course, go to **59**. Or perhaps Olric could advise him on how to reach the Gegum — he seemed to recall that the Knight Regent had once successfully visited the Convent, although what he found there he never talked about. If Fire*Wolf decides to seek Olric's advice, go to **5**. Or perhaps there was more to the matter of King Voltar's ring than he had previously thought. Should he abandon his immediate (and urgent) quest to claim his legacy? If so and Fire*Wolf has already tried to claim the ring, go to **26**. If this is, however, his first attempt to claim the ring, turn instead to **18**.*

46

Fire*Wolf pushed the Leopard's corpse off the ledge and set off with a heavy heart. Guilt gnawed at his vitals like an animal. Surely he could have saved her?

But guilt-ridden or not, he still had his quest; and now, without his little guide, he still had to find his way, unaided, up the mountain.

*Which is probably not so easy as it sounds. The mountain has more perils than the occasional Rock Leopard. One of the most frequent is rockfalls. Roll two dice now for Fire*Wolf. Score 5 or below and he has been struck by a falling rock. If struck, roll two dice and multiply the result by 4 to determine the amount of damage.*

*If Fire*Wolf is killed in this way, go to **13**. If he survives, go to **43**.*

47

The mist pressed in on him as he searched for another route downwards. He felt chill and strangely listless as if he were weakened by loss of blood.

*That feeling is not subjective. Roll two dice to determine how many LIFE POINTS Fire*Wolf has lost at this time. Then decide whether he continues searching at 64 or returns to the path through the rocks at 57.*

48

As was his custom, he travelled swiftly, seeking the more direct route above the convenience of easy roads: not that there were many easy roads in this remote and desolate region. On the first night of his journey, he pitched camp in the lee of a small rock ridge, but it seemed as though he had only just stretched his weary frame on the sleepcloak when he found himself awake, every Wilderness instinct alive and tingling.

The sound, when it came, was unmistakable, a low, coughing grunt followed by the barest hint of a sigh. There was a Desert Lion nearby!

Fire*Wolf was on his feet in the instant. The tawny carnivore was not the largest of the great cats, but it was one of the swiftest and most ferocious, willing to hunt anything for food. His nostrils twitched: the beast was close - too close.

At the sound of a pebble, Fire*Wolf turned. Then he saw the yellow flash of the eyes as the Lion launched itself upon him.

At the same time, there was a fearsome coughing roar from his right! Not one Desert Lion, but two!

Each Lion has the following statistics:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	90
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	85
SKILL	60
LUCK	20
CHARM	10
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	395

*Fire*Wolf has no option other than to fight. The Lions will attack him consecutively. If Fire*Wolf survives this unfortunate encounter, turn to 102. If he succumbs, his fate lies only at 13.*

49

As the acrid stench subsided, Fire*Wolf felt his STRENGTH return. The corpse of the Squash was already decomposing at his feet, turning into thick green slime which oozed through the sandy floor.

He turned and went to Llanda, who was still shaken by the encounter, but she shook off his comforting hand impatiently. 'I'll survive,' she said shortly. 'I'll survive.' Then, less abruptly, she added, 'You do indeed bear the mark of Ancient Power, Lord Xandine.'

He was tempted to ask her what she meant, but already she was off, pushing downwards through the passage as if determined to show he had no need to worry himself on her account. He followed her until the passage turned, then almost walked into her back. A glance ahead showed him instantly why she had stopped. Half Mocking the passage was a rearing Serpent of gigantic dimensions.

*After so recent an encounter with the Squash, is it wise for Fire*Wolf to fight now? If you feel he should fight, turn to 58. If discretion is the better part of valour, turn to 65.*

50

Summoning up every ounce of instinct which had preserved him in the Wilderness, Fire*Wolf edged past the girl, Doomsword in hand, eyes locked on the tawny shape crouched on the ledge. His caution was rewarded, for the Leopard, which might have killed them both quite easily during this delicate manoeuvre, remained waiting until Fire*Wolf, past the girl at last, launched himself upon it.

The Rock Leopard has the following stats:

STRENGTH	75
SPEED	98
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	90
SKILL	65
LUCK	35
CHARM	10
ATTRACTION	8
LIFEPOINTS	431

Fang and claw damage give it a natural +5.

*Should the Leopard kill Fire*Wolf, go to 13. Should he kill the Leopard, turn to 11.*

51

There were tendrils of mist at the end of the tunnel. The old woman walked onwards without hesitation, but stopped as they reached the mouth. The tunnel, Fire*Wolf saw, had cut completely through the mountain to emerge on the other side.

She pointed downwards into the roiling bank of fog. There,' she said, 'is Serpentine Deep. No one knows what lies beyond the mist, for no one has ever been there and returned.'

'Will you continue to lead me?' Fire*Wolf asked quietly. But the old woman shook her head.

The mist is dangerous,' she said. 'Some say it is a living creature. You are young and strong, but even you may not survive. For me to go further would be certain doom.'

*Not the best situation to be in at this crucial time. Should Fire*Wolf venture into the deadly mist? If so go to 68. Should he turn back, he will find himself at 72.*

52

The fog was so dense it was a matter of feeling his way almost inch by inch. Cautiously he edged forward, losing track of time, and eventually sensed, rather than saw, a turning to the south. The track he was currently following continued eastwards.

There is something about this fog that is doing our hero no good at all. Roll two dice and deduct the score from his LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, he still has the problem of where to go. Continuing east will take him to 71. Turning south takes him to 66. Or he can, of course, backtrack to 81 or 51.

53

Fire*Wolf grabbed the girl, fighting successfully to keep his balance, and backed away slowly from the Leopard. The sleek feline began to stalk forward.

Fire*Wolf shouted loudly in the hope of frightening it off. The sound echoed and reverberated across the mountain ... and was answered by a low rumbling as the vibrations set off a rock slide!

*Sometimes you just can't win. The girl, tucked in close to the cliff wall, will be safe enough, but you should roll two dice on behalf of Fire*Wolf. Double the score and subtract the result from his LIFE POINTS. If Fire*Wolf is killed, go to 13. If he survives, he will find the rockfall has frightened off the Leopard at 33.*

ENCOUNTER WITH THE GEGUM

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Angrily, he turned to leave... and the door opened behind him.

Fire*Wolf turned and stifled a gasp of surprise. Nothing had prepared him for the woman in the doorway. In Gegum white, limned with the russet trim that denoted an initiate of the Order, she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. Even his beloved Freya paled by comparison. She smiled serenely and stepped aside with a gesture. 'You may enter, Lord Xandine.'

Fire*Wolf walked through more brusquely than he had intended and found himself within an enclosed courtyard. The Convent buildings towered on all sides and in the colonnaded cloisters white-robed women walked with feline elegance about their business. All seemed as strikingly lovely as the woman who had admitted him. He glanced back and found her smiling ironically at him as if she had read his mind.

Fire*Wolf swallowed. 'I wish. . .' he began.

To see the Abbess Lipta,' the woman finished for him. 'Her Serenity expects you. Please follow me.'

Expects? He had sent no messenger to announce his visit. But the questions that arose in his mind were stilled in his throat. Inexplicably, he found this Convent more daunting even than the Crypts of Terror where he had once earned sorcerous power.

The woman took him along a lengthy corridor, up a short flight of stairs and through a wooden door into what seemed to be a private study. 'Her Serenity will join you in a moment,' she said.

Alone, Fire*Wolf seized his opportunity to examine the leather-bound tomes which lined the walls. To his astonishment, the first he opened proved to be a manual of erotic arts, delicately illustrated with fine line drawings.

'An interesting work, Lord Xandine, but a trifle unsophisticated,' said a voice behind him.' 'The subtle interplay of energies is not mentioned at all for example.'

Fire*Wolf turned and, flushing red, set down the book. The woman who had entered was old beyond imagining, yet upright, calm, collected, and with that same feline grace which had marked the other nuns. The air of power that clung to every movement marked her as clearly as the purple trim of her white robe. This was the Abbess Lipta.

He bowed.

'Oh come, Fire*Wolf,' she said easily, 'we must not stand on ceremony, you and I. We have much in common. I too was a warrior once and now -' she spread her slim hands disarmingly, '— they insist I practise sorcery however much I seek to deny it. Please sit and we shall have mead and you shall tell me how things are in the great Kingdom without our walls.' She moved towards a chair and without visible signal, a novice of the Order appeared bearing goblets of sweet honey-mead.

Fire*Wolf sat too, uneasily. 'Matters of State do not go well, Serenity,' he said without preamble. 'You may know King Voltar has been murdered.'

Indeed. And a great tragedy. I met him once and found him wise.' She paused almost imperceptibly and added, 'For a man.'

'His death was a personal loss,' said Fire*Wolf bluntly, 'but that is not why I am here.'

'No,' the Abbess agreed. 'You are here because you fear the forcefield which protects the Kingdom from the Demonspawn is crumbling.'

He stared at her. 'How did you know that?'

The Abbess Lipta shrugged. There has been no trouble from the Spawn for a decade. Voltar was a skilled sorcerer — perhaps the most skilled Harn has ever known. It is a reasonable deduction to imagine he would have used Power in such a manner; and a reasonable deduction that his art must die with him.' She sipped from her brimming goblet. 'In fact, Fire*Wolf, your fears are well founded. The field has already broken down in places. Soon your new King will receive reports of Demonspawn raiders in the remoter areas. These creatures can sense weakness. Already they gather in strength on the borders.'

Stunned, Fire*Wolf gasped, 'How do you know?'

In the Gegum Way,' the Abbess Lipta said unhelpfully. 'But how may we poor nuns assist you?'

Heart pounding, Fire*Wolf leaned forward in his chair. Never for an instant did it occur to him to doubt what she had told him. 'I have heard,' he said, 'of a Golden Orb with which the forcefield might be renewed. I have also heard your Order may know something of this artifact.'

'Indeed?' murmured the Abbess. She sipped her mead absently. 'It seems to me I did once hear mention of something of the sort in connection with the Vale of Illusion.'



The ancient Abbess of the Gegum

'The Vale of Illusion?' Fire*Wolf asked.

'An area supposed to lie to the north-west of Harn,' the Abbess said. 'Doubtless no more than a myth, as the Orb is probably a myth.' She smiled at him without warmth. 'I am no longer young. I find it increasingly difficult to sustain romantic notions of mysterious artifacts of power.'

*But in that, at least, Fire*Wolf did not believe her. When he took his leave, his mind was firmly set. If there was even a slim chance that the Orb existed, he must find it. Thus, he would seek the Vale of Illusion, for with the forcefield crumbling, he had no better place to go. And if you have no better place to go, you may follow him on his journey at 48.*

55

Fire*Wolf groped his way along until an upsurge of the Wilderness instinct told him the path turned north. He followed it, but eventually struck solid rock - another dead-end.

*Perhaps literally - throw two dice and subtract the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, turn to 13. If he survives, his only option is to backtrack to 63.*

56

The choice of route proved ill founded. After only a few steps, the ring-light showed his way completely blocked by a sheer rockface.

*Roll one die and deduct the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If he survives, his only option is to retrace his steps to 68.*

57

Fire*Wolf stepped into the mist and was at once seized by difficulty in breathing. There was pressure in his ears and a feeling of oppression embraced him like a sullen lover. He could see nothing but the mist. The path had disappeared. The surroundings had disappeared. One single step had taken him into a swirling world of mystery and confusion.

Stumbling, fumbling, he edged his way forward, Wilderness instincts honed to their finest edge. Eventually he sensed rather than saw that he had reached some sort of division in his route, a T-junction running east and west.

*Which way to go? But before that decision is made, Fire*Wolf is in a little more trouble than he imagines. Roll two dice and deduct the score from his current LIFE POINTS. There is something in the fog which is subtly sapping his strength. If the energy loss kills him, go to 13. Otherwise, he may choose to travel west to 81 or east to 52.*

58

Fire*Wolf leaped towards the Serpent, Doomsword howling in hellish anticipation.

The creature's stats are:

STRENGTH	98
SPEED	60
STAMINA	55
COURAGE	60
SKILL	30
LUCK	15
CHARM	1
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	319

If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, go to **51**. If not, slither off to **13**.

59

If the decision took an instant, the task itself was considerably more daunting. The totality of the King's papers embraced not only the past decade, but the years before his mystic sleep when he had earned himself the title of 'Magnificent'.

Fire*Wolf set to at a methodical pace, but in an hour came to realize it might take him months to search through every record and scroll. He abandoned the search momentarily and strolled to look through the small window across the sweeping parkland of the Palace grounds. If Voltar knew anything more of the Orb, surely he would have included this knowledge in his testament to Fire*Wolf? There could be nothing more . . . unless ...

Unless there was something the King himself had forgotten, something from the old days, perhaps, the days long before Fire*Wolf's birth when the glory of Harn was at its peak.

Fire*Wolf returned to the table and rang a silver bell. When the servant appeared, he gave instructions for the old State archives to be brought. The man bowed and left, to return some minutes later with a train of helpers carrying a vast series of locked chests. Fire*Wolf stared in horror at the daunting task which faced him, but two hours later, once again alone, the Barbarian gods of his childhood granted him a boon. In an ancient geographical text, he caught a passing reference, no more than a footnote, to the legend of the old woman who had created an Orb of gold. On its own, the reference would have been useless to him, but the

section of the text dealt with the mythology of a specific location and while the words he read had been penned centuries ago, they roused a fresh excitement in his soul. For the place-name written was the Lake of Serpentine Deep, and while distant, the location was at least known to him.

*All the same, should Fire*Wolf set out at once? Might it not be wise to try (again?) to see the Gegum? If so, turn to **45**. But if our impatient hero wishes to follow the clue in the geographical text, he may begin his journey at **70**.*

60

Cautiously, Fire*Wolf began to edge past the girl... and stumbled!

It was over in a single, heart-wrenching instant. The girl teetered, Fire*Wolf grabbed for her and missed, then she tumbled. He watched in horror as the small body arced outwards, screaming - a scream which echoed in his mind long after the reality was cut abruptly into silence.

Fire*Wolf stared over the edge, his mind numb. And the Rock Leopard attacked.

*The Rock Leopard, which gains first strike due to Fire*Wolf's numb paralysis, has the following stats:*

STRENGTH	75
SPEED	98
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	90
SKILL	65
LUCK	35
CHARM	10
ATTRACTION	8
LIFEPOINTS	431

61-62

*Fang and claw damage give it a natural +5. Should the Leopard kill Fire*Wolf, go to 13. Should he kill the Leopard, turn to 46.*

61

With a muttered oath, Fire*Wolf felt his outstretched hands touch rock. A moment's investigation was enough to convince him he had reached a dead-end.

He has also reached the loss of a double dice roll of LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not he had better backtrack to 52.

62

'As you wish,' said Archimandine. 'I must ask you to remove your clothing and any rings or other metallic ornaments you may be wearing.'

Quickly Fire*Wolf undressed. When he was naked, Archimandine gestured him to stand in the centre of the room. Then the Healer squatted in the Shaman manner and began a slow, monotonous chant which wove like woodsmoke through the air to insinuate itself into Fire*Wolf's mind. In a moment he could feel his consciousness dimming, as if he were sinking into a trance.

*Which is precisely what is happening to him. Throw two dice and multiply the result by 10, keeping a note of the final figure. Now throw again. If you score 6 or below on this second throw, Fire*Wolf is in trouble: the figure you have noted should be deducted from his LIFE POINTS. (If the deduction kills him, go to 13.) If he survives, he has the option of risking the healing process again in exactly the same way, or, with even more seriously depleted*

63-64

LIFE POINTS, searching the King's papers again at 30 or visiting the Gegum Convent at 54. Should your second roll score above 6, however, the figure you noted should be added to his LIFE POINTS - although the addition cannot bring him beyond his original total. When this is done, he has the option of a second healing as before, or leaving to search the King's papers at 30, or visiting the Gegum Convent at 54.

63

Fire*Wolf stumbled and ran headlong into a rockfall. At first he thought his way was totally blocked, but investigation soon showed the path had turned westwards. He followed it cautiously and some distance further on the mist thinned sufficiently to show him a turning south, while the path he was following continued west.

*Roll two dice and deduct the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him go to 13. If he survives, he may go west to 55 or turn south to 85.*

64

The mist seemed to thicken as Fire*Wolf searched the plateau. For a time, his Wilderness instincts guided him, but soon he could no longer see the route down to the village, let alone the village itself. He wandered helplessly, growing more and more angry with himself . . . and weaker.

At first the process was so subtle that he was tempted to believe it was imagination, but eventually he could no longer hide from himself the fact that something on this chill and lonely plateau was draining his strength, his very life energies, at an alarming rate.

He squatted to conserve the few remaining LIFE POINTS, but even this made no difference. He grew cold, his mind dimming ...

Like a wounded animal, he will certainly prefer to be left alone to meet his fate which is, unfortunately, at 13.

65

Fire*Wolf pulled back cautiously. 'Is there another route to the Lake of Serpentine Deep?' he asked.

But old Llanda shook her head. 'The serpent is a Guardian,' she whispered, 'and a mystical Guardian to boot. It must be slain anew each time anyone passes here.' She glanced at him in sudden concern. 'But you are weak, Lord Xandine. None will blame you should you decide to return to the village - indeed, you will be revered for your courage in the Spawn attack.'

*Perhaps so, but will Fire*Wolf simply return to the village, however weakened he is now? If he does, turn to 72. If, however, he changes his mind and decides to fight the Serpent, go to 58.*

66

The southerly direction was no easier than any other. But Fire*Wolf persevered until he found a turning to the west. The path he was on continued south.

There is something about this fog that is doing our hero no good at all. Roll two dice and deduct the score from his LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, he still has the problem of where to go. West will take him to 61. Turning south takes him to 76. Or he can, of course, backtrack to 81 or 51.

67

The Doomsword howled in triumph as he drew it from its scabbard and raced down the hill to aid the hard-pressed villagers.

But we may, perhaps, be a shade less confident than the hellish sword. There are, in the village, some dozen Spawn engaged in doing what they do best - pillage, arson, loot and slaughter. Each has the following stats:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	92
STAMINA	95
COURAGE	80
SKILL	50
LUCK	70
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	467

*Each Spawn carries a +10 sword and has call on a single, special spell: a FIREBOLT. To use this spell, the Spawn must sacrifice a double dice roll of LIFE POINTS and throw a 9 or better on two dice. If the spell succeeds, a bolt of green lightning will strike Fire*Wolf for the loss of 75 LIFE POINTS.*

*Naturally, not all these vicious opponents will attack Fire*Wolf simultaneously. While the villagers are losing their battle, they are certainly keeping some of the Demonspawn otherwise engaged. Throw two dice to discover how many of the hellish horde will attack Fire*Wolf. (And be thankful that they will, by nature, attack singly.) If Fire*Wolf succumbs to their assault, go to 13. If he survives, he will find he has mysteriously gained 5 POWER POINTS for every*

Spawn killed and any remaining Demonspawn will flee, permitting him to stagger off to 44.

68

Fire*Wolf stepped on to the path . . . and into the mist which clung to his garments and within moments was leeching the warmth from his body. Voltar's ring on his finger glowed with sudden intensity to cast a pool of light allowing him a limited visibility of about ten yards. It was a small thing, but welcome since without it he might well have missed the pathway to the south. The path he was following continued westwards.

*First roll one die and subtract the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If he survives, you must decide whether he will continue westwards to 56 or take the southern path to 75.*

69

A dazed Fire*Wolf examined his surroundings with the dawning realization that the beautiful apparition had transported him through Time itself. He was back in the old King's room, searching through Voltar's papers, exactly as he had before setting out for the Lake of Serpentine Deep.

The insight chilled him. This was sorcerous power of the highest order. Strange currents were abroad in Harn and with all his experience, he did not understand them. But more importantly, where should he go now? What should he do? What was the secret which would take him beyond that strange lake?

*What indeed? And since Time has turned full circle. Fire*Wolf is locked into only two options. He may visit the Gegum at 45 or claim his legacy of the King's ring at 23.*

70

Fire*Wolf's servants stared at him in astonishment as he appeared in the courtyard to begin his journey. He had abandoned the Xandine finery and was dressed in the rugged homespun of a Barbarian fighting man, the Doomsword, so long unused, so often hidden beneath his robe, now prominent at his side.

He offered no explanation, but his mind was firmly set. He knew from long experience that a noble's cloak or sorcerer's robe could all too often gain him polite deference in place of information; and too great a show of wealth acted as a magnet for brigands and robbers. With the forcefield crumbling, he had no time for chance encounters. To travel alone, as the rude Barbarian he still sometimes felt himself to be, was to travel swiftly. He climbed on his horse and rode from the courtyard without a second glance.

There were maps in his saddlebag, but for this leg of the journey he did not need them. Serpentine Deep lay several days' journey to the north, and for the first four days at least, the territory was familiar to him. He made good time, staying at wayside inns or sleeping rough as necessity required. And as he travelled, a curious mood overtook him, a sense of freedom as if he had turned back the clock to the days when he was a carefree warrior who knew little of sorcery and nothing at all of affairs of State.

The euphoria did not last. No more than a day and a half out of the capital he saw the first signs of Demonspawn activity- A remote, burned-out farmhouse, timbers still smouldering slightly, attracted his attention and when he rode to investigate, the small suspicion flared into absolute conviction. The place had been looted, then burned. On the surface, it might have been

the work of criminals or brigands, but through the smell of charred wood and burned hay, Fire*Wolf caught a subtler stench of sweet decay. He had smelled it once before, far more pronounced than here, in the ravaged city of Belgardium, and would never forget it to the day he died. It was the stink of Demonspawn, a stench that exuded from their bodies like corruption in the excitement of battle.

On the morning of the third day, his path breasted a hill and his stallion, a placid enough animal at most times, reared abruptly so that it required all his skill to remain in the saddle. He spun the beast and calmed him, heart thumping not so much from the stallion's sudden panic as from the glimpse of what had caused it. There was a greenship in the valley, squatting like some foul and monstrous fungus on the outskirts of a village which nestled at the foot of a massive mountain.

As his eyes swept across the village, his worst fears were realized. Spawn raiders were at work - ten or so of them that he could see — and murderous work it was, against a handful of villagers with no better arms than pitchforks. Even at this distance, he could hear the screams.

*And what a dilemma those screams carry on their wings. Fire*Wolf is one man - a seasoned warrior. no doubt, but scarcely a sorcerer now as it is ten years or more since he exercised his magical skills to any real degree and his Power reserves are severely limited. What can one man do against ten Spawn? While every fierce instinct reared to hurl him down the hillside, he knew in his heart that this was a risk he should not take. If he died now at the hands of the Spawn, the Orb might never be found and a*

*greater evil befall the land than the loss of a single village. But will instinct win over judgement? If Fire*Wolf decides to fight the Spawn, turn to 16. If he is prepared to leave the village to its fate, go to 42.*

71

Fire*Wolf groped his way for a further twenty-five yards in the chilling fog before discovering he had reached a dead-end. His questing fingers confirmed the worst: there was some sort of rock barrier here that seemed quite impassable.

That's the bad news. The worst news is that you should roll two dice and deduct the total from his current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, his only option is to return to 52 and try to find his way from there.

72

They welcomed him like a hero, unmindful - or possibly just unaware - of the implications of his failure to reach the Lake of Serpentine Deep. Fire*Wolf determined to remain but a short time only, conscious of the danger to the realm and convinced that with thought and luck he could somehow find another solution. But on the night of his return, a village maiden offered him fermented mare's milk, laced with the pressed juices of an exotic mushroom.

Fire*Wolf drank, unsuspecting, and was transported to a garden of delight. A pleasant numbness was guardian to his soul, so that he had no means of telling how long he dallied with the sloe-eyed beauties in the garden. But the drug-induced experience passed eventually and he awoke weak and thirsty to the nightmare of the Spawn greenships.

73-75

He stood unsteadily, staring upwards in horror, as wave after wave of the hideous vessels sailed gracefully across the mountain top. It was obvious that Voltar's forcefield had completely crumbled and the main invasion had begun. Even as he watched, seven of the greenships detached themselves from the great fleet to hover, then land on the outskirts of the village.

A wave of guilt, regret and sorrow for the fate of Harn welled up in him as he drew his Doomsword for the last time and moved to meet his destiny.

Which lies, regrettably, at 13.

73

It was a dead-end. With dogged determination, Fire*Wolf turned.

But before he backtracks, you should roll two dice and subtract the answer from his current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not he will have to fumble his way back to 76.

74

There was little room and if the girl was small, Fire*Wolf was a bulky man. Although he edged cautiously, he could not afford to linger.

Which means there is considerable danger of his causing her to lose her footing completely. Roll one die. Score 1 or 2 and the girl is safe at 50. Score 3 to 6 and the unpleasant result unfolds at 60.

75

He could see the path was turning westwards and followed it with all his native caution. Eventually he

reached a branch path to the south, while his existing path ran a little further west, then swung north.

*Roll one die and subtract the result from Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If he survives, decide whether he continues on his present path to 77 or takes the southern path to 84.*

76

Fire*Wolf groped his way south until the path he was painfully following swung eastward. He stumbled onwards until he discovered a branch route leading south. His existing path continued east.

As the ever-present fog continues to soak energy from his vitals, roll two dice and deduct the result from his LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If he survives, he may continue east to 73 or take the branch south to 63.

77

The route was clear enough at first, but no sooner had he followed its swing north than he saw it ended abruptly in a landslide.

*Roll one die and subtract the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, his only option is to retrace his steps to 75.*

78

The path eventually turned due south, then west... and the mist thinned! With a silent prayer to his Wilderness gods, Fire*Wolf pushed onward with renewed energy. The ground underfoot was treacherous, but an eerie green light beckoned him forward.

For a time the light seemed to be receding, but abruptly, without warning, he was clear of the mist.

Fire*Wolf was standing in a strange landscape. Before him stretched a vast black lake, its surface mirror still. Tall mountains ringed the shore in all directions and the total landscape was lit with the same weird green light.

He took a deep breath. There was no mistaking the place. He had reached his destination, the Lake of Serpentine Deep. But where to go? What to do? Around him, all was silence and stillness.

What to do indeed? In his weakened state, he may well simply sit down in despair: if so go to 91. But perhaps he has enough enthusiasm left to search the shore, in which case turn to 87. Or should he investigate the lower slopes of those surrounding mountains at 93? Or examine the waters of the lake at 98?

79

Fire*Wolf's servants stared at him in astonishment as he appeared in the courtyard to begin his journey. He had abandoned the Xandine finery and was dressed in the rugged homespun of a Barbarian fighting man, the Doomsword, so long unused, so often hidden beneath his robe, now prominent at his side.

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80

Fire*Wolf stepped through the archway into nightmare. Before him, almost filling a small, high-ceilinged cave, was a creature of myth, a rearing twelve-foot dragon, lizard head wreathed in smoke from the flame plume spitting from its mouth!

*Which gives him the option of fighting at **104** or running at **110**.*

81

There was a faint buzzing in his ears and the mist chilled his bones. Fire*Wolf moved on slowly, but before he had travelled more than a few yards, his outstretched hand touched a sheer rock wall. It was the work of only moments to determine that he had reached a dead-end.

*Which means turning back. But before he does, roll two dice and deduct the total from his current LIFE POINTS. If the deduction kills him, go to **13**. If not, he may fumble his way back to **57** or **52**.*

82

Although he used every tracking skill he had learned in his long years in the Wilderness, Fire*Wolf found nothing.

*This brings him full circle to **86** to reconsider his options.*

83

With a groan of animal frustration, Fire*Wolf felt his hands touch solid rock. Yet another dead-end in this infernal mist!

*Roll two dice and subtract the result from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, turn to **13**. If he survives, although he may well wish he was in **13**, his only option is to backtrack to **63**.*

84

Fire*Wolf turned south and shortly afterwards reached a turning west, while the path he was on continued south. He hesitated. His straining eyes seemed to tell the way south was a dead-end, but he could not be

*Roll two dice and subtract the result from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to **13**. If not, should he double-check the southern path at **99**? Or should he turn westwards at **86**?*

85

The southern route took him through the foggy depths for perhaps thirty yards before he discovered a path running westwards. The path he was on continued south.

*This mist is killing Fire*Wolf by inches. Roll two dice and subtract the result from his current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to **13**. If not, he can take the western path at **78** or continue south at **83**.*

The path eventually turned due south, then west... and the mist thinned! With a silent prayer to his Wilderness gods, Fire*Wolf pushed onward with renewed energy. The ground underfoot was treacherous, but an eerie green light beckoned him forward.

For a time the light seemed to be receding, but abruptly, without warning, he was clear of the mist.

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*What to do indeed? He may decide to search the shore, in which case turn to **82**. Or should he investigate the lower slopes of those surrounding mountains at **94**? Or examine the waters of the lake at **123**?*

87

Fire*Wolf searched the narrow stretch of sand between the dark waters and the towering mountain; and searched with the care and diligence of his Wilderness upbringing. His task took him on a full circle around the great lake, but he discovered nothing.

*Which leaves him only able to return to **78** to reconsider his options.*

88

Fire*Wolf walked through the shimmering archway into a smallish chamber with a raised dais in its centre. For an instant he stopped, stunned. Lying on the dais, flames licking around his prostrate body, was King Voltar the Magnificent. But Voltar was alive! Fire*Wolf could distinctly see the rise and fall of his chest as he breathed! The heat from the fire was intense, yet the King himself did not seem to be burning.

*What a bizarre development. Should Fire*Wolf attempt to rescue the King at **122**? Or search the room at **116**? Or even return to the hall at **102**?*

89

The statistics of the Cave Bear are as follows:

STRENGTH	90
SPEED	40
STAMINA	60
COURAGE	80
SKILL	30
LUCK	10
CHARM	2
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	312

*Should the Bear throw a natural 12 during this combat, it will hug Fire*Wolf for the loss of fully half his current LIFE POINTS irrespective of damage indicated. Should Fire*Wolf die in this encounter, turn to 13. If he survives, go to 115.*

90

The chains snapped with a sound which seemed to reverberate through Fire*Wolf's skull. He fell back a step and watched in wonder as the scene before him faded leaving neither flames, dais nor king. In their place was an empty chamber with the letters NEVER-ENDING cut into the stonework of the floor.

*Should Fire*Wolf search this room at 116? Or should he return to the hall at 102 to reconsider his options?*

91

Fire*Wolf despaired. After a long and dangerous journey, he was at a total loss. The Lake of Serpentine Deep stretched dark and mysterious before him, with **no** indication whatsoever of anything that could aid him in his quest. Even the roiling mist through which he had entered this strange place had disappeared.



The body of King Voltar the Magnificent

After a time, he realized the strange green light was affecting his vision. The environment was blurring and an odd tiredness was creeping through his body. He made to stand and found he could not. Out across the dark waters a shimmer of light appeared, hovering. He stared at it mutely, more than half convinced it was an hallucination. The effort of concentration made him sleepy and he felt his eyes sink closed.

But he did not sleep. At least he did not think he slept. Nor did closing his eyes affect his vision of the light, which drew closer and assumed the shapely form of a radiantly beautiful woman, long blonde hair shimmering with green highlights, long green robes stirring in an errant breeze.

A soft voice echoed in his mind. 'You can go no further, brave Fire*Wolf. Your courage is great, your skill commendable, but more than courage and skill are needed to possess the Great Orb.'

Who —' gasped Fire*Wolf, scarcely able to rouse himself to speak.

But the half-formed question went unanswered as the woman's outlines faded back into the shimmering light from which they had emerged; and the light itself slowly faded . . . faded . . . faded . . . into darkness.

Fire*Wolf sat up with a start. Something was wrong, so deeply, terribly wrong that panic gripped his vitals like a claw. His surroundings had changed. The lake and its encircling mountains had completely vanished. He looked around him in sudden alarm.

Where was he?

A good question. The answer may possibly lie at 69.

92

Fire*Wolf stepped through the archway and found himself outside. He was in a small area of what appeared to be desert, surrounded by a circle of towering cliffs. A red sun blazed down directly overhead and hot sand burned beneath his feet.

He made to move forward, but before he could do so, the sand boiled abruptly and a huge snake reared from its depths. As the reptile lunged towards him, Fire*Wolf could hear the single word DESPAIR ringing in his ears and a wave of bitter helplessness engulfed him.

*If Fire*Wolf, subtly influenced by this weird experience, decides to run, he will find himself back at 102. Should he overcome despair and fight, you should turn to 140.*

93

Although he was not quite certain what he was searching for, Fire*Wolf combed the lower reaches of the mountain in the hope of discovering something which might help: When he saw a cave a little distance away, his natural curiosity impelled him towards it. And perhaps curiosity overcame caution, for he had actually entered the cave before he discovered it to be occupied. The looming shape was indistinct in the gloom, but the rank odour was unmistakable - he had disturbed a giant Cave Bear.

*This is not perhaps a time for heroics, so Fire*Wolf may elect to run, in which case he will return to 78. If, however, he chooses to fight, you should turn to 89.*

94

The lower reaches proved devoid of any useful discovery, but not devoid of interest, for he quickly discovered he could not find the route by which he had entered this strange place. The discovery left him profoundly uneasy. Unless he solved the mystery of the Lake of Serpentine Deep, it seemed he was trapped.

On *which ominous note, Fire*Wolf must return to 86 to reconsider his options.*

95

As the light of the archway closed around him, Fire*Wolf felt a bone-numbing wrench that seemed to tear the very soul from his body. But the sensation lasted only an instant and he passed through the archway into . . .

Fire*Wolf stared, unable to believe what he was seeing. For many years now, the unfamiliar had been a part of his life - unfamiliar sights, unfamiliar places, unfamiliar circumstances. But now, abruptly, he was somewhere all too familiar. He had stepped through the archway into the great subterranean Stone Village of his youth!

He took a hesitant step forward and found himself confronted by four men of the village, each armed with a club.

'Why have you returned, Fire*Wolf?' one asked belligerently. 'Banishment is forever.'

They moved towards him threateningly. Instinctively. Fire*Wolf reached for the Doomsword, but found to his horror he had no weapons. A quick glance around showed several pieces of wood scattered about, any one of which might be of use in defending himself.

But should he fight? If your answer is yes, turn to 97. If not, he can step back through the shimmering archway to 102.

96

Fire*Wolf could feel the ground shifting beneath his feet and the waves now towered above him, sweeping him helplessly into the torrent. He struggled furiously, lungs bursting, aware only of a watery green universe that stretched on all sides to infinity. But soon he could struggle no more. A convulsive gasp drew the shimmering green water into his body - and suddenly all was still!

Fire*Wolf's awareness returned slowly. He was in a green tunnel stretching endlessly ahead. Green-glowing stone slabs formed walls and ceiling, while beneath his feet was firm black sand. He turned to find great rocks pressing at his back with no indication of an entrance or exit.

There is only one way to go — forward into the eerie green silence at 127.

97

Fire*Wolf grabbed a piece of wood as the men attacked and dropped instinctively into a fighting crouch.

Their statistics are as follows:

STRENGTH	48	50	60	58
SPEED	36	48	50	55
STAMINA	90	48	48	50
COURAGE	80	40	55	70
SKILL	44	30	25	22
LUCK	48	30	12	16
CHARM	40	20	15	8
ATTRACTION	16	5	9	20
LIFE POINTS	402	271	274	299

*Their clubs give them +5 on damage, while Fire*Wolf's makeshift weapon gives +3. If he is killed in the melee, go to 13. If he survives, turn to 120.*

98

Staring into the murky waters revealed nothing, so that he took a cautious step forward into the water itself. The lake was chill, but he persevered and careful probing soon told him that only a few yards from the shore the bottom shelved steeply.

He stood near the edge of the drop, contemplating the possibility of swimming, but the idea had little appeal. He turned to wade back to the shore and as he did so, the water boiled around him. Fire*Wolf spun round to find himself only feet away from the head of a monstrous green sea-serpent rearing from the depths beyond the shelf.

*With the creature so close, Fire*Wolf has no option but to fight in self-defence, which he can do at 109.*

99

There was, he discovered, little wrong with his eyes: the path did indeed halt abruptly at a sheer rockface.

*Roll two dice and subtract the score from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, he may retrace his steps to 84.*

100

The shimmering light of the archway enveloped him. He entered a small, empty room, on the ceiling of which was inscribed in large gold letters a single word

NVITV

*Which might be an unknown language or a code or perhaps nothing at all. But does Fire*Wolf search this room? If so, turn to 130. If not, he may return to the hall at 102.*

101

The search, though thorough, unearthed nothing of interest.

Go to 114.

THE VALE OF ILLUSION

102

On the second day of his journey, Fire*Wolf found himself travelling through an even more desolate landscape. Even the isolated farmsteads and crofter cottages seemed to have disappeared, leaving only a wild emptiness which was somehow more lonely even than the Wilderness where he had spent his childhood. Such emptiness did things to a man's mind, so that when, on the afternoon of the second day, he noticed a strange shimmering ahead, he thought for a moment it might be the product of his imagination.

But while the source of the shimmering was perhaps a mile or more away, his mount sensed it too and balked, shivering. So terrified was the horse that Fire*Wolf was eventually forced to dismount and lead it.

As they drew closer, he saw that the shimmering surrounded an area of lush vegetation, which itself surrounded a beautiful low white building. Both were so out of place in this environment that their appearance defied explanation.

With the suspicion of sorcery in his mind, Fire*Wolf entered the shimmering and at once lost all consciousness of the desolate landscape beyond. His horse calmed a little, but remained nervous enough. He approached the low white building with no more than curiosity, but was abruptly seized by a compulsion to enter. He fought the feeling for a moment, then succumbed. There was, after all, no indication of danger.

Fire*Wolf found himself in a large, near-square hallway, floor tiled in a cool marble mosaic, while overhead a frieze of delicate fauns romped through the traceries of an ornate ceiling. But it was the walls which caught his immediate attention. The door through which he had entered was the focal point of one of them, but in each of the remaining three were two archways filled with shimmering light.

Fire*Wolf stared, entranced.

*As well he might, given that this is not a sight granted mortal men every day of their lives. There are six archways in all, set two in the western wall, two north and two east. But should he enter any of these shimmering archways? And if so, which? If Fire*Wolf decides to ignore the archways, he may leave the building by turning to **160**. If, however, he decides to find out where an archway leads then he may enter:*

*Southernmost arch on the western wall at **80**.
Northernmost arch on the western wall at **88**.
Westernmost arch on the northern wall at **95**.
Easternmost arch on the northern wall at **100**.
Northernmost arch on the eastern wall at **106**.
Southernmost arch on the eastern wall at **92**.*

103

But no sooner was the decision made than Fire*Wolf discovered his feet had lost their purchase. It was as if he were standing on quicksilver ... or quicksand.

*Which, if it is not exactly sucking him down, certainly means he cannot easily get out. Thus Fire*Wolf remains where he is, at 96.*

104

The statistics of the Dragon are:

STRENGTH	150
SPEED	80
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	100
SKILL	80
LUCK	60
CHARM	5
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	525

*The creature strikes with +10 damage from fang and claw, but becomes particularly dangerous each third combat round. On the third round, a roll of 8 or better indicates a flame breath, which will cost Fire*Wolf a double dice roll of damage multiplied by 10.*

*If Fire*Wolf survives this nasty encounter, turn to 113. If not, turn to 13.*

105

Fire*Wolf waits, and waits, and waits . . .

*If Fire*Wolf waits long enough, he will die of starvation while the green humanoid looks on (in*

which case go to 13). He may, however, still elect to fight, although with his LIFE POINTS reduced by 25, at 112.

106

The shimmering light of the archway enveloped him. For a moment, Fire*Wolf felt his consciousness flicker, then he stepped through into a stone-lined chamber . . . and came face to face with a nightmare!

Before him, crouching in the chamber, was a squat, green-scaled creature wearing dull green armour while stubby bat-wings caressed its broad shoulders like a leather cloak: Spawn for certain and high-ranking Spawn at that. But Fire*Wolf had faced and overcome Demonspawn before. The horror that arose in him was occasioned by another factor. This Spawn was a Demonspawn Regent. .. No, he could not hide behind pretence, however terrifying the truth: this Spawn was the Demonspawn Regent he had killed a decade before in the sanctum of the Temple of Belgardium! It was impossible, yet the proof was before him, a foul resurrection which was even now launching its attack.

The Regent's statistics are:

STRENGTH	150
SPEED	110
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	150
SKILL	100
LUCK	0
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	610

The creature carries a magical sword which gives +10 on damage in the first combat round, +20 in the second, and +20 multiplied by the result of a single die roll in the third. If combat lasts more than three rounds, the sword reverts to +10 and begins the cycle anew.

The Regent may, however, elect to fight with spells, of which it has the following:

LEPROSY *Requires a throw of 8 or better on two dice. Causes Fire*Wolf to rot so that he loses 10 per cent of his LIFE POINTS each combat turn following the casting of the spell.*

BLIGHT *Requires a roll of 6 or better and paralyzes Fire*Wolf completely for two combat rounds.*

CRACK OF DOOM *Requires a roll of 8 or better and allows the Regent to remove 50 of Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS with a simple handclap.*

FIREBOLT *Requires a throw of 9 or better and causes a lightning strike which will remove 75 of Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS.*

Each spell will cost the Regent a double dice roll of LIFE POINTS every time he attempts to use it, whether or not it is in fact successful.

*If Fire*Wolf is killed in this encounter, go to **13**. If he succeeds in ridding the world of the Demonspawn Regent for the second time, turn to **135**.*

107

Fire*Wolf returned through the crawlspace to the cave in which the Amoebix had attacked him. As he emerged, he was seized by sudden indecision. Had he been right to return this way?

*Indecision is a curious thing. It may force Fire*Wolf to return to **126**. Alternatively he may leave the cave via the western turning to **114**.*

108

The flowers were fresh, but otherwise Fire*Wolf found nothing of interest.

*Which leaves him able only to return to the hall at **102**.*

109

The statistics of the Sea Serpent are:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	35
STAMINA	30
COURAGE	90
SKILL	40
LUCK	5
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	280

*If Fire*Wolf survives the encounter, his best bet is to return to **78** to reconsider his options. If he does not, his best bet is to die quietly at **13**.*

110

Fire*Wolf ran. ..

*And found himself back in the hall at **102**.*

111

The casket was beautifully carved with the letters INTO interlaced with a delicate tracery of leaves and flowers. A small handle was set into the lid.

112-113

Should he open this casket at 125? If not, he may return to the hall at 102.

112

'Then,' hissed Fire*Wolf, 'if kill you I must, then kill you I will!'

But the brave boast may be difficult to carry out. The green Guardian of the Tunnel is tough indeed. His stats are:

STRENGTH	150
SPEED	100
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	100
SKILL	80
LUCK	90
CHARM	50
ATTRACTION	25
LIFEPOINTS	695

The sword he carries give +10 on damage while the leather armour he wears subtracts 5 from damage scored against him.

*In situations like this, combat requires a little more consideration than whether to hack at the head or the chest. If Fire*Wolf elects to use the trusty Doomsword, turn to 131. If he decides to use spells turn to 138. Should he decide that wicked spear leaning on the tunnel wall might be the best weapon to use, he may attempt to grab it at 149.*

113

The great corpse was slowly disappearing before his startled eyes ... and with it the cave which was its lair. To his amazement, Fire*Wolf found himself standing

114-116

in a bright, airy room filled with cut flowers in delicate bowls. The single word IRONIES was inlaid in the marble floor.

*Should Fire*Wolf search this gentle room at 108? If not, he may return through the shimmering archway to the hall at 102.*

114

Fire*Wolf stepped over the corpse to find the tunnel widened considerably, then opened into a vast cavern. Luminous green rock formations gleamed everywhere and as he stepped forward, his feet sank softly into a carpet of fine black sand. He looked around. There were three exits from the cavern: tunnels leading south, west and east.

*Which should he take? If Fire*Wolf chooses south, turn to 142; if west 165; if east 134.*

115

Fire*Wolf rested, then began methodically to search the cave. It was, by all indication, the bear's home, but beyond this there was nothing of interest, certainly nothing which might have helped him in his quest.

*Which leaves the harassed Fire*Wolf no alternative but to return to 78 to review his options.*

116

Fire*Wolf found nothing.

Which suggests he should return to 88 and review his options.

117

The opening was so narrow that for a moment Fire*Wolf felt he might be trapped, but he wriggled through eventually to find, to his vast annoyance, he had gained access only to an alcove. He moved forward to examine the walls for the possibility of a secret exit, but found nothing. He turned, planning to squeeze his way back the way he came, and the black sand of the floor abruptly erupted into hundreds of tiny, squirming jet-black snakes.

*This is not a pleasant predicament. Fire*Wolf is twenty strides away from the narrow entrance and attempting to kill so many snakes would be an entirely futile operation. Roll two dice to determine how often he will be bitten for each step he takes, subtracting 1 from the result for every 10 points of Fire*Wolfs current SPEED. Each bite removes only 1 LIFE POINT, but the cumulative effect may well kill him, in which case go to 13. If, however, he survives, he may backtrack to 128.*

118

The search proved vain.

*Which leaves Fire*Wolf only with the option of returning to 102 to reconsider.*

119

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange - not to say disturbing - is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and,*

*worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doomsword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

The statistics of the Amoebix are:

STRENGTH	96
SPEED	50
STAMINA	90
COURAGE	70
SKILL	20
LUCK	10
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	336

*The creature scores no damage as such, but if Fire*Wolf (whose sword now functions as +20 on damage) cannot kill it in fifteen combat rounds, he will suffocate all the way to 13. Should our hero survive, however, he may gasp his way to 136.*

120

As the last of the Stone Villagers dropped, Fire*Wolf experienced the same bone-wrenching sensation he had felt when he passed through the shimmering archway. The piece of wood dropped from his nerveless fingers and was immediately replaced by the familiar feel of his Doomsword. At once his environment changed. He was no longer in the village, but in a small bare room, empty but for a wooden casket on the floor in one corner.

121-122

Should Fire* Wolf search his new surroundings — and particularly that casket? If so, turn to **111**. Alternatively he may still step back through the archway to **102**.

121

The Amoebix felt slightly warm and surprisingly dry. On closer inspection, Fire*Wolf discovered that the dark spot, which he had taken for an eye, was in fact a dark stone on which was cut a curious inscription.

UC Δ I NCAL
 Γ Γ I O U U I I I

An interesting find. Will Fire*Wolf now search the cave at **126** - or alternatively retrace his steps to **128** and review his options?

122

Without hesitation, Fire*Wolf leaped through the flames to snatch the prostrate body of the King . . . and discovered on the instant that Voltar was chained!

The old King's eyes flickered open briefly. 'Help me,' he whispered. 'Help me.'

But can Fire* Wolf help? Roll two dice and multiply the result by 12 to determine the strength of the chains at this moment in time. If the figure is less than Fire*Wolf's STRENGTH then his attempt to break them will be successful and he can proceed to **90**. If not, then Fire* Wolf may, if he so decides, try

123-124

again: but each subsequent attempt to break the chains, successful or otherwise, will cost him 10 LIFE POINTS due to burns. (If the flame damage kills him, go to **13**.) He may abandon the attempt at any time by returning to the hall at **102**.

123

As Fire*Wolf stepped into the lake shallows, the water began to heave and bubble.

A swift and disturbing development. Should Fire*Wolf stay where he is and await developments at **96**? Or should he try to get out of the water fast at **103**?

124

The statistics of the Amoebix are:

STRENGTH	96
SPEED	50
STAMINA	90
COURAGE	70
SKILL	20
LUCK	10
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	336

The creature scores no damage as such, but if Fire* Wolf cannot kill it in fifteen combat rounds, he will suffocate all the way to **13**. Should our hero survive, however, he may gasp his way to **136**. One small piece of good news, however, is that any attack spell used will score double damage against this opponent.

125

The lid opened easily enough - too easily. Fire*Wolf sensed rather than saw the blur of movement a split second before a mechanically propelled dart struck him in the neck.

*Roll two dice and deduct the result from Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS. If this kills him, go to 13. If he survives, he has the option of continuing his search at 118 or returning to the hall at 102.*

126

At first he thought his search must prove fruitless, but eventually he discovered a small opening in the south-west of the cave, a crawlspace leading into a twenty-foot-wide cavern with an opening to the north.

He may, of course, crawl back - to 107. Or he may decide to take the northern opening which will lead him to 129.

127

As Fire*Wolf started down the tunnel, he noticed the King's ring on his finger had begun to glow brightly as if picking up the surrounding green light. But this was a small mystery compared with another which he noticed almost at once: however far he walked, he remained aware of the wall of solid rock at his back. Several times he glanced behind him and each time the rock was there, no more than a single step away. Once he ran, then turned quickly, but the rock remained. And throughout it all, the silence pressed down on him oppressively, even swallowing up the sound of his own footsteps.

He lost track of how far he had travelled, moving forward in this seemingly endless tunnel since there was

no other way to go. And in the green silence, he fell into a reverie, pondering the doom which faced the Kingdom should he fail in his vital quest. Without Voltar's forcefield, there was nothing which could stand against the Spawn, nothing which would prevent the carnage which had characterized past invasions.

But could the forcefield be maintained? Even with the mysterious Golden Orb he sought, would he have the skill to rebuild the artifact wrought by the great King?

Fire*Wolf stopped abruptly. He could still sense the rock wall at his back, but now, directly ahead, loomed a threatening shape - a giant, green-skinned humanoid clad in leather armour and carrying both sword and shield. Beside it, propped against the tunnel wall, was a stout, well-made spear.

For a moment they regarded one another bleakly, then the creature said softly, 'You can go no further, human, until you destroy me.'

Fire*Wolf's hand reached instinctively for the Doom-sword, yet the creature made no move. Fire*Wolf hesitated.

*It seems as though our hero has no choice but to attack this creature... or has he? The green-skinned giant has made no move against him and appears to be waiting, despite the softly worded challenge. But if Fire*Wolf does not attack, he cannot retreat. Perhaps he should simply wait... forever? If Fire*Wolf elects to fight, turn to 112. If he decides to sit and wait, turn to 105.*

128

Although the way was clear for a distance, Fire*Wolf discovered that once he reached the corpse of the Green Guardian, any further progress was blocked by solid rock.

Which leaves only his original three options — south to 142, west to 165 or east to 107.

129

The opening was so narrow that for a moment Fire*Wolf felt he might be trapped, but he wriggled through eventually to find, to his vast annoyance, he had gained access only to an alcove. He moved forward to examine the walls for the possibility of a secret exit, but found nothing. He turned, planning to squeeze his way back the way he came, and the black sand of the floor abruptly erupted into hundreds of tiny, squirming, jet-black snakes.

*This is not a pleasant predicament. Fire*Wolf is twenty strides away from the narrow entrance and attempting to kill so many snakes would be an entirely futile operation. Roll two dice to determine how often he will be bitten for each step he takes, subtracting 1 from the result for every 10 points of Fire*Wolf's current SPEED. Each bite removes only 1 LIFE POINT, but the cumulative effect may well kill him, in which case go to 13. If, however, he survives, he may backtrack to 128.*

130

The room, to his surprise, was empty.

Which means he can only return to the hall at 102.

131

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange - not to say disturbing - is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and, worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doomsword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

*This is a bizarre situation which, nonetheless, makes the Doomsword very happy. If the unexpected reversal kills Fire*Wolf, go to 13. If he manages to survive, turn to 155.*

132

The southern slab was attached to a complicated system of pulleys and chains, with one main chain supporting a smallish platform which hung a few feet in the air. Fire*Wolf stared at it, frowning. The equipment was obviously intended to raise the slab. But how?

You'll never work it out,' a gloomy voice remarked.

Fire*Wolf swung round, instinctively adopting a fighting stance, but there was no one there.

Down here,' said the voice.

Fire*Wolf looked down to find himself looking at a any gnome squatting on the floor by the wall. The little creature regarded him with glittering eyes.

'Good morrow, Gnome,' said Fire*Wolf politely.

'Well,' said the gnome stiffly, 'if it's social chat you want that's fine by me, but it won't get us past that slab. You wouldn't believe how long I've been here trying to work it out.'

'Won't the slab lift?' asked Fire*Wolf, moving towards] it.

'Don't touch that slab!' screamed the gnome in sudden] panic. 'One wrong move here and the roof comes down!'

Fire*Wolf stopped. 'Then what are we to do?'

'We are to think,' said the gnome, mimicking his accent rather effectively. 'We are to work out how to use that damn chain, that's what we are to do, you muscle-brained Barbarian.'

Grinning despite himself, Fire*Wolf said, 'Have you no notion of the mechanism, Gnome, since you have studied it so long?'

'Oh yes,' said the gnome. 'Yes, indeed I have. We have to place exactly the right weight on that platform to lift the slab. The wrong weight starts a very dangerous process. Very dangerous. Quite lethal in fact, if the weight is too high.'

'I don't suppose,' asked Fire*Wolf carefully, 'you happen to know what the correct weight is?'

'Of course I do!' growled the gnome. 'Do you take me for a complete fool? We need something precisely eight times my present weight to do the trick.'

Fire*Wolf looked around the cavern in search of inspiration.

The frustrating thing is,' the gnome continued, 'that I happen to have an innate ability to increase my weight in direct proportion to my size. I can't do it very often - only once per century to be exact - but I can do it.'

Then why,' asked Fire*Wolf, 'don't you do it now?'

The gnome sighed in the manner of one who is dealing with a mental defective. 'Because I don't know *how much* to increase my size in order to reach the required weight. Do I double it? Do I treble it? How much? How much? How much?' And he began to bang his head against the stone wall in pent-up fury.

'Please calm yourself, Gnome,' said Fire*Wolf hurriedly. 'I'm sure I can work it out!'

But can he? To achieve a weight gain to eight times his present weight, will the gnome need to:

Increase his size by half? Go to 153.

Double his size? Go to 196.

Increase his size four times? Go to 146.

Increase his size eight times? Go to 164.

*Fire*Wolf will, it seems, only have one shot at this if the gnome is right about the roof falling in, so consider carefully.*

133

That was well done, Warrior,' remarked the gnome gratefully. 'A difficult dilemma, as they say - and one I doubt I could have solved alone.' He hitched up his breeches with a determined gesture. 'Have no fear from now on: I shall accompany you on your journey. A man needs a bodyguard in a place like this and should you be attacked by any dire creature, any monster of the night, rest assured I shall protect you.' He scratched his

nose. 'Who knows, I may even find my way home it we're lucky.'

Fire*Wolf smiled at the little fellow, then bowed gravely. 'I thank you, Gnome, for your offer of protection and accept it gratefully.'

They set off along the tunnel and Fire*Wolf noticed with amusement that despite his brave words, the gnome remained firmly to the rear. After a short distance, the way narrowed and the tunnel took an upward slope.

'We're climbing, Warrior,' remarked the gnome. 'Maybe we'll reach the surface.'

But Fire*Wolf was not so sure. He had noticed that while the ground was undoubtedly sloping upwards, the roof of the tunnel remained level. As a result, the space between the two was steadily decreasing. Soon there was less than five feet between them: no problem for the gnome, but Fire*Wolf was forced to stoop as they marched forward.

For a time he wondered if he would be able to continue this way, but the tunnel, though cramped, did not diminish further, although it did begin a sweeping curve. And suddenly their way was barred.

Fire*Wolf stopped. Across the tunnel ahead was a glittering golden web, glinting in the pervasive greenish light, as if spun by some gigantic spider. It was a beautiful creation, but there was no way of continuing without touching it.

'Don't like the look of this, Warrior,' remarked the gnome grimly, flattening himself against the wall and glancing back the way they had come as if expecting pursuit. 'Maybe we'd better go back.'

*Some bodyguard? If Fire*Wolf decides to go back, he may return to **196** and review the options given there. If, however, he proves of sterner stuff than the gnome and decides to continue the way they were going, turn to **148**.*

134

The eastern tunnel turned south almost immediately and widened into a cave approximately twenty feet across. As Fire*Wolf entered, something large and slimy dropped from above, almost encasing his entire body.

Fire*Wolf froze, locked in the strange sensation of being able to see quite clearly through the clear green slime curtain which covered his face. But inaction was a luxury he could ill afford. The slime was suffocating him. His mouth and nose were completely covered while he could feel tentacles tighten around his throat and chest.

*Fire*Wolf has been attacked by one of the nastier subterranean denizens of Harn - an Amoebix. Will he tackle it with the Doomsword at **119**? Use spells at **124**? Or choose another means of attacking it at **161**?*

135

As the Spawn Regent breathed his last, a strange thing happened. The whole environment began to change, a metamorphosis which left Fire*Wolf in a bare and apparently empty room with the single word EVENTS inlaid in the marble floor.

*And since there is manifestly nothing else to find in this small chamber, Fire*Wolf may return to **102** to reconsider his options.*

136

Gasping, Fire*Wolf stared down at the remains of the Amoebix, an almost beautiful clear green jelly with one dark spot in its bulk which might possibly be its single eye.

*As a thorough adventurer, it occurs to Fire*Wolf that he might search this peculiar corpse, although the thought of pushing his hands into the jelly-like substance is far from appealing - and might, who knows, be dangerous. However, if he wishes to try, he may do so at 121. If he decides against a search, turn to 144.*

137

Cautiously, Fire*Wolf picked up the tail. It curled gently around his wrist, but made no other movement.

*His instinct is, in fact, sound: the tail may be used as a weapon. On a successful strike, it will squeeze an opponent for three combat rounds with a damage factor of 10 per round, additional to any damage Fire*Wolf might do with another weapon. Furthermore, if Fire*Wolf throws a 12 when he is using the tail, it will strangle the opponent to death, whatever the damage shown. After three combat rounds, the tail returns to Fire*Wolf and may be used again.*

Now our hero can gather up his tail and return to 165 to review the options given there.

138

*An interesting decision and one that may be a lifesaver. Fire*Wolf will swiftly discover that attack spells work with DOUBLE their normal damage against this opponent. (He may also notice that the*

*ring he wears dims a little with each spell cast.) If, despite his spells, Fire*Wolf loses the battle, go to 13. Should he win, turn to 155.*

139

The chains proved too strong to break, but their arrangement, while complex, allowed him to loosen them sufficiently to pull her free. For a moment she hung in his arms, breathing deeply with relief, then she stood up and smiled.

And changed.

*Fire*Wolf's trusting nature, and predilection for rescuing naked females, may be the death of him yet. The creature he is facing is a Dianthrope, the most dangerous of Harn's shape-shifters. In her true form, Regina now has the appearance of a panther, with glowing green eyes and vicious fangs and claws. But the similarity with the great cat ends at the prehensile tail, a natural weapon more deadly than a sword. The stats of the Dianthrope are:*

STRENGTH	85
SPEED	96
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	80
SKILL	60
LUCK	40
CHARM	10
ATTRACTION	40
LIFE POINTS	461

The creature has two modes of attack which it uses alternately: one with fang and claw giving it +10 damage; the other with the prehensile tail, which

140-141

also occasions +10 damage but will kill outright by strangulation on a throw of 12 during combat.

*Fire*Wolf has no alternative but to fight. The question now is whether he will use the Doomsword at **186**, cast combat spells at **193** or fight some other way at **199**.*

140

As he prepared himself for battle, Fire*Wolf discovered that the wave of helplessness which had engulfed him had produced a physical effect: his current STRENGTH had been reduced to half its normal value.

Meanwhile, there is still the problem of the Snake, which has the following statistics:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	20
STAMINA	55
COURAGE	60
SKILL	30
LUCK	30
CHARM	5
ATTRACTION	20
LIFEPOINTS	300

*The creature, perhaps fortunately, is not venomous, but it will nevertheless cause +8 damage with its fangs. If Fire*Wolf is killed, go to **13**. If not, go to **147**.*

141

Cautiously, Fire*Wolf reached up to tug the chain.

*Roll two dice and add 1 to the result for every 10 STRENGTH points Fire*Wolf has above 50. If the*

142-143

*final tally is 12 or better, the slab will lift at **173**. If Fire*Wolf fails to achieve this total, his only option is to inspect the southern slab at **132**.*

142

The route took him eventually to a smaller cave about twenty feet across with no apparent exit save for a small opening directly opposite leading south. The cave itself seemed empty.

*Will Fire*Wolf risk squeezing through the small opening at **117**? Or should he retrace his steps to **128**?*

143

As Fire*Wolf approached the gems, he was vaguely aware that his gnomish companion had vanished - presumably running hell for leather back along the corridor. But Fire*Wolf did not care. The gems glistened hypnotically in the green light and in their midst he could just make out a large, partially hidden object of some sort. He bent closer, frowning.

The attack began without the slightest hint of danger.

Our hero is under attack from a Cupric, a rare creature from a near-extinct species. The monster has a vicious ridged beak, long talons and a covering of tough, green lizard scales. Vestiges of membrane wings hang limply from the shoulder-blades. The brute's stats are:

STRENGTH	120
SPEED	50
STAMINA	80

COURAGE	90
SKILL	25
LUCK	64
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	429

In combat it will use beak and talons alternately, the former doing +15 damage while the latter do +10.

*Since Fire*Wolf was undoubtedly surprised, the Cupric has first strike. But how will our hero retaliate? If he opts to use the Doomsword, turn to **166**. If he prefers to use spells, turn to **156**. If he decides to fight barehanded or with some other weapon, turn to **187**.*

144

At first he thought his search must prove fruitless, but eventually he discovered a small opening in the south-west of the cave, a crawlspace leading into a twenty-foot-wide cavern with an opening to the north.

*He may, of course, crawl back - to **107**. Or he may decide to take the northern opening which will lead him to **129**.*

145

Nestling among the gemstones was a large mottled egg. The pile was obviously the Cupric's nest.

*Should Fire*Wolf take the egg at **163**? Or the gems at **151**? Or perhaps even both at **168**?*

146

Before Fire*Wolf's startled eyes, the gnome obligingly expanded to four times his original size and leaped on to the platform.

With a dreadful rumble, the ceiling caved in.

*No arguing with that - except, perhaps, at **13**.*

147

The scene dissolved and Fire*Wolf found himself in a small, empty room on the floor of which was inscribed the letters GREAT.

*Not much for his pains, but he may at least now return to **102** and review the options there.*

148

As Fire*Wolf cautiously approached the golden web, he noticed a small wooden casket cocooned near the centre. He stopped, intrigued. Anything might be useful here and for all he knew, the casket might contain the very Orb he sought. Yet it would be difficult to reach and time was too short for dangerous diversions.

*A quandary. If Fire*Wolf decides to try for the casket, turn to **157**. If, on the other hand, he feels it better simply to try to break through the web, turn to **200**.*

149

*Roll one die to discover whether Fire*Wolf manages to seize the spear. Score 1 or 2 and he does so successfully. Score 3-6 and he does not. Fire*Wolf may make as many attempts as he wishes to get this weapon, but for every unsuccessful attempt, the Green Guardian will land one blow. Once Fire*Wolf has the spear, which is an excellent weapon*

delivering +20 on damage, he may proceed to fight normally. If the Guardian kills him, go to 13. If he wins, go to 155.

150

Fire*Wolf stared upwards, frowning. The mechanism appeared to be a simple system of counterweights with one large chain attached to a massive handle swinging free about a foot from the stone slab.

*Which leaves us to wonder whether Fire*Wolf will attempt to open the slab doorway at 141, or inspect the southern slab at 132.*

151

Greedily, Fire*Wolf filled his pockets with the gems, briefly transported back in time to the days of his youth when the search for treasure had been one of his main concerns on an adventure. He had no real need of treasure now, but the thrill remained.

And now our hero can search the cave at 172.

152

Fire*Wolf searched diligently, but found nothing.

Which at least leaves him free to continue his journey at 79.

153

'Are you sure?' asked the gnome.

Fire*Wolf nodded.

Drawing himself up to his full two-foot stature, the gnome closed his eyes, took a deep breath and held it. At once his entire body began to swell dramatically.

'Here we go!' he called when he had reached the required volume; and leaped nimbly onto the platform.

At which point the roof fell in.

*Carrying Fire*Wolf direct to 13.*

154

The narrow tunnel continued westwards until Fire*Wolf reached a cave some twenty feet wide with an opening leading north. Black sand covered the floor of this cavern and while Fire*Wolf could see it was undisturbed, he noticed footprints in the northern tunnel, tracking both towards the cave and away from it. In the south wall was a small alcove.

*If Fire*Wolf enters the cave, turn to 203. Should he decide to retrace his steps, then turn to 196 and review the options there.*

155

Fire*Wolf stood over the slumped corpse of the Guardian.

Wondering, no doubt, if he should search the body. If so, go to 101. If not, turn to 114.

156

*The good news is that any attack spell used by Fire*Wolf will do double damage here. The bad news is that the hypnotic effect of the gems has reduced his SPEED (permanently) by 10. If Fire*Wolf wins the battle, go to 177. If not, it's a short trip to 13.*

157

Fire*Wolf lunged towards the web, hands outstretched grab the casket. But no sooner had he touched the

glittering filaments than the web convulsed and wrapped itself around him.

Fire*Wolf struggled furiously, but it quickly became apparent that stronger action would be needed if he were not to be trapped completely. The web seemed alive, sentient. He had little time.

*So Fire*Wolf will have to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword in an attempt to cut the web, turn to 175. Should he decide to use spells, he may do so at 195. If he fights by any other means, turn to 209.*

158

Ignoring the woman in the chains, Fire*Wolf searched the cave thoroughly . . . and found nothing whatsoever of interest.

Which leaves him with the choice of reviewing the options which faced him at 173 or leaving the cave and reviewing his options at 165.

159

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange — not to say disturbing — is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doomsword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

If, against these odds, he wins, go to 177. Death, as always, sends him to 13.

AN END TO ILLUSION

160

As Fire*Wolf turned to leave the hall, a flicker at the edge of his field of vision caused him to spin round, right hand groping instinctively for the Doomsword. Then he froze. Standing before him, her lined face solemn, was the Gegum Abbess! Had the witch transported herself by sorcery - or had she been following him all the time?

But before he could speak, she waved him imperiously to silence with one wizened hand. 'Remember well what you have learned here, Lord Xandine.' She smiled thinly. 'Although how much you have learned depends on your own efforts. The degree of knowledge you have obtained is the measure of your worth. Go now to pursue your quest, for there is nothing more that can help you.'

'Mother Abbess -' Fire*Wolf called urgently. But the outlines of the figure were already fading and, in no more than a moment, the Abbess had vanished completely. An illusion? So much might be illusion in this accursed place.

As if to mirror the thought, the hall itself began to distort, change, fade and disappear. In a moment of total disorientation, Fire*Wolf spun around, desperately trying to find his bearings. Then he knew. He was back in the desert, just a few paces from his mount.

*If Fire*Wolf cares to search the area for clues to the meaning of the experience he has just undergone, he may do so at 152. But time is short and he may prefer to continue on his way at 79.*

161

The statistics of the Amoebix are:

STRENGTH	96
SPEED	50
STAMINA	90
COURAGE	70
SKILL	20
LUCK	10
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFEPOINTS	336

*The creature scores no damage as such, but if Fire*Wolf cannot kill it in fifteen combat rounds, he will suffocate all the way to 13. Should our hero survive, however, he may gasp his way to 136.*

162

As he turned to leave, the stone slab slid downwards with a resounding crash, sealing the exit. Fire*Wolf ran to it in something close to panic, but his efforts at moving it proved fruitless.

Which, regrettably, leaves him trapped until, eventually, starvation -not to say boredom - carries him off to 13.

163

The egg proved surprisingly light for its size, but cautious testing showed it to be extremely strong so

that Fire*Wolf had no worries about carrying it. He stowed it away carefully, then turned to search the cave.

Which he may do at 172.

164

Before Fire*Wolf's startled eyes, the gnome obligingly expanded to eight times his original size and leaped on to the platform.

With a dreadful rumble, the ceiling caved in.

No arguing with that — except, perhaps, at 13.

163

As Fire*Wolf walked along the tunnel, he became aware of a light green-tinged mist rising from the black sand. The phenomenon disturbed him strangely, but the mist did not thicken nor impair his progress in any way.

He came eventually to a cave, some twenty feet across. Although the rock chamber seemed empty, his attention was immediately drawn to two large stone slabs fitted into the rough walls to the south and west. Attached to each was a complicated system of pulleys and chains.

*Too intriguing a set-up to neglect a closer look. But will Fire*Wolf inspect the slab to the south at 132, or the slab to the west at 150?*

166

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange - not to say disturbing - is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE*

*POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and, worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doomsword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

*And as if this were not bad enough, the hypnotic effect of the gems has reduced Fire*Wolf's SPEED by 10 points.*

If, against these odds, he wins, go to 177. Death, as always, sends him to 13.

167

'I am in no position to bargain,' Regina told him tightly. 'Release me and you shall have the information you desire.' But as Fire*Wolf stepped forward, she added, 'One thing I must say, even at peril of my life. The inner cave may not be all you would wish. There are great and dangerous sorceries abroad, and to reach it, you will surely enter the very Pit of Despair.'

Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'That is a risk I shall have to take. But I prefer to take no other. You must tell me the location of the inner cave before I release you.'

She stared at him momentarily, then nodded. 'As you will,' she said.

*Fire*Wolf obviously considers this woman less trustworthy than she seems. And even as she gives him the necessary information, he may not be certain of its accuracy. Hence there is the question of whether he does indeed free her at this time. If he*

does, turn to **180**. If he prefers to leave her chained until he is certain the information is correct, then turn to **162**.

168

The egg proved surprisingly light for its size, but cautious testing showed it to be extremely strong so that Fire*Wolf had no worries about carrying it. He stowed it away carefully, collected up the gems, then turned to search the cave.

Which he may do at **172**.

169

'That was well done, Warrior,' remarked the gnome gratefully. 'A difficult dilemma, as they say — and one I doubt I could have solved alone.' He hitched up his breeches with a determined gesture. 'Have no fear from now on: I shall accompany you on your journey. A man needs a bodyguard in a place like this and should you be attacked by any dire creature, any monster of the night, rest assured I shall protect you.' He scratched his nose. 'Who knows, I may even find my way home if we're lucky.'

Fire*Wolf smiled at the little fellow, then bowed gravely. 'I thank you, Gnome, for your offer of protection and accept it gratefully.'

They set off along the tunnel and Fire*Wolf noticed with amusement that despite his brave words, the gnome remained firmly to the rear. After a short distance, they reached a cave some twenty feet wide, apparently empty except for . . .

Fire*Wolf drew in his breath sharply. In the centre of the cave was a large pile of glittering gems!

The gnome saw them at the same instant. 'Don't touch them!' he hissed, flattening himself against the wall. 'That's treasure, that is, and treasure is usually guarded by hideous monsters so powerful that not even I may be able to protect you!'

'What do you suggest we do?' asked Fire*Wolf.

'Go back!' said the gnome promptly.

*Will Fire*Wolf take the advice of his little bodyguard, returning to **196** to review the options given there? If not, he can inspect the pile of gems at **143** or alternatively inspect the remainder of the cave at **172**.*

170

The attack began without the slightest hint of danger.

Our hero is under attack from a Cupric, a rare creature from a near-extinct species. The monster has a vicious ridged beak, long talons and a covering of tough, green lizard scales. Vestiges of membrane wings hang limply from the shoulder-blades. The brute's stats are:

STRENGTH	120
SPEED	50
STAMINA	80
COURAGE	90
SKILL	25
LUCK	64
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	429

In combat it will use beak and talons alternately, the former doing +15 damage while the latter do +10.

*Since Fire*Wolf was undoubtedly surprised, the Cupric has first strike. But how will our hero retaliate? If he opts to use the Doomsword, turn to 159. If he prefers to use spells, turn to 184. If he decides to fight barehanded or with some other weapon, turn to 190.*

171

*The stone Fire*Wolf found is, in fact, a healing talisman of considerable potency. It requires no personal POWER to activate, but may be used (once only) after any combat up to a maximum of ten uses. When touched after combat, the talisman restores LIFE POINTS equivalent to the result of a double dice roll multiplied by 8. Now that he has solved the mystery of the stone, Fire*Wolf may search the cave he is in at 126 or retrace his steps to 128 and review his options.*

172

On searching the cave, Fire*Wolf discovered a small opening to the west.

Should he decide to go through that opening, turn to 154. Alternatively he may return to 196.

173

As Fire*Wolf put his weight on the chain, muscles locked and bulging with the effort, the slab creaked, groaned, then slowly rose with a grinding of stone on stone. He stepped forward through the opening, then stopped in open-mouthed amazement.

A naked woman of quite striking beauty hung in chains from the far wall of a small, dark cave, her brown eyes blinking at the sudden light. But startled

though he was at such a find, Fire*Wolf was even more perplexed by something he had noticed almost instinctively as he entered. The floor of the cave was covered in a thick layer of fine dust, which seemed to have been undisturbed for years.

'Thank the gods!' exclaimed the woman. 'I thought none would ever prove strong enough to rescue me!'

'Who are you?' Fire*Wolf asked. 'What are you doing here?' He moved a step towards her, but with caution. Nothing in this accursed place was as it seemed, and while the woman looked real enough, he was not prepared to take chances.

'My name is Regina,' the woman told him. 'I was incarcerated here as punishment for attempting to steal the Golden Orb, doomed to wait until one of Ancient Power arrived to release me.'

Fire*Wolf glanced again at the dust on the floor, still without moving to free her. 'How long have you been here?'

'I have no measure of time. It may be centuries for all I know.'

'Centuries?'

The chains are time-locked. I do not age or weaken, merely endure.'

'You sought to steal the Orb?' asked Fire*Wolf, still undecided how to deal with this bizarre situation.

'It was needed,' Regina said. 'My people had need of it.'

A dozen more questions swarmed in his mind, but one took precedence over all the rest. 'You found the Orb?'

174-175

'It rests in the innermost cave of this complex,' Regina told him. 'I could not take it: the magic was too strong.'

*It seems Fire*Wolf is nearing his destination. But what does he do about this naked beauty? Should he attempt to free her from the time-locked chains at **180**? Or leave her, at least temporarily, and search the cave at **158**? Or possibly attempt to strike a bargain: freeing her only if she is prepared to tell him the location of the cave in which she found the Orb. If he takes this latter course, turn to **167**.*

174

His attempts to break the chains proved futile. Eventually he stepped back, near exhaustion, shaking his head in anxious frustration. The woman stared at him. 'I was mistaken,' she said quietly. 'If these chains successfully resist you, then you do not have the Ancient Power.'

*But Fire*Wolf may not be beaten yet. If he wishes to try again, he may return to **180**. Alternatively he may backtrack to **165** and review the options there.*

175

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange - not to say disturbing - is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and, worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each*

176-178

*successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doomsword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

*The web has 500 LIFE POINTS and will not release Fire*Wolf until he reduces these to zero. If he succeeds, go to **217**. If he fails, turn to **13**.*

176

The climb was easy enough for someone of Fire*Wolf's muscular build, but leaving the rope when he reached the lip of the pit was a different matter altogether. The edge was still ten feet away, so that he had to produce a pendulum swing to carry himself nearer.

It proved a near-impossible task and his arms were tiring alarmingly when, with a monumental effort, he finally managed it. He lay for a moment, gasping for breath, then slowly climbed to his feet and looked around.

*A narrow escape, but where now? If Fire*Wolf goes south, turn to **205**. If west, turn to **213**.*

177

The creature looked smaller in death than it had in life. Fire*Wolf instinctively examined the corpse, but discovered nothing of use or interest.

*Which leaves him with the choice of examining the gems at **145** or searching the cave at **172**.*

178

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange — not to say disturbing — is happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE*

179-181

POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and, worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doom-sword both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.

If Fire*Wolf succeeds in killing the lizard, turn to **226**. If not, he must go to **13**.

179

If Fire*Wolf wins this battle, turn to **235**. If not, turn to **13**.

180

Fire*Wolf moved to the wall and reached for the chains. They were heavy and well made, strong enough to tax the skill and strength of any man. Worse still, the task brought him into close proximity with Regina's naked body, an experience he might have welcomed at a less critical time, but one which now distracted him alarmingly from his task.

*So our hero has high-class problems, but can he free Regina from the chains? Roll one die. Score 1 or 2 and go to **139**. Score 3 to 6 and go to **174**.*

181

The tunnel opened into a forty-foot-diameter cave. The centre twenty feet of the cave floor was taken up by an open pit, leaving a pathway of about ten feet wide around the walls. The tunnel, he could see, continued due south at the other side of the cave, while there was a second exit to the west.

182-184

If Fire*Wolf decides to search this cave, turn to **223**. If he goes directly south, turn to **205**. If he takes the western exit, go to **213**.

182

Fire*Wolf gripped the barrier and found the metal icy cold - colder by far than the temperature of the atmosphere would account for. As the thews and sinews of his muscular body locked in effort, he bent his whole will towards moving the barrier.

*But willpower won't be enough. Roll two dice and add one to the score for every full 10 STRENGTH points Fire*Wolf has above 50. A total of 12 is needed before the barrier lifts, and while Fire*Wolf may try as often as he wishes, every unsuccessful attempt will cost him 10 LIFE POINTS from the cold which is even now numbing his hands and arms. If Fire*Wolf succeeds in raising the barrier, turn to **229**. If he is unsuccessful and decides to leave it rather than suffer further damage, go to **205** and review the options there.*

183

The guard scowled. "The Mystic Orb was not created for the defence of paltry humankind!" he cried and leaped to attack Fire*Wolf.

*Which leaves our hero no option other than to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword, turn to **215**. If he prefers to use spells, go to **189**. Should he fight by any other means, turn to **194**.*

184

*The good news is that any attack spell used by Fire*Wolf will do double damage here. If Fire*Wolf*

wins the battle, go to 177. If not, it's a short trip to 13.

185

He became aware of a gentle, golden light. The falling sensation had stopped, although he had no recollection whatsoever of crashing to his death, or even meeting a firm surface. He looked around in something akin to awe.

He was in a vast, open chamber, a cathedral structure in glittering white and gold. Four pillars were set in a square at the centre of the sweeping marble floor; and four more outside these; and again four outside these. Clear blue forcefields flickered between the pillars, forming three ethereal rooms within rooms within this chamber.

Fire*Wolf took a hesitant step forward and became abruptly aware of a change in himself. He was no longer the dark-haired, dark-eyed barbarian; no longer even the sorcerous Lord Xandine. He had grown taller by a full eight inches and his body, always muscular, was even more powerful than before.

He became aware of his clothing: a form-fitting armour in white and gold; yet an armour so light, so flexible, he was scarcely aware of it impeding his movements. A lock of hair fell forward across his forehead and he saw that even this had changed: his colouring was now a bronzed golden blond.

He was standing in the southern sector of the chamber. The near-transparent forcefields allowed him an unimpeded view across the entire room. He was not alone.

Each forcefield barrier was broken at one point; and guarding each opening was a white and gold clad figure

which might have been a brother to the splendid warrior he himself had become. At the centre of the chamber, within the innermost of the forcefields, was a far more threatening spectre, the hooded, skeletal figure he immediately associated with death itself. Beside it, distorted by the shimmer of the forcefields was a second shape and the outline of a golden sphere.

*Before Fire*Wolf leaps enthusiastically to retrieve the marvellous artifact he has sought so long, there are some things you should know. The change in his appearance is far from superficial. His stats (whatever they were before) now stand at:*

STRENGTH	95
SPEED	95
STAMINA	85
COURAGE	99
SKILL	95
LUCK	80
CHARM	95
ATTRACTION	100
LIFEPOINTS	744

His POWER, POINTS stand at exactly 175 and the ring on his finger is glowing more brilliantly than ever before.

*If Fire*Wolf moves directly to the centre through the forcefields, go to 239. If he makes his way to the north of the chamber to the guarded break in the first forcefield, go to 191.*

186

*Now that he is committed to fighting with the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover something very strange - not to say disturbing - is*



The hooded, skeletal figure of Death

*happening. In normal use, the sword drains LIFE POINTS from an opponent and gives them to Fire*Wolf. Now, however, the sword gives none of the opponent's LIFE POINTS to Fire*Wolf - and, worse still, actually drains LIFE POINTS from Fire*Wolf in direct proportion to the damage it causes to his opponent. In other words, for each successful strike Fire*Wolf makes with the Doom-sword, both he and his opponent lose the same number of LIFE POINTS.*

*If, despite this disadvantage, Fire*Wolf wins the battle, turn to **206**. If he does not, it is a familiar road to **13**.*

187

*This hypnotic effect of the gems has reduced Fire*Wolf's SPEED (permanently) by 10. If he wins the fight despite this drawback, go to **177**. If not, pick up the pieces at **13**.*

188

For an instant time itself seemed suspended. Then his hands gripped firmly on the rope. He hung, swinging wildly, eyes locked on the point where the rope was attached to the roof. But the fixing held.

When his heartbeat steadied, he began to climb down the rope. He reached the end surprisingly quickly and discovered that while the platform he had seen was now no more than ten feet below him, he was still unable to see it clearly. Nonetheless, he determined to jump.

He took one final glance downwards. And the platform vanished!

*Dear gods, is there no end to Fire*Wolf's problems?*

Will he still jump now that the platform (if it was a platform) has gone? If so, turn to 211. If he decides to climb back, turn to 176.

189

The guard's stats are:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	80
STAMINA	60
COURAGE	80
SKILL	80
LUCK	80
CHARM	95
ATTRACTION	99
LIFE POINTS	654

*The sword he carries will give him +20 damage and he will use it effectively since Fire*Wolf will discover spells do not work against him. Deduct the POWER POINTS for the spell Fire*Wolf had decided to use first and permit the guard a free strike. If this kills Fire*Wolf, go to 13. If not, Fire*Wolf may return to 183 and review his combat options.*

190

*If Fire*Wolf wins the fight go to 177. If not, pick up the pieces at 13.*

191

Fire*Wolf approached the golden-garbed guard. The man raised a hand in warning. 'Where goest thou?' he asked in the archaic tongue of Old Harn.

'I seek the Golden Orb,' Fire*Wolf replied.

'For what purpose?' asked the guard.

To reinforce the forcefield which safeguards the realm!

The guard stared at him momentarily. 'The Orb may not be used in mere defence of evil!' he said grimly. And attacked.

*So, once again Fire*Wolf is faced with combat. The guard's stats are:*

STRENGTH	70
SPEED	70
STAMINA	50
COURAGE	70
SKILL	70
LUCK	70
CHARM	90
ATTRACTION	95
LIFEPOINTS	585

The sword he carries will give him +15 on damage and he has the first strike automatically by reason of his surprise attack.

*Fire*Wolf must defend himself. But will he fight with the Doomsword at 179? Or use spells at 227? Or engage in combat by some other means at 219?*

192

The guard's stats are:

STRENGTH	90
SPEED	90
STAMINA	70
COURAGE	90
SKILL	90
LUCK	90
CHARM	99
ATTRACTION	99
LIFE POINTS	718

193-195

*The sword he carries will give him +25 on damage. If Fire*Wolf wins this encounter, go to **222**. If not, go to **13**.*

193

*The good news is that in this encounter, Fire*Wolf will quickly discover all combat spells he uses will do double damage. If he wins the fight, turn to **206**. If not, he may recover his strength at **13**.*

194

The guard's stats are:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	80
STAMINA	60
COURAGE	80
SKILL	80
LUCK	80
CHARM	95
ATTRACTION	99
LIFE POINTS	654

*The sword he carries will give him +20 on damage and he will use it effectively since Fire*Wolf will discover his weapons or hand combat gain him only half damage. After three combat rounds, Fire*Wolf may (if still alive) return to **183** and review his combat options.*

195

*The web has 500 LIFE POINTS which must be reduced to zero before Fire*Wolf is released. His spells will, however, work at double strength here, which may be of some help. If Fire*Wolf destroys the web, turn to **217**. If not, he is destined for **13**.*

196-197

196

'Are you sure?' asked the gnome.

Fire*Wolf nodded.

Drawing himself up to his full two-foot stature, the gnome closed his eyes, took a deep breath and held it. At once his entire body began to swell dramatically.

'Here we go!' he called when he had reached the required volume; and leaped nimbly on to the platform.

For a moment nothing happened. Then, in a grinding of gears, the slab slowly raised, revealing a tunnel forking south-east and south-west.

'Good thinking, Boy Wonder!' exclaimed the gnome. 'Now let's get out of here!'

*Which they can do by going south-west to **133** or south-east to **169**.*

197

The tunnel narrowed so dramatically that the going became difficult. Fire*Wolf persevered and eventually squeezed through a narrow opening into a smallish cave.

He was still examining his new surroundings when a shadow detached itself from the west wall and flew swiftly towards him.

*Fire*Wolf is, in fact, under attack by a Flying Lizard. The creature's stats are:*

STRENGTH	72
SPEED	80

STAMINA	48
COURAGE	64
SKILL	20
LUCK	16
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
LIFE POINTS	300

The Lizard does +5 damage with fang and claw and its scaled body acts as natural armour at -8.

*Fire*Wolf may run back to **205** to review the options there, since the Lizard will not follow him out of the cave. If, however, he elects to fight with the Doomsword, he may do so at **178**. If he wishes to fight using spells, turn to **201**. Should he decide to fight by any other means, turn to **216**.*

198

The guard scowled. 'The Mystic Orb was not created for the defence of paltry humankind!' he cried and leaped to attack Fire*Wolf.

*Which leaves our hero no option other than to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword, turn to **192**. If he prefers to use spells, go to **242**. Should he fight by any other means, turn to **248**.*

199

*If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, you may turn to **206**. If not, the only place to go is **13**.*

200

Fire*Wolf lunged towards the web, fully expecting to

break through the slim gold strands. But no sooner had he touched the glittering filaments than the web convulsed and wrapped itself around him.

Fire*Wolf struggled furiously, but it quickly became apparent that stronger action would be needed if he were not to be trapped completely. The web seemed alive, sentient. He had little time.

*So Fire*Wolf will have to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword in an attempt to cut the web, turn to **175**. Should he decide to use spells, he may do so at **195**. If he fights by any other means, turn to 209.*

201

*Fire*Wolf will quickly discover any attack spell will do double damage to the Lizard. If he wins the battle, turn to **226**. If not, turn to **13**.*

202

The noise was deafening and the smell almost unbelievable. He seemed to be going even deeper into the very heart of the mountain. The floor sloped downwards steeply and loose stones slid and scattered under his feet.

Fire*Wolf stumbled, almost fell, but caught himself in time. Despite the steep slope he was almost running, encouraged by the hellspawn gibbering behind. But he was finding a new difficulty now. A dank breeze blowing upwards from the depths had increased into a wind, then increased again until now it was blowing at hurricane force, making his progress more and more difficult, threatening at every moment to unbalance him, hurl him backwards into the arms of the advancing Demonspawn.

203-205

*Can our hero survive this steadily increasing wind? Roll two dice and add 1 to your score for every STRENGTH point Fire*Wolf has above 50. If the final total is 10 or more, turn to 244. If not, turn to 228.*

203

Fire*Wolf moved forward to examine the walls for the possibility of a secret exit, but found nothing. He turned, planning to return the way he came, and the black sand of the floor abruptly erupted into hundreds of tiny, squirming, jet-black snakes.

*This is not a pleasant predicament. Fire*Wolf is twenty strides away from the entrance and attempting to kill so many snakes would be an entirely futile operation. Roll two dice to determine how often he will be bitten for each step he takes, subtracting 1 from the result for every 10 points of Fire*Wolf's current SPEED. Each bite removes only 1 LIFE POINT, but the cumulative effect may well kill him, in which case go to 13. If, however, he survives he may proceed to 128.*

204

He kicked the corpse aside and raced into the north-eastern passage.

Go to 202.

205

Carefully skirting the pit, Fire*Wolf continue; southwards. He came eventually to a fork in the tunnel leading south-east and south-west.

*Another choice for Fire*Wolf. Will he go south-west to 197, south-east to 218, or return the way he can to 181?*

206

The feline corpse of the Dianthrope slowly vanished at his feet . . . all but that deadly prehensile tail which lay on the stone floor like a coil of blackened rope. Even in death it twitched slightly.

Would Fire Wolf be foolish enough to try to add this dangerous extremity to his personal armoury? If so turn to 137. Alternatively, he may backtrack to 165 and review the options given there.*

207

Fire*Wolf jumped — and missed!

For a heart-wrenching moment he seemed to hang suspended in space, then to his astonishment the rope whipped of its own accord and wrapped around his hands!

Heart pounding, Fire*Wolf clung to the rope. He hung, swinging wildly, eyes locked on the point where the rope was attached to the roof. But the fixing held.

When his heartbeat steadied, he began to climb down the rope. He reached the end surprisingly quickly and discovered that while the platform he had seen was now no more than ten feet below him, he was still able to see it clearly. Nonetheless, he determined to jump.

took one final glance downwards. And the platform

*Dear gods, is there no end to Fire*Wolf's problems? Will he still jump now that the platform (if it was a platform) has gone? If so, turn to 211. If he decides to climb back, turn to 176.*

208

The fight had given the Demonspawn horde time to close the gap. Desperately, Fire*Wolf made another attempt to enter the cavern.

*Roll two dice and add 1 to the score for every 10 points of STRENGTH Fire*Wolf has above 50. If the final total is 10 or higher, turn to 244. If less, turn to 228.*

209

*The web has 500 LIFE POINTS which must be reduced to zero before Fire*Wolf can break free. If he succeeds, turn to 217. If not, he will hang there exhausted until claimed by 13.*

210

How had he ever defeated them? The golden guards fought with almost supernatural skill, their weapons a blur, their movements swift and sure. Even so, the battle lasted close on half an hour before the Spawn succumbed. And as the last Demonspawn pitched forward, eyes glazed, green slimeblood pouring from the fatal wound, all three guards shimmered, disappeared.

Fire*Wolf was alone. He emerged from hiding and looked back down the mountain. A mass of Demonspawn, a veritable Spawn army, was starting up towards him. With a sudden insight he realized the hell-creatures were attracted to the Orb, perhaps to destroy it before it was used to destroy them.

*With several hundred Demonspawn on his trail, there is only one way to go for Fire*Wolf- up! That route leads to 247.*

211

Fire*Wolf jumped, convinced in his heart that the platform was still there, solid but invisible. He jumped - and plummeted past the spot where the platform had been a moment before!

He fell, endlessly, tumbling through the black void in a soundless plunge to certain destruction. The Doom-sword, companion through so many adventures, began to hum as if in anticipation of its master's lifeforce.

Fire*Wolf fell endlessly.

But not, curiously enough, to 13. Go to 185.

212

Fire*Wolf hurled the powerword, Gemini, into the aching void of his desperate situation. At once the Orb flared like a miniature sun. Around him, the howling increased as he felt POWER being drained from him like water pouring from a jug.

*Can he withstand the drain. If Fire*Wolf has 0 to 149 POWER POINTS at this time, turn to 214. If above 149 POWER POINTS go to 250.*

213

The tunnel continued westwards, narrowing as it did so. Fire*Wolf followed it, with the distinct impression that he was swinging north-west. The tunnel continued to narrow until he was forced to edge sideways in order to proceed. He was more than half decided to turn back when he reached an opening leading to a small alcove.

Beyond the alcove lay a cave some twenty feet in diameter, the floor of which was covered with smooth

black sand. Directly opposite, leading northwards, was a tunnel and he could just make out footprints on the tunnel floor, leading both to and from the cave.

*Will Fire*Wolf go north into the cave at 117? Or return to 181 and reconsider the options there?*

214

The Orb flared, then dimmed abruptly, faded, disappeared. With an exultant scream, the Spawn were on him.

It's pointless reaching for your dice against such overwhelming odds. Go instead directly to 13.

215

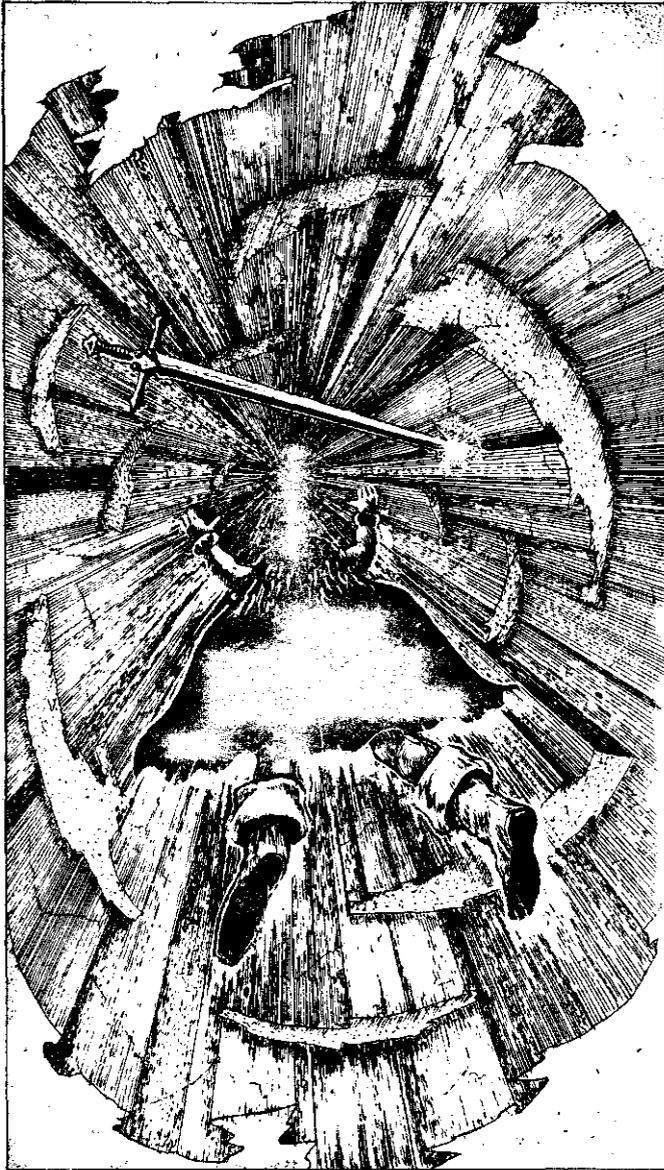
The guard's stats are:

STRENGTH	80
SPEED	80
STAMINA	60
COURAGE	80
SKILL	80
LUCK	80
CHARM	95
ATTRACTION	99
LIFE POINTS	654

*The sword he carries will give him +20 on damage. If Fire*Wolf wins this encounter, go to 224. If not, go to 13.*

216

*If Fire*Wolf wins the encounter, turn to 226. If not, go to 13.*



Fire*Wolf fell endlessly

217

Abruptly the web collapsed, disintegrating into a tangled mass of golden threads on the black sand. Fire*Wolf picked himself up to discover that the casket had also fallen, its lid sprung open on impact. Inside, nestling on red velvet lining, was a scroll.

Fire*Wolf unrolled it carefully and read the contents written in a bold, archaic hand:

*Warrior brave who ventures here
Beyond lies the place of greatest fear
Where reasoned thought will help you not
And trusted weapons are best forgot.
When doubts, confusion, seize your mind,
Distort your thoughts and make you blind
To the only truth that survives here,
Then abandon hope - welcome despair!*

He frowned, unable to make much sense of the words. But the scroll was a mystery for another time. Now that the web was gone, he could see the tunnel divided a short way ahead. One passage opened into a cave, but the other branched away into darkness.

He may explore the cave at 181, or venture down the new tunnel at 232.

218

After travelling some distance, Fire*Wolf reached a heavy metal grid which closed off the tunnel completely, barring his way.

*If Fire*Wolf fancies his chances of lifting the grille, turn to 182. If not, he may return to 205 and review the options there.*

219

*Within three combat turns, Fire*Wolf will discover that ordinary weapons (or blows struck with bare hands) cause only half the damage shown by the dice. If Fire*Wolf survives these three turns, he may change tactics by reviewing the combat options given at 191. If he does not survive, turn to 13.*

220

Fierce heat erupted as his fingers touched the glowing sphere. Fire*Wolf felt a surge of raw POWER flow through him, searing every nerve and fibre of his body. For a moment he stood limned in a halo of dancing energy, then slowly toppled ...

All the way to 13, unfortunately.

221

He could not find the path! Near panic struck him as he realized his predicament and redoubled his efforts. A Spawn warrior clambered on to the plateau while he was still searching and attacked without the slightest hesitation.

The stats of the Spawn are:

STRENGTH	100
SPEED	100
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	100
SKILL	100
LUCK	100
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
POWER	50
LIFEPOINTS	650

Spawn POWER is added to their LIFE POINTS, but not used for magic. The Demonspawn will strike at +15 irrespective of the weapon it is using.

*If Fire*Wolf survives the attack, roll as before to determine whether or not he will find his path. For each missed roll, one Spawn will appear and attack. On a successful pathfinder roll, turn to 241. On death, go to 13.*

222

As the third guard fell, his body vanished, fading into nothing as if it had never been. Around Fire*Wolf, the flickering forcefields also disappeared so that now he could see the distorted central shape more clearly. It was, he saw, a tall stone statue of a bearded sage, one hand outstretched. In the open palm lay the Orb, but it was insubstantial, a ball of glowing golden light. Beside it stood the spectral figure of robed Death.

Without a second thought, Fire*Wolf lunged towards it... and the figure vanished as completely as the body of the guard. At once, all three guards reappeared, alive and whole, ranged behind the statue. Fire*Wolf watched them warily, but they made no move to prevent his reaching for the Orb. He hesitated, but there was nothing else to do. His hand grasped the glowing sphere.

Go, with bated breath, to 240.

223

With a brief instant of vertigo, Fire*Wolf looked into the pit. It was like staring into the depths of starry space, a black emptiness with no sign of bottom. It beckoned him with alarming power, so that he had to fight hard to banish dizziness.

Some fifty feet below, he thought he could see a greyish white square which might have been a platform of some sort, although one without any visible means of support. A platform floating in the void. But strain though he might, he could not bring it into focus. The square danced and shimmered tantalizingly, so that he was more than half convinced it was an illusion. At times he half imagined something glinted on its surface, like a distant star.

Fire*Wolf backed away slightly from the edge and looked around him. Halfway up the nearby wall, caught on a protruding edge of rock, was a coil of golden rope, one end of which appeared to be attached to the cave roof at a point directly over the centre of the pit.

With the tip of his Doomsword, Fire*Wolf flicked the coil loose. It snaked downwards smoothly and when he again peered over the edge, he discovered the rope now hung short of, but reasonably close to, the floating platform. It was difficult to judge exactly, but he felt it ended no more than ten feet away.

Fire*Wolf hesitated. To reach the rope itself would require a leap of some ten feet from the edge of the pit. To miss his grip would be certain doom. Furthermore, he had no means of determining how securely the rope was fastened to the roof: it might not bear his weight. And if he did successfully climb down, he was still short of the platform... which might itself be illusionary. Worst of all, there was the problem of returning from the pit if this proved the wrong route to take.

He looked around him. The two exits beckoned.

*But Fire*Wolf, as ever, has free choice. Should he attempt to jump for the rope at 233? Or go south at 205? Or west at 213?*

224

Fire*Wolf stood staring blankly. This guard too had disappeared. Now only one remained. Fire*Wolf approached and heard the now familiar question.

*But how does Fire*Wolf answer? If his reply is that he wants the Orb to rebuild the forcefield, turn to 198. If he tells the guard simply that he needs the artifact to save the realm, turn to 238. Should he reply that he wishes to kill Demonspawn, turn to 245.*

225

From his place of concealment, Fire*Wolf saw the three gold-clad guards advancing to attack the Demonspawn.

Does he remain in hiding at 210? Or join the fight at 243?

226

Fire*Wolf stepped over the corpse and made a thorough search of the cave. He found nothing of interest and the cave had no exit other than the way he had come.

*Which sends Fire*Wolf back to 205 to review the options there.*

227

*Whichever spell Fire*Wolf has decided to use will cost him the relevant POWER POINTS, but will not have any effect on the guard, who has an additional strike now, as well as the first strike given him by his surprise attack. If Fire*Wolf survives these two strikes, he may return to 191 and review the combat options given there. If he does not survive, he may only go to 13.*

228

Fire*Wolf found himself forced back. Desperately he made another attempt to push through the howling wind.

*Throw two dice and add 1 for every 10 STRENGTH points Fire*Wolf has above 50. Score 10 or better and go to 244. Score less and go to 231.*

229

The barrier lifted slowly, then clicked into place leaving the way free for Fire*Wolf to enter the small cave behind. To his chagrin, he quickly discovered it to be empty and without an exit.

Which only leaves him with the return to 205 to review the options there.

230

The guard scowled. 'The Mystic Orb was not created for the defence of paltry humankind!' he cried and leaped to attack Fire*Wolf.

Which leaves our hero no option other than to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword, turn to 215. If he prefers to use spells, go to 189. Should he fight by any other means, turn to 194.

231

With a howl of triumph, two Demonspawn reached him!

The stats of the Spawn are:

STRENGTH	100
SPEED	100

STAMINA	100
COURAGE	100
SKILL	100
LUCK	100
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
POWER	50
LIFE POINTS	650

Spawn POWER is added to their LIFE POINTS, but not used for magic. Each Demonspawn will strike a +15 irrespective of the weapon it is using.

*If Fire*Wolf survives the attack, go to 208. If not, go to 13.*

232

Fire*Wolf found himself laboriously negotiating the dark boulders that littered the floor of the tunnel. Slimy walls seemed to press in upon him, but there was little point in turning back now.

*All Fire*Wolf can do is continue along the tunnel at 213.*

233

Fire*Wolf drew back from the edge, uttered a silent prayer to his neglected Wilderness gods, then ran and jumped.

Roll one die. Score 1-3 and go to 188. Score 4-6 and go to 207.

234

Which way to go? Fire*Wolf glanced around. The Demonspawn were closer - the leaders of the hellish pack little more than a hundred feet behind him, while more pressed forward to join them. Which way to go?

*Which way indeed! North-west will carry Fire*Wolf to 246, north-east to 202.*

235

Fire*Wolf approached the second golden-garbed guard with even greater caution than the first. The man stepped forward. 'Warrior, why do you seek the Mystic Orb?'

*Essentially the same question as before, but how should Fire*Wolf answer it this time? If he tells the guard he wants the Orb in order to rebuild Harn's forcefield defences, turn to 183. If he simply says he needs it to save the realm, turn to 230. If he declares his intent to use it in order to kill Demonspawn, turn to 224.*

236

Fire*Wolf felt an instant of searing heat as his fingers touched the Orb, then a wave of almost overwhelming power swept through him, inflaming his very soul. For a moment he staggered back, his mind reeling, then slowly his world steadied and he stood before the statue, Orb in hand.

There was someone standing to his right. He tore his eyes away from the Orb to find himself looking into the grave, lined features of the Gegum Abbess. She raised a hand and at once vivid images invaded his mind. He saw pictures of chaos, the defensive forcefield broken in a multitude of places, bands of Demon-

spawn rampaging. Then came a grimmer vision of the mountain range which formed the border between Harn and Kaandor: Demonspawn poured down the slopes in an endless flood.

The visions faded. 'Remember well what you learned in the Vale of Illusion, Xandine,' said the Gegum Abbess.

He reached for her and touched a whirlwind. His surroundings reeled, then changed.

He was halfway up the steep slopes of a tall mountain, accompanied by the three gold-garbed guards. Behind and below them was an open plain. Moving down the mountain towards them was a group of Demonspawn.

*Will Fire*Wolf fight at 243? Or take sensible refuge behind some rocks at 225?*



Pursuit of the Golden Guards

IN THE LAIR OF THE SPAWN

237

Far below, he could see the mass of Demonspawn on the plain look up towards them, then turn to climb the mountain.

Fire*Wolf scrambled to the top with the golden-garbed guards silent at his side. Below, the Spawn were gaining ground: their stubby bats-wings did not permit them to fly, but helped balance and aided leaps so that they climbed with alarming ease and speed.

A guard pointed silently. Some fifty yards down the slope, he could see the yawning entrance of a large cavern and knew, with a conviction that brooked no hesitation, that this was an entrance to the labyrinthine warrens of Spawn. Was this where he must take the Orb? He was, he knew, carrying the battle into the enemy camp, and while there was no sign of Spawn near the cave-mouth, the horde was still climbing the mountain behind him - and getting nearer.

He turned to the guards, but they were no longer with him. This was a task which Destiny had chosen for him alone.

A task which he may attempt to carry out at 249.

238

The guard scowled. 'The Mystic Orb was not created

for the defence of paltry humankind!' he cried and leaped to attack Fire*Wolf.

Which leaves our hero no option other than to fight. If he elects to use the Doomsword, turn to 192. If he prefers to use spells, go to 242. Should he fight by any other means, turn to 248.

239

With a silent flash, the forcefield threw him back.

Fortunately without injury. But now he must return to 185 and review the options given there.

240

*Check on Fire*Wolf's current POWER. If 0 to 149, go to 220. If 150+, go to 236.*

241

Some fifty yards below him on the downward slope, Fire*Wolf caught sight of a yawning cave-mouth and knew instinctively this must be an entrance to the labyrinthine warrens that were home to the hellish Demonspawn.

Behind him, the leading Spawn were closing in.

Which may persuade him to hurry to 249.

242

*Deduct POWER POINTS for the spell Fire*Wolf decides to use. He will, however, discover that neither this nor any other spell is effective in the present circumstances. The guard has one free strike at Fire*Wolf who may, however, return to 238 thereafter and review his fight options.*

243

As Fire*Wolf leaped into the fray, he became aware of the three gold-garbed guards attacking the Demonspawn group - and attacking with such successful ferocity that Fire*Wolf himself was left to cope only with two of the monsters.

The stats of the Spawn are:

STRENGTH	100
SPEED	100
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	100
SKILL	100
LUCK	100
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
POWER	50
LIFE POINTS	650

Spawn POWER is added to their LIFE POINTS, but not used for magic. Each Demonspawn will strike at +15 irrespective of the weapon it is using.

*If Fire*Wolf survives the battle, turn to 237. If not, go to 13.*

244

He could see a large pit set central in a cavern. The howling of the Demonspawn was almost unbearable, shrieking through his brain and blending with the howling of the infernal wind, which had now reached new peaks of intensity.

Fire*Wolf forced his way to the pit and looked down. Smell and noise were both higher than ever and a ruddy lava glow emerged from bottomless depths. Was this,

he wondered, his ultimate goal - the heart of the Spawn warrens? And if it was, what should he do now?

The Orb broke abruptly from his grasp. Fire*Wolf snatched for it in sudden alarm, but missed and stood for a moment teetering on the edge of the pit. The Orb itself was floating in the air above the pit a good ten feet beyond his grasp.

A new sound spun him round. The pursuing horde of Demonspawn were pouring through the cavern entrance. He had only seconds left to activate the Orb and save the realm. But what could he do? What was the secret of the Orb?

SH AI(1)H RI(2)JVCUV YJV AI(1)ULNU

245

The third guard vanished, fading into nothing as if it had never been. Around Fire*Wolf, the flickering force-fields also disappeared so that now he could see the distorted central shape more clearly. It was, he saw, a tall stone statue of a bearded sage, one hand outwretched. In the open palm lay the Orb, but it was insubstantial, a ball of glowing golden light. Beside it stood the spectral figure of robed Death.

Without a second thought, Fire*Wolf lunged towards it... and the figure vanished as completely as the body of the guard. At once, all three guards reappeared, alive and whole, ranged behind the statue. Fire*Wolf watched them warily, but they made no move to prevent his reaching for the Orb. He hesitated, but there was nothing else to do. His hand grasped the glowing sphere.

Go, with bated breath, to 240.

246

After only a few yards, Fire*Wolf reached a dead-end. Fuming, he retraced his steps, aware of time lost. As he reached the fork, two of the pursuing Demonspawn attacked him.

The stats of the Spawn are:

STRENGTH	100
SPEED	100
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	100
SKILL	100
LUCK	100
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
POWER	50
LIFEPOINTS	650

Spawn POWER is added to their LIFE POINTS, but not used for magic. The Demonspawn will strike at +15 irrespective of the weapon they are using.

*If Fire*Wolf survives the attack, turn to **204**. On death, go to **13**.*

247

He reached the top, a small plateau broken by tall rock outcrops. Now he had to find a route downwards.

*Which may not be all that easy. Roll one die. Score 1 or 2 and go to **241**. Score 3 to 6 and go to **221**.*

248

*It will take Fire*Wolf three combat rounds to discover he is doing only half damage. If, however, he survives these rounds, he may return to **238** to re-*

*view the fight options there. If not, of course, he may only return to **13**.*

249

A foul smell oozed from the cave-mouth like a sullen perfume emanating from the rocks themselves. But the Spawn were close behind and he had no option but to enter. As he stepped inside, his ears were assailed by a high-pitched disharmony of shrieks and wails, a continuous, obscene vibration which set his teeth on edge.

He moved forward, pressing against the force of a high wind which seemed to erupt from the depths of the caverns. But at least he had light, for the golden Orb in his hand glowed brighter than ever.

The entrance cavern narrowed to a corridor which led steeply downwards, meandering slightly until it reached a fork. Fire*Wolf stopped. The fork was guarded by a Spawn captain. With the pack at his heels, Fire*Wolf had no option but to fight.

The stats of the Spawn captain are:

STRENGTH	110
SPEED	100
STAMINA	100
COURAGE	120
SKILL	100
LUCK	100
CHARM	0
ATTRACTION	0
POWER	75
LIFEPOINTS	705

The creature has one spell - Blight - which requires a roll of 6 or better on two dice and the expenditure of 25 POWER POINTS. If effective, it will paralyse an opponent for two combat rounds. It strikes with +20 damage irrespective of weapon used.

*If Fire*Wolf survives the encounter, go to 234. If not, go to 13.*

250

Raw power streamed from Fire*Wolf's body, curling in a shimmering fountain of ethereal light towards the Orb . . . The golden sphere flared - then plunged like a stone into the pit.

Fire*Wolf spun round, Doomsword howling in his hand, but the pursuing Spawn had stopped, frozen in their tracks. From deep within the pit a burst of brilliant light erupted, followed almost instantly by an ear-shattering thunderclap. The floor of the cavern shook, as if hit by the first shock of an earthquake. Above, a rumbling growl heralded a rock slip. Small stone fragments showered down from the ceiling.

Still the Spawn horde remained frozen.

Fire*Wolf took a small step forward. With a nerve-shattering screech, the pit behind him sealed itself, closing like a sphincter. The shower of stones became a torrent.

The Demonspawn began to melt!

Despite the immediate perils of his situation, Fire*Wolf stared in dumb amazement. Every creature in the hellish horde was similarly affected, their stocky forms running liquid as waxworks in a furnace.



The death of the Demonspawn

Even as he watched, their substance pooled on the cavern floor, a slime which dried to dust, blown into swirling clouds by the ever-present wind.

Fire*Wolf hesitated no longer, but plunged towards the exit tunnel. He passed through the dissolving Spawn as easily as if they had been mist.

EPILOGUE

They were walking, King Olric and Lord Xandine, through the scented gardens of King Voltar's former palace.

There is no doubt?' asked Fire*Wolf.

'None,' said Olric. 'The effect was total. Every Demonspawn was totally destroyed. Even the marauding bands within our Kingdom did not escape. The reports suggest they all perished at the same instant wherever they were.' He smiled. 'We of Harn have much to thank you for, Fire*Wolf.'

Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'Perhaps. But I can scarcely believe it is really over.'

'Believe, old friend,' said Olric. 'The curse of centuries is lifted. Already House Harkaan has made overtures. They seek a treaty between Kaandor and ourselves. As a gesture of goodwill, they have sealed the old Spawn warrens. It is of no practical import, but the symbolic value is considerable.'

Fire*Wolf stopped to sniff a particularly heady blossom. 'I would be happier if I knew more of what happened.'

'You?' asked Olric. 'Great gods, man, you were there!'

'I was,' Fire*Wolf nodded. 'Yet there is much which remains a mystery to me. I ask myself who created the

Golden Orb? Why was it never used before against the Spawn? How did it destroy them so utterly?'

Olric waved a hand. 'Intriguing questions, but scarcely important now. You have better things to absorb your interest.'

Fire*Wolf smiled. His wedding was no more than a month away. With the realm safe, and with such a future, he should have been the happiest man in Harn.

And yet he wondered . . .

SPELL TABLE

SPELL	EFFECT	POWER
ARMOUR	Creates a magical aura around Fire*Wolf for the duration of the section and subtracts 10 points from any damage scored against him during combat.	25
FIREBALL	Creates and hurls a magic fireball from Fire*Wolf's palm which, if the spell succeeds, will deduct 50 LP from an enemy.	15
INVISIBILITY	Renders Fire*Wolf invisible for one section. He cannot fight while invisible, but can elude an enemy, proceeding as if he had won the fight. Invisibility may be used once only during the current adventure.	30
PARALYSIS	Causes total paralysis of a single enemy for sufficient time for Fire*Wolf to escape to the next section. Can be used only once in this adventure.	30

POISON NEEDLE

Shoots a poison needle into any single enemy within combat range. If the spell works, the poison will prove fatal unless the enemy is naturally immune. Check for immunity with a single die roll. A score above 3 shows the poison will not work.

25

XENOPHOBIA

Causes a single enemy to fear Fire*Wolf so that 5 points are deducted from any damage caused to Fire*Wolf during combat.

20

RESURRECTION

Returns Fire*Wolf to the start of the current section with newly rolled stats. Enemy's stats remain at the level they were at when Fire*Wolf was killed. Successful use of this spell permanently deducts 10 points from Fire*Wolf's STRENGTH rolls in this or any future adventure.

RETRACE

Allows Fire*Wolf to return to any section he has previously visited and to proceed with his adventure from there. Neither LIFE POINTS nor POWER are restored by this move.

2

TIMEWARP

Distorts time. This spell is generally used in combat since it has the effect of restoring Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS, POWER, etc. to the level they were at when combat started. Enemy stats are similarly restored.

15

THE HISTORY OF THE DOOMSWORD

At a time when the world was young and only one sun rose to mark the dawn at whatever season of the year, there fell from the sky a great fiery stone which plunged into the sea near the coast of a land called Sumaritania. Because of the fierce heat, the great stone split on its impact with the waters and from it emerged a creature the likes of which no man had ever seen. It was a veritable leviathan, fierce, cunning, destructive and infinitely evil in its nature.

This creature from the fiery stone took residence in a fortress on the coast of Sumaritania and demanded tribute sacrifice of human lives, grain, honey and gold. The Sumaritanians, a proud race, at first tried to stand against the monster, but the fortress proved impregnable to their attacks and the loss of life occasioned by the Firestone War, as it came to be called, was unendurable. Thus some form of agreement was reached and the sacrifices were to be made on an annual basis at the time of the Winter Solstice.

It happened at this time that the wisest person in all Sumaritania was a warrior smith, a woman of heroic proportions who, in a brief encounter with her husband fifteen years previously, had produced a daughter named Lena Laughter, so called because of her sunny disposition. It was this young girl whom fate de-

manded to be the first sacrifice to the Firestone Monster.

But Hadriana, the warrior smith, would not permit her child to be slaughtered in this way and hid her in a cave and vowed that she alone, if need be, would rid the land of the accursed monster from the skies. Thus she bent her skills and wisdom to a daring plan.

In those days, all smiths were sorcerers, since the working of the metal and the creation of fire were both magical arts. At the Autumnal Equinox, three months before the Solstice sacrifice was due, Hadriana travelled from Sumaritania to the Quaking Mountain in the land of Ragnarok, known to conceal the entrance to the Netherworld in which a race of demons lived in uneasy alliance with the human dead.

Hadriana slew the Guardian of the Entrance, a Worm named Klaanisbaad, and wearing the Wormskin as a protection, entered the region of the Netherworld. In this gloomy realm she tricked and trapped a demon Prince called Lucifuge Rofocal and fashioned his essence into a magical sword unlike any which had ever before been crafted by human hands.

This sword she carried back to Sumaritania and, concealing it within her robe, presented herself in her daughter's place for sacrifice at the Winter Solstice.

It transpired that the Firestone Monster, taken by Hadriana's statuesque good looks, was moved to dally with her before the final sacrifice. But as Hadriana removed her robe in preparation for this additional indignity, she revealed the demonsword and leaped upon the creature with a warrior determination.

The conflict which ensued lasted seven days and seven

nights and almost cost Hadriana her life. But in the end, it was the monster who was slain. Hadriana cut the creature into four pieces and buried one at each corner of the Kingdom.

But the story did not end there, for in the fury of the battle, Hadriana discovered that the sword she had created retained an evil sentience and purpose of its own and continually urged her to deeds of slaughter in order that it might drink the souls of her victims, as was the nature of the demon Prince Lucifuge Rofocal.

At first, Hadriana thought she might control the creature she had fashioned, but in time came to realize the weapon was too dangerous for mortal hands. Thus she attempted to destroy it and release its demon spirit back to the Netherworld. But in this task she failed, for the sword proved beyond her wisdom to destroy. So she attempted to hide it in the great Caverns of the Whisper Wraiths where no man might ever find it. But in this too she failed, since the sword had the property of returning to her side whenever she attempted to leave it.

Eventually, in desperation, Hadriana used her arts to bind the demon of the sword and constrain him to accept a bargain. In order to release the mystic bond between them, Hadriana undertook to weave a magic web from filaments of silk, electrum and moonmetal. This creation, which took her ten years to complete, was then cast into the ether as a snare for heroes in the years to come.

The snare was subtle, for a man or woman who became enmeshed in it would not realize they were trapped, but would simply experience a change of destiny which linked them, until death, with the demonsword.

Thus, Hadriana was freed from the demon artifact she had created. And thus, through the aeons which followed that long-forgotten time, the greatest warrior, the fiercest fighter, of any age has always found himself partnered by the Doomsword in a dreadful symbiosis which none have so far had the knowledge to undo.

HINTS PAGE

Use this section ONLY IF YOU ARE COMPLETELY STUCK in your adventure. The hints given will get you out of the most difficult areas. The clues should be read backwards.

VALE OF ILLUSION

drow rewop teg ot drow hcae fo rettel tsrif ekat neht syawhcre eht lla morf derehtag sdrow morf ecnetnes ekaM

AMOEBIX AMULET

flah tsrif eht htaenrednu edoc fo enil hcae fo flah dnoces ecalP

USING THE ORB

edoced ot siht esU .pot naht retrohs eb lliw enil mottoB .kcab gnikrow dna Z htiw gnitrats siht htaenrednu tebahpla etirW .drow rewop ni gniraepa ydaerla srettel gnittimo tub tebahpla yb dewollof drow rewop etirW

Rules of Combat

First Strike

Roll two dice for your character; two for the enemy. Add to the result the SPEED, COURAGE, LUCK of each. Highest moves first.

To begin Combat, each takes turn.

Successful Hit

Roll two dice. Score of 7 or more indicates hit. But for every 10 full points of SKILL, take one point off hit requirements. For every 72 LUCK points, take one point off hit requirements.

Damage

Subtract modified strike score from actual number rolled and multiply by 10. Modify by STRENGTH: for every 8 points STRENGTH, add one to DAMAGE. Modified also by weapon, check Table on page 13.

Avoiding Death

If LP 0 or below, roll two dice, multiply by 8. If final score is less than LUCK, then start fight again.

Endurance

Length of battle depends on STAMINA. Divide figure by 10 for number of rounds.

Gaining Skill

For every fight you survive, add one to SKILL.