

Sagas of the Demonspawn

Book One FIRE*WOLF

Book Two THE CRYPTS OF TERROR

Book Three DEMONDOOM

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ANCIENT EVIL

SAGAS OF THE
DEMONSPAWN

BOOK 4

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GETTING STARTED

To play this fantasy gamebook, you will need two dice. (Or one will do if you can't find two, although the pair is certainly easier to use.) You'll also need paper and 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, a few less martial characteristics as well. These are:

LUCK

CHARM

ATTRACTION

Take your pair of dice and roll them against the first heading in our table: STRENGTH. (If you couldn't find

a pair of dice, roll one die twice - it amounts to the same thing, only takes longer.)

When you've rolled the dice, multiply the result you got by 8. Write down the answer on the specially designed *Quest Journal* at the front of the book, where you can keep track of your progress throughout the adventure.

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 particular 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. So remember that however good you 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=LIFE POINTS.

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 several other interesting situations and regain them through rest, healing and so on. At no time, however, will his LIFE POINTS 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. Fundamentally, 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 below 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.

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.

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.

If, as is usually the case, Fire*Wolf is using the Doomsword, a treacherous, magical weapon 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 can find out more about the Doomsword in a special section at the back of the book.

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 POINT 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

The use of any spell requires POWER expenditure, and you can find the effects of the spells on the table on page 151.

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*.
2. However much POWER Fire*Wolf has at his disposal, 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.

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 characteristic 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 the first three books 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, his father 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.

According to legend, the Spawn 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 treacherous labyrinth, somewhere near the mountain range which separates the neighbouring Kingdoms of Harn and Kaandor.

From time to time, the Spawn emerged from their lair to mount attacks on Harn, devastating sorties against which there was little defence... until, that is, Fire*Wolf discovered the mysterious Golden Orb, an ancient artifact of immense power, which he used to destroy the Demonspawn utterly and reduce their lair to rubble.

Now, only a few weeks after that historical event, the prestige of Fire*Wolf is at its height. Throughout Harn, he is hailed as the hero who rid the realm of ancient evil, beloved by the common people, admired and courted by the ruling powers. But for all this he cares little and for good reason ...

Now turn to 1.

ANCIENT EVIL

THE ADVENTURE

DISASTER AT THE WEDDING

1

Fire*Wolf stared in numb amazement as the grinning Pogun carried in yet another silk-wrapped package. 'From the noble House Romov,' he explained. 'Late as usual.'

Fire*Wolf gestured, at a loss for words, and Pogun, removing the wrapping with a flourish, added the latest gift to all the rest. It was a staggering array. Here a finely woven, intricately patterned cape from the Guild of Weavers ... there a pair of golden wristbands from the Necromancers... a tooled leather belt with jewelled clasp and silver-filigree-worked scabbard for his Doomsword, commissioned by the Guild of Merchants ... a chaste silver casket containing a pendant of deep ruby on a heavy silver chain, sent by the Guild of Alchemists ... a small, plain gold box delivered by the Goldsmiths' Guild which had proven to contain a heavy emerald ring. Fire*Wolf had received it with sorrow: it reminded him too much of the ring given him by the dead King Voltar, the ring which had disintegrated when he triggered the Golden Orb to destroy the Demonspawn.

He tore his eyes away from it with an effort. Caskets and crystal, silks, linen, wickerwork, ceramics, ornamental weaponry... it was all here, gift upon gift upon gift. There was even buried somewhere a beautifully carved ebon box which contained a tiny jewelled dagger - a gift from the Guild of Assassins!

'Lord Xandine ...'

Fire*Wolf emerged from his reverie. The manservant Pogun was at his elbow. 'It's almost time, my Lord.'

Fire*Wolf nodded. Had it been left to the Lady Freya and himself, it would have been a simple ceremony. But neither Freya's father Olric nor the State Council would hear of it. All had a hundred reasons why the wedding should be the finest Harn had ever seen. And since Olric was now King, there could be no argument.

As he stepped from the massive banquet hall with its overpowering display of wedding gifts, Fire*Wolf almost cannoned into Olric himself, scurrying along the corridor without attendant retinue. The King looked pale and somewhat distracted.

'Calm yourself, Majesty,' Fire*Wolf murmured, smiling. 'It is the groom who is supposed to be nervous on his wedding day.'

But Olric did not seem in festive mood. He drew Fire*Wolf to one side, frowning. 'Have you seen the Chancellor?'

'Lord Nazar? No, not for several days. He is due as a guest, of course.'

Olric shook his head. 'He seems so strange now. You know he disappeared for more than a week a month ago?' Fire*Wolf nodded and Olric went on: 'He's been behaving oddly ever since his return. I'm worried that the experience may have affected him more than he realizes - more than any of us realizes. He remembers nothing of where he went, you know.'

'So I had heard,' Fire*Wolf said.

'I mistrust strangeness,' Olric told him soberly, 'and these disappearances are strange. More than a dozen in all, the Chief of Police was telling me - and now he's gone as well.'

'Nazar? Again?'

'No, the Chief of Police! I can find him nowhere!'

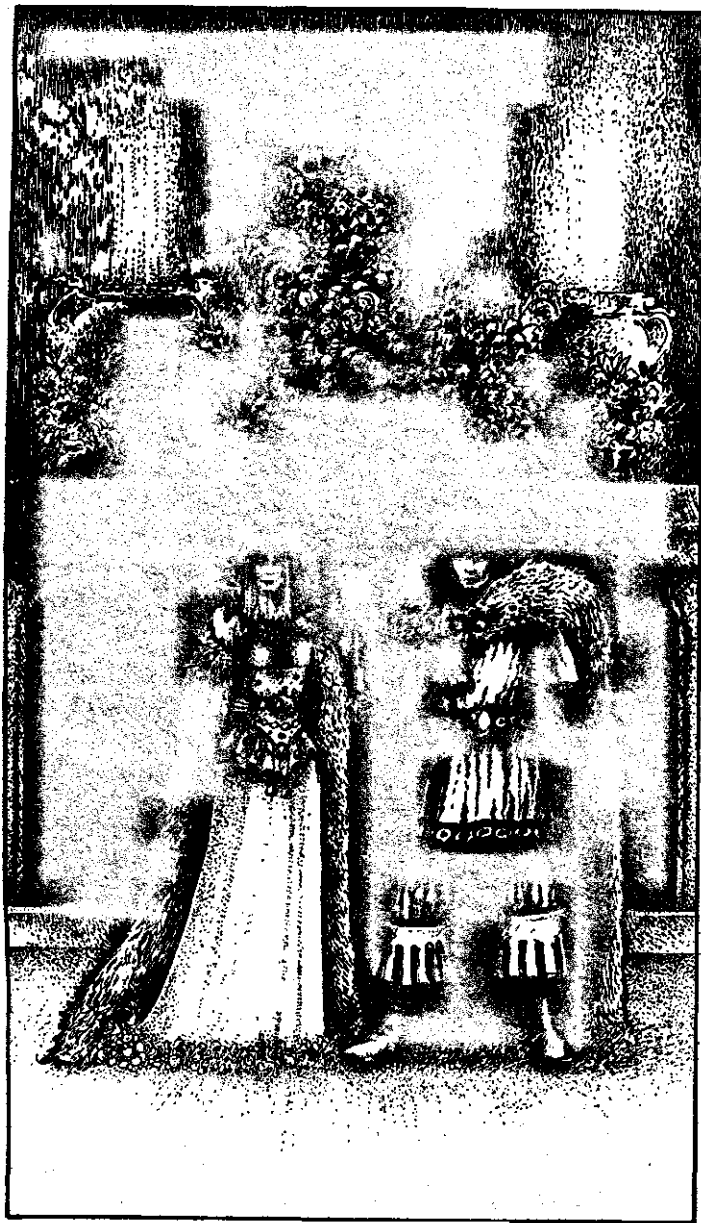
'Perhaps he has simply gone to investigate the mystery,' Fire*Wolf suggested.

'Yes. Yes, perhaps that's - ' Olric seemed to come to himself suddenly and smiled. 'But my dear fellow, I should not be burdening you with my worries on your wedding day. You hurry along and prepare yourself. The High Priest and Priestess are at their stations and almost all the guests have arrived.'

Less than an hour later, Fire*Wolf, resplendent in his formal robes of office as a Minister of State, stood before the High Altar in the Palace Temple as the wail of golden rams' horns heralded the entrance of his bride. His heart leapt as he turned to look into the veiled face of the Lady Freya, and pounded as it had never done within the caverns of the Spawn when the firm tones of the old High Priestess began the nuptial ceremony.

The wedding rite itself took close on three hours to complete and ended with a kiss. As was the custom, Freya led her new husband, hands bound with golden rope, to the banquet hall, then released him to a cheer from the assembled company. They kissed again and walked together to the seats of honour at the High Table. Even King Olric, on this special occasion, took a slightly lower station. The Major Domo entered with the Wedding Cup, an ornate chalice filled with purple wine. Freya sipped, then Fire*Wolf, and with an explosion of cheerful chatter, the feast began.

It was a magnificent affair which lasted late into the afternoon, but when the Court Fool, a dwarf named Iff, announced the entertainment and a troupe of jugglers tumbled in, it was the unofficial signal for the bride and groom to steal away.



Fire*Wolf weds the Lady Freya

Fire*Wolf parted reluctantly from his new bride and retired to the antechamber to change into travelling clothes. Pogun was still fussing over a fold in his cloak when a discreet knock interrupted them.

Fire*Wolf looked up in surprise as the woman entered. He had never seen her before, but her posture, walk and serenely lovely countenance marked her instantly as Gegum - as did the fact she had passed the Palace Guards without a wedding invitation.

She bowed with just a hint of irony, then fixed Fire*Wolf with a steady blue-eyed gaze. 'Do you know me, Lord Xandine?'

'You are Gegum, Lady,' Fire*Wolf told her tightly. He had no great love for the witch-nuns who had manipulated his actions so easily when he sought the Golden Orb.

'I am Gegum,' she agreed. 'The Abbess Lipta has charged me to deliver a message.'

'Speak,' Fire*Wolf commanded.

She glanced briefly at Pogun, who slipped away without a word. When the servant had gone, she said, 'Lord Xandine, your presence is required at our Convent at once.'

'At once?' echoed Fire*Wolf. 'By the gods, Lady, it is my wedding day!'

'Nonetheless,' said the Gegum nun serenely, 'you must come.'

*But must he? Fire*Wolf is a free agent, able to decide his own fate. He may answer the summons or ignore it as he wishes. Should he decide to go, turn to 25. If he ignores the summons, go to 15.*

2

The Doomsword slid softly into the fine scabbard. Fire*Wolf admired the workmanship for a moment,

then strapped it on, well pleased with both the appearance and the feel.

If this is his first choice, return to 28 for his second. If not, go direct to 19.

3

What had come over the old Chancellor? While Fire*Wolf had not known him intimately, the man's reputation was written in the history books of Harn, a sober, upright citizen of wealth and power and a loyal subject of the ruling Ring. Something very strange was going on.

*Should Fire*Wolf search the body at 38? Or does the problem of his missing bride take precedence so that he goes immediately to examine the police files at 8?*

4

The surroundings swam abruptly and a vision of the Gegum Abbess appeared briefly as Fire*Wolf tumbled headlong into the pit.

Which falls all the way to 13.

5

The surroundings swam abruptly and a vision of the Gegum Abbess appeared briefly as the ground beneath his feet collapsed and Fire*Wolf tumbled headlong into the lava bed beneath.

Which is a short, hot road all the way to 13.

6

*The pendant, set in a filigree of silver, is not only beautiful but useful. Placed against the forehead, it will restore half of any LIFE POINTS lost in combat. But the artifact may be used only once after any given combat and at no other time. If this is Fire*Wolf's first choice, return to 28 to make his second. If not, turn to 19.*

7

As Fire*Wolf advanced with the staff, the large man did likewise so that they met in the middle of the narrow plank.

'Let combat commence!' exclaimed the large man, grinning.

Indeed. But despite his size and obvious confidence, the stats of the large man are not particularly impressive:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Strength | 50 |
| SPEED | 48 |
| STAMINA | 48 |
| COURAGE | 70 |
| SKILL | 61 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 25 |
| ATTRACTION | 35 |
| LIFE POINTS | 367 |

*There remains, however, the problem of staying on the plank. For each successful blow Fire*Wolf takes, he must make a successful check roll of 10 or better to keep his footing. In calculating the score, he may add 1 for every 5 points of SKILL he has above 50. The same check (with the same additions) should be made to determine whether the large man manages to remain on the plank. If Fire*Wolf survives the encounter, turn to 58. If not, turn to 13.*

8

The Assistant Police Chief, a gnomish man named Menton Mala, brought the relevant files without question. Fire*Wolf took them, surprised at the volume of papers they contained. As he began to read, surprise turned to shock: there had, in all, been some fifteen reported disappearances within the past few

9-10

weeks. All involved personages of high rank and power, ranging upwards from District Administrators to the Chancellor, Lord Nazar. In most cases, he quickly discovered, the person concerned had returned after a few days, unable - or unwilling - to say where he had been. But all were unharmed and the file had been closed. There was, however, a note in Nazar's file mentioning a confused report that he had been seen at or near Belgardium during the period he was reported missing.

Fire*Wolf studied the information carefully, searching for a pattern. Most of the earlier disappearances seemed confined to a region to the south of Harn, in or around Belgardium. Fire*Wolf frowned. The once-great coastal city, second only in size to Pelimandar itself, had been devastated by the Spawn in a vicious aerial attack almost a decade previously, but was now being rebuilt. Could there be a connection?

*Fire*Wolf may still wish to question Lord Nazar at 20. But he may instead decide to organize a trip to Belgardium to search for clues to the disappearance of his bride - if so turn to 28.*

9

Despite the most conscientious search, Fire*Wolf was unable to discover any mechanism.

Which leaves no other choice than to return to 43 and review the options given there.

10

Fire*Wolf drew the Doomsword and pushed past the panic-stricken man. By following the screaming, he came quickly to an oaken door. As he burst through, his eyes took in a scene of carnage.

In the centre of the chamber loomed a creature from a nightmare, a horned slime-thing from the nether pits

of Hell. Around it were not two but five dismembered human corpses and blood ran everywhere. Ringed around the chamber walls were seven members of the Guild, robed figures immobile in their concentration. It was their efforts alone which were holding the creature at bay, but the bloody bodies indicated all too clearly that they were weakening.

Fire*Wolf did not hesitate. With the Doomsword singing in his hand, he leaped into the centre of the room.

A leap he could live - or die - to regret. The stats of the Slimefiend are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 125 |
| SPEED | 75 |
| STAMINA | 100 |
| COURAGE | 120 |
| SKILL | 50 |
| LUCK | 70 |
| CHARM | 0 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFEPPOINTS | 540 |

*Although carrying no weapons, it will strike with +10 damage and, worse still, will poison on a natural throw of 12. If poisoned, Fire*Wolf will lose an additional 8 LIFE POINTS per combat round on top of any other damage. (The poison will not, however, last beyond the immediate encounter.)*

*If Fire*Wolf survives this little bit of unpleasantness, go to 44. If not, go to 13.*

11

*Since both Fire*Wolf and the gnome are of the same sex, it is Fire*Wolf's CHARM rather than his undoubted ATTRACTION which may produce positive results here. Roll two dice and multiply the*

result by 8, adding 1 for every 5 points of CHARM he has above 50. If the final result is greater than 50 on no more than three attempts, turn to **21**. If not, go to **41**.

12

A sudden silence descended on the little antechamber as Fire*Wolf asked about the scar. Nazar's hand went involuntarily to his head, then dropped. 'This?' He shrugged. 'A riding accident. Nothing serious: the damned horse threw me. I expect I'm getting too old to hunt the way I used to.'

It seemed a plausible enough explanation; and even if it were not, it was obvious to Fire*Wolf that he would obtain little more in the way of information here. He half turned to go ... and the old man launched himself upon him, a dagger in his hand!

Despite his advanced age, Nazar is surprisingly tough. His stats are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 50 |
| STAMINA | 48 |
| COURAGE | 55 |
| SKILL | 16 |
| LUCK | 40 |
| CHARM | 20 |
| ATTRACTION | 25 |
| LIFE POINTS | 314 |

*But more to the point, Fire*Wolf is not wearing the Doomsword, for while the hellish blade can never be stolen, taken from him or lost, he had voluntarily left it in his chambers during the wedding ceremony and, in the crisis, forgotten to reclaim it. Thus he is armed only with a ceremonial dagger, which strikes at +5 exactly like that used by Nazar.*

*If Fire*Wolf survives this unexpected attack, turn to **3**. If Nazar kills him, turn to **13**.*

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 in 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

*The emerald ring fits perfectly. The gem itself is exceptionally finely cut with a market value of perhaps 10,000 gold pieces. If this is his first choice, return to **28** to make his second. If not, go to **19**.*

15

Fire*Wolf shook his head. 'Present my regrets to your Abbess,' he said. 'It is impossible for me to visit her at this time. I shall endeavour to see her when I return from my honeymoon.'

To his surprise the Gegum merely shrugged and left without protest. Who could fathom the witch-nuns? Fire*Wolf stared momentarily at the closed door, then pushed the incident from his mind and continued changing. He was just reaching for his travelling cloak when King Olric burst in.

The King took a swift glance around the room. 'She is not here?'

'Freya?' Fire*Wolf frowned. 'No, of course not - ' The

implications of the King's words sank in. 'What has happened, Olric?'

'She is gone!' Olric exclaimed, his voice close to panic. 'She went to her quarters to change for the journey as you did, but when her maidservants came to join her, the room was empty. We have scoured the *palace*, but she is nowhere!'

'The Gegum!' hissed Fire*Wolf. 'There was a Gegum nun here only moments ago!'

But Olric shook his head. 'It is not the Gegum way, Fire*Wolf. Besides, the nun of whom you speak is still in the entrance hall: Freya is not with her. My friend, I feel this is in some way connected with the other disappearances we have been experiencing.'

Fire*Wolf stared at him thoughtfully. If the King was right, then it might make sense to speak with Lord Nazar, the Chancellor who had disappeared and subsequently returned. Or perhaps the Chief of Police knew something. He too had temporarily disappeared, but as a Councillor of State, Fire*Wolf had access to police files, which might provide some clue to what was going on.

'Calm yourself, Olric,' he said firmly. 'I shall find her.'

*But where to start? If Fire*Wolf decides to speak with Lord Nazar, turn to 20. If he opts to search the police files, go to 8.*

16

As Fire*Wolf moved within a yard of the gnome, he found his way barred by an invisible forcefield. The gnome watched his abrupt halt with interest.

Should he try to break through the forcefield at 39? Or threaten the gnome at 24? Or perhaps he would

be better served speaking to the gnome in friendly terms at 11. Alternatively, he may turn back at 45.

17

Although not himself a member of the Guild of Alchemists, Fire*Wolf was well known to its Master, the venerable Ben bene bar Jain, a Shaman wizard with an interest in the ancient art, who frequently advised the ruling Council. But a formal request to inspect the crypts elicited an unexpected response. The Crypts of the Alchemists were no more, bar Jain told him sadly. They had been demolished — accidentally — almost three years previously in an experiment involving sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal. There was as yet no firm decision to reconstruct them, since recent alchemical discoveries suggested power might be drawn more easily from certain megalithic structures than obtained in the old way through courage and the sword.

*Small consolation for Fire*Wolf, who now must review the options given at 38.*

18

*The total distance across the cavern is some thirty feet. To cross safely, Fire*Wolf must make a check roll each ten feet. Roll two dice, adding 1 to the score for every 5 points of SPEED he has above 50. A final result of 10 or better is needed for safety. If Fire*Wolf succeeds in his endeavour, turn to 43. If not, the lava will carry the ashes to 13.*

19

There were still indications in the countryside of the ravages of the Demonspawn. Generations of invasions had left their mark, sometimes subtly. The road to Belgardium from the capital was well travelled, much of it across the broad grassland of the central plains,

but when Fire*Wolf reached the River Iyx, the bridge marked on his map was no longer there. Perhaps it had been swept away in the winter floods; but more likely Spawn raiders had demolished it at some time in the past. A new bridge might have been constructed, but exactly where was anybody's guess and a man could waste much time searching for it.

*Will Fire*Wolf take the time to search at 80? Or attempt to swim the river at 56?*

20

Finding Lord Nazar proved simple: the old Chancellor was indeed among the wedding guests, now in something of a turmoil as the news of Lady Freya's disappearance had spread.

Fire*Wolf fended the inevitable questions brusquely and drew Nazar aside into a small antechamber for privacy. Wasting no time in small talk, he came to the point at once.

Nazar stared at him in surprise. 'But my dear young Xandine, all this talk about my so-called disappearance is just so much nonsense. It was necessary for me to visit my estates in the east: I left plenty of messages behind. Frankly, I can't think why the whole thing was built up into such a mystery.' He leaned forward. 'Certainly it can have nothing to do with the missing lady.'

There was a small scar on Nazar's head. Fire*Wolf found himself staring at it as if hypnotized. The wound lay just beneath the hairline - or where the hairline would have been had not the Chancellor long succumbed to baldness. There was something familiar about the tiny injury, and as Fire*Wolf tore his eyes away, it came to him. He had once seen an exactly similar scar on the corpse of an assassin sent to kill him. Coincidence? Or something more sinister?

*Should Fire*Wolf directly query the origin of the scar at 12? Or will he accept what Nazar says and perhaps examine the files of the police chief at 8? Or indeed search for other possible clues to the whereabouts of his missing bride at 34?*

21

The gnome smiled and beckoned. Hesitantly, Fire*Wolf stepped forward and discovered the forcefield had gone. He took a moment to investigate, without, however, discovering the nature of the phenomenon. By the time he had finished, the gnome had gone.

Fire*Wolf followed the corridor into another cavern. As he emerged into it, he realized at once he might be in even greater trouble. He could feel intense heat beneath his feet and hear the subterranean roar of flame. Even as he looked around, he could see the floor cracking and whole sections caving in to slide into the lava bed beneath. He knew at once that he must race for his life to cross this cavern before the entire floor collapsed.

Should he risk it at 18? Or turn back at 5?

22

Still far from certain that he was making the right decision, Fire*Wolf sought out Olric for advice. The King listened carefully, but ventured no more than that the fastest route to Fire*Wolf's chosen destination lay through Belgardium. The more direct route would inevitably prove slower since it lay through swampland and over several rivers.

Fire*Wolf nodded, then took his leave to prepare for the journey.

Which he can do at 28.

23

*Fire*Wolf's COURAGE must be high to survive this initial test. The chasm he has to cross is thirty feet wide. Make a double dice roll for every ten feet he has to cross, adding 1 to your score for every 5 points of COURAGE he has above 50. Should he score below 10 at any stage, go to 13. If, however, he survives, turn to 26.*

24

The gnome grinned bleakly at Fire*Wolf's harsh words, but otherwise made no reaction.

*Which leaves Fire*Wolf with his original dilemma. Should he try to break through the forcefield at 39! Or perhaps he would be better served speaking to the gnome in friendly terms at 11. Alternatively he may turn back at 45.*

25

'Very well,' said Fire*Wolf curtly. 'I shall attend on your Abbess. But I am sure she will forgive me if my visit is brief.' He was, in fact, intrigued. The Gegum were a law unto themselves, following their own mysterious inclinations as they had done for generations. They had been involved in the destruction of the Demonspawn, although in so convoluted a manner that he scarcely knew if they had helped or hindered. For the Abbess to issue a summons was unheard of: yet it had happened and he burned with curiosity to discover why.

If the nun was offended, she did not show it. Indeed she showed nothing as she turned to leave. 'I shall convey your decision to my Abbess,' she said.

Fire*Wolf finished dressing, found his manservant skulking in an anteroom and alerted him to his imminent departure, stressing that he planned to

return within the hour. He specifically required that no message be sent to his bride, since he hoped to have returned before she was ready to leave. Then he called for a swift horse and, leaving the palace by a side entrance to avoid the crowds, set off across Pelimandar for the Gegum Convent.

On his last visit, when the threat of the Demonspawn was at its height, he had found entry to the Convent difficult. But now the door swung open immediately at his knock. 'You are expected, Lord Xandine,' said the novice in the courtyard and turned to walk with the feline grace of her Order to the cloister.

Fire*Wolf followed, expecting to be led to the study where he had last met the Abbess Lipta. But instead, he found himself in a vast, wood-panelled audience chamber where the old crone herself awaited him, seated on an ornately carved oakwood chair which only just fell short of being a throne.

She did not rise as he entered, but fixed him with her glittering gaze. 'It is well that you have come, Lord Xandine.'

'Well or not, my time is short,' Fire*Wolf remarked dourly.

The Abbess smiled lightly. 'Ah yes, your wedding celebrations. I should perhaps congratulate you, but there are more important matters afoot.'

Fire*Wolf allowed one eyebrow to drift upwards. 'Really.'

Indeed,' said Lipta. 'And since your time is short, I shall not waste it in small talk. Thanks to your courage and your efforts, the scourge of the Demonspawn is finished ... and now Harn faces the greatest crisis the realm has ever known.' Somehow she made it sound his fault.

'Crisis?' echoed Fire*Wolf. 'I know of no crisis.'

'You do not,' the Abbess agreed. 'Nonetheless it is here. This kingdom has reached a turning point in its long history. To a degree, it is a crisis which we of the Gegum have long planned. But planned or not, it may yet plunge Harn into utter destruction.'

Frowning, Fire*Wolf said, 'You doing?' He was confused.

'Our planning, not our doing,' Lipta snapped. 'There is a difference. The threat, as always, comes from elsewhere. To meet it, we require a focus of our power - a living focus. We have chosen you.'

It was becoming more bewildering. 'Me?' He stared at her. 'What is this threat of which you speak?'

But the Abbess shook her head. 'That knowledge is unimportant to you at the present time. What is important is your ability to control - even survive - the power that shall flow through you. I have called you here for testing, Xandine.'

'You have called me here for nothing, Abbess,' Fire*Wolf told her shortly. 'I leave within the hour for my honeymoon journey. I have no time for witch-tests and mystification.'

The Abbess leaned forward. 'Did not we aid you against the Spawn?'

*Which is true and may change Fire*Wolf's mind, since he is a man of honour who would normally acknowledge a debt. If he agrees to take these unnamed Gegum tests, turn to 42. If he follows his original inclination to leave, turn to 31.*

26

Heart pounding, Fire*Wolf reached the other edge of the pit and found himself in a narrow passageway with

rough-hewn stone walls. He walked a short distance forward before a sudden movement ahead caused him to pause. Straining his eyes in the gloom, he could just make out the shape of a monstrous serpent, head raised to strike.

Will he fight this reptile at 52? Or try to find an alternative route at 29?

27

On his first visit to Pelimandar as a rude Barbarian with a sorcerous veneer, Fire*Wolf had spent what seemed a lifetime lost in the narrow streets of the Old City, searching for the houses of the ancient Guilds. Now, ten years on, he walked the winding alleyways without guide or hesitation and reached the Necromancers' Guildhouse in less than half an hour.

Nonetheless, enough of the Wilderness Barbarian remained in him to hesitate at the sunken doorway. An errant instinct warned him of impending danger, so that he dropped one hand unconsciously to the pommel of the Doomsword as he knocked.

The heavy door slammed open on the instant. A wild-eyed, saturnine man in the dark Guild robes stood within. 'Xandine!' he gasped. 'Thank the gods! You must help us!' From somewhere in the dismal depths behind him came a constant, high-pitched screaming.

What has happened?' Fire*Wolf demanded. Despite his suspicion of sorcery, he was an honorary Guildsman himself now, initiated into certain of the lesser mysteries.

The Council of Masters has raised a fiend!' the man blurted. 'An experiment with the ancient lore. But something has gone wrong. Two of our senior brethren are already dead. The brothers hold the creature, but

they are weakening. We know not what havoc it may cause if it escapes!'

*A pretty pickle for the Guild - and one which must tend to confirm Fire*Wolf's deep distrust of sorcery. Obviously there can be no question of searching the crypts now, but will our hero tackle the fiend? If so, turn to 10. If not, Fire*Wolf must review the options at 8.*

28

It was, perhaps, some sentimental superstition which led him to the great hall where the presents to the Lady Freya and himself were on display. He would, he decided, take two with him as a reminder of the urgency of his quest: but two only, since he must perforce travel light.

*Fire*Wolf must make his decision now from the following shortlist, but he should make it BEFORE turning to the sections indicated for a fuller description of the item chosen.*

The cape from the Weavers' Guild — 40

The jewelled dagger from the Assassins' Guild — 46

The emerald ring from the Goldsmiths' Guild - 14

The rubypendant from the Guild of Alchemists - 6

The leather scabbard from the Guild of Merchants - 2

The golden wristbands from the Guild of Necromancers—50

29

Fire*Wolf backed away cautiously and was seized by an instant of sheer confusion. His surroundings tilted and swam and it seemed to him the Gegum Abbess loomed before him, changing at the last moment into the fanged head of a striking snake.

Our hero's confusion may ease somewhat at 13.

30

*Still no sign of the gnome returning. Unless Fire*Wolf turns back at 45, he will die of starvation here (in which case turn to 13).*

31

Fire*Wolf rode back to the palace, his mind a turmoil. Despite his brusqueness, he was aware the Gegum never spoke lightly. If Lipta said there was a crisis facing Harn, then her words must be given weight. Yet what crisis? The Demonspawn were utterly destroyed. A peace treaty had been signed with neighbouring Kaandor. No threat loomed on the horizon. It was a total enigma.

As he reached the palace, all thoughts of the puzzle fled from his mind. Even as he dismounted, he knew something was wrong from the bustle of activity in the courtyard. And his suspicion was confirmed when Olric appeared, white faced and without his usual retinue.

'Is she with you?' the King demanded.

'Is who with me?' Fire*Wolf asked.

'My daughter, your bride!' snapped the King. He caught Fire*Wolf's expression. 'I see that she is not.' His lips tightened into a thin line. 'My friend, prepare yourself - she has disappeared! We have already searched the palace and she is no longer here.'

Stunned, Fire*Wolf stared at him. 'Gone?'

'Like the others,' Olric said. 'Like Lord Nazar and the rest.'

'But Nazar has returned,' Fire*Wolf protested.

'Indeed he has; and it might be worthwhile questioning him. Or perhaps there could be some clue in police

files — these disappearances have been under careful investigation. I know not what to do, Fire*Wolf. She is my daughter!

'And my wife,' said Fire*Wolf grimly. 'Stand firm, Olric -I shall find her.'

*Brave words, but words alone will not butter parsnips as the old Harn saying puts it. Fire*Wolf must take action — and at once. If he decides to question the old Chancellor, Lord Nazar, turn to 20. If he feels there might be more pertinent information on police files, go to 8.*

32

The smells and sounds of a busy marketplace assailed him. The rebuilding programme had obviously brought a new prosperity to the city to judge by the quality of the goods on display. At another time, he might have been tempted to indulge a little time here, but as it was, time was his most precious commodity.

Nonetheless, he may decide to spend a little of that time questioning the stallholders at 65. But if not, you should return to the map on page 158 to pick a new destination.

33

As Fire*Wolf stepped on to the plank, so too did the large man. They edged cautiously towards one another, meeting finally in the centre. Fire*Wolf lunged ... and the sword in his hand passed through the body of the large man without resistance. Before he could recover his balance, he felt the weight of the large man's staff on the side of his head.

*A pretty pickle. Will Fire*Wolf and his useless sword stay where they are until thumped into the pit at 54? Or will our hero turn back at 4?*

34

He began in Freya's quarters, the last place she was seen. Questioning the maidservants elicited the information that some, but not all, of her travelling clothes were also missing, but he found nothing else of interest.

Although King Olric had already done so, Fire*Wolf organized a team to search the entire palace, but while he drove the men mercilessly, they unearthed not a single clue.

*Which leaves Fire*Wolf with the limited options of returning to Lord Nazar to ask about that tiny scar at 12 or examining the police files at 8.*

35

Fire*Wolf turned... and turned, spinning faster and faster until his surroundings were a blur. He caught the merest glimpse of the Gegum Abbess, looming like the Angel of Death before he toppled backwards into the inferno below.

Falling, as you may have guessed, all the way to 13.

36

No one seemed to have noticed the incident at the gate. Fire*Wolf moved away with native caution to the next district he wished to visit.

Which you may select from the map on page 158.

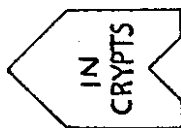
37

*Forget the dice rolls. In these circumstances,, Fire*Wolf will find the man remains unfriendly whatever Fire*Wolf does. Better return to 48 and review the options given there.*

38

The oddly shaped piece of black crystal was about two inches thick. Fire*Wolf stared at his find in amazement: it was a gem the like of which he had never seen before, glowing dully, then flashing green and blue-green as he turned it in his hand.

He looked closer and discovered there seemed to be a message floating deep within the crystal, two words distorted somewhat by the shape, but legible nonetheless:



In crypts? Something hidden in crypts? Could it be a clue? If so, it was the only one he had. But which crypts? And what crypts? There were, of course, many family tombs in Harn, but for Lord Xandine the sorcerer, if not Fire*Wolf the Barbarian, crypts had a special meaning. They were labyrinths in which a sorcerer could trade courage for POWER. He himself had done so more than once in the past when he practised sorcery more than he did today. But he knew of only two Power Crypts in Pelimandar - those of the Alchemists and those of the Necromancers. Was the crystal telling him to search one of these?

There was another labyrinth, one which Fire*Wolf recalled with special trepidation. In the enchanted valley of his father, perhaps the greatest sorcerer of the Xandine line, there lay the crypts in which Fire*Wolf had received his own sorcerous initiation. The castle of the late Lord Xandine was a ruin now, collapsed when the Timelock was broken, but the crypts beneath might have survived. Could his quest lie in that mysterious valley so replete with memories?

*Who knows, but Fire*Wolf must decide. Should he seek to search the Power Crypts of the Alchemists, go to 17. If he decides on examining the crypts of the Necromancers, turn to 27. Should he determine to visit once again the enchanted valley where his father spun his mystic webs, go to 22.*

39

Even the Doomsword could not dent the forcefield. The gnome watched Fire*Wolf's attempts impassively.

*Fire*Wolf can try for as long as he wishes, but must tire of the hopeless task eventually, at which point he should return to 16 to review the options there.*

40

Fire*Wolf hung the cape around his shoulders, marvelling at the lightness and warmth.

If this is his first choice, return to 28 to make his second. If not, go direct to 19.

41

The gnome listened patiently to Fire*Wolf's overtures, but in the event merely stood without speaking and wandered off down the corridor, leaving the forcefield intact.

*Which leaves poor Fire*Wolf with the option of waiting to see what might develop at 30, or turning back at 45.*

42

Fire*Wolf bunked. His surroundings had changed completely, although the Gegum Abbess was still with him.

'Where are we?' he asked. 'How did we get here?'

'We walked,' the Abbess told him bluntly, 'although you will never remember the route. No man has ever before been permitted to visit this place.'

He looked around. They were standing in a large hall with marble floor and sunlight streaming through a multitude of windows. There was a doorway at the far end.

Catching the direction of his gaze, the Abbess said, 'You may well die quite quickly when you pass through yonder door, Lord Xandine. However, when you enter you must not in any circumstances turn back: nor must you use magic, for that is certain death.' Her voice dropped and in a totally uncharacteristic gesture, she placed one wizened hand on his shoulder. 'May the Goddess walk with you, Fire*Wolf,' she said quietly.

Fire*Wolf walked without a word to the door, pushed it open and entered. At once the door swung closed behind him.

He found himself standing on a narrow ledge at the edge of a deep pit. Intense heat and the roseate glow of molten lava rose from its depths with sudden fountains of flame hurling themselves twenty feet or more above the level of the ledge. Stretching in front of him across the chasm was a narrow plank, barely four inches wide.

*Will Fire*Wolf walk the plank? If so, turn to 23. Or should he ignore the warning of the Abbess and attempt to get back through the door at 35?*

43

Fire*Wolf made it safely ... only to be confronted by a large rock slab blocking the only exit. There was a narrow ledge of firm ground directly in front of the slab, but he knew he could not stay there forever.

So does he search at 9 for a secret trigger mechanism to move the slab? Or simply try to lift it at 47? Or risk returning the way he came at 53?



*Fire*wolf looked down into the pit*

44

For a moment all was still. Fire*Wolf stared down at the broken corpse of the Slimefiend, then half turned to the silent figures in the chamber. As he did so, a sudden eruption at his back spun him round. He was just in time to see the corpse explode in a soundless burst of leprous light. A vicious vibration sounded in his ears, ringing louder and louder. Around him, the masonry of the building began to shake. A small fall of rubble from the ceiling above heralded greater disaster to come.

'Out!' screamed Fire*Wolf.

His companions needed no second urging. In the confusion of the moment, Fire*Wolf was aware only of running and of running figures around him. He reached the street then turned to watch as the Guildhouse slowly collapsed in on itself, disintegrating into a vast heap of broken stones. He turned to one of the hooded men beside him. 'Are there any trapped within?'

The man paused momentarily, his eyes briefly unfocused, then said, 'None still alive. I sense several corpses.'

'The crypts beneath?' asked Fire*Wolf.

'Collapsed,' said the man with finality.

*So much for Fire*Wolf's prospective search. With nothing more for him here, he can only review the options given at 38.*

45

The surroundings swam abruptly and a vision of the Gegum Abbess appeared briefly as Fire*Wolf was hurled backwards along the passageway to tumble headlong into the pit.

Which falls all the way to 13.

46

*An excellent choice. While Fire*Wolf wears the dagger, no member of the Assassins' Guild will voluntarily attack him and you should ignore any indications to the contrary during the course of his adventure. If this is his first choice, return to 28 to make his second. If not, go to 19.*

47

*Whether or not Fire*Wolf can move the slab depends, reasonably enough, on his STRENGTH. Roll two dice and add 1 to the score for every 5 points of STRENGTH he has above 50. A roll of 10 or better is required to move the slab. After his first unsuccessful attempt, a check roll on his STAMINA is needed to see if he can roll again. Here, too, the magic figure is 10 or better. Roll two dice and add 1 for every 5 STAMINA points he has above 50. Each unsuccessful attempt to lift the slab after the first will result in a LOSS of 5 STAMINA points.*

After all that, success in lifting the slab will take him to 63, failure to 49 and turning back from the task to 55.

48

The passageway continued for a short distance before opening into a cavern. For an instant Fire*Wolf wondered if he had travelled in a circle, for he again found himself standing on a narrow ledge at the edge of a lava pit across which was a narrow plank.

Yet there were differences. A heavy wooden staff lay on the ledge by his feet, while at the other end of the narrow plank stood a giant of a man, almost eight feet tall, holding a similar staff in his hands.

Show your skill, Mighty Warrior,' the large man

49-51

called. 'Your sword will never strike at me, yet strike at me you must if you wish to pass this way!'

*Should Fire*Wolf advance with his faithful Doomsword at 33? Or take the wooden staff as a weapon at 7? Or should discretion prevail over valour with an attempt to charm the large man at 37? Alternatively, of course, Fire*Wolf may always turn back to 4.*

49

Broken and defeated, Fire*Wolf sank down in a bitter fugue.

Which did no more than hurry him to 13.

50

Fire*Wolf slipped the wristbands over his broad hands and watched with not a little trepidation as the gold writhed briefly before taking the shape of his wrist.

But he need not concern himself: the bands will actually increase his STRENGTH (and hence his LIFE POINTS) by 5 while worn. If this is his first choice, return to 28 to make a second. If not, go direct to 19.

51

Two of the five small cottages in the row proved to be empty, although there were clear signs of habitation. In the remaining three, the tenants seemed a little overawed by the appearance of the burly noble on their doorsteps, but while anxious enough to help were unable to do so.

Which leaves our hero no option other than to pick a fresh destination from the map.

52

The stats of the serpent are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 75 |
| SPEED | 50 |
| STAMINA | 55 |
| COURAGE | 80 |
| SKILL | 25 |
| LUCK | 16 |
| CHARM | 2 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFE POINTS | 303 |

*There is, however, one problem for Fire*Wolf in this combat. The serpent has a particularly swift and deadly strike (which it can use only once) to paralyse an opponent, leaving him helpless and ready for digestion. Fire*Wolf must roll 10 or more on two dice to avoid this deadly strike, but he may add 1 to his dice roll for every 5 points of SPEED he has above 50. If Fire*Wolf manages to avoid the initial deadly strike, the fight will continue normally with the serpent scoring only dice damage. A win here for Fire*Wolf will take him to 48. If he loses, it's 13.*

53

The surroundings swam abruptly and a vision of the Gegum Abbess appeared briefly as the ground beneath his feet collapsed and Fire*Wolf tumbled headlong into the lava bed beneath.

Which is a short, hot road all the way to 13.

54

The one-sided battle continued, but the outcome was ever really in doubt. As Fire*Wolf's final LIFE POINT

vanished beneath the whirling staff, he jack-knifed and tumbled into the pit.

And is dead by the time he reaches 13.

55

The surroundings swam abruptly and a vision of the Gegum Abbess appeared briefly as the ground beneath his feet collapsed and Fire*Wolf tumbled headlong into the lava bed beneath.

Which is a short, hot road all the way to 13.

56

With a half-conscious prayer to his Wilderness gods, Fire*Wolf dived into the river.

But whether he will emerge again is a different story. Roll two dice and add 1 to your score for every STRENGTH point he has above 50. Score 2 to 6 and go to 60. Score above 6 and go to 64.

57

It proved a pleasant, if frustrating, conversation which gave Fire*Wolf no information of any real interest. But as he finished his drink, he noticed the man speaking softly to a young boy who slipped furtively away from the inn immediately afterwards.

*An incident which may or may not have sinister implications. A thoughtful Fire*Wolf should return to 71 to review the options given there.*

58

Fire*Wolf stepped gratefully off the plank and entered a narrow passageway which he followed for no more than a few yards before encountering a small, gnome-like creature seated in the middle of the floor.

A small, gnome-like creature which may or may not

*be highly dangerous. Should Fire*Wolf attempt to walk past at 16? Or go immediately on to the attack at 24? Or perhaps turn back at 45?*

59

It was not, as it happened, a particularly useful approach. The police guardian exhibited the ingrained suspicion of his profession and told Fire*Wolf nothing other than that accommodation was available at the inn.

*Which, if Fire*Wolf wants it, is at 9. Otherwise, he may pick any other mapped destination.*

60

He realized his mistake almost at once. The chill waters and strong current sapped his strength with alarming speed. In moments he was in difficulties. In moments more. ..

But why amuse ourselves with a hero's death-throes? Suffice to turn to 13.

61

Fire*Wolf followed the spiral staircase to the top of the tower, stepping out on to the open battlements to find himself under almost immediate attack.

From three police guardians as it happens. The stats of each are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 55 |
| STAMINA | 50 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 40 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 8 |
| ATTRACTION | 30 |
| LIFE POINTS | 313 |

*They are armed with normal +10 swords and wearing -5 leather armour. If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, which will involve killing all three, turn to 69. If not, the guardians will thoughtfully carry the corpse to 13.*

62

*Make a check roll against Fire*Wolf's current CHARM as outlined in the introduction. Failure to achieve the desired result will take our hero to 70 for the now inevitable combat. Should he succeed, however, he may pass through without let or hindrance to the fabled Forest of Farthingdale, an area of myth, magic and clear blue translucent light where he will have the choice of two possible paths: north-east to 68 or west to 72.*

63

With muscles locked and sweat pouring down his face, Fire*Wolf made one last gigantic effort... and the slab slid upwards with a massive grinding of stone on stone.

He stepped through to find, to his astonishment, he was again face to face with the Abbess in the hallway where he had begun these bizarre Gegum trials.

She stared at him momentarily, then nodded. 'Your powers may be sufficient,' she said drily. Reaching into the folds of her robe, she handed him a strangely shaped stone, polished black with dully flashing blue and green highlights. On it were inscribed the letters:



Fire*Wolf stared at it dumbly. 'Is this a code?' he asked.

But the Abbess remained silent, merely leading him to the entrance hall where a young novice escorted him to the door.

From which our totally bemused — and somewhat battered — hero may proceed to 31.

64

As Fire*Wolf dragged himself, chill and dripping, on to the far bank, his hand closed upon a muddied metallic disc. Curious, he cleaned it off to discover it to be a Golden Xandine, a coin of his own minting, bearing on its obverse the insignia of his seal. Such coins were not exactly rare, but rare enough and he took the find as a good omen. He dried himself off, took time to eat a little of his travelling rations, then moved onwards.

The route was less pleasant now since he had passed beyond the central plains into swampland and forest, but it proved safe enough . . . until, that is, he reached the northern mountain pass — and found it guarded.

Not all the ancient races of Harn swore allegiance to King Olric - nor even to King Voltar the Magnificent before him. The creature staring sullenly at Fire*Wolf was one of those who stood aloof from the affairs of the Kingdom, one of the giantish folk, rarely seen despite their massive bulk, and following their own ways. They were little trouble in the main, but emerged occasionally from their mountain fastness on business of their own. What this one wanted, Fire*Wolf did not know, but he blocked the way and was armed with an impressively gigantic club of hewn stone.

*Fire*Wolf may like to try talking his way past this overbearing creature at 62. But since time presses heavily on him, he may simply elect to fight at 70.*

65

But no one, as it transpired, knew anything of interest.

*Leaving Fire*Wolf no option but to try another mapped destination.*

66

There was little of interest on the body of the giant and but for the fact that Fire*Wolf accidentally dropped the full wine-skin the huge man had been carrying, he might have missed the jewel completely. It was a small sapphire of unusual cut with a liquid centre.

*And an interesting find it is, for the sapphire is a rare magical artifact which, if swallowed, will allow Fire*Wolf to breathe underwater for one section, effectively ensuring he will not drown. Now return to **70** and select his next option.*

67

The man stared at him momentarily, then shrugged. 'Let's hope you know what you're doing,' he remarked and left the cell.

Fire*Wolf waited until he was sure the man was clear, then began a systematic search. But although he worked with considerable patience, it proved fruitless: the only way out was through the door.

*So should he try to break it down at **119**? Or wait to see if the older guardian policeman will reappear at **125**?*

THE MAGIC FOREST

68

The cool, clear aura of the forest soothed him as he walked a path made soft beneath his feet by a carpet of pine needles and dead leaves. He had heard much of Farthingdale, although this was the first time he had ventured into it. The forest had a reputation as a mystic place, the home of many non-human entities, some dangerous, some helpful. But they were elusive creatures in the main and he felt the possibility of actually meeting any of them was unlikely... until, that is, he reached a clearing.

Fire*Wolf stopped. The two little elfin entities were no more than twelve inches tall, winged on back and ankles and tumbling round the clearing in carefree play. One at least saw him, but made no attempt to fly away.

*A pleasant encounter with nature sprites, but what should Fire*Wolf do about it? If he tries to talk to the sprites, go to **74**. Should he attempt to capture one, turn to **76**. He may, of course, elect to ignore them, in which case he has the choice of a path west to **90**, north to **86**, north-east to **94** or south-west to **70**.*

69

*What now for Fire*Wolf? He may search the bodies at **75** or return to the map to choose a different destination.*

70

The Doomsword howled triumphantly as Fire*Wolf released it from its scabbard and flung himself upon the giant which suddenly loomed before him.

Which may have been a dire mistake, considering the giant's stats:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 100 |
| SPEED | 50 |
| STAMINA | 90 |
| COURAGE | 95 |
| SKILL | 75 |
| LUCK | 50 |
| CHARM | 40 |
| ATTRACTION | 30 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 530 |

The club he wields will wreak havoc at +25 damage, although a natural 12 thrown by the giant indicates that the club has shattered, in which case he will continue to fight with bare hands for +10 damage.

If Fire Wolf fails to survive this ill-matched contest, turn to 13. Should he survive, he may search the body at 66.*

And having done so, the way is clear for him to reach the fabled Forest of Farthingdale, an area of myth, magic and clear blue translucent light where a north-eastern pathway will take him to 68, while a western route will lead to 72.

71

The inn reflected the new prosperity of Belgardium: it was packed to capacity.

Fire*Wolf pushed his way through the throng and waited quietly at the bar counter while the busy landlord - a fat and cheerful individual - sought to extricate himself from a group of merchants complaining about the price of ale.

He looked around him with a practised eye. The inn was obviously a meeting place for many different types, although merchants predominated. He caught sight of at least four men he put down as mercenary soldiers, a woman who seemed to be a low-grade courtesan, a scattering of craftspeople, both men and women, with the various Guild insignias tattooed on their wrists, an old man, obviously a local character and equally obviously deaf from the way the patrons shouted at him, and a slim man who, while he lacked the usual robes, had the smell of sorcerer about him.

*A motley crew indeed, but will they be useful to our hero? Should Fire*Wolf wish to talk to the landlord, turn to 57. If he prefers to question the customers, go to 73. Alternatively, of course, he may seek a new destination from the map.*

72

The barest instant of dizziness struck him as he reached a clearing. But it passed on a shake of the head.

There are two exits from the clearing —north-east to 70 or east to 82.

73

He gave up quickly with the old man in the corner. As he had suspected, this worthy was stone deaf. The merchants proved an unforthcoming lot, but the slim man, possibly sensing one of his own in Fire*Wolf, remarked that there had been a peculiar mixture of travellers through Belgardium of late - most seemed to be people in high positions.

*Food for thought. Fire*Wolf may digest it at 71 where he may also review his options.*

74

Fire*Wolf squatted, watching them in silence for a moment, then said softly, 'Good morrow, little friends.'

One took to the air and hovered above his head, the rainbow wings vibrating like those of a hummingbird. 'Good morrow, stranger,' it said and chuckled. 'Why do you travel through our forest?'

Fire*Wolf sighed in answer, the enormity of his task abruptly heavy on his shoulders.

'You are troubled,' said the sprite. 'Go north then, for there you will find a sacred glade of great tranquillity and beauty to soothe your sorrows.'

*Friendly, caring advice, but Fire*Wolf may have no time to soothe his sorrows. He has the choice of a path west to 90, north to 86, north-east to 94 or south-west to 70.*

75

*A waste of time. Apart from the pittance of 5 gold pieces, Fire*Wolf finds nothing at all of interest on the bodies. Better return to the map and pick a fresh destination.*

76

It was fruitless. With all his Wilderness skills, Fire*Wolf was unable to get closer than five feet to the little creatures. At length, in desperation, he launched himself upon one - and both vanished utterly in a sparkle of blue light.

Which leaves him only with the choice of a path west to 90, north to 86, north-east to 94 or south-west to 70.

77

The area was, he discovered, composed of small cottages. And while he took at least a little time to chat with the residents, he learned nothing of interest.

But he may at least return to his map and pick another destination.

78

The forest did not, by and large, bear much fruit, composed, as it was, almost entirely of pines. But here Fire*Wolf noticed a single apple tree, heavy with rosy fruit. It struck him instantly as peculiar.

*From this point, Fire*Wolf may travel north-west to 108, south to 94 or west to 118. If, however, he pauses to eat an apple from the tree, turn to 114.*

79

This was, as Fire*Wolf quickly discovered, the mansion of a wealthy merchant. Although the man and his wife recognized him instantly and offered hospitality, it took him only a little time to realize they had no information of any use to him.

Which means returning to the map to pick another destination.

80

Perhaps his initial estimate had been wrong. By the time he had walked more than a mile each way up and down the river, Fire*Wolf was fast concluding that the original bridge had not yet been replaced.

Which, since he must go on, leaves him no option other than to try his skill at swimming, at 56.

'I thought you deaf!' Fire*Wolf exclaimed in some surprise.

'Only when I want to be,' grinned the old man from the inn. They had met in the midst of eight busy market stalls. 'There are those as hears too much. But I came to warn you.'

'Warn me?' Fire*Wolf echoed.

'The police guardians seek you, friend.'

It did not occur to him to doubt it. 'But why?'

The old man shook his head. 'I do not know.'

*Disturbing information, which may make Fire*Wolf more cautious when he returns to the map to pick a fresh destination.*

'Psst!'

Fire*Wolf stopped, his hand dropping to the hilt of the Doomsword.

'Less of the aggression, Your Lordship!' a soft burred voice suggested in his ear. 'Sure what would a little lad like me be doing fighting with the man who rid the realm of Demonspawn?'

'You know me?' Fire*Wolf asked, looking around him, but failing completely to discover the origin of the voice.

'Doesn't everybody? Even in Farthingdale where the cares of the world seldom intrude. And don't I know of your troubles as well, with your poor lady wife gone and not a pick of comfort for you.'

'Where are you?' Fire*Wolf demanded.

At your feet, man - at your feet!'

Fire*Wolf looked down into a pair of glittering brown eyes, set in the wizened face of the smallest man he had ever seen — including the Court Jester, who was himself a dwarf. 'The name is Olric,' said the little man. 'Named after the present King when he was Knight Regent and you, young fellow, were no more than a twinkle in your mother's eye. Would you believe I have been searching these woods for the past two hours or more looking for you.'

Why so, Little Olric?' Fire*Wolf asked, smiling.

I have a bit of information for you,' Olric said. 'And the offer of a trade.'

'Trade?'

'I'm a racing man myself,' the little man explained. And no more than a week ago, didn't the horses at Penguard run off with the very shirt from my back, leaving me with not a penny to my name above a copper or two for a night at the inn and a bite of food.'

'If it's gold - ' Fire*Wolf began, reaching for his purse.

'Nay, never gold. It's your brain I need. For it's my relief the race was fixed, if I could ever prove it. But to do that I need to know the time it started.'

'I fear,' said Fire*Wolf, 'I cannot help you there, for I have never visited the Penguard Races.'

Ah, but you can, if you will. For I have the information necessary, if only I had the wit to calculate the answer. You see, Lord Xandine, the winning horse finished at me minute after three in the afternoon, four lengths in front of the third horse, which itself was only two lengths behind the second horse, which was the one that was carrying my money if the stupid animal had

only known it. Now that second horse was ahead of the fourth horse by four and a half lengths, and the fourth horse ran the course in exactly sixty-one and three-tenths seconds. Are you following me so far?'

'I think so,' Fire*Wolf said, frowning.

'Well,' went on Little Olric, 'the point is that in the last quarter of the race, wasn't it a fact that every horse was travelling at the same speed, covering one length in one fifth of a second. Now, from all that, can you tell me when the damn race started?'

*Well, can he? Or should he even bother wasting time trying to work it out? Fire*Wolf is perfectly free to go south-west to 72, south-east to 90, north-east to 96, or north to 92. But if he decides to humour this curious little man, he may perform the necessary calculations. If he concludes the race began at 2.50 pm then go to 120; if at 3.03 pm go to 110; if at 2.59 pm go to 106; or if at 3.00 pm go to 116.*

83

The guardian escorted Fire*Wolf to a small side door that led out into a square.

Walk wary,' he warned. 'This may help.'

*This transpired to be a leather armour breastplate with the guardian insignia - a simple but possibly effective disguise. Fire*Wolf donned it gratefully and took his leave.*

*While Fire*Wolf may now select another mapped section, it is as well to remark that the armour which gives a -5 on damage, may help him in an future bother with the guardians. There is a chance (1 to 3 on a single die roll) that he can ignore an attack by them and proceed as if he had fought his way through the encounter.*

84

They were an illusion! Technically, it was a brilliant piece of sorcery, for sight and even smell were fooled completely. But touch was not. The path felt as any other path. Who had cast the spell? Or was it some magic of the forest itself?

These are not questions he can answer. But since the path itself is safe enough, he may follow it to a fork where he may turn east to 68 or north to 82.

85

The inn stables were newly built, but the attendant was old — and stupid. Fire*Wolf gave up the attempt to talk to him after a few words: the man was obviously a poor source of information on anything more complicated than manure.

*Thus a disappointed Fire*Wolf must try another mapped destination.*

86

Fire*Wolf stopped, bemused. The path had taken him northwards to another, larger clearing in which, to his utter astonishment, was an old man, white haired and white bearded, precariously standing on his head.

'Xandine!' exclaimed the venerable ancient, righting himself with alacrity. He peered shortsightedly at Fire*Wolf. 'No, you can't be Lord Xandine. Too young. Too young by far, even with his accursed sorceries. Look like him, though — I'll say that for you.'

'Perchance, sir, it was my father you knew,' Fire*Wolf ventured.

'Xandine's son?' asked the old man. 'Never knew he had one. Well, well, well. What brings you to Farthingdale, young man?'

'I seek clues to the whereabouts of my wife,' Fire*Wolf said simply.

'You won't find her here,' said the old man. He glanced upwards at the sun. 'Time to meditate, I think.' He sank down, crossing his spindly legs in an impossible position and rolled back his eyes alarmingly.

'But sir - ' protested Fire*Wolf, full of questions.

'One answer only I shall give you,' intoned the ancient, obviously sinking into trance.

And for all he wished to ask - about his wife, his father, the forest - all Fire*Wolf could think to say was, 'Why were you standing on your head?'

For a long instant he thought the old man might not answer, then, in a voice that rustled like dried leaves, he said, 'The posture ... prevents baldness.'

Useful information should our handsome hero ever start to lose his hair. But in the meantime, he can only leave this venerable idiot to his trance and take the eastern path to 94, the western path to 96 or the southern path to 68.

87

Before Fire*Wolf could react, he was surrounded by guardians and hustled into a tiny cell with the only light filtering through a small slit high up in the wall. It was a bewildering development... and all the more bewildering when, some twenty minutes later, the cell door opened again and an older guardian came in, finger on lips.

'Lord Xandine,' he whispered. 'What is happening is wrong. I do not understand it, but several of the younger guardians have been receiving very curious orders of late. I am here to help you escape.'

*But is he? Fire*Wolf may accept his help at 95 or decide to go it alone at 67.*

88

They were an illusion! Technically, it was a brilliant piece of sorcery, for sight and even smell were fooled completely. But touch was not. The path beneath his feet felt as any other path. Who had cast the spell? Or was it some magic of the forest itself?

These are not questions he can answer. But since the path itself is safe enough, he may follow it to a fork where he may turn east to 68 or north to 82.

89

The newly built Town Hall had been modelled on the old building razed by the Spawn and presented an imposing edifice as Fire*Wolf stepped between the soaring entrance pillars. In the hallway, three police guardians stepped forward to greet him.

Lord Xandine!' one exclaimed. 'We have been instructed to find you!'

Fire*Wolf remained calm, although his hand crept towards the hilt of the Doomsword. 'Why so, sir?'

'It shames me to say there are those in our ranks who would wish to harm you, my Lord. We have been ordered to assist you in any way we can.'

*If Fire*Wolf is prepared to accept this generous offer, turn to 93. Should he refuse, go to 97.*

90

Subtly, his pathway changed. From beaten earth it became dried earth, then charred earth, then - a few yards ahead — glowing coals.

Fire*Wolf halted bewildered. The forest trees grew

thickly on either side, with no indication of damage, yet his eyes told him he was walking directly into a fiery pit.

*And walking into a major decision by the looks of it. Should he examine the coals at **84**? Return the way he came at **72**? Or simply try a little firewalking at **88**?*

91

Like similar places elsewhere in the kingdom, the headquarters of the guardians had a vaguely threatening air... and a vaguely off-putting scent of stale sweat.

As Fire*Wolf stepped inside, a broad-shouldered specimen of the breed stepped forward to demand, 'Your name, sir, and place of residence?'

*Someone who obviously does not recognize Harn's greatest hero. But should Fire*Wolf say who he is at **107**? Or make up a false identity at **59**? Or simply stand on his dignity and refuse to tell him anything at **87**?*

92

The pathway opened abruptly and Fire*Wolf found himself on the shore of a large inland lake. But it was not the sudden change of scenery which captured his attention. Bobbing near the water's edge was a slim black ferryboat. Beside it, like a spectre of Destiny, stood Death - a skeletal figure in a long, dark, hooded robe.

Fire*Wolf gazed at the apparition calmly. He had seen such spectres before - and lately, when he went to seize the Golden Orb which he had subsequently used to destroy the Demonspawn.

They were seldom what they seemed: sometimes no more than the creation of a sorcerer's imagination, although occasionally they could be a dangerous shape shifter or something of that ilk.

*Fire*Wolf has paused to consider. He might advance on the figure to examine it more closely at **98**. Or go into an immediate attack at **102**. Or attempt to return the way he came, in which case he will find himself at **86**.*

93

The man who had spoken nodded. 'It would be well, sir, if you would accompany us to our superior who will know what to do.'

*If Fire*Wolf is prepared to do so, turn to **101**. Alternatively, he may refuse at **103**.*

94

His surroundings pulsed and twisted, as if the universe itself had, turned abruptly inside out. In reflex, Fire*Wolf clutched at his Doomsword.

*Not that the old soulstealer will do him any good since he has triggered an area of random teleportation. Roll two dice. Score 2 to 4 and go to **68**. Score 5 to 8 and go to **90**. Score 9 to 11 and go to **92**. Score 12 and go to **82**.*

95

Fire*Wolf and his friendly companion moved quietly down the corridor, then turned a corner into a sudden disaster. Two other guardians stood before them, definitely unfriendly.

This is a fight for sure. The stats of the two attacking guardians are:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 55 |
| STAMINA | 50 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 40 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 8 |
| ATTRACTION | 30 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 313 |

*Both are armed with +10 swords. But Fire*Wolf will not at least have to deal with the two, since his friendly companion effectively neutralizes one attacker. Should our hero dispose of the other, he may go to 83. If not, of course, his only possible destination is 13.*

96

Three paths faced him.

East to 86, south-west to 82, north-east to 102.

97

Without word or warning, the man attacked.

The stats of each guardian are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 55 |
| STAMINA | 50 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 40 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 8 |
| ATTRACTION | 30 |
| LIFE POINTS | 313 |

*They are armed with normal +10 swords and wearing -5 leather armour. If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, which will involve killing all three, he may return to the map to pick a fresh destination. If not, the guardians will thoughtfully carry the corpse to 13.*

98

As Fire*Wolf advanced, the creature stretched out one bony hand. Within it flickered a gold coin which vanished instantly. The hand remained outstretched.

*Fiie*Wolf will recognize the coin despite its fleeting appearance: it is a Golden Xandine, a piece of currency of his own mintage. Should Fire*Wolf have such a coin in his possession, he may, if he wishes, use it to pay the Ferryman who will carry him across the lake to exit north-east to 108. Alternatively, he may decline the boat trip and return to 92 to review the options given there.*

99

He awoke in a tiny cell with the only light filtering through a small slit high up in the wall. It was a bewildering development... and all the more bewildering when, some twenty minutes later, the cell door opened again and an older guardian came in, finger on hips.

Lord Xandine,' he whispered. 'What is happening is wrong. I do not understand it, but several of the younger guardians have been receiving very curious orders of late. I am here to help you escape.'

*But is he? Fire*Wolf may accept his help at 95 or decide to go it alone at 67.*

BELGARDIUM RENEWED

100

There were many changes in Belgardium since the last time he had visited the city. Then it had been a smoking ruin, ravaged by the Demonspawn. Now it was a hive of activity, with new building everywhere . . . although some areas still bore the scars despite the decade which had elapsed.

*The map on page 158 will enable Fire*Wolf to select his destinations in this city. But as he stands at the gate attempting to make up his mind, two black-robed figures appear from nowhere — members, it is obvious, of the Assassins' Guild. Is this a fight for his life? The stats of the Assassins are:*

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 95 |
| STAMINA | 65 |
| COURAGE | 80 |
| SKILL | 70 |
| LUCK | 50 |
| CHARM | 25 |
| ATTRACTION | 40 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 485 |

Each is armed with a dagger which strikes at +7 and will deliver a lethal poison blow on a roll of 12.

*If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, turn to 36. If not, go to 13.*



Trouble at the gates of Belgardium

101

The guardians led him to their headquarters . . . and promptly threw him in a cell!

Go to 107.

102

The path led to a lake, and a distinctly unfriendly Ferryman.

The stats of the Ferryman are:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 55 |
| SPEED | 65 |
| STAMINA | 35 |
| COURAGE | 85 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 55 |
| CHARM | 55 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 370 |

*The creature is unarmed, but uses a magical cold touch which will drain Fire*Wolf at the rate of +15 on each successful blow. If our hero survives, go to 104. If not, he can warm up a little at 13.*

103

Fire*Wolf found himself under attack.

A situation he may - hopefully - resolve at 97.

104

Fire*Wolf looked around him, considering his options.

Which are to return the way he came, a decision which will send him to 72; to use the ferryboat to make for a north-eastern exit on the far side of the lake at 108; or to search the skeletal corpse of the Ferryman at 112.

105

Fire*Wolf watched the last of the three guards sink to the floor. He was about to turn away when, it seemed, the universe exploded and he fell abruptly into darkness.

Go to 99.

106

The world flickered around him and a rushing sensation overtook his senses. The single thought — *teleport!* - flickered through his mind before his surroundings changed.

Go to 72.

107

Before Fire*Wolf could react, he was surrounded by guardians and hustled into a tiny cell with the only light filtering through a small slit high up in the wall. It was a bewildering development. . . and all the more bewildering when, some twenty minutes later, the cell door opened again and an older guardian came in, finger on lips.

Lord Xandine,' he whispered. 'What is happening is wrong. I do not understand it, but several of the younger guardians have been receiving very curious orders of late. I am here to help you escape.'

*But is he? Fire*Wolf may accept his help at 95 or decide to go it alone at 67.*

108

Fire*Wolf stopped, confused. He had reached a complex junction of paths, with no indication of which he should take.

His options are south to 124, south-east to 78, north to 130, west to 128 or south-west to 92.

'Come buy! Come buy! Who will come buy!'

The voices of the merchants vied with one another in the busy ring of stalls. Fire*Wolf waited until custom was slack before striking up a conversation with one: a plump, swarthy man with broad, strong hands, who proved to be obsessed by avoiding the guardian police.

'My business is legal,' he remarked, 'and honest. But something's come over the guardians lately. You just can't be too careful: not even a man of your obvious standing. Avoid them if you can, that's what I say.'

*When Fire*Wolf grows tired of this windy paranoia, he may seek out a fresh destination from his map.*

The world flickered around him and a rushing sensation overtook his senses. The single thought — *teleport!* — flickered through his mind before his surroundings changed.

Go to 72.

The door opened and Fire*Wolf felt a sudden surge of sheer delight. 'Yalena!' he exclaimed.

The woman stared at him in momentary alarm, then her face cleared abruptly. 'Fire*Wolf!' she gasped. In a moment she was in his arms. 'Fire*Wolf, is it truly you!'

He extricated himself gently and held her at arm's length to look at her. She had changed little in the ten years since he had rescued her from the Spawn. 'Yalena, you look wonderful—more lovely than ever.'

'And you, Warrior, look as dangerous as ever, despite your soft life as a lord. Dangerous, but tired. Won't you come in and tell me how you found me?'

'An accident, I fear, but a happy one.' As he stepped across the threshold, he asked, 'Is there news of my old friend, Baldar?'

Her face clouded instantly. 'Ah, Fire*Wolf, my father is dead.'

'Dead?' echoed Fire*Wolf, shocked. 'Impossible!'

She shook her head. 'Not impossible, although until it happened I would have agreed with you.'

'How did it happen?' Fire*Wolf exclaimed.

She turned her face away from him. 'He took his own life. It may be that his mind was disturbed, for he had been behaving strangely for some time. He was not himself. But he often talked of you towards the end. He was obsessed by the enchanted valley where your father lived: he imagined ... I know not what he imagined, for he seldom spoke clearly of these things. It was in his mind that there was an evil arising in the valley, associated with the ancient crypts. Perhaps it was this obsession that finally deranged him.'

'I should not have thought him a man destined for madness,' Fire*Wolf remarked thoughtfully.

'Nor I,' said Yalena. 'But what else could it have been?' She shrugged and turned again to look at him directly. 'He thought often of you, Fire*Wolf. Among his belongings, he left this for you ...' And she produced a piece of curiously shaped black stone.



Fire*Wolf stared at her.

*As well he might. Her father, the hermit Baldar, was a man to whom our hero owed his very life - and a man unlikely to imagine anything, let alone crack beneath the strain. And what was the mystery of the black stone fragments! Many questions remain to be answered. Perhaps Fire*Wolf should go at once to the enchanted valley, in which case he may begin his journey at 149. But there may, of course, be further information he can gather in Belgardium, in which case he may still seek new destinations from the map.*

112

There was a scroll wrapped in a fold of the Ferryman's robe. Fire*Wolf handled it carefully, suspecting magic, but in the event it proved merely to be a reference to a 'sacred glade of the dryads' at the northernmost point of Farthingdale Forest.

*Information which may or may not be of some use. If Fire*Wolf crosses the lake he may exit to the north-east at 108. Alternatively, he may return the way he came, in which case he will find himself at 72.*

113

Finding himself among the market stalls, Fire*Wolf noticed one that sold a vast selection of second-hand clothing. The thought occurred to him to purchase something which might help him travel incognito.

But has he gold? Ten pieces might suffice, in which case he can safely haggle over a bargain at 115. As against that, talk is cheap so he will certainly have the option of questioning these stallholders at 117.

114

The apple had a bitter almond taste. In sudden alarm, Fire*Wolf spat out the piece. But it was already too late...

Go to 13.

115

One jacket, half buried beneath a pile of old furs, took his attention, more for the curious nature of its material than for any consideration of style. The merchant, noting his interest, suggested the item was a bargain at 80 gold pieces, but Fire*Wolf, with the instinct of the Wilderness Barbarian, soon talked him down to merely 8.

'Now you do indeed have a bargain,' said the merchant sourly. 'The material is levenskin.' He caught Fire*Wolf's puzzled look and added, 'It will turn a fireball thrown against you, although only once.'

*Not merely a bargain, but a magical bargain and one which Fire*Wolf may now take with him as he returns to the map to choose another destination.*

116

'By the hokey man, but I believe you're right, me broad boyo!' remarked the little man. 'Now pay close attention to me, for I'll say this only once: what you need to do is get yourself as fast as you can to the Place of the Dryads, otherwise you'll be wandering about forever and getting nowhere.'

As the little man turned to go, Fire*Wolf called desperately, 'But where is the Place of the Dryads?'

To the north, to be sure!

*Fire*Wolf may now go south-west to 72, south-east to 90, north-east to 96 or north to 92.*

117

*A frustrating choice: the stallholders know nothing of interest or use to Fire*Wolf, who should return to the map to pick another destination.*

118

He had entered a bedroom with two exits, east and south-west. But for the moment, his attention was riveted on the massive golden four-poster against the north wall. It was by far the largest bed he had ever seen, but more to the point, it radiated a golden energy so intense he felt he might almost touch it.

*Fire*Wolf may exit to the east at 78, to the south-west at 96. But if he wishes to search the golden bed, he should turn to 126; and if he fancies lying on it, he may do so at 122.*

119

Fire*Wolf stood back and kicked the door, carefully aiming his blow near the lock. The wood shuddered, but held.

Fire*Wolf kicked again, concentrating his total energies into the effort. This time there was just the slightest hint of splintering wood. He rested a moment and was about to try again when the door burst open abruptly under the onslaught of three angry guards.

Who are not at all happy about our hero's attempt to escape. The stats of each guard are:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 50 |
| SPEED | 48 |
| STAMINA | 48 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 16 |
| ATTRACTION | 20 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 272 |

*Each is armed with a +10 sword and is quite determined to put paid to Fire*Wolf before he does any more damage to that door. If Fire*Wolf survives the attack, go to 105. If not, turn to 13.*

120

The world flickered around him and a rushing sensation overtook his senses. The single thought — *teleport!* — flickered through his mind before, his surroundings changed.

Go to 72.

121

As Fire*Wolf approached three open stands, he felt a hand upon his arm. He turned swiftly to find himself looking at a young man in his middle twenties. The man smiled. 'You do not know me, Lord Xandine?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head. 'I have never seen you before in my life.'

The smile broadened. 'Be not so certain, for once I put an arrow in your shoulder not far from this very spot. Although,' he added, 'I had cause to regret my action later.'

Fire*Wolf stared at him, searching vainly for a familiar feature. There was none.

'Much changes in ten years,' the young man said. 'Most of all a child, which is what I was when we last met. I am stepbrother to Yalena, daughter of Baldar, whose life you saved when the Spawn ravaged Belgardium.'

*A fortuitous encounter and one which will lead Fire*Wolf to meet with Yalena at 111 if he has not already found her by his own efforts. Alternatively, he may return to the map to select a different destination.*

122

The bed was one of the most comfortable he had ever used. As he stretched out, he could feel relaxation creep through his muscles like a drug and while he fought against it in sudden panic, in moments he was fast asleep.

Fire*Wolf dreamed. In his dream, he had finished his quest. His beautiful young wife stood before him, smiling in her wedding gown.

Fire*Wolf raced to embrace her, but as he took her in his arms, she half turned and plunged a silver dagger in his heart.

Fire*Wolf awoke with a start. So vivid was the dream that he actually examined his body for a wound.

But there was none. Indeed, the sleep on the golden bed will have restored him to full LIFE POINTS should he have lost any at this time. He may now search the bed at 126, exit east to 78 or south-west to 96.

123

Ties, sir? Kebabs? A little mutton?'

It was a food-stall, tended by an enthusiastic vendor.

If Fire Wolf is hungry and has even a few copper pieces, he may buy something to eat. If not, he may return, stomach grumbling, to the map to pick a different destination.*

124

The route took him into fairyland - or at least something suspiciously like the legends told of fairyland. He had entered a garden of crystal, sparkling in the sunlight and intercut with golden paths.

Fire*Wolf wandered for more than an hour in this glorious environment, fascinated by the delicacy of the crystal flowers and shrubs. But for all the beauty here, he found not one living creature.

Although he did eventually find an exit to the north which will take him to 108.

125

It seemed as if Fire*Wolf must wait forever, but the man did return eventually.

'Are you still prepared to aid me?' Fire*Wolf asked.

The man simply nodded.

Now go to 95.

126

To his intense disappointment, he found nothing.

Which leaves him with the option of lying on the bed at 122, or leaving through the eastern exit at 78 or the south-western exit at 96.

127

As Fire*Wolf entered the establishment he had time only to discover it was a weapons shop before two broad-shouldered young men approached him.

'Stranger here, aren't you?' one said aggressively.

'Yes,' the second chimed in. 'An outsider, like .. '

Fire*Wolf glanced across at the store-keeper who had a lightened look, then moved to pass the young men.

Here, who do you think you're pushing!' the man demanded, reaching for his sword.

'An ill-mannered lout, by the look of it,' Fire*Wolf remarked calmly. He waited until the other's weapon

was almost clear of its scabbard, before dropping his own hand to the hilt of the Doomsword.

And as the hell-blade emerges shrieking, it is obvious our hero is once again facing a Jess than welcome conflict. The stats of the two young thugs are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 55 |
| STAMINA | 65 |
| COURAGE | 70 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 15 |
| CHARM | 10 |
| ATTRACTION | 25 |
| LIFEPPOINTS | 320 |

*Their swords give them each +10 on damage, but they wear no armour. If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter he may return to the map to select a new destination. If not, he may only go to 13.*

128

The atmosphere changed abruptly as he emerged from the forest, so that he hesitated for a moment like a man waking from a long, confusing dream.

He shook his head to clear it. The path on which he had emerged led directly to a large stone bridge over a broad river. But it was a guarded bridge and the three men had the uncomfortable look of the berserker about them.

Fire*Wolf stood stock-still for a moment, attempting to evaluate his position. The berserkers, now mercifully rare, were a bane in the kingdom, followers of an ancient cult which trained them in the martial arts and fed them a porridge brew of alcohol and ivy

The drug-induced frenzy made them fearsome, fearless fighters and, some said, increased both stamina and physical strength.

*If these are, as he suspects, berserkers, Fire*Wolf may be in real trouble facing three of them. If he attempts to fight his way through, go to 140. Should he try to charm them, turn to 142. But if, on the other hand, he wants to risk a bribe, go to 144.*

129

Fire*Wolf found himself in the shop of an armourer, a man of broad girth who was, however, only recently moved to Belgardium from the tiny island state of Damar and knew next to nothing of the affairs of the kingdom.

But while our hero is chatting with this worthy, a sly, slim character fiddling with an ornamental breastplate makes his move. Roll two dice. Score 2 to 8 and go to 131. Score 9 to 12 and turn to 133.

130

Before him on the path was a natural archway formed as great trees bowed in silent reverence; and streaming through the opening was a blaze of blue-gold light.

Fire*Wolf hesitated, then stepped through. A sensation of great peace descended on him. Although a forest opening much like any other, this place was pervaded by the golden light and so still he could hear his own slow, strong heartbeat.

In the centre of the clearing was a shallow well, half ringed by stones and fed by a sparkling little brook. He moved towards it like a man entranced, but as he reached it, a hand fell on his arm.

He turned and found himself looking into the cool grey eyes of a maiden of such ethereal beauty that she put

even his new bride to shame. She was dressed in gossamer and though in appearance no more than eighteen years, carried herself with an authority that transcended time.

'Welcome, warrior,' she said softly.

'What is this place?' asked Fire*Wolf. He could not take his eyes from her.

'You have entered the Glade of the Dryads,' said the girl.

'And you. ...?'

But she only smiled. After an eternal moment she said 'You are drawn to the well, as mortals must be drawn for it contains a fragment of your Destiny.'

Not understanding, Fire*Wolf said only, 'Help me.'

'There is a question,' she said. 'Answer it truly and you may safely take from the well that which you seek.'

He stared at her.

*Fire*Wolf, it seems, has reached a crucial point in his quest. He may, of course, simply leave the glade for **108**. But if he wishes to test his wits against her question, then he must go to **132**. Alternatively, since this young woman is no match for Fire*Wolf and cannot therefore stop him doing so, he might also attempt to take what he seeks from the well without answering the question, in which case turn to **134**.*

131

An ornamental helmet caught Fire*Wolf's eye and on impulse he reached for his purse - only to find it gone!

*A thief at work obviously. Does Fire*Wolf call for the guardian police at **107**? Or search for the thief himself at **135**?*

132

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'I will attempt your question.'

'It is simple,' said the girl. 'You must tell me my name.'

He hesitated. 'But you might be called anything.'

'I might, but I am not. Listen.' She threw back her head and rhymed:

My first is nowhere, but never elsewhere
My second is everywhere, but never in air
My third it is royal, but is not a king
My fourth is in mitre and also in ring
My fifth is around you, but out of your reach
My sixth is in undergrowth, but never in beach
My seventh is saunter and standstill and stay
My whole is the answer to show you the way!

She laughed. 'Add six times six to the total of my name and go safely on your journey, warrior!'

*Well, yes. But if Fire*Wolf finds himself completely bewildered, he might try **138**.*

133

Instincts fine honed by years of Wilderness life swung Fire*Wolf round in time to discover the hand of a small, slim man on his purse.

*A cutpurse at work, but what is Fire*Wolf's reaction? He may call for the guardian police at **107**, fight the thief at **137** or simply take back his property and return to the map to select a new destination.*

134

Brusquely, Fire*Wolf brushed past her and plunged his hand into the water of the well. He had a brief

135-137

impression of a fragment of black stone before pain erupted like a fountain ...

.. . carrying him directly to 13.

135

There was no one else in the shop and the armourer himself had not been close enough to take the purse. Who knew where he might have lost it - except that Fire*Wolf was convinced this was no accidental loss, but theft.

A theft which he may report to the guardian police at 107, or write off by returning to the map to select a new destination.

136

Fire*Wolf plunged his hand into the clear water of the well and felt his fingers close upon a piece of shaped black stone.



He looked around, but the girl had disappeared.

With the stone safely in his possession, our here may now leave the forest at 128.

137

The stats of the thief are:

138-140

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 48 |
| SPEED | 95 |
| STAMINA | 60 |
| COURAGE | 25 |
| SKILL | 60 |
| LUCK | 55 |
| CHARM | 50 |
| ATTRACTION | 40 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 433 |

*He is armed with a dagger which, fine blade that it is, strikes at +7. Beneath his ragged cloak he wears a leather breastplate which will act as -5 on damage. If Fire*Wolf extracts his bloody revenge on this wrongdoer, he may return to the map to select a new destination. If not, his new destination lies at 13.*

138

*If Fire*Wolf wants to have another try at answering the convoluted question, he may return to 132. Should he wish to try his luck at the well without answering the question at all, he may do so at 134. But there is a third, unusual alternative, open not to Fire*Wolf, but to you - the Hints Page on page 157.*

139

The building was, he discovered, a changing house, well guarded as such establishments tended to be: and not only by the bank's own mercenaries, but by a contingent of the guardian police.

*Fire*Wolf may enter at 141, or return to his map to select a fresh destination.*

140

Fire*Wolf drew the Doomsword and moved forward.

The stats of each berserker are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 90 |
| SPEED | 80 |
| STAMINA | 95 |
| COURAGE | 100 |
| SKILL | 50 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 30 |
| ATTRACTION | 40 |
| LIFE POINTS | 515 |

*Each is armed with a +10 sword, but, perhaps fortunately for Fire*Wolf, unarmoured. If he survives this difficult encounter, turn to **148**. If not, turn to **13**.*

141

The changing house was crowded, mainly, with merchants, although a scattering of warrior adventurers shouldered their way through the throng to do business. As he stepped within the portals, Fire*Wolf paused. Some errant instinct was warning him of danger, although a glance around assured him that nothing seemed immediately amiss.

*Nonetheless, will Fire*Wolf trust his instinct by leaving now and returning to the map to select a new destination? Or will he remain in the changing house at **107**?*

142

*Nice try, but because of their curious religion, no berserker will accept a bribe. Fire*Wolf should return to **128** and review his options.*

143

A wave of bitter nostalgia swept over Fire*Wolf as he stared up at the ruin of the mansion. It was, he knew, a

relic of the Spawn invasion, one of many which had been gutted by the hell creatures when they razed almost the whole of Belgardium. But this building had been left unrepaired, perhaps because the owners had been killed, perhaps as a deliberate reminder of the bad times.

Fire*Wolf sighed and turned away.

And will, of course, select a new destination from the map.

144

*Bribery is always tricky and nowhere more so than when facing a berserker. Roll one die. Score 5 or 6 and go to **146**. Score less than 5 and Fire*Wolf faces a fight at **140**.*

145

Fire*Wolf followed the spiral staircase to the top of the tower, stepping out on to the open battlements to find himself under almost immediate attack.

From three police guardians as it happens. The stats of each are:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 55 |
| STAMINA | 50 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 40 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 8 |
| ATTRACTION | 30 |
| LIFE POINTS | 313 |

*They are armed with normal +10 swords and wearing —5 leather armour. If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, which will involve killing all three,*

146-148

turn to **69**. *If not, the guardians will thoughtfully cany the corpse to* **13**.

146

*Well, it seems they have accepted, but that does not mean these intoxicated lunatics will stay bribed. Roll one die. Score 1 to 4 and Fire*Wolf is free to pass to* **148**. *Score 5 or 6 and he faces a fight at* **140**.

147

Desperately he tried to tear away the probing tendrils. They were soft, but strong, yet with force born of grim determination, he managed to dislodge one. Then, with terrifying suddenness, the tendrils disappeared. Fire*Wolf stepped forward immediately, but was rocked by a soundless explosion as a gigantic flame-red dragon appeared before him, suspended in mid-air.

*A sorcerous artifact in all probability, but one which could prove exceedingly dangerous. Should Fire*Wolf fight at* **174**? *Or retreat to* **162**?

148

Fire*Wolf crossed over the river and spent an uneventful day in crossing a pleasant grassland plain. He rested the night and resumed his journey at dawn. Before noon he had reached a familiar road. He was now within easy reach of Belgardium.

Which he may enter at **100**.

RETURN TO THE VALLEY

149

Fire*Wolf left the city by the eastern gate. It had been ten years since he had travelled this route and then his journey had been in the opposite direction, yet it seemed he recognized every tree and shrub, every stone on the road.

He came, within a few days' ride, to the mountain path where he had escaped the slavers those many years ago, killing one of their number in the process. They had not followed him into the valley below and at the time he had wondered why. But he had soon found out: the valley was an accursed place, timelocked and strange, where weird creatures roamed in search of prey and the undead walked in the fortress of his father.

Fire*Wolf stood at the head of the valley, thinking of his father. The sorcerous Lord Xandine, then holder of the title Fire*Wolf himself now bore, remained a mystery to him. Throughout his childhood and his young manhood, he had never known his father; and when, at last, fate brought them face to face, it was for a brief time only. Yet Xandine had set Fire*Wolf on a course which changed his entire life, raised him from Barbarian nonentity to one of the most powerful nobles in the land.

It was his father who had taught Fire*Wolf the sorcery he abhorred. It was his father who had set him against the Demonspawn. And it was his father who had died here, in this valley, his body withered by the ravages of magic.

Time had dealt kindly with the valley: so kindly Fire*Wolf scarcely recognized it as the nightmare place which had several times come within an inch of costing him his life. The swampland had gone, replaced by a conifer wood; and the monstrous creatures set to guard the place were no more. Small animals skeetered in the undergrowth and birds sang in the branches.

But the great river was still there, Wending slowly between overhanging boughs and retaining in its murky depths some of the old enchantment. Fire*Wolf followed it until, at last, he reached his destination.

The Castle Xandine he remembered was no more. The towering turrets, looming greystone walls were fallen into ruin, although the skeleton of the building still stood, defying time without the help of sorcery. He could not find the river door' at all, but by circling through dense undergrowth he came eventually to great gates, smashed and twisted, hanging from their huge metallic hinges.

*Fire*Wolf may now enter this ancient demesne through the broken gates, using the plan on page 159 as a guide to where he wishes to explore in his search for the crypts (if they still exist at all) below the ruined building. He may not, of course, select destinations at random within the plan, but must move progressively, entering areas only where the plan shows an entrance exists.*

150

As Fire*Wolf touched the door again, another blue flash blinded him.

And robbed him of another 10 LIFE POINTS. The door remains tight shut. Should he try again at 220? Or return to 196 to review the options there?



The ruins of Castle Xandine

151

After almost an hour, Fire*Wolf was on the point of abandoning his search when, almost by accident, he noticed the remnants of a half-blocked doorway in the western wall.

If he squeezes through, this entrance, he will find himself at 173. He may, of course, ignore it and proceed to some easier section of the plan.

152

There was something wrong. The finished piece was obviously cruciform, but Fire*Wolf could not form it. A section was missing and without it, he was unable to fit the whole together into the depression in the wall. With sinking heart, he realized he had missed a piece of black stone somewhere on his adventure . . .

A brutally frustrating predicament and one which only you can solve for our hero. The only real answer is to backtrack (as far as necessary) to discover where the missing piece lies hidden.

153

He was in an empty courtyard, desolate and silent, the paving stones broken and strewn with rubble. Grass and weeds had invaded here, and the walls around him were crumbling. Broken doorways, like the gap teeth of a shattered mouth, led west, north and east.

*Fire*wolf continues, following his plan.*

154

As Fire*Wolf struck the final, fatal blow, the dragon disappeared: no blood, no corpse, no indication whatsoever that it had ever been.

Panting from his exertions, Fire*Wolf stumbled forward, only to find his feet sinking deeper and deeper into the mist of his tenuous bridge across the void.

Heedlessly, he plunged onwards. But the bridge seemed endless and with every step he took, his position grew more and more precarious until it seemed certain the bridge would no longer support him. Around, above and below him stretched the darkness of the void and the pervasive sense of evil he had felt when he entered this accursed place was increasing dramatically.

In despair and anger, he raised his head and shouted wild defiance at the evil. At once a voice answered in his mind: 'Throw away your possessions, Fire*Wolf. Throw them into the void.'

He stopped. Was it imagination? And if not imagination, what was the voice?

*And, more importantly, will he really contemplate throwing away all he has, leaving himself utterly helpless in this alien place? If Fire*Wolf throws away everything (including, of course, the Doomsword) turn to 160. If he ignores the voice, we must follow him to 168.*

155

The corridor was blocked. Huge stone slabs sealed the far end in tumbled profusion.

Should he waste time in a search here (which may be carried out at 159) or return to his plan and select another destination?

156

The Doomsword shrieked and howled as Fire*Wolf wielded it upon the tendrils, but passed through them without the slightest effect.

*Which leaves Fire*Wolf with no alternative but to return to 200 to review the options there.*

157

This must be, he thought, the ancient entry hall. But he could no longer recognize it. The furnishings were crumbled into dust, the walls little more than piles of rubble. And strewn all about were bleached bones, the remnants of the undead hordes of Castle Xandine as they sought to flee that final disaster.

*Fire*Wolf continues, following his plan.*

158

A glutton for punishment, Fire*Wolf generated yet another blue flash and lost a further 10 LIFE POINTS.

If our hero is still alive after all this messing about, the time may have come to insist he returns to 196 to review his options.

159

With his attention fixed on the great fallen slabs, Fire*Wolf failed completely to hear the footfalls behind him. He was aware that he was no longer alone only when the creatures attacked.

He swung round, hand already reaching for the Doomsword, and found himself staring into the grinning faces of a brace of trolls. It was predictable in retrospect. Although trolls were no part of his father's ancient magic, deserted ruins drew the hideous creatures like a magnet.

*But enough of anthropology. Fire*Wolf has the more immediate problem of surviving the combat. The stats of each troll are:*

| | |
|----------|----|
| STRENGTH | 96 |
| SPEED | 59 |
| STAMINA | 80 |
| COURAGE | 60 |

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| SKILL | 45 |
| LUCK | 25 |
| CHARM | 10 |
| ATTRACTION | 5 |
| LIFE POINTS | 380 |

*The creatures are unarmed, but will rend with fang and claw at +8 damage. If Fire*Wolf survives, he may return to the plan to seek a new destination. If not, go to 13.*

160

In a moment he suspected must have brought him to the brink of madness, Fire*Wolf hurled his possessions into the dark void.

At once, the Doomsword described a shallow arc, then floated back into his hand, locked by the thread of Destiny stronger than any mortal magic.

Beneath his feet, the mist bridge seemed to strengthen and as he started forward once again, he could see its end - a rocky ledge connecting to a large, vaulted cavern.

Almost running now, Fire*Wolf reached the ledge and entered the cavern. Something gibbered in the air around him, a fearsome, teeth-grating sound, but he could see nothing. He looked around him.

And discovered three exits. If he takes the opening to the west, turn to 178; to the east, turn to 198; to the south, turn to 184. Should he risk a search of the cavern itself, turn to 210.

161

This was, he thought, the old back hallway, although now it was little more than a rubble-filled chamber. A section of the western wall had caved in completely and a rockfall from the upper storeys filled the north-east corner.

162-163

Fire*Wolf half turned to leave, then hesitated as the old instincts of the Wilderness pricked him. Some errant memory perhaps prompted him to search more carefully here.

But should he listen to his instincts? There is, after all, the southern corridor which will take him to 155. Or he may select a new destination from the plan. But if he wishes to search, he may do so at 151.

162

Fire*Wolf stepped back... and discovered the mist bridge no longer held him. With a despairing scream he pitched into the endless blackness of the void.

All the way to 13.

163

They were, as he had suspected, works of sorcery. Most were useless to him: descriptions of group operations or solitary spells which required ingredients or artifacts he did not possess.

But one leather-bound tome held his attention, a volume on Power Meditation. The exercise contained therein was purely mental, an imaginary construction which formed a channel to the astral plane and drew therefrom no fewer than 100 points of POWER.

The operation required solitude and could never take his POWER total beyond 100 however often it was performed. Nonetheless, it was a useful piece of knowledge.

*Which Fire*Wolf may use, provided he is alone, at any time henceforth in his adventure. But for the moment, he should return to his plan and seek another destination.*

164-166

164

As Fire*Wolf touched the door, a blue flash half blinded him.

And robbed him of 10 LIFE POINTS into the bargain. The door remains tight shut. Should he try again at 150? Or return to 196 to review the options there?

165

Bandits! There were two of them here, asleep in a room which was more or less intact. Fire*Wolf eyed them with distaste, although he knew it was almost inevitable that the roving lawbreakers of Harn would make use of any derelict building they found.

*The thing is, what should Fire*Wolf do? Since the men are asleep, he may simply continue his quest via the plan. If, however, he elects to attack them, he will gain an automatic first strike on both. The stats of the bandits are:*

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 50 |
| SPEED | 48 |
| STAMINA | 48 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 16 |
| ATTRACTION | 20 |
| LIFE POINTS | 272 |

*Each has use of a +10 sword and will fight to the death (which, if Fire*Wolf succumbs, means a trip to 13).*

166

Fire*Wolf waited, heart pounding, as the tendrils crept around his head and neck. It took every ounce of

willpower he possessed to remain immobile ... but in the event they seemed to do him little damage.

He tried to step forward and the tendrils abruptly solidified, halting him with ease. Then, as he froze again, they returned to their gentle probing as if feeling for something on his body.

For an eternity, Fire*Wolf stood, unable to proceed, reluctant to go back. Then, with terrifying suddenness, the tendrils disappeared. Fire*Wolf stepped forward immediately, but was rocked by a soundless explosion as a gigantic flame-red dragon appeared before him, suspended in mid-air.

*A sorcerous artifact in all probability, but one which could prove exceedingly dangerous. Should Fire*Wolf fight at 174? Or retreat to 162?*

167

There was one thing among the pile of weapons which attracted Fire*Wolf's attention, a pair of metal gauntlets which were not only finely made, but gave off that distinctive aura he had long learned to associate with sorcery. Carefully he pulled them on ...

*To find them an excellent fit: but more to the point, the gauntlets will deliver an additional 6 points each of STRENGTH and SPEED during his next three combats (which temporarily adds 12 to his LIFE POINTS as well). Fire*Wolf may now return to 179 to reconsider the options there.*

168

Fire*Wolf moved forward. The bridge beneath his feet became increasingly tenuous. Further and further he moved. Deeper and deeper he sank.

And without wishing to drag it out, let us simply

report that the time will inevitably come when he sinks all the way into the void and the dreaded 13.

169

He knew these stairs! Now he had reached them, he was certain where they led. Without a moment's hesitation, Fire*Wolf started down.

The going was not particularly easy, for the staircase was both long and steep and there were parts of it almost totally blocked by fallen rubble. But he persevered until at last he had reached the battered, but familiar doors of the Xandine Power Crypts.

For a moment he hesitated. The crypts could not possibly remain active, but all the same he wondered what might have evolved down there. A decade had passed and the magical residue, run cancerous without the strict controls of sorcerous practice, might have produced anything.

He took a deep breath to steady himself and 'pushed open one door. As he expected, a spiral staircase lay immediately beyond it.

That staircase will spiral all the way downwards to 181.

170

As Fire*Wolf touched the door again, another blue flash blinded him.

And robbed him of another 10 LIFE POINTS. The door remains tight shut. Should he try again at 158? Or return to 196 to review the options there?

171

The room - what remained of it - had been converted into sleeping quarters for the intruders. There were several straw-filled pallets and a number of chests.

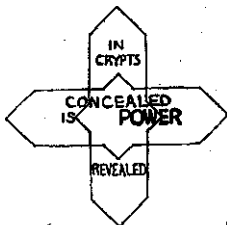
172-173

Since no one else was present, Fire*Wolf took the opportunity of searching through the chests, but found nothing other than old clothing.

A bit of a time-waster that, but he may now continue to his next destination via the plan.

172

Hands trembling slightly, Fire*Wolf formed the cruciform stone.



IN CRYPTS CONCEALED IS POWER REVEALED... well, well, well. And the whole thing is obviously a key of some description since it fits perfectly the impression in the wall. Should Fire*Wolf try to use it! Should he heck as not! Take a deep breath and go to **241**.

173

A wave of nostalgia struck him as he entered. Even in its ruined state, the aura of his father clung to the chamber like a heady perfume. The old Lord Xandine had lived for sorcery and the foundation of his powers was learning. As Fire*Wolf recalled it, many rooms of the castle had been lined with books, ancient tomes of forbidden knowledge, half-forgotten spell scrolls, shelves which bore the weight of arcane knowledge.

This chamber was one such, and though the shelves were broken and most of the volumes torn or rotted or fallen into dust, some seemed more or less intact.

174-176

*Fire*Wolf may search through the books at **163** or return to the plan to select another destination.*

174

*An amazingly dangerous opponent. The stats of the fiery dragon are straight 100s all the way, giving it a massive 800 LIFE POINTS. And that is only the good news. The bad news is that the creature is totally resistant to all attack magic and even the Doomsword will only do half the dice damage shown. Perhaps the worst news is that while the dragon will do +10 damage with its claws, it will also breathe fire on a throw of 6 or 12, with +25 damage each time it does so. In the unlikely event that Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, he should turn to **154**. Otherwise, tuck him up in **13**.*

175

*A sound notion, for his search of the rockpile has enabled him to discover the hidden entrance to the south-running tunnel which will take him to **169**.*

176

in desperation, Fire*Wolf drew the Doomsword, more in the hope of parrying her blows than in any real desire to cause her harm. But once the hell-blade emerged screaming from its sheath, it took on a life of its own.

For years now, Fire*Wolf had had difficulties in controlling the Doomsword, which thirsted for the life force of its victims as a vampire thirsted for the taste of blood; but never before had the weapon displayed such berserk viciousness and speed. Where Fire*Wolf tried to parry, it slashed. Where Fire*Wolf attempted to block, it stabbed.

He found himself swallowed in a maelstrom of

emotions. He needed to defend himself, yet he had no wish at all to harm his beloved, who was obviously caught in some enchantment so that she knew not what she did. But the sword refused to let him pull his blows, or make a single defensive move. Instead it wove an intricate and lethal web, howling the defiant death chant that was so familiar to his ears.

'Stop!' shrieked Fire*Wolf. But if the sword could hear, it was not listening.

*Like it or not, Fire*Wolf is in a fight to the death here. His bride's stats are:*

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 80 |
| STAMINA | 40 |
| COURAGE | 70 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 20 |
| CHARM | 80 |
| ATTRACTION | 99 |
| LIFE POINTS | 469 |

*The dagger she is using, which is more an ornamental toy than a fighter's weapon, strikes at +3, but it is poison tipped, so that on the first successful hit, Fire*Wolf will automatically lose an additional 15 LIFE POINTS on each successive combat round thereafter, up to a maximum of 100 when (if he is still alive) natural immunity will block the poison until another successful hit is achieved, when the process begins again. If Freya kills her husband, Fire*Wolf should go to 13. If, however sorrowfully, he kills her, he may search the room at 239 or (perhaps reluctantly) search her body at 231.*



A deadly, heartbreaking battle

177

Someone was using this place as a food-store: there were sacks and skins stacked untidily in one corner. But even had he been starving, Fire*Wolf would have found little to appeal to him here: signs of rat infestation were everywhere and maggots crawled from a hole in one of the skins.

The sooner Fire Wolf gets on to his next destination (via the plan) the better.*

178

Fire*Wolf moved into the western tunnel. Black rocks formed walls, roof and floor, with a strange dim light filtering through from some unknown source. He felt uneasy: the passage had a pervasive smell of evil.

After ten paces, the tunnel turned south. As Fire*Wolf made to follow it, he became aware of a tingling sensation in his feet and legs. Ahead he could see the tunnel appeared to turn east some thirty paces further on.

But should he continue, ignoring that curious tingling in his legs? If so, turn to 242. If he prefers to turn back, go to 160.

179

He had a fleeting impression of a weapons store — crude weapons, scarcely worth stealing - before his eyes alighted on the two men guarding it. They had the weatherbeaten look of bandits about them. Neither seemed in the mood to talk.

*Which means Fire*Wolf is facing another fight. The stats of the bandits are:*

| | |
|----------|----|
| STRENGTH | 50 |
| SPEED | 48 |
| STAMINA | 48 |

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 16 |
| ATTRACTION | 20 |
| LIFE POINTS | 272 |

*Each has use of a +10 sword and will fight to the death (which, if Fire*Wolf succumbs, means a trip to 13). Should Fire*Wolf survive, he has the option of searching the rockfall in the south-west corner at 175, searching the entire room at 167 or proceeding via the plan to his next destination.*

180

Despite his most strenuous efforts, he was unable to breakthrough.

Which leaves him no choice but to return to 242 and review the options there.

181

Memories flooded through his mind as he stood near the bottom of the spiral staircase. The chamber was virtually intact and the corridors running from it seemed free of debris. But the central statue had tumbled and lay in fragments scattered across the stone slab floor.

Fire*Wolf moved across and moved one fragment with his foot. He had almost died here, generating the foundations of personal POWER so necessary for sorcery. What dangers did the crypts hold now? What dangers if any?

Doubtless he will soon find out. The corridors run east to 193, west to 189, north-west to 215, north-east to 207 and south to 223. Or he may, of course, mount a full search of this chamber at 185.

182

As Fire*Wolf touched the door, a blue flash half blinded him.

And robbed him of 10 LIFE POINTS into the bargain. The door remains tight shut. Should he try again at 170? Or return to 196 to review the options there?

183

Fire*Wolf stepped into the room and found himself under immediate attack. He had just time to draw the howling Doomsword before six bandits fell upon him.

*By the look of the room, there might be many more bandits about - a gang, perhaps, who have made the ruined castle their lair. But for the moment, Fire*Wolf has only (!) six to worry about. Their stats are:*

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 50 |
| SPEED | 48 |
| STAMINA | 48 |
| COURAGE | 40 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 30 |
| CHARM | 16 |
| ATTRACTION | 20 |
| LIFE POINTS | 272 |

*Each has use of a +10 sword and will fight to the death (which, if Fire*Wolf succumbs, means a trip to 13). Should he survive, he may proceed via the plan to his next destination.*

184

He crossed the cave and took the southern tunnel. Black rocks formed walls, roof and floor, with a strange

dim light filtering through from some unknown source. He felt uneasy: the passage had a pervasive smell of evil.

After ten paces, the tunnel came to an abrupt halt, blocked completely by a rockfall.

*Should Fire*Wolf attempt to clear it at 232? Or will he return to 160 and review the options there?*

185

Beneath one of the shattered statue fragments, Fire*Wolf found a small piece of torn white material. He stared at it with a rising mixture of panic and excitement. Although he 'could not be absolutely certain, the material seemed almost identical to that of his wife's wedding dress.

*An encouraging sign. Now Fire*Wolf may proceed east to 193, west to 189, north-west to 215, north-east to 207 or south to, 223.*

186

He could feel himself weaken with each step he took...

He is, in fact, losing a halfpoint of STRENGTH per pace, meaning that by the time he reaches the turning west his STRENGTH figure has dropped by a full 15 points. Once he turns west, he can see that the tunnel continues westwards, with a branch tunnel leading south almost immediately. If he decides to continue westwards, turn to 236. Alternatively, he may turn south at 248. But that STRENGTH figure is disturbing, so he may decide to return to 160... in which case a further 15 points must be deducted from his STRENGTH.

187

Fire*Wolf carefully lifted the shield from the chest and felt a surge of energy course through his body.

*This is, to mix a metaphor, a, double-edged sword of a shield. On the one hand, that sudden surge of energy will demolish no fewer than 30 of Fire*Wolf's precious LIFE POINTS (which, if this kills him, means a trip to 13). As against that, the magic of the shield will protect him henceforth against the first blow (only) of any combat. It will, however, shatter after ten combats. A worthy find, if Fire*Wolf survives the energy, but the room is otherwise empty and without additional exits. Fire*Wolf should therefore return to 181 and review his destination options.*

188

The creature which had launched itself at Fire*Wolf was straight out of a nightmare, a chaos of shifting planes and surfaces, half seen, half felt. He had a fleeting impression of a demonic face and the fetid smell of brimstone in his nostrils as taloned hands raked viciously towards his face.

*Fire*Wolf, who has encountered the denizens of hell before, will recognize this creature instantly as one of the minor demons of the infernal regions. Its stats are:*

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 150 |
| SPEED | 100 |
| STAMINA | 100 |
| COURAGE | 120 |
| SKILL | 70 |
| LUCK | 100 |
| CHARM | 0 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 640 |

*Although carrying no obvious weapon, the Demon will attack at +10 and absorb the first 5 points of damage scored against itself without actual injury. It is absolutely immune to magic of any sort, including that of the Doomsword which will fight at +20 against it, but will NOT absorb any of its LIFE POINTS to donate to Fire*Wolf. If our hero survives this unpleasant encounter, turn to 202. If not, try 13.*

189

Fire*Wolf stared into the long gallery, remembering. Once, three pendulums had swung from the ceiling here, edged with blades that were razor sharp and deadly.

The pendulums remained, but still now, the machinery which had driven them shattered in the disaster which had overtaken the castle.

*It looks safe enough, but should Fire*Wolf risk entering what was once a most dangerous chamber? If he takes the risk, turn to 197. If not, he may return to 181 and review the options given there.*

190

Cautiously, Fire*Wolf reached out to grip the support of the bridge . . . and found, to his horror, that his hand passed completely through it!

Before him, the void beckoned.

*Is he still prepared to step on to the 'bridge' after this disturbing experience? If so, turn to 200. If not, Fire*Wolf may return to 196 and review the options given there.*

191

The rumbling above his head became a roar. Mortar and Mocks began to fall around him. Fire*Wolf ran blindly, :rusting to instinct to guide him.

And ran successfully, for he emerges safely into the courtyard at 153 as the corridor collapses completely behind him.

192

He continued eastwards until he reached a section of the tunnel completely blocked by a rockfall.

Should he try to get through at 226? Or return to 242 and review the options there?

193

The destruction of the castle when the timelock shattered had affected this crypt chamber dramatically. Rubble piles were everywhere, the result of several breaches of the ceiling. Beneath one was an armoured human skeleton, sword still in hand as if to threaten defiance of the danger.

*Fire*Wolf may examine this grisly relic at 201 or return to 181 to pick a different destination.*

194

Fire*Wolf stepped into the void ... and found himself without transition in a large, beautifully proportioned chamber with dressed stone walls. Directly opposite, on the southern wall, was a huge mirror which reflected every detail of the chamber - except for his own presence in it.

Fascinated, Fire*Wolf stared into the mirror and discovered the reflections of three monkish figures, robed and cowed, but when he looked around the room itself, it remained empty.

What was happening here? He took a hesitant step forward. One reflected figure raised an arm threateningly. Again Fire*Wolf looked around him, still finding the room completely empty. In the mirror, the three robed figures moved in unison.

*And whatever his eyes tell him, Fire*Wolf is under attack. But should he fight these visible/invisible opponents at 245? Or retreat back into the void at 251?*

195

The rubble struck him like a nightmare avalanche. Fire*Wolf arched his great body in one despairing attempt to break free, to escape somehow. But in vain.

Go to 13.

196

His head reeled. He was standing on the edge of a monstrous void stretching upwards, downwards, outwards, unbroken by the slightest feature or any hint of light.

There was evil here. His every instinct screamed a warning message. He could sense it in the air, heavy and ominous, a presence lurking in the darkness, a stench oozing from the very rocks. Fire*Wolf, who had braved the very lair of the Demonspawn only weeks before, looked around nervously. Never in his entire life had he breathed such hellish air as this.

He steadied his nerves with an effort and took stock of his surroundings. Immediately to both east and west were huge oak doors, black with age and bound with metal. Metal studs reinforced the wood. Before him, reaching out across the void, were three slender bridges, formed, so it seemed, by twisted ropes of grey-blue mist.

The bridges - if they were bridges - riveted his attention. The mist that formed them whirled and roiled, although the overall shape remained fairly constant. They did not span the void, but reached out into that vast, overpowering darkness, disappearing

from sight towards the north. What held these fragile mist structures in place? Or did they exist at all, other than as an illusion of his fevered mind?

*Important questions and ones which Fire*Wolf must ask himself before he makes his next decision. Should he attempt to walk a mist bridge? And if so, which one? Or is there something behind those huge, strong doors which might give him a clue to how he should progress? If Fire*Wolf tries the western door, turn to **164**. If the eastern door, turn to **182**. Should he attempt to set foot on the leftmost of the three mist bridges, turn to **212**. If the centre bridge turn to **224**. And if the rightmost bridge, turn to **190**.*

197

The pendulums did not move. Fire*Wolf breathed a sigh of relief and stepped forward... to find himself facing a black-armoured figure armed with a black two-handled sword, a glowing ruby in the hilt.

Beyond the figure was an oakwood chest: something, Fire*Wolf was certain, which had not been in the crypts before.

Fire*Wolf examined the motionless figure carefully. It was not, he concluded, a living creature, nor yet a statue, but an artifact of some description and one cunningly made.

He turned his attention to the chest, which appeared to be unlocked. As he moved towards it, the black-armoured figure attacked.

*A magical animation by all indications, suggesting that the sorcery of the crypts is not altogether dormant. Fire*Wolf has no option but to fight and a tricky fight it will be. Both the figure and the sword are magically animated, each with its own stats and*

*LIFE POINTS. Fire*Wolf will have to kill both to survive this encounter, Scoring damage (hopefully) against the figure in the first instance, then against the sword. The relevant stats are:*

| | Figure | Sword |
|-------------|--------|-------|
| STRENGTH | 64 | 48 |
| SPEED | 48 | 56 |
| STAMINA | 56 | 56 |
| COURAGE | 56 | 56 |
| SKILL | 15 | 25 |
| LUCK | 48 | 48 |
| CHARM | 24 | 48 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 | 0 |
| LIFE POINTS | 311 | 337 |

*The sword strikes at +15 whether wielded by the figure or when fighting on its own. Only if Fire*Wolf survives both figure and sword may he search the chest at **205** or review his destination options at **181**. If he is killed in the conflict, his only destination option is **13**.*

198

Fire*Wolf moved into the eastern tunnel. Black rocks formed walls, roof and floor, with a strange dim light filtering through from some unknown source. He felt uneasy: the passage had a pervasive smell of evil.

After ten paces, the tunnel turned south. As Fire*Wolf made to follow it, he became aware of a tingling sensation in his feet and legs. Ahead he could see the tunnel appeared to turn west some thirty paces further on.

*But should he continue, ignoring that curious tingling in his legs? If so, turn to **186**. If he prefers to turn back, go to **160**.*

199

He had entered a corridor, but no more than thirty feet ahead, the way was blocked by fallen walls and ceiling. Fire*Wolf moved to investigate. A momentary examination told him there would be no further progress here: the rubble would take days to clear.

He turned to retrace his steps and a tiny dust shower descended from above. Fire*Wolf froze, glancing upwards. What remained of the stone ceiling above his head was deeply cracked.

There was a small sound, the first faint herald of doom and he saw a stone block shift slightly.

Fire*Wolf ran.

But swift though he is and fast as his reaction might be, there is still more than a passing chance he will not make it back. Roll one die. Score 1 to 4 and turn to 203. Score 5 or 6 and turn to 195.

200

With a silent prayer to his Wilderness gods, Fire*Wolf stepped on to the bridge.

His feet sank into the misty structure! For an instant he fought to retain his balance, then, heart pounding, realized that despite all appearances, the bridge seemed to be supporting his weight.

He took a hesitant step forward. The void stretched below him to infinity in total darkness, but still he did not fall. Another step. And another.

The structure of the bridge was rope-like twists of mist, with many gaps between them, making progress slow and difficult. Nonetheless, he persevered, reminding himself constantly that this weird construction must lead somewhere — although in truth he could see nothing other than the void ahead.

For an endless age, Fire*Wolf inched his way forward, step by step until, quite suddenly, he felt something brush across his neck.

He froze, fearful of his balance. The strands which composed the bridge were slowly unwinding, forming tendrils of mist which reached out slowly to wind themselves around his head and shoulders.

*Yuk! What on earth will Fire*Wolf do now? Should he try to pull away the tendrils at 147? Or cut through them with the Doomsword at 156? Or would it make more sense to retreat to 162? Or simply do nothing at 166?*

201

It was not, Fire*Wolf quickly discovered, the rockfall which had killed this armoured warrior, but a spear thrust in the side: the broken spear shaft was still lodged within the rib-cage. But how long ago this had happened, he had no way of determining.

*Since there seems to be little more to discover here, Fire*Wolf may as well return west to 181 and review the options given there.*

202

Slowly the air of unreality left him and he could see the tunnel again. But several paces ahead the floor ended, dropping into an endless black void.

Should he continue onwards into that void at 194? Or take the sensible course of turning back to 251?

203

The ceiling was caving in! Desperately, Fire*Wolf leaped forward.

But does he succeed in escaping? Roll one die. Score 1 to 5 and go to 191. Score 6 and turn to 195.

204

Fire*Wolf turned south, but after only a few paces found the tunnel blocked.

Should he try to break through at 180? Or perhaps it might be better to return to 242 and review the options there.

205

With caution born of long experience, Fire*Wolf approached the chest slowly, examining it carefully for traps. But there were none, and when he tried the lid, he discovered it to be unlocked.

Light streamed from the chest as he opened it. Inside lay a brightly glowing shield forged from a metal which radiated blood-red light.

*A magical artifact, without a doubt, and like all such artifacts, potentially dangerous if touched. Does Fire*Wolf take the shield at 187? Or should he leave it where it is and return to 181 to review the options there?*

206

As Fire*Wolf struck the final blow, the hell-creature disappeared as abruptly as it had materialized. The scene in the mirror opposite had not changed - there was still no sign of his own reflection, but the three cowed figures remained.

He took another step towards it, then halted abruptly as a dim shape began to appear in the mirror at the spot where his own reflection should have been. But it was not the shape of Fire*Wolf. Fascinated, he watched the slow coalescence of Lipta, the Gegum Abbess, a slim, wizened figure in the robes of her Order. And as she appeared, Fire*Wolf felt the strength begin to drain from him like water pouring from a jug.

Does nothing ever go smoothly for our hero? Perhaps he should try to get out of this magical chamber at 251. Or at least look away from the mirror at 238. But if curiosity impels him to stand watching like an idiot, turn to 258.

207

He stared in wonder at the chamber with its ceiling no more than four feet above the stone-flag floor. Then recollection dawned. This was one of the tests of the crypts: a room in which the ceiling dropped to crush the adventurer within.

Now, however, the mechanism was inert, the ceiling permanently lowered. It seemed perfectly safe to enter.

*But is it? If Fire*Wolf wishes to enter, go to 213. Otherwise, he may return to 181 and review his options.*

THE CORDS OF DESTINY

208

Fire*Wolf stood in space. Above him floated the bulk of a huge, ringed planet. Stars glinted in the void. He could hear the music of the spheres, a harmony more pervasive and compelling than anything he had previously experienced.

He felt calm. The weakness that had brought him here was gone.

In these impossible surroundings, he was like a god, striding the celestial wilderness, immune alike to heat and cold.

A creature stood beside him, slim, black, muscular and feline as a panther, unknown, yet strangely familiar. It stared at him with glittering black eyes.

Without fear, Fire*Wolf said, 'Who are you?'

The creature smiled. 'We have come far together, you and I, Barbarian. Can you not see the cords that bind us?'

He looked and saw the silver cords which attached the creature to his heart. They danced and sparkled.

The cords of Destiny,' the creature said.

Fire*Wolf reached out to touch it and it changed its form, becoming on the instant a slim black blade which leaped howling into his outstretched hand. The Doomsword. He had seen the real form of the Doomsword.

'Your little toy will serve you poorly here,' a voice said, like the rustle of dead leaves on a barren hillside.

Fire*Wolf turned. Three hideous old men, bent and withered by the weight of years, stared malevolently at him. 'Who are you?' he asked.

'Your death,' said one.

'Your fate,' replied another.

'Your future,' interjected the third.

The Doomsword whined and howled.

Fire*Wolf moved forward a pace and found himself on the rock floor of an ancient cavern. The old men changed, elongated, towered above him in the familiar robes of sorcerers. A clawlike hand reached out and discharged leprous energy in his direction.

Fire*Wolf pivoted to avoid it - and attacked.

The sorcerers have identical stats:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 99 |
| SPEED | 99 |
| STAMINA | 99 |
| COURAGE | 99 |
| SKILL | 99 |
| LUCK | 99 |
| CHARM | 99 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 693 |

*They are immune to any magic Fire*Wolf may have, but not to the Doomsword, although even the hell-blade can only deliver to Fire*Wolf one quarter of any LIFE POINTS drained from them. Each of the three has, however, a hidden vulnerability which, if Fire*Wolf can find it on a throw of 12, will kill the*

*sorcerer outright. They will attack sequentially with the leprous energy bolts Fire*Wolf has already experienced, removing 25 LIFE POINTS from him with each hit. If Fire*Wolf survives, he may go to 252. If he does not, his destiny lies at 230 and NOT in this very special instance, at 13.*

209

The crawlspace seemed to be hewn from bedrock. It narrowed and descended some two hundred feet before opening into a natural cavern.

Fire*Wolf dropped out, falling on his feet like a cat, then turned to survey his new surroundings. Even as he did so, the sulphur smell told him he was in trouble: and on the instant his eyes confirmed it. He had entered a dragon lair.

The great lizards were rare enough in Harn, although sorcerers frequently created garish illusionary versions to protect their valuables. The creature facing Fire*Wolf was, however, no illusion, but a full-grown male example of the breed, fully eighteen feet long from scaly tail to short-horned head. He had a brief impression of six-inch fangs as the creature launched itself upon him.

The stats of the dragon are:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 150 |
| SPEED | 50 |
| STAMINA | 100 |
| COURAGE | 90 |
| SKILL | 60 |
| LUCK | 80 |
| CHARM | 90 |
| ATTRACTION | 10 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 630 |

*The creature does natural damage at +15 and while it is not, contrary to popular belief, a fire-breather, it does have the curious capacity of emitting poisonous fumes on a throw of 5, 6 or 9. These fumes will deduct ten per cent of Fire*Wolf's current LIFE POINTS (rounded down if necessary) each time they hit. If Fire*Wolf is slain by the dragon, go to 13. If he survives, he has the option of searching the giant corpse at 217 or searching the cavern itself at 211.*

210

As Fire*Wolf searched the cave, he found an embarrassment of items — rings, pieces of clothing, personal possessions . . .

Most were meaningless to him, but a few he recognized - or thought he recognized - as belonging to those individuals who had disappeared and reappeared again. There was even a fragment he could have sworn was torn from the cape habitually worn by the Chief of Guardian Police.

*However, despite this hoard of rubbish, Fire*Wolf will find nothing of immediate use to him here. Consequently he should now return to 160 and review the options given there.*

211

After an hour or more, Fire*Wolf had found nothing, although his instinct still suggested there was something of importance here,

He may, in fact, continue to search at 221, but he has, too, the option of searching the dragon's body at 217 or returning to 181 to select a new destination.

212-214

212

As Fire*Wolf reached out for the bridge support, he found, to his horror, that his hand passed completely through it!

*In view of this disturbing development, should he still attempt to step on to the bridge at **200**? Or should he return to **196** and review the options given there?*

213

Bent double, Fire*Wolf stepped into the room. As his weight went on to the stone-flagged floor, there was an abrupt grinding of gears . . . and the ceiling lifted.

Fire*Wolf felt a wave of relief as the ceiling slotted into place some ten feet above his head. He glanced around and immediately discovered a hitherto hidden opening into a crawlspace some five feet above the floor.

*Should Fire*Wolf risk entering the crawlspace, which leads to **209**? Or will he return to **181** and review the options given there?*

214

He crawled through the narrow passage and reached a cavern. A quick glance around showed him a tunnel to the north was blocked by rubble, while three further tunnels led off from the southern wall of the cave, including the eastmost by which he had entered.

But for once it was not the exits which held his attention. The cavern itself was filled with people - or were they people? He could certainly see them, yet it also seemed to him he could see *through* them.

To his profound shock, Fire*Wolf realized he recognized several familiar faces amongst the horde. There was the Chief of Guardian Police . . . there a noble from the south he had met at a State banquet . .

All seemed to be struggling against some unseen restriction, as if attempting to free themselves from invisible fetters. Their eyes were on Fire*Wolf, yet none spoke. Were they ghosts, spirits of the dead? On an insane impulse he began to search for Freya: had he not just killed her with his own hell-blade? But she was not among the throng.

What was happening here?

*What indeed? And what is Fire*Wolf going to do about it? He may attempt to free these creatures at **255**. Or, alternatively, he may leave via any one of the three tunnels leading off the southern wall: the westernmost to **247**, the easternmost to **226** or the centre tunnel to **251**.*

215

The rectangular room looked vaguely familiar, then Fire*Wolf's eye fell on the shattered remnants of a crystal die and six broken wooden chests. Once this had been a source of choice and danger, but no more.

He turned to leave and found himself under attack.

*The creature attacking Fire*Wolf is undoubtedly a Night Stalker, an entity which defies accurate description for one reason and one reason only - it is transparent to the point of invisibility. The stats of the creature are not too daunting:*

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 50 |
| SPEED | 50 |
| STAMINA | 50 |
| COURAGE | 50 |
| SKILL | 50 |
| LUCK | 50 |
| CHARM | 50 |
| ATTRACTION | 50 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 400 |

216-217

*The real difficulty is that it is so hard to hit. To do so, Fire*Wolf will have to throw a 10 or better during combat. The Stalker will normally do +5 damage, except on a throw of 12 which enables it to drain 75 of Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS in a single burst, whatever damage the dice indicate. If Fire*Wolf survives this difficult encounter, he may take a crystal die fragment as a souvenir and return to **181** to review the options there. If he does not survive, there are at least no invisible entities to bother him at **13**.*

216

Although it took time, his diligence was eventually rewarded. There, for a certainty, was the entrance to the crypts, but blocked by rubble now and sealed with a large stone block.

Fire*Wolf set his jaw and moved to lift the stone.

*But will he succeed? Roll two dice and add 1 to your total for every STRENGTH point Fire*Wolf has above 50. Score 10 or more and he will lift the stone at **244**. Score less and he will fail at **228**.*

217

The dragon lay dead at his feet. Fire*Wolf half turned away before a thought struck him. Dragonskin, properly layered, made a valuable armour, light and flexible to wear, but remarkably resistant to damage of any sort.

Given time, he knew, he could create such armour from the hide of the dead beast: not professionally, of course, but well enough to serve. The problem was the time he would need for the work - the better part of a day. His quest was always urgent and never more so than now when he had spent many days searching for his missing bride.

218-220

*But if Fire*Wolf decides to take the time, he may manufacture dragonskin armour at **219**. If not, he may return to **181** and review the options given there.*

218

He ran ... and ran .. and ran ... and ran ... endlessly in the black void, running ... running ... running...

*Strictly speaking, he should remain here forever, an immortality of sorts, since he has entered a Timeloop. But if you wish to intervene as the nearest thing to a Wilderness god that Fire*Wolf really has, you may be cruel to be kind and cause the Death-sleep to fall upon him so that he may go quietly to **13**.*

219

The task proved easier than he had anticipated and in no more than half a day, he had completed the armour.

*And an untidy suit it is, but if Fire*Wolf elects to wear it, he will be completely protected from fire of any sort and the armour will absorb a massive 20 points of any other damage scored against him. It will not, however, survive more than ten combat situations intact. Now Fire*Wolf may return, well armoured, to **181** to review the options given there.*

220

Fire*Wolf proved himself a glutton for punishment as the door again generated a blue flash which removed a further 10 LIFE POINTS.

*And, assuming this nonsense hasn't killed him, it might now be best to insist he returns to **196** to review the options given there.*

221

After a further hour, Fire*Wolf finally abandoned his search. He had found precisely nothing.

Which leaves him with the option of searching the dragon's body at 217 or returning to 181 to select a new destination.

222

The image of the Abbess grew more solid, more pronounced. She stepped forward as if to break through the glass of the mirror. As she did so, Fire*Wolf weakened further, his head spinning, his limbs shaking, his vision blurring...

It seemed she was pressing on the surface of the mirror. And still Fire*Wolf weakened. His knees buckled and he began to sink, almost gently, to the floor. He was only half aware of the image of Lipta as she raised her arms ...

The mirror shattered. Gleaming shards filled the space around him, as a fountain of raw force erupted from the floor beneath his feet, sweeping him upwards. Time stopped. He was rushing through eternity, surrounded by fragmented, shining silver.

Rush with him to 208.

223

The chamber was like nothing he remembered from his previous experience of the crypts. It was both large and lavishly furnished, with thick white carpeting on the floor and scenic tapestries hanging on the walls. An ornamental fountain, cunningly contrived, played in the centre of the room. And beyond it, asleep on a bed of solid gold...

Fire*Wolf blinked, scarcely able to believe his eyes. But there could be no doubt. His quest was over. The woman on the bed was Freya, his bride!

He started forward - and found himself under vicious attack!

Turn quickly to 225.

224

As Fire*Wolf reached out for the bridge support, he found, to his horror, that his hand passed completely through it!

In view of this disturbing development, should he still attempt to step on to the bridge at 200? Or should he return to 196 and review the options given there?

225

With a howl of bitter fury, Fire*Wolf flung himself upon the guard.

*A man of no mean ability when it comes to guarding sleeping wives, as it happens, for the stats of Fire*Wolf's opponent are:*

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 58 |
| SPEED | 36 |
| STAMINA | 90 |
| COURAGE | 90 |
| SKILL | 44 |
| LUCK | 48 |
| CHARM | 40 |
| ATTRACTION | 26 |
| LIFE POINTS | 432 |

*The guard is, to compound Fire*Wolf's problems, wearing plate mail which gives him —12 on damage, and carrying a magical +10 sword which will always strike a lethal blow on a throw of 12. If Fire*Wolf survives this encounter, he may proceed with his rescue of the fair maiden at 227. If not, he may proceed to die at 13.*

226

He did not succeed in tunnelling through, but in the course of his endeavours found something possibly as good - a small passageway leading north.

If he decides to take it, turn to 230. If not, he may review his options at 186.

227

Fire*Wolf turned from the corpse of the guard and ran swiftly to his wife's side. She had not moved during the combat, so presumably she was drugged, or perhaps placed under some sort of hypnotic enchantment.

He bent over to shake her awake, but as his hands touched her shoulders, the eyes flickered open and she attacked him with astonishing ferocity and speed.

*Will Fire*Wolf's fine-honed fighting instincts (not to say finely stretched nerves) persuade him to fight back at 176? Or will he retain sufficient control to wait passively until she recognizes him at 229?*

228

The stone remained immobile, well beyond Fire*Wolf's power to move it.

Which leaves him no option but to seek help from the nearest village, which he will surely find on the road to Belgardium via 240.

229

She was armed with a dagger! The flashing blade matched the flashing fury in her eyes as she stabbed frantically at Fire*Wolf.

*This may be a good time to mention Freya's stats, for, however reluctantly, Fire*Wolf is now in a combat situation of sorts. Those stats are:*

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 60 |
| SPEED | 80 |
| STAMINA | 40 |
| COURAGE | 70 |
| SKILL | 20 |
| LUCK | 20 |
| CHARM | 80 |
| ATTRACTION | 99 |
| LIFE POINTS | 469 |

*The dagger, which is more an ornamental toy than a fighter's weapon, strikes at +3, but it is poison tipped, so that on the first successful hit. Fire*Wolf will automatically lose an additional 15 LIFE POINTS on each successive combat round thereafter, up to a maximum of 100 when (if he is still alive) natural immunity will block the poison until another successful hit is achieved, when the process begins again. Since Fire*Wolf is not fighting back at present, Freya will have three attempts to strike him. If she succeeds and the damage kills him, go to 13. If he is still alive to make a decision, he may elect to begin fighting back at 176 or hope that she will come to her senses at 233.*

230

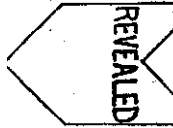
He knew he should be dead. Lethal bolts had wrenched through every nerve and sinew of his body, ripping it into bloody fragments. Yet there was no oblivion. Instead he felt himself pulled backwards through an endless, pitch-black tunnel. He tumbled, weightless and was dimly aware of a voice that said, 'From the noble House of Romov, my Lord.'

Where was he? Where was he?

Go to 1.

231

With mounting horror, Fire*Wolf searched the slender body. There was, as he had more than half suspected, a small scar half hidden by the hairline. And there was also a fragment of black stone in a pocket of her dress.



*Fire*Wolf may now search the room itself at 239.*

232

Fire*Wolf wiped sweat from his brow. He had made a respectable dent in the rockpile, but with no indication that he might be anywhere near to breaking through. Reluctantly, he abandoned the attempt.

And returned to 160 to review his options.

233

Freya continued to attack him fiercely, her eyes glazed.

*And will gain six further attempts to hit him in the process. If Fire*Wolf elects to fight back at this stage, turn to 176. If not, go to 235.*

234

Despite his most strenuous efforts, he was unable to break through.

Which leaves him no choice but to return to 186 and review the options there.

235

Freya continued to attack him fiercely, her eyes glazed.

*And will gain nine further attempts to hit him in the process. If Fire*Wolf elects to fight back at this stage, turn to 176. If not, go to 237.*

236

Fire*Wolf continued westwards, but soon found the tunnel totally blocked.

Should he try to get through at 247? Or return to 186 and review his options there?

237

Still the dagger flashed.

*And will continue to flash as Freya notches up a further twelve attempts to do her husband damage. At which stage, Fire*Wolf must surely opt for suicide by default, in which case turn to 13, or fight back at 176.*

238

With a massive effort of will, he tore his eyes away from the mirror. But still the drain on his strength continued.

Which doesn't take him much further. Perhaps he should return to 206 and review the options there.

239

A thorough search of the room unearthed a depression in one wall, hidden by a hanging tapestry. Fire*Wolf examined it carefully. It seemed to be a lock of some

description, cruciform in shape, similar in many respects to the shape formed by piecing together the blade stone pieces he had collected.

*But has Fire*Wolf enough pieces to complete the shape? If so turn to 172. If not, go to 152.*

240

His mind a turmoil, Fire*Wolf walked along the valley of his birthright, his halting steps carrying him towards the road back to Belgardium.

He scarcely knew where he was going, his emotions shattered by the events he had so recently experienced. He still did not know what it all meant, not for certain. He had won another victory, and would be feted for it, but he had lost as well, and lost heavily, for his beloved had been ripped from him with soul-numbing finality.

He was almost on the small encampment before he really noticed it. There were horses tethered and, in a small clearing, a circle of twelve women in the familiar Gegum robes.

Fire*Wolf stopped, then moved towards them. As he did so, the slim figure of the Gegum Abbess stepped from the circle and approached him. Was she real this time? She certainly seemed real enough now ...

But his speculation ended as he looked beyond her shoulder and saw, with a heart-stopping wrench, the Gegum witches were surrounding the body of his wife!

The Abbess stopped before him and stretched out her hand. 'Your sword, Lord Xandine,' she said grimly.

*Once more Fire*Wolf is faced with a bewildering situation. What has his sword got to do with anything now? But how will he react? The Doomsword cannot, of course, be taken from him.*



*Fire*Wolf walked slowly along the valley*

Should he explain this to Lipta at 246? Or simply refuse the witch at 256? Or perhaps hand the weapon to her and let her find out for herself at 250?

241

Frowning, Fire*Wolf placed the cruciform stone into the depression in the wall. The fit was perfect. As he watched, the cross began to turn, then spin. Almost at once there was a grinding of stone on stone and a small secret door slid open.

*If Fire*Wolf wishes to enter - and why would he not, after coming so far — turn to 196.*

242

He could feel himself weaken with each step he took...

He is, in fact, losing a halfpoint of STRENGTH per pace, meaning that by the time he reaches the turning east his STRENGTH figure has dropped by a full 15 points. Once he turns east, he can see that the tunnel continues eastwards, with a branch tunnel leading south almost immediately. If he decides to continue eastwards, turn to 192. Alternatively, he may turn south at 204. But that STRENGTH figure is disturbing, so he may decide to return to 160... in which case a further 15 points must be deducted from his STRENGTH.

243

A searing pain flashed through his brain and his body locked into immobility. He stood helpless while the Abbess reached out and took his sword.

What she does with it will be revealed at 250.

244

The stone moved!

Behind it there was just sufficient space for Fire*Wolf to crawl through. Beyond the blockage, the crypts themselves seemed to have suffered little further damage and he ran towards the fateful room with pounding heart. He reached it to find it empty but for the corpse of the guard. There was no sign whatsoever of the body of his wife.

*Should Fire*Wolf, who must by now be half insane with confusion and grief, search the room at 249? Or backtrack to search the remainder of the crypts at 254? Or will he simply leave to 240?*

245

The creature which had launched itself at Fire*Wolf was straight out of a nightmare, a chaos of shifting planes and surfaces, half seen, half felt. He had a fleeting impression of a demonic face and the fetid smell of brimstone in his nostrils as taloned hands raked viciously towards his face.

*Fire*Wolf, who has encountered the denizens of hell before, will recognize this creature instantly as one of the minor demons of the infernal regions. Its stats are:*

| | |
|------------|-----|
| STRENGTH | 150 |
| SPEED | 100 |
| STAMINA | 100 |
| COURAGE | 120 |
| SKILL | 70 |
| LUCK | 100 |
| CHARM | 0 |
| ATTRACTION | 0 |
| LIFEPOINTS | 640 |

*Although carrying no obvious weapon, the Demon will attack at +10 and absorb the first 5 points of damage scored against itself without actual injury. It is absolutely immune to magic of any sort, including that of the Doomsword which will fight at +20 against it, but will NOT absorb any of its LIFE POINTS to donate to Fire*Wolf. If our hero survives this unpleasant encounter, turn to 206. If not, try 13.*

246

More calmly than he felt, Fire*Wolf explained his curious relationship with the Doomsword, outlining its legend as he did so.

Lipta said nothing until he had finished. Then she said simply, 'I am Hadriana.'

Fire*Wolf blinked.

'I am Hadriana,' the Abbess repeated. 'I am she who forged the sword.'

'The sword was forged aeons past!' Fire*Wolf protested.

'Indeed — and by these hands. Those creatures you killed are not the only ones with the secret of prolonging life, although mine was prolonged lawfully so that I might undo the wrong I had done in creating the hellish blade you carry. Lipta is the name I took within my mystic Order. I am Hadriana and only I can rid you of the sword which has been your destiny and your curse.' She held out her hand again.

*Can Fire*Wolf believe this nonsense? Will he give her the sword at 250, or again refuse at 256?*

247

As Fire*Wolf searched, his patience was rewarded by the discovery of a small opening to the north.

Should he take this opening at 214? Or simply return to 186 to review the options there?

248

Fire*Wolf turned south, but after a few paces found the tunnel blocked.

Does he try to get through at 234? Or return to 186 to review his options there?

249

But there was nothing in the room.

Will he now search the remainder of the crypts at 254, or leave to 240?

250

The Gegum Abbess Lipta stroked the sword gently as one might caress a pet, then turned, her face set and walked back towards the circle of the nuns.

The shock which held Fire*Wolf motionless broke suddenly. What matter about the sword? It would return to him, or it would not. What matter? His task was completed, his destiny fulfilled. He would never need the hellish blade again, yet he was cursed with it forever. No matter. No matter. The slender body of his bride lay in that circle.

'Gegum!' Fire*Wolf screamed. 'I will have my wife!' Half mad with grief he began to run towards them.

Lipta turned and gestured with the Doomsword. In turmoil though he was, something in her face caused him to pause.

'Be still, Lord Xandine!' Lipta hissed. She took a step towards him and raised the hell-blade high. The Doomsword howled in familiar anticipation.

The sword arced in the sunlight, a black flash of death. With Wilderness instinct, Fire*Wolf flung himself aside. But even as he did so, he realized the old Abbess had not swung the sword at him, but instead brought it down with almost unbelievable force on a nearby rock.

The Doomsword shattered!

The ground shook. Fire*Wolf stumbled, fell. He saw a lightning flash of black light and caught a fleeting glimpse of a vast, dark feline shape, head thrown back, shrieking laughter, which vanished on the instant. Lipta stood, silhouetted against the morning sun, then slowly bowed her head. From within the circle of the witch-nuns, the body of the Princess Freya moved.

Fire*Wolf was on his feet, scarcely able to believe his eyes. His bride, the bride he had slain, was sitting up!

'She lives,' said Lipta quietly. 'Her soul returned momentarily to its body when you slew the demon and the Doomsword trapped it. She is free now, Fire*Wolf ... and so are you.'

Fire*Wolf ran. The Gegum nuns scattered at his approach. Freya was standing now, looking around her like one emerging from a dream. Fire*Wolf seized her in his arms, sweeping her off her feet and spinning, screaming his elation like a madman.

Even in the madness of the moment, he noticed one small thing. Lipta was smiling.

Here end the Sagas of the Demonspawn. Turn to page 149.

The feeling of evil seemed to be increasing steadily as he moved along the tunnel. He was seized by a sudden sensation of unreality, as if he were at once walking



The sword arced towards Fire*wolf

and remaining in exactly the same place. He glanced behind and saw to his horror that the tunnel stretched endlessly - the entrance seemed to have completely disappeared.

Fire*Wolf moved cautiously onwards . . . and realized almost at once that the walls of the tunnel had faded into oblivion, leaving him walking in an endless void. Then suddenly, without the slightest warning, he was under attack. A wave of fear swept through his vitals like a tide.

Will he have the courage to fight at 188? Or should discretion prove the better part of valour so that he runs at 218?

252

As Fire*Wolf struck the final blow, something tugged at him from behind. Momentarily, he thought he might be under another attack, but then, with savage ferocity, he felt himself pulled backwards through an endless, pitch-black tunnel. He tumbled, weightless, and became dimly aware of a cool breeze on his face.

Where was he? Where was he? He sat up in a rising panic and looked around. He was lying on grass, in the valley. To the west stood the ruins of his father's castle, but not as he last saw them: no walls remained standing anywhere - all was stone and rubble strewn over a great distance as if the entire building had been razed by a power almost beyond comprehension.

Fire*Wolf stared at the destruction, desolation in his soul. He had defeated the ancient evil, but at what a personal cost. Somewhere beneath that rubble lay the broken body of the bride he had slain. His heart ached for her as he stumbled wearily to his feet.

But perhaps he might search for the corpse to bring it back to Pelimandar for decent burial. If so turn to

*216. But then again, no one could blame the sorrowing Fire*Wolf if he preferred to leave her in the natural tomb of his father's castle and he may simply leave this site of desolation at 240.*

253

He was paralysed completely, unable to blink an eyelid, let alone move his hands or arm. He was aware, if only faintly, that the Gegum Abbess Lipta was reaching for his sword.

Go to 250.

254

It took him an hour or more to search the crypts fully, but he discovered nothing.

Should he now return to search the room at 249 or leave at 240?

255

Fire*Wolf reached out to touch the figure nearest him and found his hand passed through it as though it were a ghost. He moved forward and tried another... and another, with the same result.

These people - if they were people - seemed to be talking to one another, yet he heard no sound. He waved his hands and shouted to attract their attention, but was ignored.

The only way out of this highly frustrating experience seems to be to return to 214 and review the options given there.

256

Lipta raised her arm in a threatening gesture.

*Should Fire*Wolf make a pre-emptive strike at 243, or wait to see what the old witch is up to at 253?*

The image of the Abbess grew more solid, more pronounced. She stepped forward as if to break through the glass of the mirror.

As she did so, Fire*Wolf weakened further, his head spinning, his limbs shaking, his vision blurring...

But you no doubt get the picture - follow him to 13.

'Fire*Wolf!'

The sound of his own name echoed through his mind. The image of the Gegum Abbess in the mirror strengthened and he watched the ancient lips move.

'Fire*Wolf!'

It was the Abbess Lipta who was speaking to him! Waves of mental energy pulsed from the mirror image, seizing his consciousness, and inscribed words upon it as clearly as if they had been spoken aloud.

'The time has come,' the Abbess said. 'Now is the moment when we shall discover if our instrument is strong enough to meet our needs.'

'Instrument?' Fire*Wolf murmured. He had never before felt so weak.

'You, Lord Xandine, who was Fire*Wolf the Barbarian. You, who destroyed the Demonspawn, but spared no thought for the creatures who created them.'

'Created the Spawn?' asked Fire*Wolf blankly. The Spawn, while they survived, had been a dark blot on Harn's history for generations. Legend said they were created by sorcerers millennia ago. Certainly whatever had given birth to them had long departed from this world.

'The Ancient Evil!' Lipta spat. She gestured. 'The offal you see beside me.'

He followed her gesture with his eyes and realized she was referring to the three hooded figures, none of which seemed to be aware of her presence.

'These men created the Spawn?' he gasped, his voice barely above a whisper.

'Call them not men!' hissed the Abbess. 'They are abominations. They were men once, but no more. They have used their sorcerous arts to maintain their life force far beyond their appointed time and in that, if nothing else, they have become corruption. Regard them well, Fire*Wolf, for you will never again see creatures so foul. It was they who sent the Spawn against the kingdom, year upon year. It is they who have kidnapped the most powerful in Harn and stripped them of their souls so that they could use the empty bodies for their own purposes. They seek power, Fire*Wolf. It is an addiction with them, greater than any other lust. They sought it through the vehicle of the Demonspawn horde; and now that horde has been destroyed, they seek it more subtly by ruling through the shells of those who once were men.'

'And women - ' Fire*Wolf breathed. 'They took my wife!' A sudden elation filled him. He had not killed her after all, merely slaughtered the shell which had once housed that beautiful spirit. Everything was becoming clearer to him now. The ghostlike creatures he had seen were the actual souls of those the sorcerers had captured. Only their bodies, inhabited by who knew what foulness, had been returned to Harn to infiltrate and rule.

Yet the soul of Freya had not been among them.

'We of the Gegum have known of these creatures for centuries,' Lipta was saying soundlessly within his

mind. 'But only now have we forged an instrument with sufficient power to break down their magical protections. That instrument is you, Fire*Wolf. Are you ready?'

'A moment!' Fire*Wolf called desperately. He knew the ruthlessness of the Gegum Order, knew they would not hesitate to use him in any way they saw fit, with or without his permission. But there was something he needed to know.

'What is it you wish?' asked Lipta.

'The souls taken by these men - what happens to them when their bodies are killed?'

If she knew the heartbreak behind that question, she did not show it. 'The bodies taken are inhabited by the entities which once vitalized the Spawn. Should you destroy one in combat, the Spawn is released to its own plane and the original soul recalled. But since the body itself no longer functions, the soul may not remain. It is released from the sorcerers' bondage, but moves on to the deathworlds and eventually to a new incarnation.'

Fire*Wolf's shoulders slumped, his momentary elation gone. It did not matter that he had not killed her, for Freya was still dead, still gone beyond his reach. He closed his eyes. Only revenge mattered now. 'Do as you will, Gegum,' he said softly.

*But what Lipta, the Gegum Abbess, plans will put a serious strain on our hero. Add Fire*Wolfs current stats together (ignoring POWER) for a wholly accurate calculation of his LIFE POINT potential. (Note: this figure is NOT necessarily the same as his current LIFE POINTS which may have been reduced by combat etc.) If your calculation shows Fire*Wolf's constitution to be 600+, turn to **222**. If less than 600, turn to **257**.*

EPILOGUE

The *High History of Harn*, a scholarly work in thirty-seven volumes apparently commissioned by King Olric the First (but only completed almost a century after his death), records that Fire*Wolf was offered a Dukedom for his remarkable feat in ridding the realm not only of the Spawn but of their Hidden Masters. He refused the honour as, years later, he was to refuse Olric's offer of the throne itself.

For a period of some three years, it seemed he wished for nothing more than a quiet, unassuming life, locked away behind the high walls of his villa to the east of the Kingdom. During that period, he took little part in public life, attending the State Council only on ceremonial occasions and politely declining almost all of the inevitable flood of social invitations.

It was during this period that his wife bore him a daughter, the brooding, fey child Selina, who was to play such a dramatic part in the dispersal of the Gegum Order in her later years. But while released from the curse of the Doomsword, Fire*Wolf himself was unable to avoid his warlike destiny forever. It is recorded that he personally led the forces which repelled the first great invasion of the Sea Raiders and was instrumental, as a very old man, in creating the strategies which eventually broke the power of these vicious pirates.

Curiously, for one who had abhorred sorcery so much as a young man, he returned to the study of magic in

later life and became as adept in the arts as his father before him. Some said the death of his beloved wife had caused the change in his personality; others insisted it was no more than the call of the Xandine blood. Careful historical analysis, however, suggests the Gegum had a hand in the change, as they had had a hand in so much of Fire*Wolf's destiny. There is even some evidence of the possibility that Selina became a witch-nun herself for a time before she destroyed the Order forever.

There remains a very real mystery about the death of Fire*Wolf. It is known for certain that, despite his taste for danger, he lived to a very great age, but the exact circumstances of his death are totally unknown. Inevitably, legends have arisen — one of the most popular (if least likely) has it that he transported himself to the gates of Hell itself to fling a final challenge at the Demonspawn on their home ground - but none of these bear close investigation.

Even his final resting place remains a mystery. For years his body was believed to lie in a granite tomb in the enchanted valley where his father once raised Xandine Castle, but an archaeological investigation mounted five centuries after the era of the Demonspawn found the tomb empty and showed conclusively that it had never been used.

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 50LP 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 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--|----|------------|--|-----|
| 152 | | | | | 153 |
| 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 | 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. | 20 |
| 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 | 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 |
| 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. | 55 | 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 |

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 demanded 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 demon sword 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 demon sword.

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.

HINTSPAGE

Section 132 is the one place in the adventure where you may find yourself really stuck. If you positively *can't* find your way forward from there, the coded instructions below will help you on your way.

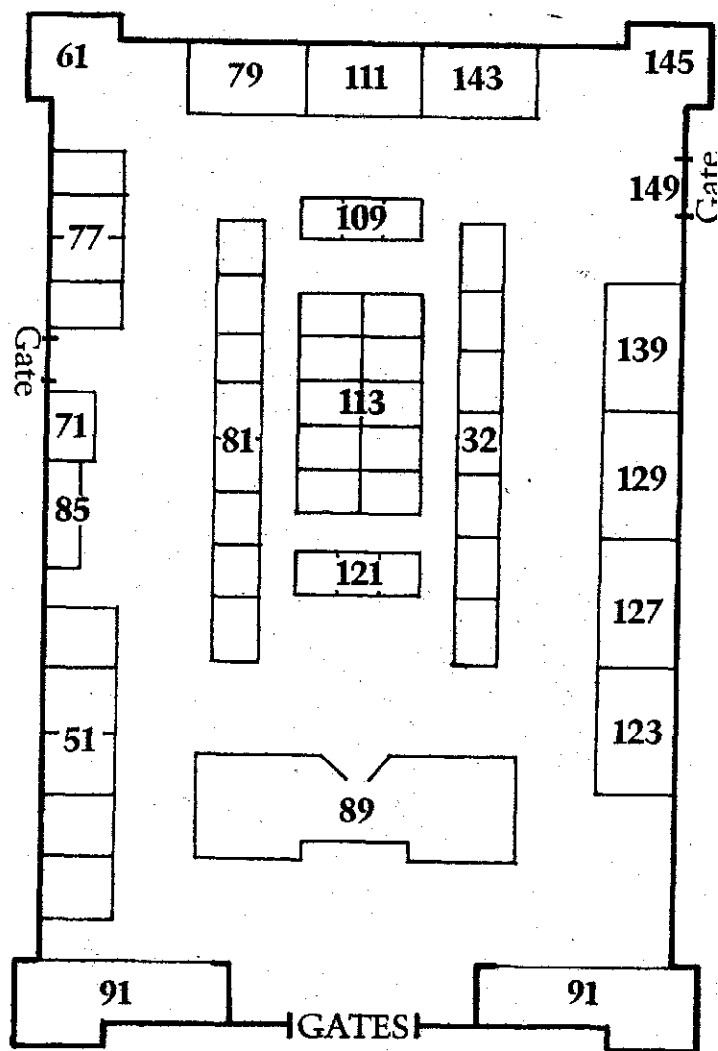
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MAP OF BELGARDIUM

Section 100



X Door

XX Double doors

☼ Cave-in: blocked

▨ Solid rock

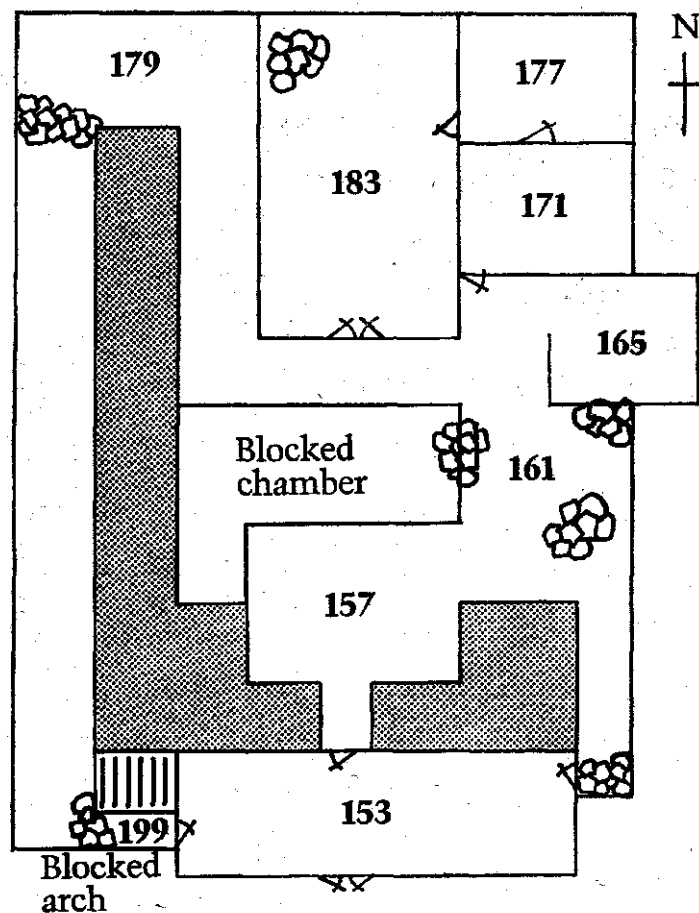
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THE CRYPTS

OF XANDINE

CASTLE

Section 149



Quest Journal

FIRE*WOLF'S LIFE POINTS

| | | | |
|----------|-------|------------|-------------|
| 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:

Damage done:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

Result:

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Enemy LIFE POINTS:

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Enemy LIFE POINTS:

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Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

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Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

Result:

Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Damage done:

Result:

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.