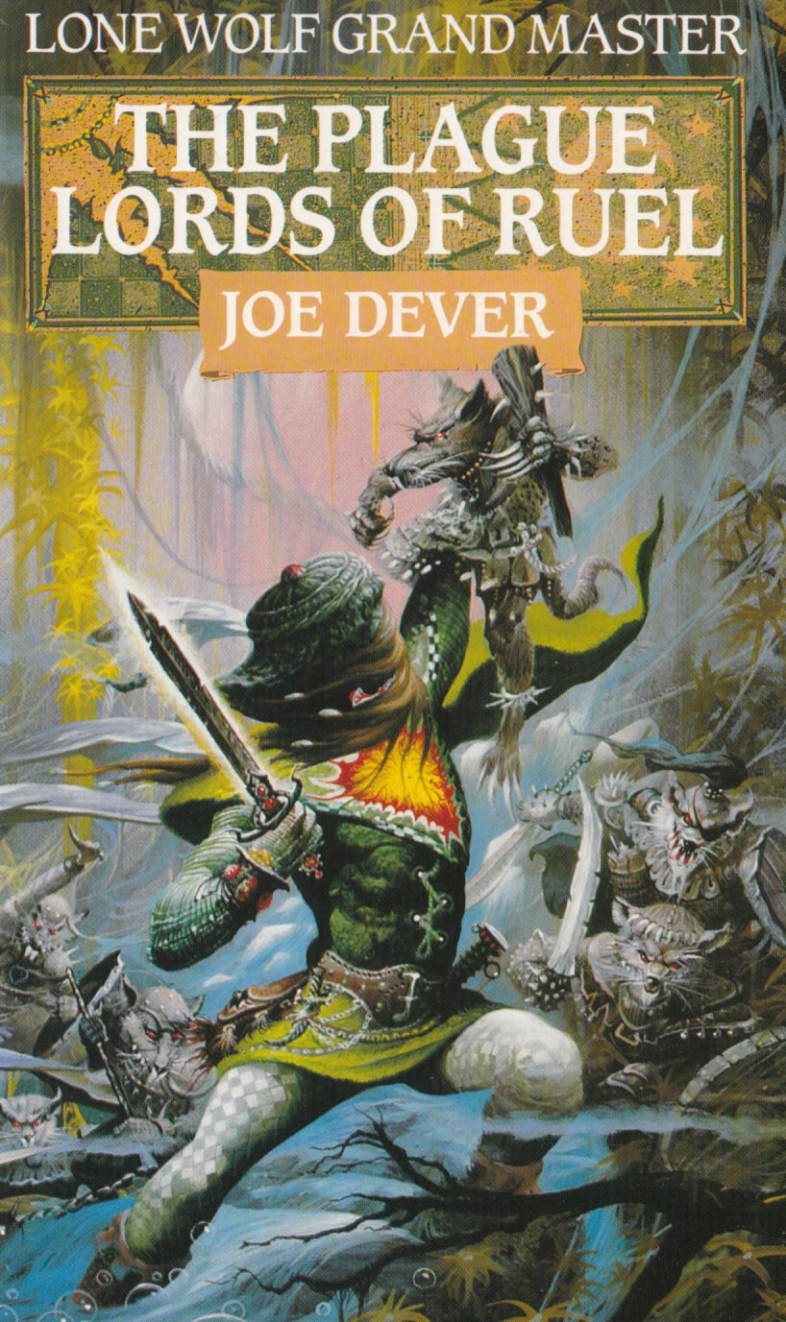
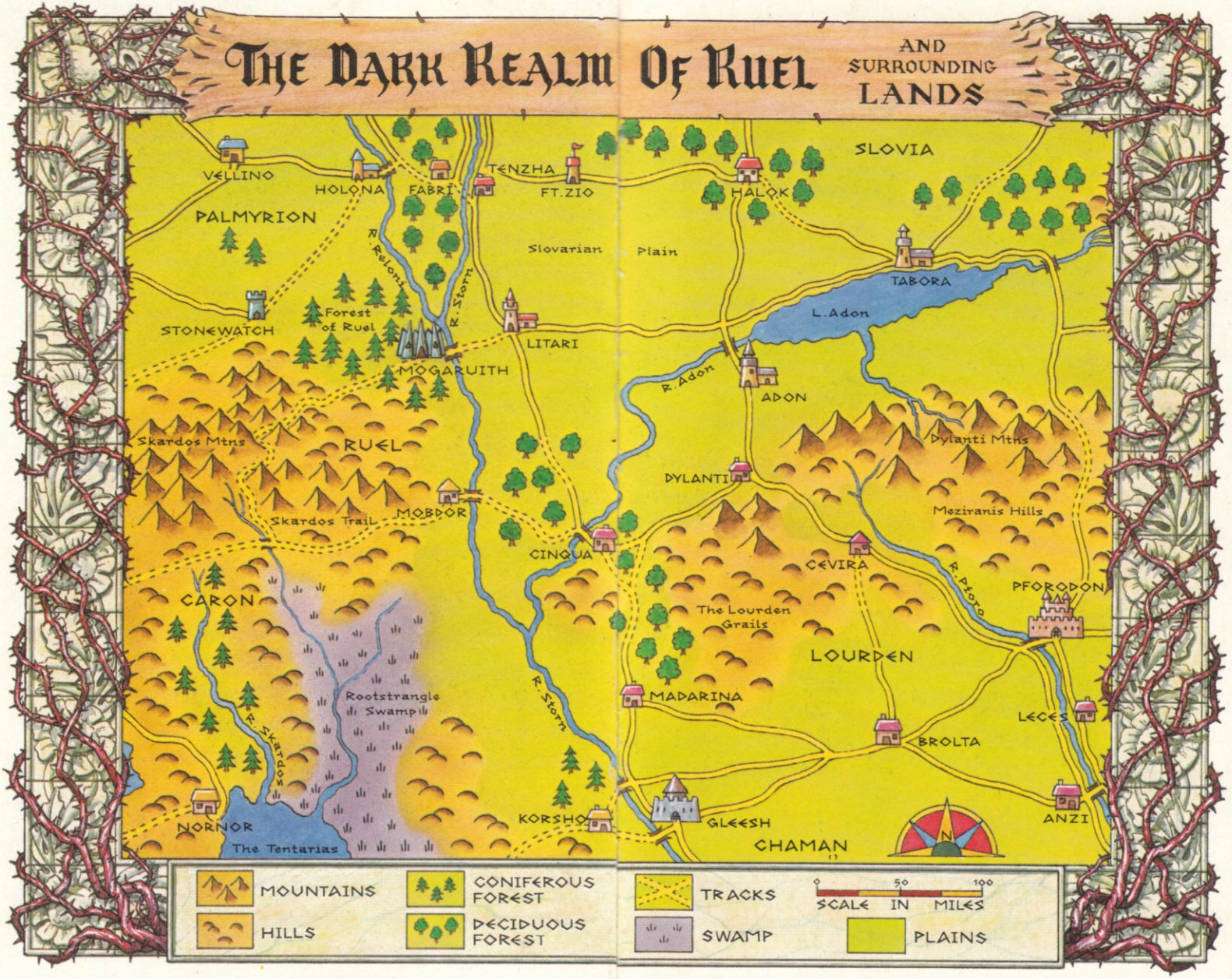
LONE WOLF GRAND MASTER

# THE PLAGUE LORDS OF RUEL

JOE DEVER




THE DARK REALM OF RUEL AND SURROUNDING LANDS
VELLINO
HOLONA
FABRI
TENZHA
FT. ZIO
HALOK
SLOVIA
PALMYRION
R. Relont
R. Storn
Slovarian Plain
TABORA
L. Adon
Forest of Ruel
STONEWATCH
LITARI
MOGARUITH
R. Adon
ADON
Skardos Mtns
RUEL
Dylanti Mtns
DYLANTI
Skardos Trail
MOBDOR
Meziranis Hills
CINQUA
CEVIRA
R. Pforo
PFORODON
CARON
The Lourden Grails
LOURDEN
Rootstrangle Swamp
R. Storn
MADARINA
LECES
BROLTA
R. Skardos
NORNOR
The Tentarias
KORSHO
GLEESH
ANZI
CHAMAN
N
MOUNTAINS
HILLS
CONIFEROUS FOREST
DECIDUOUS FOREST
TRACKS
SWAMP
0 50 100
SCALE IN MILES
PLAINS


The bearer of
this scroll,
name _____
is a _____
in the Order of the Kai

# THE PLAGUE LORDS OF RUEL

## THE AUTHOR

JOE DEVER was born in 1956 at Woodford Bridge in Essex. After he left college, he became a professional musician, working in studios in Europe and America. While working in Los Angeles in 1977, he discovered a game called 'Dungeons and Dragons' and was soon an enthusiastic player. Five years later he won the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Championships in the US, where he was the only British competitor. The award-winning Lone Wolf adventures are the culmination of many years of developing the world of Magnamund. They are printed in several languages and sold throughout the world.

Joe also writes for modelling journals and contributes to Britain's leading role-playing games magazines. He adapts the Lone Wolf adventures for computer play, is editor of the 'World of Lone Wolf' series and is noted for his model painting and photography.

*Also in Red Fox/Beaver by Joe Dever*

**The Lone Wolf Series:**

Flight from the Dark
Fire on the Water
The Caverns of Kalte
The Chasm of Doom
Shadow on the Sand
The Kingdoms of Terror
Castle Death
The Jungle of Horrors
The Cauldron of Fear
The Dungeons of Torgar
The Prisoners of Time
The Masters of Darkness

**The World of Lone Wolf Series:**

Greystar the Wizard
The Forbidden City
Beyond the Nightmare Gate
War of the Wizards

**The Freeway Warrior Series:**

Highway Holocaust
Slaughter Mountain Run
The Omega Zone
California Countdown

*By Joe Dever and John Grant*

**The Legends of Lone Wolf Series:**

Eclipse of the Kai
The Dark Door Opens
The Sword of the Sun
Hunting Wolf

*By Joe Dever and Gary Chalk*
The Magnamund Companion:

LONE WOLF 13

# THE PLAGUE LORDS OF RUEL

Joe Dever

Illustrated by Brian Williams
Cover by Peter Jones



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*To Mel*

## GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES

## NOTES

| |
|---|
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 4 |

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

CS = COMBAT SKILL EP = ENDURANCE POINTS

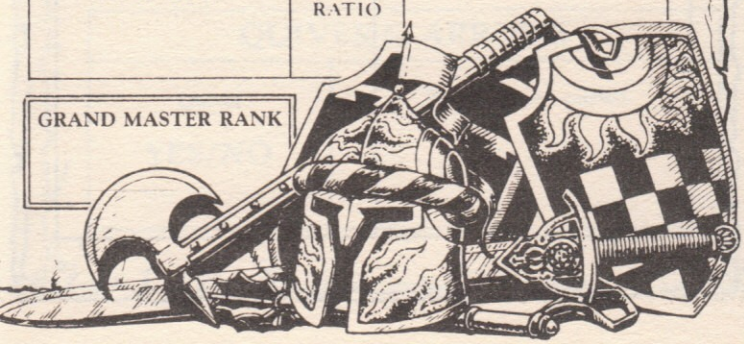
# ACTION CHART

| COMBAT SKILL | ENDURANCE POINTS<br>0 = dead |
|---|---|

## COMBAT RECORD

| ENDURANCE POINTS<br>LONE WOLF | COMBAT RATIO | ENDURANCE POINTS<br>ENEMY |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| LONE WOLF | COMBAT RATIO | ENEMY |
| | | |
| LONE WOLF | COMBAT RATIO | ENEMY |
| | | |
| LONE WOLF | COMBAT RATIO | ENEMY |
| | | |
| LONE WOLF | COMBAT RATIO | ENEMY |
| | | |

GRAND MASTER RANK



# SPECIAL ITEMS LIST

| DESCRIPTION | KNOWN EFFECTS |
| --- | --- |
| | |

# WEAPONS LIST

| WEAPONS (maximum 2 Weapons) |
|---|
| 1 |
| 2 |
| If holding Weapon and appropriate Grand Weaponmastery in combat + 3CS |

| GRAND WEAPONMASTERY CHECKLIST | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| DAGGER | | SPEAR | |
| MACE | | SHORT SWORD | |
| WARHAMMER | | BOW | |
| AXE | | SWORD | |
| QUARTERSTAFF | | BROADSWORD | |

| QUIVER & ARROWS | |
|---|---|
| Quiver<br>YES/NO | No. of arrows carried |



## THE STORY SO FAR . . .

You are Grand Master Lone Wolf, last of the Kai Lords of Sommerlund and sole survivor of a massacre that wiped out the First Order of your elite warrior caste.

It is the year MS 5075 and twenty-five years have passed since your brave kinsmen perished at the hands of the Darklords of Helgedad. These champions of evil, who were sent forth by Naar, the King of the Darkness, to destroy the fertile world of Magnamund, have themselves since been destroyed. You vowed to avenge the murder of the Kai and you kept your pledge, for it was you who brought about their downfall when alone you infiltrated their foul domain – the Darklands – and caused the destruction of their leader, Archlord Gnaag, and the core of their cancerous power that was the infernal city of Helgedad.

In the wake of their destruction, chaos befell the Darkland armies who, until then, had been poised to conquer all of Northern Magnamund. Some factions which comprised this huge army, most notably the

barbaric Drakkarim, began to fight with the others for control. This disorder quickly escalated into an all-out civil war, which allowed the freestate armies of Magnamund time in which to recover and launch a counter-offensive. Skilfully their commanders exploited the chaos and secured a swift and total victory over an enemy far superior in numbers.

For five years now peace has reigned in Sommerlund. Under your direction, the once-ruined monastery of the Kai has been thoroughly rebuilt and restored to its former glory, and you have begun the task of training a Second Order of Kai warriors so that the skills and proud traditions of your ancestors will be carried forward in the centuries to come. The new generation of Kai recruits, all of whom were born during the era of war against the Darklords, possess latent Kai skills and show exceptional promise. These skills will be nurtured and honed to perfection during their time at the monastery so that they may teach and inspire future generations, thereby ensuring the continued security of your homeland in future years.

Your attainment of the rank of Kai Grand Master brought with it great rewards. Some, such as the restoration of the Kai and the undying gratitude of your fellow Sommlending, could have been anticipated. Yet there have also been rewards which you could not possibly have foreseen. The discovery that within you lay the potential to develop Kai Disciplines beyond those of the Magnakai, which, until now, were thought to be the ultimate that a Kai Master could aspire to, was truly a revelation. Your discovery has inspired you to set out upon a new and previously unknown path in search of the wisdom and power that no Kai lord before you has ever

possessed. In the name of your creator, the God Kai, and for the greater glory of Sommerlund and the Goddess Ishir, you have vowed to reach the very pinnacle of Kai perfection – to attain all of the Grand Master Disciplines and become the first Kai Supreme Master.

With diligence and determination you set about the restoration of the Kai monastery and organized the training of the Second Order recruits. Your efforts were soon rewarded and, within the space of two short years, the first raw recruits had graduated to become a cadre of gifted Kai Masters who, in turn, were able to commence the teaching of their skills to subsequent intakes of Kai novices. Readily the Kai Masters rose to their new-found responsibilities, leaving you free to devote more of your time to the pursuit and perfection of the Grand Master Disciplines. During this period you also received expert tutelage in the ways of magic from two of your most trusted friends and advisors: Guildmaster Banedon, leader of the Brotherhood of the Crystal Star, and Lord Rimoah, speaker for the High Council of the Elder Magi.

In the deepest subterranean level of the monastery, one hundred feet below the Tower of the Sun, you ordered the excavation and construction of a special vault. In this magnificent chamber wrought of granite and gold, you placed the seven Lorestones of Nyxator, the gems of Kai power that you had recovered during your quest for the Magnakai. It was here, bathed in the golden light of those radiant gems, that you spent countless hours in pursuit of perfection. Sometimes alone, sometimes in the company

of your two able advisors – Banedon and Rimoah – you worked hard to develop your innate Grand Master Disciplines and grasp the fundamental secrets of left-handed and Old Kingdom magic. During this time you noticed many remarkable changes taking place within your body: you became physically and mentally stronger, your five primary senses sharpened beyond all that you had experienced before, and, perhaps most remarkably, your body began to age at a much slower rate. Now, for every five years that elapse you age but one year.

At this time many changes were also occurring beyond the borders of Sommerlund. In the regions to the north-east of Magador and the Maakengorge, the Elder Magi of Dessi and the Herbwardens of Bautar were working together in an effort to restore the dusty volcanic wasteland to its former fertile state. It was the first tentative step towards the reclamation of all the Darklands. However, although they had had notable successes in these regions, generally their progress was painfully slow and both parties were resigned to the fact that their efforts to undo the damage caused by the Darklords would take not years but centuries to complete.

In the far west, the Drakkarim had retreated to their homelands and were engaged in a bloody war against the Lencians. Much of Nyras had been reclaimed by the armies of King Sarnac, the Lencian commander, and his flag now flew over a land which, two thousand years ago, had once been part of Lencia.

Following the destruction of the Darklords of Helgedad, the Giaks, the most prolific in number of all of Gnaag's troops, fled into the Darklands and

sought refuge in the gigantic city-fortresses of Nadgazad, Aarnak, Gournen and Kaag. Within each of these hellish strongholds there exists now a state of frenzied civil war as remnants of the Xaghash (lesser Darklords) and the Nadziranim (evil practitioners of right-handed magic who once aided individual Darklord masters) fight for control. By virtue of their geographic locations, and the struggles taking place within them, each of these city-fortresses is isolated from the next and poses no immediate threat to the peoples of the Free Kingdoms. It is widely believed that by the time the Elder Magi and the Herbalish reach the walls of these strongholds the occupants will have long since brought about their own extinction.

Elsewhere, throughout Northern Magnamund, peace reigns victorious and the peoples of the Free Kingdoms rejoice in the knowledge that the age of the Darklords has finally come to an end. Readily men have exchanged their swords for hoes and their shields for ploughs, and now the only marching they do is along the ruts of their freshly furrowed fields. Few are the watchful eyes that scan the distant horizon in fear of what may appear, although there are still those who maintain their vigilance, for the agents of Naar come in many guises and there are those upon Magnamund who wait quietly in the shadows for the chance to do his evil bidding.

Often, over the past two years, Lord Rimoah has warned you to be wary of one such group. They are known as the Cener Druids and they occupy a small forested realm to the south of the Stornlands called Ruel, which they have made virtually impregnable to

invasion through the use of evil herbcraft. Once, long ago, after the defeat of Naar's greatest champion – Agarash the Damned – they were used by Naar as agents of revenge. Then they formulated and released a plague that decimated the Elder Magi and left the way open for their conquest of Magnamund. Now the Elder Magi fear that, as before, Naar will use them again to enact revenge for the defeat of his champions. They fear that they will seek to destroy the Second Order of the Kai before it becomes too strong, for your quest for mastery of the Grand Master Disciplines has opened a door to such goodly power that even Naar himself may be unable to counter it. Unless he closes that door, others of your kind could soon be following in your footsteps.

Already the Elder Magi have petitioned the courts of all the Freeland rulers, beseeching them to act immediately and destroy the Cenerese before it is too late. Many of the kingdoms they have visited unwittingly harboured secret sects of Cener Druids who practised their vile herbcraft, often in remote areas. Sommerlund was one such land. Only a year ago, a sect of Cenerese was found in the foothills of the Durncrags engaging in blood rituals at a site less than a day's ride from the Kai monastery. News of this prompted action which brought about a scourge of the Lastlands and forced many Cenerese sects to flee to the safety of Ruel. The regular armies of three nations – Palmyrion, Lourden, and Slovia – are now encamped around its border in an attempt to contain the Cener threat. They remain watchful, but that is all they can hope to do. The Cenerese are too powerful within their own domain for the Freeland armies to dare launch an invasion. One such attempt

has already ended in disaster. Six months ago an allied force numbering seven thousand men entered the Forest of Ruel, intent on storming the Cenerese fortress of Mogaruith and razing it to the ground. Seven thousand men went into the forest; only seventy returned alive.

Despite the vigilance of the three Freeland armies, the containment of the Cenerese threat within Ruel has not been entirely successful. To the south, the Cenerese can enter and leave their realm by means of tunnels which honeycomb the Skardos Mountains. These secret passages emerge in the free state of Caron, at the northern edge of the Rootstrangle Swamp which, in due course, drains into the Tentarias (the great waterway which divides the northern and southern continents of Magnamund). Once access to the Tentarias has been achieved, the Cenerese are virtually free to sail to any port or country of their choosing. Caron is helpless to prevent the Cenerese from using this route through their land. They are a poor nation with few resources, and the Rootstrangle Swamp is one of the most difficult places to patrol. It comprises a constantly shifting morass of mud flats and rotting vegetation, inhabited only by Tzargs – a carnivorous race of frog-like animals originally bred by the Cenerese for the sole purpose of guiding them through the swamp's ever-shifting channels.

On midsummer's day, Lord Rimoah arrived at the monastery without, as was customary on such occasions, any forewarning of his visit. His unexpected appearance surprised the other Kai and caused them to speculate in whispers about the reasons for his

journey. Yet his coming was of no surprise to you. For days you had experienced a feeling of unease, a presentiment that your orderly life at the monastery was about to undergo a dramatic change. Rimoah brought with him a glass phial of pale green liquid, a liquid that was proof-positive that the Cenerese were indeed preparing to enact Naar's revenge upon the Free Kingdoms of Magnamund.

The phial had been found among the possessions of a Cener Druid who had been caught in the city of Ragadorn after having been followed there by a watchful Herbwarden from Bautar. Under interrogation, the Cener revealed that he had been sent to Ragador by Arch-Druid Cadak, the ruler of Ruel, to distribute the phials of this liquid to agents sympathetic to the Cenerese cause. The Herbwarden had sent the phial to Dessi where the Elder Magi, upon analysing the liquid, discovered it to be a powerful vaccine against a new and complex plague virus. Judging by the composition of the vaccine, this plague virus would prove to be several times more lethal than the Great Plague which had so devastated their race thousands of years ago. The Cener succeeded in taking his own life before he revealed further details, but, judging from the evidence in their possession, the Elder Magi were convinced that the Cenerese are getting ready to unleash an airborne plague virus that could kill all the living creatures of Magnamund, save those that had ingested the vaccine.

Rimoah informs you that the Elder Magi are unable to replicate the vaccine in huge quantities, and even if they were so able, to distribute it to every living

creature on Magnamund would be an impossible task.

'The Herbwardens are sure that the Cener they found in Ragadorn was one of the first of those sent out of Mogaruith to distribute this vaccine,' said Rimoah, his voice uncharacteristically sombre. 'Therefore we must act quickly if we are to destroy the virus before Cadak is ready to release it into the atmosphere. Someone must enter Mogaruith. They must find and destroy the plague virus, and they must ensure that this evil work can never again be resumed.'

For a long moment you stood in silence staring into Rimoah's unblinking eyes. Then, with a nod of your head, you acknowledged what had to be done. Only a Kai Grand Master possesses the skills and experience that would be essential to the success of this vital mission . . .

and there is only one Kai Grand Master.

# THE GAME RULES

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

For five years, ever since the demise of the Darklords of Helgedad, you have devoted yourself to developing further your fighting prowess – COMBAT SKILL – and physical stamina – ENDURANCE. Before you begin your first Grand Master adventure you need to measure how effective your training has been. To do this take a pencil and, with your eyes closed, point with the blunt end of it on to the *Random Number Table* on the last page of this book. If you pick a *0* it counts as zero.

The first number that you pick from the *Random Number Table* in this way represents your COMBAT SKILL. Add 25 to the number you picked and write the total in the COMBAT SKILL section of your *Action Chart* (ie, if your pencil fell on the number *6* in the *Random Number Table* you would write in a COMBAT SKILL of 31). When you fight, your COMBAT SKILL

will be pitted against that of your enemy. A high score in this section is therefore very desirable.

The second number that you pick from the *Random Number Table* represents your powers of ENDURANCE. Add 30 to this number and write the total in the ENDURANCE section of your *Action Chart* (ie, if your pencil fell on the number 7 on the *Random Number Table* you would have 37 ENDURANCE points).

If you are wounded in combat you will lose ENDURANCE points. If at any time your ENDURANCE points fall to zero, you are dead and the adventure is over. Lost ENDURANCE points can be regained during the course of the adventure, but your number of ENDURANCE points can never rise above the number you have when you start an adventure.

**If you have successfully completed any of the previous adventures in the Lone Wolf series (Books 1–12), you can carry your current scores of COMBAT SKILL and ENDURANCE points over to Book 13. These scores may include Weaponmastery, Curing, and Psi-surge bonuses. Only if you have completed these previous adventures will you benefit from the appropriate bonuses in the course of the Grand Master series. You may also carry over any Weapons and Backpack Items you had in your possession at the end of your last adventure, and these should be entered on your new Grand Master *Action Chart* (you are still limited to two Weapons, but you may now carry up to ten Backpack Items).**

**However, only the following Special Items may**

**be carried over to the Lone Wolf Grand Master series (Book 13 onwards):**

**CRYSTAL STAR PENDANT**
**SOMMERSWERD**
**SILVER HELM**
**DAGGER OF VASHNA**
**SILVER BRACERS**
**JEWELLED MACE**
**SILVER BOW OF DUADON**
**HELSHEZAG**
**KAGONITE CHAINMAIL**
**KORLINIUM SCABBARD**

## KAI AND MAGNAKAI DISCIPLINES

During your distinguished rise to the rank of Kai Grand Master you have become proficient in all of the basic Kai and Magnakai Disciplines. These Disciplines have provided you with a formidable arsenal of natural abilities which have served you well in the fight against the agents and champions of Naar, King of the Darkness. A brief summary of your skills is given below.

**Weaponmastery**
Proficiency with all close combat and missile weapons. Master of unarmed combat; no COMBAT SKILL loss when fighting bare-handed.

**Animal Control**
Communication with most animals; limited control over hostile creatures. Can use woodland animals as guides and can block a non-sentient creature's sense of taste and smell.

**Curing**
Steady restoration of lost ENDURANCE points (to self and others) as a result of combat wounds. Neutralization of poisons, venoms and toxins. Repair of serious battle wounds.

**Invisibility**
Mask body heat and scent; hide effectively; mask sounds during movement; minor alterations of physical appearance.

**Huntmastery**
Effective hunting of food in the wild; increased agility; intensified vision, hearing, smell and night vision.

**Pathsmanship**
Read languages, decipher symbols, read footprints and tracks. Intuitive knowledge of compass points; detection of enemy ambush up to 500 yards; ability to cross terrain without leaving tracks; converse with sentient creatures; mask self from psychic spells of detection.

**Psi-surge**
Attack enemies using the powers of the mind; set up disruptive vibrations in objects; confuse enemies.

**Psi-screen**
Defence against hypnosis, supernatural illusions, charms, hostile telepathy, and evil spirits. Ability to divert and re-channel hostile psychic energy.

**Nexus**
Move small items by projection of mind power; withstand extremes of temperature; extinguish fire by force of will; limited immunity to flames, toxic gases, corrosive liquids.

**Divination**
Sense imminent danger; detect invisible or hidden enemy; telepathic communication; recognize magic-using and/or magical creatures; detect psychic residues; limited ability to leave body and spirit-walk.

## GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES

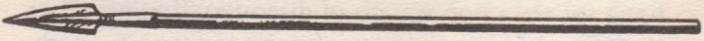
Now, through the pursuit of your new skills and the further development of your innate Kai abilities, you

have set out upon a path of discovery that no other Kai Grand Master has ever attempted with success. Your determination to become the first Kai Supreme Master, by acquiring total proficiency in all twelve of the Grand Master Disciplines, is an awe-inspiring challenge. You will be venturing into the unknown, pushing back the boundaries of human limitation in the pursuit of greatness and the cause of Good. May the blessings of the gods Kai and Ishir go with you as you begin your brave and noble quest.

In the years following the demise of the Darklords you have reached the rank of Kai Grand Defender, which means that you have mastered *four* of the Grand Master Disciplines listed below. It is up to you to choose which four Disciplines these are. As all of the Grand Master Disciplines will be of use to you at some point during your adventure, pick your four skills with care. The correct use of a Grand Master Discipline at the right time could save your life.

When you have chosen your four Disciplines, enter them in the Grand Master Disciplines section of your *Action Chart*.

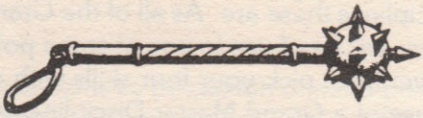
**Grand Weaponmastery**
This Discipline enables a Grand Master to become supremely efficient in the use of all weapons. When you enter combat with one of your Grand Master weapons, you add 5 points to your COMBAT SKILL. The rank of Kai Grand Defender, with which you begin the Grand Master series, means you are skilled in *two* of the weapons listed overleaf.



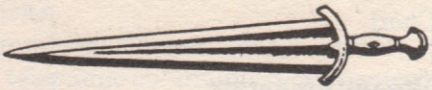
SPEAR



DAGGER



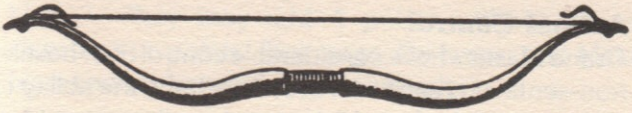
MACE



SHORT SWORD



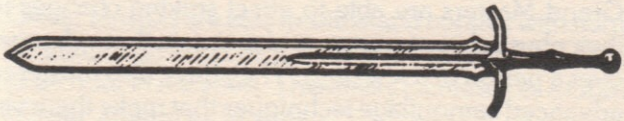
WARHAMMER



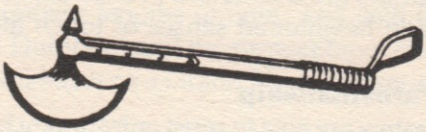
BOW



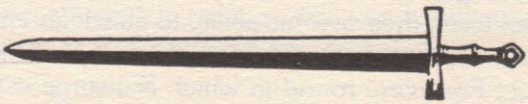
QUARTERSTAFF



BROADSWORD



AXE



SWORD

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

**Deliverance** *(Advanced Curing)*
Grand Masters are able to use their healing power to repair serious battle wounds. If, whilst in combat, their COMBAT SKILL is reduced to 8 points or less, they can draw upon their mastery to restore 20 ENDURANCE points. This ability can only be used once every 20 days.

**Assimilance** *(Advanced Invisibility)*
Grand Masters are able to effect striking changes to their physical appearance, and maintain these changes over a period of a few days. They have also mastered advanced camouflage techniques that make them virtually undetectable in an open landscape.

**Grand Huntmastery**
Grand Masters are able to see in total darkness, and have greatly heightened senses of touch and taste.

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

**Kai-surge**
When using their psychic ability to attack an enemy, Grand Masters may add 8 points to their COMBAT SKILL. For every round in which Kai-surge is used, Grand Masters need only deduct 1 ENDURANCE point. When using the weaker psychic attack – Mind-

blast – they may add 4 points without loss of ENDURANCE points. (Kai-surge, Psi-surge, and Mind-blast cannot be used simultaneously.)

Grand Masters cannot use Kai-surge if their ENDURANCE score falls to 6 points or below.

**Kai-screen**
In psychic combat, Grand Masters are able to construct mind fortresses capable of protecting themselves and others. The strength and capacity of these fortresses increases as a Grand Master advances in rank.

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

**Telegnosis** *(Advanced Divination)*
This Discipline enables a Grand Master to spirit-walk for far greater lengths of time, and with far fewer ill effects. Duration, and the protection of his inanimate body, increases as a Grand Master advances in rank.

**Magi-Magic**
Under the tutelage of Lord Rimoah, you have been able to master the rudimentary skills of battle magic, as taught to the Vakeros – the native warriors of Dessi. As you advance in rank, so will your knowledge and mastery of Old Kingdom magic increase.

**Kai-alchemy**
Under the tutelage of Guildmaster Banedon, you have

mastered the elementary spells of left-handed magic, as practised by the Brotherhood of the Crystal Star. As you advance in rank, so will your knowledge and mastery of left-handed magic increase, enabling you to craft new Kai weapons and artifacts.

If you successfully complete the mission as set in this, the first of the Lone Wolf Grand Master series, you may add a further Grand Master Discipline of your choice to your *Action Chart* in Book 14.

For every Grand Master Discipline you possess, in excess of the original four disciplines you begin with, you may add 1 point to your basic COMBAT SKILL score and 2 points to your basic ENDURANCE points score. These bonus points, together with your extra Grand Master Discipline, your original four Grand Master Disciplines, and any Special Items that you have found and been able to keep during your adventures, may then be carried over and used in the next Grand Master adventure, which is called THE CAPTIVES OF KAAG.

## EQUIPMENT

Before you leave the monastery and begin your long journey to the land of Palmyrion, you take with you a map of the Dark Realm of Ruel (see the inside front cover of this book) and a pouch of gold. To find out how much gold is in the pouch, pick a number from the *Random Number Table* and add 20 to the number you have picked. The total equals the number of Gold Crowns inside the pouch, and you should now enter this number in the 'Gold Crowns' section of your *Action Chart*. If you have successfully completed any of the

previous Lone Wolf adventures (Books 1–12), you may add this sum to the total sum of Crowns you already possess. Fifty Crowns is the maximum you can carry, but additional Crowns can be left in safe-keeping at your monastery.

You can take five items from the list below, again adding to these, if necessary, any you may already possess from previous adventures (remember, you are still limited to two Weapons, but you may now carry a maximum of ten Backpack Items).

SWORD (Weapons)

BOW (Weapons)

QUIVER (Special Items) This contains six arrows: record them on your weapons list.



AXE (Weapons)

4 MEALS (Meals) Each Meal takes up one space in your Backpack.



ROPE (Backpack Item)



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



SPEAR (Weapons)

DAGGER (Weapons)

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

## How to use your equipment

*Weapons*
The maximum number of weapons that you can carry is *two*. Weapons aid you in combat. If you have the Grand Master Discipline of Grand Weaponmastery and a correct weapon, it adds 3 points to your COMBAT SKILL. If you find a weapon during your adventure, you may pick it up and use it.

*Bows and Arrows*
During your adventure there will be opportunities to use a bow and arrow. If you equip yourself with this weapon, and you possess at least one arrow, you may use it when the text of a particular section allows you to do so. The bow is a useful weapon, for it enables you to hit an enemy at a distance. However, a bow cannot be used in hand-to-hand combat, therefore it

is strongly recommended that you also equip yourself with a close combat weapon, such as a sword or axe.

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

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

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

Any item that may be of use, and which can be picked up on your adventure and entered on your *Action Chart* is given either initial capitals (eg, Gold Dagger, Magic Pendant), or is clearly labelled as a Backpack Item. Unless you are told that it is a Special Item, carry it in your Backpack.

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

*Gold Crowns*
These are always carried in the Belt Pouch. It will hold a maximum of fifty Crowns. The currency of Palmyrion is the Lune, but Gold Crowns are readily accepted at an exchange of 4 Lune for every 1 Gold Crown.

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

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

## RULES FOR COMBAT

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

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

The sequence for combat is as follows:

1. Add any extra points gained through your Grand Master Disciplines and Special Items to your current COMBAT SKILL total.

2. Subtract the COMBAT SKILL of your enemy from this total. The result is your *Combat Ratio*. Enter it on the *Action Chart*.

   **Example**
   Lone Wolf (COMBAT SKILL 32) is attacked by a pack of Doomwolves (COMBAT SKILL 30). He is taken by surprise and is not given the opportunity of evading their attack. Lone Wolf has the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-surge to which the Doomwolves are not immune, so Lone Wolf adds 3 points to his COMBAT SKILL, giving him a total COMBAT SKILL of 35.

   He subtracts the Doomwolf pack's COMBAT SKILL from his own, giving a *Combat Ratio* of +5. (35-30 = +5). +5 is noted on the *Action Chart* as the *Combat Ratio*.

3. When you have your *Combat Ratio*, pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

4. Turn to the *Combat Results Table* on the inside back cover of this book. Along the top of the chart are shown the *Combat Ratio* numbers. Find the number that is the same as your *Combat Ratio* and cross-reference it with the random number that you have picked (the random numbers appear on the side of the chart). You now have the number of ENDURANCE points lost by both Lone

Wolf and his enemy in this round of combat. (*E* represents points lost by the enemy; *LW* represents points lost by Lone Wolf.)

**Example**
The *Combat Ratio* between Lone Wolf and the Doomwolf Pack has been established as +5. If the number picked from the *Random Number Table* is a 2, then the result of the first round of combat is:

Lone Wolf loses 3 ENDURANCE points (plus an additional 1 point for using Kai-surge).
Doomwolf Pack loses 7 ENDURANCE points.

5. On the *Action Chart*, mark the changes in ENDURANCE points to the participants in the combat.
6. Unless otherwise instructed, or unless you have an option to evade, the next round of combat now starts.
7. Repeat the sequence from Stage 3.

This process of combat continues until ENDURANCE points of either the enemy or Lone Wolf are reduced to zero, at which point the one with the zero score is declared dead. If Lone Wolf is dead, the adventure is over. If the enemy is dead, Lone Wolf proceeds but with his ENDURANCE points reduced.

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

**Evasion of combat**

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

## GRAND MASTER'S WISDOM

Your mission to enter the Cenerese stronghold of Mogaruith and destroy the deadly plague virus will be fraught with deadly danger. Be wary and on your guard at all times, for the inhabitants of Ruel are sworn enemies of the gods Kai and Ishir.

Some of the things that you will find during your mission will be of use to you in this and future Lone Wolf books, while others may be red herrings of no real value at all, so try to be selective in what you decide to keep.

Choose your four Grand Master Disciplines with care, for a wise choice will enable any player to complete the quest, no matter how weak their initial COMBAT SKILL and ENDURANCE scores may be. Successful completion of previous *Lone Wolf* adventures, although an advantage, is not essential for the completion of this first Grand Master adventure.

The prevention of the spread of a deadly Cenerese plague virus, and the subsequent deaths of untold millions, depends on the success of your mission. May the light of Kai and Ishir be your guide as you venture into the darkness of Ruel.

For Sommerlund and the Kai!

## IMPROVED GRAND MASTER DISCIPLINES

As you rise through the higher levels of Kai Grand Mastery you will find that your Disciplines will steadily improve. For example, if you possess the Discipline of Grand Nexus when you reach the Grand Master rank of Grand Thane, you will be able to pass freely through Shadow Gates and explore the nether realms of Aon and the Daziarn Plane.

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

## LEVELS OF KAI GRAND MASTERSHIP

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

| *No. of Grand Master Disciplines acquired* | *Grand Master Rank* |
|---|---|
| 1 | Kai Grand Master Senior |
| 2 | Kai Grand Master Superior |
| 3 | Kai Grand Sentinel |
| 4 | Kai Grand Defender – *You begin the Lone Wolf Grand Master adventures at this level of Mastery* |
| 5 | Kai Grand Guardian |
| 6 | Sun Knight |
| 7 | Sun Lord |
| 8 | Sun Thane |
| 9 | Grand Thane |
| 10 | Grand Crown |
| 11 | Sun Prince |
| 12 | Kai Supreme Master |

# 1

'Grand Master . . . the quest must begin without delay for time is not our ally,' says Lord Rimoah, as he paces nervously back and forth across the flagstoned floor of your monastery chamber. You voice your agreement and call upon your wise friend to counsel you as best he can about the mission you have undertaken. Not entirely to your surprise, you learn that he has already made preparation, confident in the knowledge that you would agree to this dangerous quest. He has arranged for you to travel to the Freeland of Palmyrion where a guide is waiting to escort you to Ruel. The guide can guarantee safe passage to the borders of the dark realm, but no further.

Rimoah tells you that little is known of Ruel, save that the unnatural forest which surrounds and protects the Cenerese stronghold of Mogaruith harbours creatures that are the stuff of nightmares. Some almost defy description. The poor wretches who survived the last ill-conceived, ill-fated invasion of Ruel, spoke of their encounters with gigantic, acid-spitting worms that rose up out of the ground without warning and devoured whole regiments of their comrades at a single stroke. They told also of the battles that

were waged against ferocious packs of disease-ridden rat-creatures they called 'Vazhag'. The Cenerese breed these sentient vermin in warrens deep below Mogaruith, then release them into the forest to patrol and gather food for even viler abominations that rarely venture beyond the walls of their stronghold.

'Truly I wish that I were able to tell you more, Lone Wolf, but so little is known of Ruel. It is a dark and sinister place. Yet, there is something else, something that I can give you which will aid your quest,' says Rimoah, and he holds out his hand. In his palm is the phial of green liquid, the vaccine that will, at least, protect you from the plague which threatens to destroy so much of your beloved world. You take it, uncork it, then quickly swallow the bitter contents. Unexpectedly your stomach rebels and a wave of nausea rises up which makes you slap a hand over your mouth. A few moments later the nausea fades and you are able to remove your hand and speak.

'How long will it protect me?' you ask, queasily.

Rimoah smiles. 'Oh, I'm sure you will be safe for some considerable time, Lone Wolf. I'm afraid I forgot to mention that the phial contained a concentrated vaccine, more than sufficient to protect a hundred men!'

Within the space of a few short hours you are ready to begin your long journey south to Palmyrion. Having entrusted the monastery to the care of your Kai Masters, you and Lord Rimoah leave by means of a secret tunnel, one of several that you have had constructed to enable you to enter and leave the

monastery unobserved. You emerge in a clearing at the heart of the Fryelund forest, at a place where Guildmaster Banedon is waiting patiently to welcome you aboard *Skyrider*, his flying ship. Here you take time to bid farewell to Lord Rimoah, who will await your return at the monastery, before climbing aboard and placing yourself in the charge of your old friend Banedon.

Turn to **260**.

**2**

You wrench yourself free from the creature's grip and stagger towards the antechamber, but Cadak is not prepared to allow you to escape from his creation so easily. From the tip of his staff there erupts a stream of thorny vines that wrap themselves around you and bury their barbs deep into your flesh: lose 1 ENDURANCE point. You struggle desperately to break your cruel bonds as Extermius closes in for the kill.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **97**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **245**.

**3**

The knife's tip draws a crimson line across your left shoulder before it hits the wall and rebounds with a metallic clang: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

The Vazhag, its confidence boosted by the wounds it has caused you, draws another knife and comes waddling across the chamber, screeching maniacally. Raising your weapon you turn to face your foe as it launches its desperate attack.

**4**

Fat Vazhag: COMBAT SKILL 18 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **121**.



**4**

With a thin, gurgling scream, the Cener clutches at his fatal wounds and slides slowly down the cavern wall. As he crumples on the floor, he raises his hand and, in a last defiant gesture, he lunges out to scratch at your leg. You step back and avoid the sharp, cat-like claws which have suddenly sprouted from the tips of his gloved fingers, and these poisoned barbs eject their venom harmlessly upon the dusty floor.

Once you are sure that the druid is no longer alive, curiosity prompts you to prise away his green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-pocked face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity.

Before leaving the cavern you decide to search him and his Vazhag escorts, and you discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
16 Lune (equivalent to 4 Gold Crowns)
Sword

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

To continue, turn to **178**.

**5**

The warrior clasps his wounds and exhales his last breath as he tumbles lifelessly to the floor. Standing over his still body you use the tip of your weapon to prise open the visor of his iron helmet. You reveal the brutal features of a Drakkar, one who had survived the downfall of the Darklords and had counted himself fortunate to have found refuge here in Mogaruith. Sadly for him he had not reckoned on ever crossing your path.

You conceal the bodies of the Drakkar and his hound as best you can before pulling the portal closed and continuing your exploration of Mogaruith.

Turn to **205**.

**6**

A sudden rush of pain and nausea makes you drop to your knees (lose 3 ENDURANCE points), leaving you shivering fitfully. Your psychic Magnakai Disciplines were insufficient to protect you against the physical effects of the powerful mind probe

which you have just experienced, but they were at least able to shield your true identity.

The light, reflected from the Cener Mask you are wearing, activates a sensor and as you rise to your feet you see the great metal door begin to slide open.

Turn to **150**.

**7**

You focus your power upon the scuttling horde and try to bring them under your control. They do not respond to your commands and, at once, you sense that they are under a spell that has robbed them of all free will. You draw on your inner strength and attempt to break this spell, and the creatures crease their frenzied movement with an abruptness you find unnerving; it is as if they have suddenly turned to stone. Now that you can see them clearly they remind you of beetles, save that they are far larger and have long, rat-like tails. You observe them for a few moments longer, then take a tentative step fowards. Instantly they burst into life, only this time they do not confine themselves to the forest floor.

With a sound like a thousand squeaky door hinges, they sprout wings and soar into the air in a formation which resembles a small black cloud. Soon they have left the clearing, and as you watch the last of them disappear over the tops of the trees, you can only hope that they are not some form of lookout employed by the Cenerese.

On the far side of the clearing you discover that the trail continues deeper into the forest. You follow it for nearly an hour until your keen senses warn of

danger ahead and immediately you halt in your tracks. You hear a movement: it is above and behind you. With incredible speed you spin on your heel and raise your weapon to parry a possible attack. Your reactions are fast, but they may not be quick enough to protect you from what lurks in the canopy of branches high above.

From out of the darkness there falls a wriggling mass of thorny creepers that come snaking towards your head as if driven by a single mind.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **257**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **140**.

## 8

Quickly you crouch down and take cover beside the staircase, hidden from view by the shadows and your Kai camouflage skills. Within seconds the Vazhag appear, but they are not alone. They are being led by a frog-like Tzarg which they have tethered on a chain. The Tzarg has its face pressed close to the steps and it is snuffling and snorting like a bloodhound as it tries to locate your scent.

If you possess Animal Mastery and wish to use it, turn to **207**.
If you possess Grand Mastery of Assimilance, turn to **154**.
If you have neither of these Grand Master Disciplines, turn to **36**.

## 9

Trusting to your Magnakai skill of Invisibility, you leave your hiding place and attempt to slip past the wagon and its struggling escort.

**10**

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Mastery of Assimilance, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *5* or less, turn to **181**.
If it is *6* or more, turn to **59**.

**10**

Warily you follow the track into the deepening gloom, your senses alive to the evil that permeates every root and branch of this forbidding forest. As darkness closes in there arises from out of the mire a mist, grey-green and sickly, which smothers the ground. Its corpse-like chill leaves you shivering, despite all your efforts to shield yourself from its clammy touch.

Night no longer restricts your vision and, as the track ascends towards a wooded peak, you see the outline of a ruined stone watchtower perched atop a rocky knoll. You sense that the tower is deserted and, keen to escape from the mist, you climb towards a crack in its granite base. You crouch to enter the jagged breach and, in doing so, you disturb a host of crab-creatures nesting within. In a frenzy they scuttle away from the tower, disappearing among the surrounding rocks in the blink of an eye.

Aching with fatigue, and mindful of the perils which still lie ahead, you settle yourself into a corner of the rubble-strewn tower and try to snatch a few hours of sleep. This night your slumber is disturbed by strange and unwholesome dreams, formed from the fears suppressed by your conscious mind. You are haunted by phantom shapes which take the form of friends and fellow countrymen. Kai initiates under

your tutorage and simple Sommlending folk, their heads bowed and their faces pitted and disfigured by plague, drift past you in a seemingly endless procession.

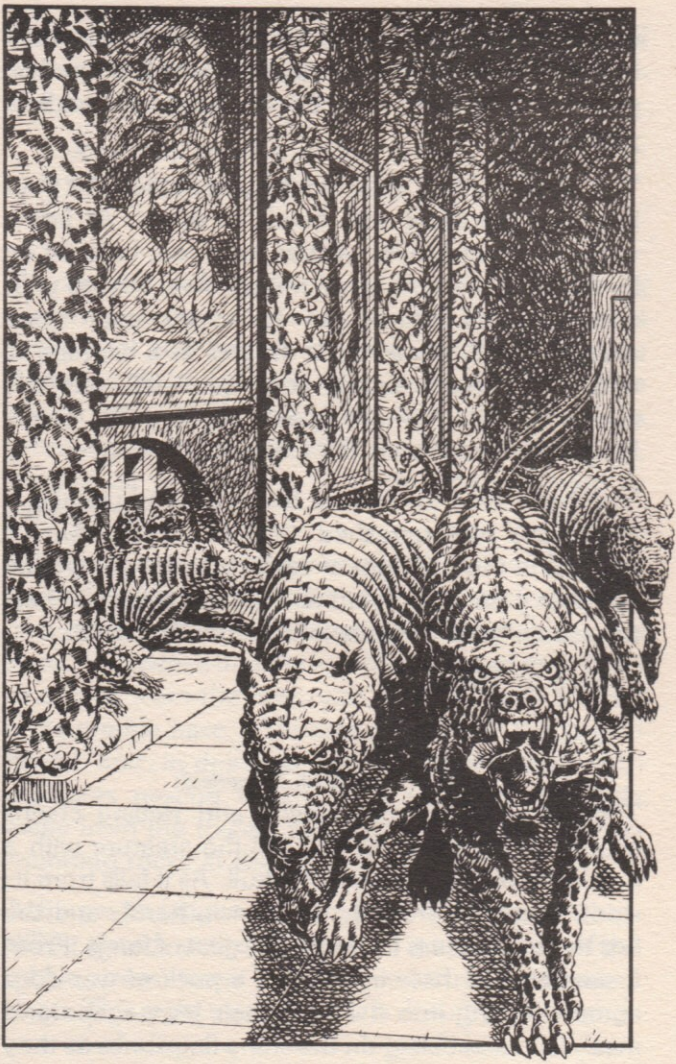
You awake with a start, your pulse racing and your forehead glistening with beads of sweat. At first a sense of hopelessness washes over you, brought on by the vivid memory of your nightmare but, as your consciousness returns, so too does your inner strength. You perceive the dreams as a warning of what will happen should your quest fail, and this realization strengthens your resolve to reach Mogaruith and thwart the Cener's evil plan.

You have slept for several hours and, physically at least, you feel refreshed (restore 3 ENDURANCE points). In the half-light of early morning you gather together your equipment and weapons in readiness to resume your perilous journey to Mogaruith.

Turn to **160**.

**11** – *Illustration I (overleaf)*

The sound of scraping metal and rattling chains echoes in your ears as you fell the creature with a deadly blow to the base of its skull. As it falls from its stool, you spin around, weapon in hand, and the first thing you see is the knife-like glint of fangs. From a semi-circular hole in the wall a pack of war-dogs come charging into the hall, their jaws agape and their claws scrabbling on the shiny flagstones as they race towards the desk. You raise your weapon confidently and brace yourself in readiness to meet their attack.



I. A pack of wag dogs with jaws agape charge into the hall.

Ruel war-dogs:
COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 22

If you win this combat, turn to **323**.

## 12

The columns of armoured rat-men pay little attention to you, but your undead charge does elicit squeals of disgust from some as you draw closer to their mighty stronghold.

Walking across the age-blackened drawbridge towards the spiky arched tower of Mogaruith is an unnerving experience. It is as if you are walking along a blackened tongue towards the gaping throat of some gigantic dragon. On either side the bubbling moat releases foul fumes which fill your nostrils with a terrible sugary stench that clogs your lungs and blurs your vision. You draw upon your Magnakai skills and your vision clears, but the sight which lies ahead looks no more inviting than it did before.

At the tower you are challenged by a troop of Vazhag guards who regard your companion with a distaste that is all too obvious. Using your Magnakai Disciplines of Animal Control and Pathsmanship to aid your deception, you inform them that you have come from the south on urgent business. They demand to know your name and why you have charge of an undead human. You try to bluff them but you notice that the zombie's presence is beginning to attract the unwanted interest of other Vazhag guards.

One of the rat-men pushes his snout to within inches of your mask and says, to your surprise, that you can enter Mogaruith so long as you first register your

arrival. He points to a door in the tower wall and asks you to enter it. 'There,' he says, 'you can make your registration.'

Immediately your Magnakai sense of Divination warns that the Vazhag is lying; a prison cell awaits you beyond that door.

If you wish to do as the Vazhag requests and enter the door, turn to **30**.
If you refuse to enter the door, turn to **162**.
If you decide to attempt to distract the Vazhag guards, turn to **256**.

## 13

As you strike the blow that brings one of the fearsome monsters crashing lifelessly to the ground, you spring away from its gore-stained carcass and barge shoulder-first through the line of screeching ghouls. The spectacle of the fallen Giganite, and the suddenness of your action, has taken the creatures by surprise. Before they can react you have already sprinted to within a few yards of the leafy tunnel.

You glance over your shoulder to see the shambling horde falling over themselves in their haste to give chase. The sight raises your spirits but the sensation is short-lived, for above them towers a Giganite, its mouth full of bubbling phlegm. With a flick of its powerful neck it sends the massive spit-ball arching towards your fleeing form.

Instinctively you throw yourself to the ground and the foul missile whooshes past, hitting a tree at the base of its trunk. At once there is a sizzling sound

and, with a creaking groan, the tree is brought crashing to the ground, its base eaten clean away by the acidic saliva. Great droplets of the spittle splash your tunic and instantly it begins to smoulder.

If you possess Grand Nexus, turn to **88**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **343**.

## 14

With ease, you sidestep and dodge your way through the throng of hungry Vazhag, and escape undetected into the empty passage which lies beyond the iron portal. A few minutes later, as you are exploring this new tunnel, you hear the squealing cease as the great door closes with a rumbling boom.

The passage continues eastwards for several miles and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, it is virtually deserted. At length you arrive at the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track that disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Directly above the archway, you notice a thin ray of sunlight streaming through a window-like hole in the rock. Sorely aware that the main entrance is so heavily guarded that it will be very difficult, even for someone as gifted as yourself, to escape that way undetected, you resolve instead to escape by means of the smaller opening in the rock wall.

**15–16**

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now 5 or less, turn to **192**. If it is 6 or more, turn to **346**.

**15**

'Szalista,' you say, the ancient Cenerese word meaning 'fifteen', and immediately you hear the door's locking mechanism disengage itself. There is a hiss of escaping air and the heavy portal swings slowly inwards on massive hinges.

Without hesitation, you step through the doorway and enter the circular tunnel beyond.

Turn to **205**.

**16**

The passage descends steeply and the foul air becomes thick with a gritty dust which clogs your eyes and nostrils. Although the pitch blackness does not hamper your vision, the air has become so saturated with dust that you now have difficulty seeing more than a few feet in front of your outstretched hands. Slowly you advance, trusting to your Magnakai skills to protect you from choking as you seek a clearer section of the passage.

After a while you notice long streamers of greasy yellow moss hanging from cracks in the tunnel roof. Between them are spread festering fungi of varying hues, all cankerous and vile to the eye. You are passing beneath these growths when suddenly, as if triggered by a silent command, they burst open and

shower you with great clouds of sticky, mote-like spores.

At once your body senses that the spores are highly poisonous and, as a sub-conscious reflex, your Magnakai curing skills activate and counter the deadly toxins that have found their way into your lungs. Your chest is wracked with pain but you sustain no serious injury: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

The sticky, foul-smelling spore cloud is so thick that you have difficulty moving forwards. It feels as if you are wading through a tunnel of mud. Your Kai skills have neutralized the poisonous spores, but there is now hardly any air left to breathe. Fear wells up in your stomach as you feel your strength beginning to ebb.

If you possess some Baylon's Fungi, turn to **277**.
If you do not possess this item, turn to **136**.

## 17

'There is only one who could withstand the fire of this wand . . . Kai lord,' he spits, still pointing at you with his flame-tipped staff.

'And I rejoice that fate has brought you here to me, Lone Wolf. Your doom is sealed. Turn around and meet your nemesis!'

Turn to **125**.

## 18

As your killing blow severs the creature's body, the two halves explode, scattering shards of mummified remains all around the chamber. The force knocks you backwards and, as you fall, you catch a glimpse

of a wispy, ghost-like shadow, rising towards the ceiling. It halts for a moment in mid-air, then it seeps through the solid stone ceiling like smoke through a veil.

Before leaving the chamber you pause to search the stone casket. Inside you discover a few mouldering rags and a Copper Key (if you wish to keep this Key, record it on your *Action Chart* as a Backpack item).

Cursing your ill luck, you leave the chamber and head towards the laboratory door. On the other side of it you discover a series of narrow passages which eventually end at an antechamber. This domed chamber is decorated with tapestries which depict Cenerese legends, ignoble and infamous deeds that were perpetuated during the Age of the Old Kingdoms, when, for nearly a thousand years, the Cenerese tyrannized Northern Magnamund.

A single heavy oaken door in the opposite wall offers the only exit from the antechamber. As you approach it, you notice that it is slightly ajar. Suddenly you hear the doleful sound of chanting emanating from beyond this door. Curiosity prompts you to peer through its narrow opening and, as you do so, a chill runs the length of your spine when you see what lies beyond.

Turn to **200**.

## 19

You look down to see that a leafy vine is spiralling upwards around your leg. You summon your powers to repel the plant but your commands appear to have no effect. Then the fearful realization

hits you that this is not a vine at all: it is the limb of a bog creature.

You attack and sever the plant-like tendril, but immediately there is another, then another. With the speed of striking snakes they ensnare your legs and wrench you into the morass. You fight desperately to free yourself as you are dragged deeper into the foul-smelling mire. Repeatedly you strike out below the surface in the hope of dealing your attacker a mortal wound. You feel something burst upon your weapon's tip and, momentarily, the creature's grip falters, but only to recover with renewed strength and tenacity.

Then sharp pain lances through your thighs as row upon row of barbed claws spring out from the unseen creature's tendrils and puncture your skin. You scream in agony and your cry is echoed from beneath the surface of the muddy pool by the sound of a malicious bubbling laugh.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **339**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **47**.



## 20

As you strike the blow that seals this creature's doom, it vents a fearful high-pitched shriek that instantly silences the cave-beasts and sends them scurrying for the shadows of their filthy cells.

Within the blink of an eye the ghostly Pechdrazil evaporates in the air, leaving nothing to mark its existence save the harsh metallic odour of ozone. You wipe your sweat-laden brow with the back of your left hand and glance over your shoulder at the cowering creatures, huddled in their cells. Casually you sheathe your weapon and step forward to stare down the staircase into the gloom below. You focus upon the darkness, but you are unable to discern where the staircase ends.

If you wish to descend the stairs, turn to **106**.
If you decide not to descend the staircase, you can retrace your steps to the junction and continue by means of the north tunnel instead. Turn to **85**.

## 21

At the top of the stairs you find a dining chamber in disarray. Piles of rubbish are strewn across its tiled floor, gnawed bones cover its tables, and the remains of a small fire are still smouldering at its centre.

An arched portal in the far wall offers hope of escape into a corridor beyond and you hurry towards it. As you are running across the room, you notice a pile of discarded weapons lying beside a bench. Among the weapons are:

Dagger
Sword
Broadsword
Bow
4 Arrows
Quiver

If you wish to take any of the above, adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

To continue, turn to **255**.

## 22

The torrent of flaming oil hits you in the face and a wave of pain forces you to your knees. Instinctively you call upon your Magnakai skill of Nexus to extinguish the flames and, within seconds, the oily fire gutters and dies: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

The Cener had begun to cackle gleefully, so sure was he that you were doomed. Now his cruel laughter chokes in his throat as, numbly, he fumbles for a weapon to halt your approach. He draws a curvy-bladed knife from a hidden sheath and holds it out unsteadily in front of his chest. You tell him to drop the dagger but he is deaf to your command. He feints a swipe then lunges for your heart, yet you deflect this weak attack with your right forearm and counter it with a left hook to the chin which shatters the druid's glassy green mask. He reels backwards and crashes to the floor, his bony fingers scrabbling his throat. For a moment he writhes around on the dusty ground, then his body stiffens and he lies completely still. Cautiously you step nearer, expecting trickery. Then you see that a shattered fragment of his mask has severed his jugular vein

and you know that he no longer poses a threat to your life.

If you wish to search the druid's body, turn to **253**.

If you do not, turn to **306**.

## 23

Swiftly you search the drawers of the dead creature's desk, sifting through papers and ledgers for clues as to where in Mogaruith the plague virus is being cultivated. The papers yield no useful information, but you do find two small levers set into the desk's surface.

You examine them closely and your Kai senses reveal that they operate the two metal doors to this antechamber. You flip the right-hand lever and the door by which you entered glides shut. Then you pause for a moment to prepare yourself before flipping the left lever, for this will open the door which leads to Cadak's throne room.

Turn to **240**.

## 24

The pit agarashi gives a deafening howl as your killing blow ruptures its black heart. Its powerful body stiffens and it red eyes become opaque, like two orbs of frosted crimson glass. For a moment it remains fixed and immobile, then its claws release their grip upon the rock wall and the beast plummets backwards to crash heavily upon the hard pit floor.

Breathless with exertion, you sheathe your weapon and force yourself towards the surface, eager to

escape lest someone, or something, should come to investigate the creature's death cry.

Turn to **87**.

## 25

With a foul, snickering cry the Vazhag swarm into the derelict hut. You side-step into a corner to prevent them from getting behind you, then raise your weapon in readiness to meet their attack. The leading rat-men throw themselves upon you in a blood-crazed frenzy, hacking and stabbing with their rusty blades, yet you dispatch them in seconds with such precision and economy of movement that it would appear to an onlooker that you had hardly moved at all.

But for every Vazhag that falls, three more take its place, and within minutes you are in danger of being suffocated to death by the press of their loathsome bodies.

Vazhag pack:
COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 44

If you win this combat, turn to **72**.

## 26

You speak your answer several times but nothing happens. You are convinced that your answer is correct and, in frustration, you tap the box on the table repeatedly in the hope of releasing the lid. On the third tap a razor-sharp blade springs from the side and cuts into the palm of your hand: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

Cursing the device, you fling it away into a corner

and attend to your injured hand. A sudden shuffling noise, somewhere in another part of the library, causes you to freeze: someone else has entered. You look over your shoulder at the door and decide that now would be a very wise time to leave.

Turn to **335**.

## 27

At the top of the stairs you find a corridor which heads off towards the west before turning sharply towards the north. As you approach the corner you skid to a halt: your senses are warning you of approaching danger. Hurriedly you unsheathe your weapon, but no sooner is it out of its scabbard than a Drakkar warrior comes running around the corner and crashes straight into you, knocking you both sprawling to the ground.

Quickly you recover but not in time to retrieve your weapon before the Drakkar attacks.

Drakkar: COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 30

You must fight the first three rounds of this combat unarmed. At the start of the fourth round you are able to retrieve your weapon and fight as normal.

If you win the combat, turn to **255**.

## 28

Feeling unsettled by your close encounter with the deadly acid-spitting tunnel crabs, you unsheathe your weapon and descend the staircase with renewed caution. Sixty steps later you arrive at a small cavern where three tunnels converge, from the north, the south, and the west.

There are many tracks on the dusty floor and your Magnakai hunting skills enable you to read them with ease. They are confined to the west and south tunnels and, judging by their size and depth, they were made by large rat-like creatures, but ones that walk upright, like humans. From what you have been told about the denizens of Ruel, you are sure that these tracks were made by Vazhag, the warrior vermin bred by the Cenerese.

Among their tracks you note others that are far from rat-like. You are about to examine these a little closer when suddenly you hear the sounds of movement echoing from the west tunnel; a group of creatures are approaching. At once you abandon your tracking and look around for somewhere to hide.

If you wish to take cover in the north tunnel, turn to **35**.

If you wish to take cover in the south tunnel, turn to **201**.

If you choose to hide in the cavern itself, turn to **153**.

## 29

As the Acolyte's body falls limply to the platform, you sheathe your weapon and take hold of the ladder which ascends to the winch. All eyes in the hall below are watching your ascent and, when they suddenly realize what it is you are trying to do, pandemonium breaks out. Hysterical screams of anger and fear merge into a dreadful cacophony which fills the hall with clamouring echoes. You glance down at their faces, contorted by rage, and as you do so you glimpse a new threat to your safety.

## 30

A handful of Vazhag archers are scurrying out of the portal which connects Cadak's chamber to the gallery. They spread out along the parapet and begin firing at you with their lacquered bows. Black-fletched arrows whistle past on either side, their barbed heads passing dangerously close to your legs and feet.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 4 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *0–2*, turn to **231**.
If it is *3–6*, turn to **293**.
If it is *7* or higher, turn to **278**.

## 30

With trepidation you approach the door, fully aware that you are walking into a trap. Spear-wielding Vazhag hover on either side, alert and suspicious, their tarnished weapons held in readiness to strike should you show any sign of resistance.

A cell awaits you beyond the door. It seems to be no more than what you expected to find and, as the heavy door is slammed shut, you begin immediately to search for a means of escape before the Vazhag guards return.

Unfortunately, despite its plain appearance, this cell is far more than you expected it to be. It is an extermination chamber, one of several located throughout Mogaruith. It is designed for the speedy destruction of those who would dare to challenge the Cenerese.

Suddenly a powerful electrical current is fed into the

metal floor and you are transfixed as the deadly voltage courses through your body. You fight with all your strength to survive this terrible onslaught but the current is irresistible and, eventually, your body can take no more.

Sadly, your life and your quest end here in Mogaruith.

**31**

You send your arrow whistling towards the creature's throat. A fatal wound looks certain until, at the very last moment, the beast twists aside to avoid the oncoming shaft and, with a dull *thunk*, the arrow skewers its shoulder. The creature roars with pain but the injury does not deter it from attacking. With the knife-wielding Vazhag close behind, it quickly recovers and together they rush forward to attack.

Pit agarashi (wounded) & Vazhag:
COMBAT SKILL 30 ENDURANCE 40

The pit agarashi is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge; only the Grand Mastery of Kai-surge can harm it psychically.

If you win the combat, turn to **297**.

**32** – *Illustration II (overleaf)*

The track crosses the plateau and passes within a few yards of the pits before continuing into a tunnel-like gap in the trees beyond. You advance, but every step that brings you nearer to the site causes your senses to rebel. The sensation of evil is so strong here that it clogs your nostrils and makes you struggle for



II. Corpse-like beings shamble out of the forest, uttering a chilling groan.

breath. You resolve to run towards the gap but a sudden noise from behind arrests you in mid-step.

Shambling out of the forest come a horde of monstrous shapes, corpse-like beings that exist in a twilight between life and death. Perched atop their withered bodies are hairless heads bearing lidless, red eyes and gaping maws, rimmed with hundreds of needle-thin fangs. As one they utter a deathly groan and you feel an icy chill electrify your spine.

Fighting to suppress your mounting horror, you turn and run towards the gap. You are within a few yards of the rocky spur when a dozen or more of these fearful creatures appear from the shadows to block your escape. Once more they utter their cadaverous cry and advance upon you from both sides.

Desperately you survey the plateau for another means of escape, but there is none: you are trapped. The only choice you have is to face the creatures or retreat towards the pits.

If you wish to fight these creatures, turn to **163**.
If you choose to retreat towards the pits, turn to **148**.

## 33

The tapestry depicts a ghastly feast, a banquet attended by demonic creatures who are gorging themselves on human remains. Seated at the head of this unholy feasting table is a bull-like creature who possesses the head and face of a man. From between his bloodstained lips there protrude two fangs, needle-sharp and gleaming. From his seat he looks down upon his loathsome guests with a sneering contempt.

**34–35**

Your thoughts are suddenly disturbed by a faint sound; someone or something is moving about in the antechamber.

Turn to **222**.

**34**

Silently you crawl through the foliage to a position close by the busy trail. Twenty minutes later you see a wagon approaching and, as it nears your hiding place, you focus your Magnakai powers of Nexus at one of the front wheels, causing it to jam. The Ghorkas grunt in protest as the wheel locks and the wagon veers off the track.

Cursing and squealing, the Vazhag driver jumps down and begins to hammer at the wheel with the butt of its spear, whilst his three wounded companions struggle to quieten the startled Ghorkas. Under cover of the confusion, you slip around to the rear of the wagon, using your camouflage skills to minimize the risk of being seen.

You climb aboard without being observed but you are shocked to the core when you discover the nature of the wagon's cargo.

Turn to **218**.

**35**

You press yourself into a hollow in the north tunnel wall and wait with bated breath as the sound of the approaching group grows louder and nearer. Torchlight flickers, casting a watery yellow beam across the cavern floor, then the first of the group enters and you catch sight of their repulsive forms.

A patrol of six Vazhag file into the cavern. Each one is as tall as a Sommlending youth and all are armed with crude, rusty weapons. Fragments of armour and uniforms, which once belonged to human soldiers, encase their hairy, rat-like bodies. They are more than twenty feet away from your hiding place, but even so, they give off such a vile aroma of filth and disease that you are forced to draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to prevent yourself from retching out loud.

They halt at the foot of the stone stairs and communicate with each other in a high-pitched squeal which reminds you of rusty door hinges, and repeatedly they cast furtive glances along the west tunnel as it they were waiting for another of their party to catch up. Within minutes, another member of their patrol does arrive, only this creature is not one of their breed: it is human-sized. However, the hooded scarlet robe it is wearing makes it difficult for you to be absolutely sure that the creature within is human.

The Vazhag cease their squealing when the hooded one raises a gloved hand and motions to the south tunnel. For an instant, you catch a glimpse of the glassy green mask that is covering his face, and at once you recognize this mask: it is a jazak, the ritual mask of a Cener druid.

If you wish to ambush this patrol, turn to **289**.
If you choose to allow them to leave the cavern by the south tunnel, turn to **198**.

## 36

You watch nervously as the Tzarg snuffles closer and

closer to your hiding place, praying all the while that your Magnakai skills of Animal Control and Invisibility will keep you safe from detection.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–4*, turn to **229**.

If the number is *5–9*, turn to **302**.

## 37

As you slay the last war-dog, a host of squealing Vazhag come pouring into the hall; your pursuers have caught up with you at last. Having chased you for over five miles, the screaming rat-men want only to rend you limb from limb, yet the unexpected sight of the slain war-dogs heaped about your feet immediately cools their blood-lust. Any warrior who could defeat half a dozen of these hellish creatures deserves to be treated with some respect!

You hear them muttering, then, from among their ranks comes one dressed in contrast to its brethren, cloaked completely in a brown hooded robe. It pulls from a pocket a sphere of glass which is filled with a speckled swirling vapour and, with a curse, it hurls this fragile sphere at your feet.

If you possess Deliverance, turn to **76**.
If you do not have this Grand Mastery, turn to **217**.

## 38

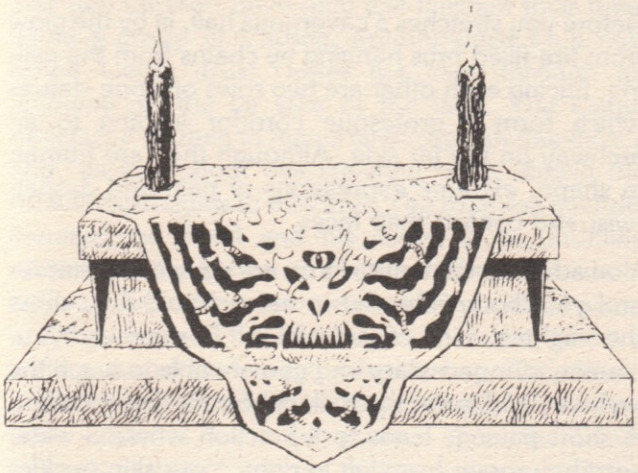
With a terrifying wail the three creatures rise above you and stretch wide their powerful jaws. Defiantly

you face them as they flex their coils and steady themselves to strike.

3 Ruel Giganite:
COMBAT SKILL 50 ENDURANCE 80

These creatures are susceptible to all forms of psychic attack. When their ENDURANCE points score has been reduced to 36 or less, you can elect to evade combat by turning to **13**.

If you win the combat, turn to **286**.



**39**

With incredible speed you unshoulder your bow and draw an arrow to your lips. Then, almost instantly, you release the straining bowstring and send the shaft burrowing deep into the creature's body, killing it instantly. The force of the impact lifts it out of its hollowed stool and sends it crashing to the floor

where it wobbles back and forth grotesquely, like a giant fleshy egg, before coming to rest on its side.

Turn to **23**.

## 40

With a roar of agony, the Degradon crashes forward, forcing you to leap aside to avoid being pinned beneath its loathsome carcass. Breathless and shaking with the fatigue of this deadly combat, you lean against the wall and survey your surroundings.

Before you stretches a cavernous hall, lit by the glow from fire-filled orbs hanging by chains from the ceiling. Facing each other are two rows of stone statues which form a grotesque corridor leading to an archway on the far side. Although they are human in shape, extreme expressions of pain and despair twist and contort their faces.

You advance cautiously. You are wary of the statues and your body is tensed to react should they show the slightest hint of animation. Fortunately your caution is unnecessary and you are able to reach the archway and leave the hall without further incident. A short passage leads to a junction where a wider corridor crosses from left to right. Your skin prickles in reaction to the concentration of evil you detect in this subterranean part of Mogaruith, and silently you call upon your creator, the noble god Kai, for protection and guidance before continuing.

Instinct prompts you to turn left, and within a few minutes you arrive at a chamber where a vast staircase of black marble ascends to many levels, lost

in the gloom above. Opposite this grand staircase stands a large door, carved from a solid sheet of strange green metal, the like of which you have never seen before. It gives off a pulsating radiance which washes over the empty chamber, illuminating symbols carved into the walls and floor. You focus on these symbols and, in a chilling moment of realization, you decipher their meaning.

Turn to **300**.

**41**

The two rat-men have only just finished their meal when a group of Vazhag, accompanied by a red-robed Cener druid, enter the cave through an archway on the far side of the lake. The Cener directs the Vazhag to man a large capstan-like device and, as they work this creaking hoist, slowly the drawbridge begins to descend. The moment it is fully lowered the druid and his escort come shuffling across the bridge in single file. They are about halfway over when there is a bubbling rush of water and the suface of the lake begins to seethe, as if it is boiling. A sudden fear grips the Vazhag. They freeze in their tracks, twitching and squealing fitfully as they stare aghast at the frothing water. Then the Cener screams at them to retreat and they scurry back the way they came, with the two you saw earlier close on their heels.

The first ones to make it back scamper to the capstan and begin to reverse it as quickly as they can. You see the bridge-ropes tighten and, with a tortured creak, the heavy wooden bridge rises off the platform. Fearing that you could be left stranded on

the wrong side of the lake, you rush forward and leap for the underside of the rising drawbridge.

Like a limpet you fix yourself to its damp timbers as the bridge aproaches the vertical. However, before the bridge is fully retracted, the Vazhag abandon the capstan and flee through the archway, unaware that you are clinging to the underside of the bridge. For a moment you are relieved that the rat-men and their druidic master have disappeared, for you had not relished the thought of them discovering you in such a vulnerable situation. Unfortunately, your relief is short-lived, for within seconds of their disappearance you find yourself face-to-face with the object of their terror.

Turn to **295**.

**42**

You scream in pain as an arrow skewers your left wrist. The agony of the wound and the shock of the arrow's impact cause you to lose your grip and, in a terrifying instant, you fall from the chain and plummet headlong towards the floor of the hall below. Death is mercifully swift.

Your incredible bravery has brought about the destruction of the plague virus, and the druids who knew the secrets of its cultivation. This destruction has saved millions from a terrible death, and the selfless courage you displayed in bringing this about will never be forgotten by the free peoples of Magnamund. Sadly, though, death is the price you have paid for your victory.

Your life and your quest end here in the plague hall of Mogaruith.

## 43

Even though your bow and quiver are covered by your druid's robe, you retrieve them and are ready to fire at the fleeing Vazhag before either has taken a dozen paces. In lightning succession you draw and fire two arrows, sending the shafts thudding into the backs of the two rat-men with unerring accuracy. Simultaneously they crash to the ground and lie still.

Your swift dispatching of the Vazhag has gone undetected and, anxious that it remains so, you rush forward to drag their bodies away into the undergrowth. Within minutes the task is complete.

Unfortunately, you still have to find a way of entering Mogaruith. Yet, as you return to the trail, you are struck by a bold idea. Calmly you approach the zombie, who has remained stationary throughout the incident, and stoop to retrieve the poor creature's chain. Then, with pounding heart you turn and slowly walk along the trail towards the crowded drawbridge.

Turn to **12**.

## 44

You call upon your mastery to weave a multi-layered fabric which absorbs the Cener's psychic probe. It protects your mind, but in so doing the evil druid senses resistance where there should be none and his suspicions are confirmed. You have been detected!

Turn to **159**.

## 45

With an angry roar, the huge creature springs

forward with its taloned paws outstretched. You retreat, drawing a hand weapon with which to fight this ravenous beast.

Pit Agarashi:
COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 38

This creature is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge; only Kai-surge can harm it psychically.

If you win the combat, turn to **110**.

## 46

The sensation of falling accelerates until you are consumed completely by this spinning vortex. You have been drawn through a portal which leads to a terrible place, a realm where the power of Good holds no sway. You have been ensnared by the soul of Naar himself, the King of the Darkness, and as his prisoner you will remain, doomed to wander his dark domain for all eternity.

Tragically, your quest ends here.

## 47

The pain in your legs increases as the creature's venomous barbs release their poison. You draw on your natural Magnakai abilities to neutralize the venom, but even as the anti-toxins begin their work, you are being dragged deeper and deeper into the muddy pool.

Plaghatar:
COMBAT SKILL 35 ENDURANCE 30

This creature is immune to all psychic attacks. If the weapon you are using is non-edged (eg, a Mace, a Quarterstaff, or a Warhammer), deduct 4 points

from your COMBAT SKILL for the duration of this combat.

If you win the combat, turn to **129**.

## 48

You scan the walls of this reading room and as your eye passes over the books and scrolls stored upon its shelves, you feel an almost uncontrollable urge to tear every one of them to pieces. The wickedness they contain, gleaned after thousands of years of perpetrating the vilest herbcraft known to Magnamund, is so potent that you feel your Kai strength waning in their presence (lose 2 ENDURANCE points).

Mindful of the insidious effect of these books you search as quickly as you can. On one of the lower shelves you notice an ornately carved wooden box, banded with gold and inlaid with precious gemstones. You carry it to the main table where the light is brightest and, as you place it there, you hear a riddle emanating from a design engraved on its lid. It speaks in the Cenerese tongue but you instantly recognize the words:

'My treasure is hidden from view
But I'll open myself for you,
If you ponder this puzzle then state
The right answer to determine my fate.
Divide 80 by one half,
Then examine what you see.
From this number take 14,
What remains will open me.

Your Kai senses tells you that by solving the riddle, then speaking the answer aloud, you will cause the lid of the box to open.

When you think you have solved this riddle, turn to the page number which is the same as your answer.

If you cannot answer the riddle, or if your answer does not lead to the page number which opens the box, turn instead to **311**.

## 49

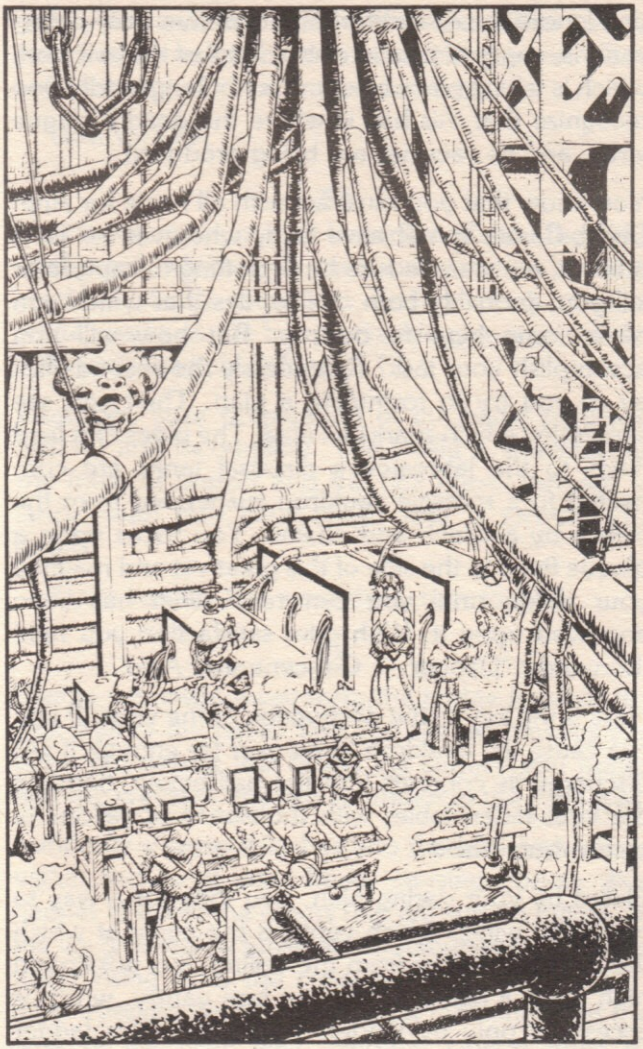
Your powerful senses detect the tang of fresh water on the air that is wafting gently towards you from out of the east tunnel. The source is distant, more than a mile away at least.

If you wish to investigate the east tunnel, turn to **118**.

If you would rather explore the west tunnel, turn to **189**.

## 50 — *Illustration III*

Through the wide opening in the chamber wall there is a gallery which overlooks a vast windowless hall. You approach the gallery's railed parapet and stare down at a score of druids who are working at tiled tables positioned in rows across the floor. Upon some tables rest porcelain troughs filled with oily fluids which seeth beneath a constant shower of electrical sparks. Other tables support dozens of glass boxes of differing sizes. The smallest contain rats; the largest contain horses. Hundreds of pipes and tubes run around the walls, feeding a supply of fluids and gasses to the experiment tables. The fumes rising from this diabolical laboratory sting your eyes, but



III. You approach the gallery's veiled parapet and stare down at a score of druids working at tiled tables.

you ignore the discomfort and continue your observations, eager to take in every detail of the evil work which is taking place below. It is not long before you recognize that this hall is where the deadly plague virus, and its vaccine, are being produced.

You know that you must act with all haste for Arch Druid Cadak is still alive and, wherever he is at present, you can be sure he is plotting to capture or kill you, probably both. Below lies that which you have come here to destroy. But how will you accomplish your task? Relentlessly the seconds tick by as you try to formulate a plan. Then you see something which sparks an idea. The pipes that feed fluids to the laboratory's disposal tanks are connected to a massive cauldron suspended from the ceiling by a winch and chains. You focus upon a plaque fixed to the side of this great vat and magnify your vision until you can read what has been engraved upon it. With grim satisfaction you read the words: 'Danger – Concentrated Acid'.

Here is the key to the destruction of the virus. If you can cause the cauldron to tilt over far enough it will discharge its contents into the hall below, flooding the virus-laden tables with thousands of gallons of concentrated acid.

Elated by your daring plan, you look for a way to reach the winch which controls the angle at which the cauldron hangs from the ceiling. It is positioned high upon a platform atop an iron gantry, which is accessible only by ladder. Fortunately this ladder begins on the far side of the gallery.

Confident in your purpose you hurry around the

gallery towards the ladder. You are within twenty paces when suddenly the harsh clang of an alarm bell fills the hall. You have been seen.

Turn to **177**.

## 51

You focus upon your left forearm and utter the Elder spell-word which calls into existence an invisible shield. Instantly there is a sizzling splash of blue-white sparks as the bolt of crackling energy collides with your magical defence.

However, your preparation of the battle spell was hurried and incomplete. The shield is shattered by the force of impact and the bolt bursts through to lance deep into your chest: lose 6 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this wounding, turn to **135**.

## 52

Swiftly you swim away from the bridge towards the east wall of the cave. You can see no obvious exit here, but twenty feet below the surface you notice that the crevasse appears to undercut the cave wall.

Suddenly a spear splashes into the lake and passes within inches of your head, causing you to dive deeper to avoid the others that are sure to follow. In the icy gloom you sense an undercurrent of warmer water rising from the crevasse. Also, your super-keen eyesight detects a pale light radiating from the base of the cave wall. Another cavern must lie beyond this one, but you have no way of knowing for sure just how far away that cave might be.

**53**

Mustering your Kai courage, you swim down towards the crevasse and propel yourself along an oval-shaped tunnel below the east cave wall. In the distance you see the pale glow and you strike out towards it, thankful that at least this watery passage does not harbour hostile creatures.

After four long minutes of strenuous swimming, you begin to suffer pains in your chest due to lack of oxygen.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*, and add 1 to the number you have picked. This total is equal to the number of ENDURANCE points you lose due to oxygen starvation.

Adjust your ENDURANCE points total accordingly and then turn to **246**.

**53**

The Cener curses you with his dying breath, his hooked hands outstretched before him as slowly he sinks to the ground. For a moment his body lies shivering at your feet, then it stiffens and is finally still.

Curiosity prompts you to prise away his green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search the body and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the gold rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 54

The Cener cackles with glee as he advances towards you, eager to finish you off. Dazed but determined to survive, you stagger to your feet in time to parry his first blow. Sparks explode as your weapon connects with his rod and a numbing jolt runs the length of your arm. Again you are forced back, but you manage to recover quickly and, with a defiant cry, you launch yourself upon him in a determined fight to the death.

Brother Croumah (with Power Rod):
COMBAT SKILL 40 ENDURANCE 30

If you win this combat, turn to **101**.

## 55

With deceptive ease you reach forward and pluck the spinning blade from the air when it is barely inches in front of your chest. The Vazhag looks at

you aghast, frozen momentarily by the shock of what it has witnessed, but it is galvanized into action upon the instant you send the blade spinning back across the chamber, aimed at its head.

The knife misses the creature's head by a finger's length, strikes the chamber wall, and rebounds with a metallic clang. It falls at the Vazhag's feet and is snatched up in its defence as you advance swiftly upon the creature, weapon in hand.

Fat Vazhag:
COMBAT SKILL 18 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **121**.

**56**

Instantly your senses tell you that what you are fighting is a living creature and not a plant! The creeper-like tendrils are part of its natural camouflage, and as it coils them around your limbs and neck in an attempt to squeeze the life from your body, you can feel its animal strength.

Forewarned, you resist this attack just long enough to raise your weapon and strike a mighty blow which tears away a great swath of the creature's wriggling limbs. A fountain of ichor erupts from every severed end and, from somewhere above the canopy of branches, you hear an unearthly roar of pain. Once more the remaining tendrils seek you out, but this time they are no longer soft and fibrous, but stiff and studded with barbed thorns.

The swirling mass strikes out for your throat. Desperately you hack at them with devastating effect, yet one of the limbs avoids your blows and

wraps itself tightly about your neck. Pain fills your head and chest as its razor-sharp thorns bite deeply into your flesh and inject a powerful acid.

Stragnah:
COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 39

This creature is immune to all psychic attacks.

If you win this combat, turn to **327**.

**57** – *Illustration IV (overleaf)*

The corridor makes a gradual descent towards a single wooden door shod with heavy iron fittings. You press the handle carefully and, to your surprise, the door opens inwards without a sound. You enter and push the door closed before beginning your exploration of this archive.

The library contains thousands of books and time-yellowed parchments, stacked in uneven rows upon shelves that line every wall. The air is heavy with their odour and your senses prickle with the sensation that you are in the presence of works of great evil. Silently you pass from one chamber to the next until you spy two druids seated at a table in an adjoining room. They are studying a large tome which is bound in a pale-coloured leather. A wave of nausea makes you swallow hard the instant you realize that the book is covered with human skin. The two druids, who appear to be little older than a dozen years apiece, are chattering to each other excitedly. You move closer to the room and eavesdrop on their conversation.

After a few minutes you learn that their names are Noraa and Monad. They are novices who were



IV. In the library you spy two druids seated at a table studying a large tome covered with human skin.

brought into the sect by Cenerese agents after having been orphaned in their native land of Lourden. They seem devoted to studying the lore of their evil brotherhood, and as they read they ruminate at length about a great 'day of retribution' that the Cenerese will enjoy before the year ends.

At length they finish their studies and rise from the table. As Monad restores the book to its shelf, Noraa says:

'Hurry up. We'll be late for Kadrian's sermon.'

Monad nods apologetically, and hurries to join his brother as he leaves the library by another door. As the latch clicks shut, you emerge from your listening place and enter the room.

If you wish to follow the two young druids, turn to **138**.

If you choose to search this room, turn to **48**.

## 58

At once you recognize the black berries contained within the stoppered glass jar. They are Volko Berries, found only in the remote uplands of Kakush, and much prized by magicians for their use as catalysts in their magical experiments. The juice of the berries aids or speeds up magical reactions between substances, while remaining unchanged itself.

Your knowledge of Kai-alchemy, as taught to you by Guildmaster Banedon, is at best rudimentary. However, you are in no doubt that these berries are valuable, and they may even be of practical help to you during your quest.

**59**

If you choose to keep this jar of Black Berries, record them on your *Action Chart* as a Backpack item.

To continue, turn to **306**.

**59**

Effortlessly you sidestep and dodge your way through the throng of rat-men, who are gathered about the wagon in a frenzy of activity, and escape into the empty passage which lies beyond the iron portal. A few minutes later, as you are exploring this new tunnel, you hear the great door close with a rumbling boom.

The passage continues eastwards for several miles and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, it is virtually deserted. At length you arrive at the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track that disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Directly above the archway, you notice a thin ray of sunlight streaming through a window-like hole in the rock. Sorely aware that the main entrance is so heavily guarded that it will be very difficult, even for someone as gifted as yourself, to escape that way undetected, you resolve instead to escape by means of the smaller opening in the rock wall.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *5* or less, turn to **192**.
If it is *6* or more, turn to **346**.

## 60

The Cener's dying scream alerts the Vazhag pack and they come scampering back to investigate the sound. The moment they see you, standing over their leader like a hunter over his kill, their nerve appears to crumble. They lower their weapons and begin to edge away. Then the leading rat-men panic; they turn and run, and the others quickly follow suit, leaving you alone in the clearing with the body of the dead druid lying crumpled at your feet.

Curiosity prompts you to prise away the druid's green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hands, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 61

You raise the Sommerswerd and catch the magical fire upon the flat of its blade. There is a deafening crack and you feel an electrifying jolt run the length of your sword arm as the flame is deflected and set roaring back towards its caster. He regards the rebounding fireball with a look of cool indifference and proceeds to sheathe himself in a glowing cocoon of pale blue light. The flames split apart as they collide with this protective shell, flowing harmlessly around his body to disappear into the antechamber beyond.

'There is only one who wields such a blade,' he spits, pointing at the Sommerswerd with his flame-tipped staff.

'And I'll see that you perish upon it, Cadak!' you shout in defiant reply.

'Ha!' he sneers, 'I rejoice that fate has brought you here to me, Lone Wolf, for it is you who will perish. Turn around and meet your nemesis!'

Turn to **125**.

## 62

You wait at the corner, relying upon your keen senses for your cue to attack. When you judge the footfalls and the rasping breaths of the Vazhag to be

within an oar's length of the corner, you leap out and confront them, striking at the leading rat-man with your weapon. The beast's rib-cage cracks under the blow, and its four companions freeze with shock as its body collapses dead at their feet. Before they snap out of their trauma, you cut your way through their ranks and escape along the passageway.

The tunnel continues eastwards for several miles and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, whom you deal with swiftly, it is virtually deserted. At length you arrive at the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track that disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Your sudden appearance galvanizes the guards into action. They squeal attack commands at their brutish dogs and let loose their straining leashes. With a fearful howling, the war-dogs bound forward and together they leap for your throat.

If you possess the Discipline of Animal Mastery, turn to **209**.

If you do not, turn to **100**.

## 63

The fearsome Dholdaarg retreats before your blows, half-mad with the pain of its wounds, its eyes rolling and its fanged jaws clashing on empty air. Desperately you draw upon your Psychic Magnakai

skills to repel this injured lake-beast, hoping to buy the few precious seconds you need in which to climb to the top of the raised drawbridge and escape.

The beast tries to resist your mental commands but it cannot overcome them. Its natural instinct for food and revenge urge it to lunge at your flailing legs, yet the stinging agony of its wounds, and your potent psychic commands, make the creature hesitate.

With your heart racing and the blood pounding in your ears, you drag yourself over the top of the drawbridge and leap down upon the platform. The cave echoes with the beast's unearthly roar as it beats its scaly head against the underside of the bridge in frustration. Timbers sag and splinter, prompting you to stagger to your feet and enter the tunnel beyond before it is too late.

During your fight, and in your haste to flee the lake monster, you lose two items from your Backpack. Erase those items which you have listed third and fourth on your list of Backpack Items.

To continue, turn to **306**.

**64**

The body of the plague hound crashes to the floor and you see the warrior freeze with shock. Hesitantly he reaches to his sword, but before he can unsheathe it, you leap forward and fell him with a single thrust that pierces his armour and skewers his heart.

Standing over his still body you use the tip of your weapon to prise open the visor of his iron helm. You reveal the brutal features of a Drakkar. He had survived the downfall of the Darklords and had

counted himself fortunate to have found refuge here in Mogaruith. Sadly for him he had not reckoned on ever crossing your path.

You conceal the bodies of the Drakkar and his hound as best you can before pulling the portal closed and continuing your exploration of Mogaruith.

Turn to **205**.



**65**

Your Magnakai defences are too weak to resist the wave of psychic energy directed against your mind. It tears through your shields and explodes like a fiery ball of white hot plasma deep within your brain. Every nerve in your body is scorched by the blast and, as you fight to remain conscious, your body is

contorted by excruciating pain: lose 12 ENDURANCE points.

As the agony fades and your powers of cohesive thought return, you are dimly aware of another hostile entity drawing closer, attracted by your psychic screams. Then, from out of the black shadows of the pits, you hear a dreadful, rumbling roar. Something huge is stirring deep within each of those dark forbidding shafts. As the ghoulish laughter of the horde reaches its pitch, you turn to see three giant, misshapen cat-like heads rise up into the light, each perched atop a snaky body as thick as the trunk of a tree. They bare their fangs and shake off the tangle of human bones that cling to their stinking, corpse-green manes.

The sight of these unholy creatures makes you reel back in shock and utter a cry of disbelief. Your cry is lost among the barrage of screeching howls, yet the cat-things react as if they hear it and, together, they come oozing out from their dark, noisome lairs and glide slowly towards where you stand.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-surge, turn to **80**.
If you do not possess this skill, turn to **38**.

## 66

Your search of the dead Cener's robes uncovers the following items:

Potion of Alether (increase COMBAT SKILL by 2 points for duration of one fight only)
Enough food for 1 Meal
Dagger

If you wish to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

To leave this chamber and continue, turn to **214**.

## 67

Your advanced sixth senses alert you to danger. At the end of the tunnel you feel the presence of several creatures, some of which you know to be Vazhag. They are a noisy crowd although the sounds they are making are not particularly hostile. Their voices echo strongly, giving you the impression that the creatures are occupying a large and spacious location.

If you wish to spirit-walk in order to gather more information about what lies ahead, turn to **337**.

If you choose not to risk spirit-walking here in hostile tunnels, turn to **244**.

## 68

Using your Magnakai skill of Psi-surge, you focus your power at a Vazhag guard who is standing on top of the wagon, and release a stunning burst of psychic energy aimed at its brain. Immediately, the creature grasps its head between its paws and lets out an ear-splitting squeal of pain as your attack sears its nervous system. The sudden cry freezes the surrounding rat-men and, when the victim of your attack tumbles from the rear of the wagon, they surge forward, eager to find out what is wrong. In the ensuing confusion, you leave your hiding place and attempt to escape unseen through the portal.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Kai-screen, add 2 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now 4 or less, turn to **223**.
If it is 5 or more, turn to **331**.

## 69

Your weapon glances off the creature's head, opening a wound which kills it instantly. But the force of the impact is not enough to prevent its hand from reaching the button. As the creature topples lifelessly to the floor, you stare with mounting fear at the sight of the depressed alarm button.

Turn to **216**.

## 70

The Vazhag pushes his snout to within an inch of your face and says, to your surprise, that you can enter Mogaruith so long as you first register your arrival. He points to a door in the tower wall and requests you to enter it. 'There,' he says, 'is where you can make your registration.'

Immediately your Magnakai sense of Divination warns that the Vazhag is lying; nothing but a prison cell awaits you beyond that door.

If you wish to do as the Vazhag requests and enter the door, turn to **30**.
If you refuse to enter the door, turn to **162**.

## 71

You grit your teeth and fix your eyes on the observation platform as you wait for the chain to reach the end of its arc. Upon the instant the momentum stops, you release your grip and hurtle through the air towards the platform's rail. You have timed your

jump to perfection. You skim the rail and land on the metal floor, roll over to lessen the impact, then spring to your feet and run towards the inviting darkness of the doorway which services this platform.

Turn to **128**.

## 72

You struggle to extricate yourself from the bodies of the Vazhag you have slain. As you rise to the summit of the grisly heap, you glimpse the Cener druid scurrying towards the gap in the trees by which he, and his late minions, entered the clearing.

You know that he must not be allowed to escape. If he were to reach Mogaruith and raise the alarm, your mission, and probably your life, would soon be over.

If you possess a Bow and Arrows and wish to use them, turn to **176**.
If you possess mastery of Magi-Magic and wish to use it, turn to **334**.
If you possess Kai-alchemy and wish to use it, turn to **264**.
If you possess none of the above, or choose not to make use of them, turn to **237**.

## 73

Exterminus is no more than an arm's length from you when you manage to tear free of your thorny bonds. With cat-like grace you duck below the creature's outstretched hands and drive your weapon deep into its unprotected belly. It screams in agony and reels backwards to crash down upon the

table which stands beside Cadak's black chair. The awesome bulk of the creature's body crushes the table to matchwood and breaks open the crystal sphere that rested upon it. Immediately there is a loud boom and a tremendous rush of putrid air knocks you down. A funnel of darkness engulfs the body of Exterminus and, with stunning suddenness, there is silence. Both the creature and the shattered remnants of the sphere have vanished completely.

You stagger to your feet and turn to face the Arch Druid. The shock of what he has witnessed has left him open-mouthed and drained of colour. He is mumbling incoherently and trembling with fear. You take up your weapon and advance towards him, determined to rid Magnamund of this evil druid once and for all, but the sight of you drawing closer snaps him out of his trauma and galvanizes him into action. He weaves his hands before his face and, in an instant, he is shrouded in a cocoon of light. You strike out at the light but your weapon passes clean through it, meeting with no resistance. Then the light fades and you are left standing alone in the druid's empty throne room.

Turn to **259**.

## 74

You step away from the water's edge as the Vazhag comes thundering off the drawbridge and on to the platform. With the manic curses of their leader echoing in their ears, they leap to the muddy shore and charge straight at you, their rusty weapons glinting dully in the light of the cave.

Vazhag: COMBAT SKILL 26 ENDURANCE 30

If you win this combat, turn to **142**.

## 75

The stairs lead to another hall on a level fifty feet higher. Here, two staircases ascend to the left and right, and a gloomy tunnel disappears directly ahead of you. Your senses pick up something moving at the end of the tunnel and, when you focus your infravision along this dark passageway, you see another Vazhag patrol heading straight towards you. This one is being led by two Acolytes of Vashna and a pack of Ruel war-dogs.

Eager to evade these enemies, you glance at both staircases and try to decide which one to climb.

If you wish to ascend the left staircase, turn to **21**.
If you decide to ascend the right staircase, turn to **27**.

## 76

The sphere explodes on impact and you are engulfed by a cloud of sickly grey gas. At once you feel your throat tighten and your stomach churn as the deadly bacteria-infested vapour penetrates your lungs. But, within seconds, your powerful defences destroy this bacteria and you recover enough to be able to run towards the entrance, hidden by the billowing gas.

In the ensuing chaos, you escape through the entrance unchallenged. For a moment you are blinded by the early morning sunlight which illuminates the surrounding hills, but, as you stumble along the

trail which leads away from the caverns, your vision clears and you see a vast expanse of forest away to the east. This sea of sickly grey-green trees radiates an unmistakable aura of evil that immediately identifies it as the Forest of Ruel.

Your escape is not pursued and, after a few minutes, you stop among a cluster of boulders in order to catch your breath. The surrounding land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being the track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the unwelcoming forest. You consult your map and conclude that this is the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

**77**

A Cener Robe and Mask would provide you with a useful disguise as you explore the chambers of Mogaruith, a disguise that would undoubtedly raise your chances of success. With this in mind you take and put on what you need from the pegs.

Remember to record your choice on your *Action Chart*. A Cener Robe takes up two spaces in your Backpack; a Cener Mask takes one space. If you already carry the maximum number of Backpack items allowed, you must discard one item in favour of the Mask and/or Robe

To continue, turn to **158**.

## 78

Before you stretches a cavernous hall, lit by the glow from fire-filled orbs hanging by chains from the ceiling. Facing each other are two rows of stone statues which form a grotesque corridor leading to an archway on the far side. A flicker of fear chills your heart when you notice that the expressions frozen upon their misshapen faces are those of pain and despair.

Cautiously you advance. You are wary of the statues and your body is tensed to react should they show the slightest hint of animation. Then you detect something which makes you freeze in mid-step. Your Kai senses warn you that something is sleeping in a shadowy alcove close to the distant archway. Anxious not to disturb whatever is resting there, you call upon your camouflage skills to mask your presence before moving any nearer.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Grand Mastery of Assimilance, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is 5 or lower, turn to **186**.

If your score is 6 or higher, turn to **196**.

## 79

You follow the tunnel for many miles as it plunges deep into the bowels of the Skardos Mountains. At length you reach a wider, smooth-walled corridor, which bears recent tracks upon its dusty floor. Your infallible Magnakai skills of Pathsmanship reveal that this corridor leads due west, towards Mogaruith.

## 80

The numerous tracks tell you that this passage is frequently used. Judging by their size and depth, they have been made by large, rat-like creatures, but ones who walk upright, like humans. From what you have been told about the denizens of Ruel, you are sure that these are the tracks of Vazhag, warrior vermin bred by the Cenerese. Among them you note other tracks that are far from rat-like.

Cautiously, you follow the corridor and, despite your mounting fears, you encounter nothing more threatening than a nest of ragged-winged bats and an occasional rock snake, which slithers away at your approach. Gradually, the air becomes increasingly cooler and more humid. You can smell the strong scent of water somewhere in the distance and you are not at all surprised when, as you round a sharp bend, you see shimmering reflections playing upon the smooth stone ceiling ahead.

If you possess Telegnosis, turn to **67**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **244**.

## 80

In desperation you draw upon your reserves of psychic strength to shape a ball of energy, then you hurl it at the nearest abomination. It strikes its subconscious and the beast's eyes shut tight in pain as the force of your mind-strike bites deep into its unshielded cortex.

The attack is successful; the creature is wounded and it slithers back into the safety of its pit. Yet, despite seeing what has befallen their brother, the remaining two creatures continue to advance undaunted.

2 Ruel Giganite:
COMBAT SKILL 38 ENDURANCE 60

These creatures are susceptible to all forms of psychic attack. When their ENDURANCE points score has been reduced to 36 or less, you can elect to evade combat by turning to **13**.

If you win the combat, turn to **286**.

## 81

You draw your weapon and slide it between the pin and the body of the cauldron. You cannot break the thick iron pin but you may be able to lever it away from the chain.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. Now consult the list below and modify the number you have picked:

If you possess the Sommerswerd, add 4.
If you are using a Spear or a Broadsword add 2.
If you are using a Quarterstaff or a Dagger subtract 2.

If your total is now 4 or less, turn to **275**.
If it is 5 or more, turn to **248**.

## 82

You raise your hood and draw your Kai cloak close about your shoulders before pressing yourself flat against the dusty tunnel wall. The shadows and your camouflage skills mask you completely; it is as if you have suddenly vanished. When the two groups of Vazhag come together, close to where you are hiding, they immediately blame each other for having allowed you to escape. They argue loudly and a fight looks imminent until the timely arrival of

a Vazhag elder cools their flaring tempers. He orders them back to the lava-lit cavern, and you wait calmly for the grumbling rat-men to disperse before continuing eastwards, along a now-empty tunnel.

For nearly five miles you explore and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, the tunnel remains virtually deserted. At length you arrive at the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track that disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Directly above the archway, you notice a thin ray of sunlight streaming through a window-like hole in the rock. Sorely aware that the main entrance is so heavily guarded that it will be very difficult, even for someone as gifted as yourself, to escape that way undetected, you resolve instead to escape by means of the smaller opening in the rock wall.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *5* or less, turn to **192**.

If it is *6* or more, turn to **346**.

## 83

Breathless and bespattered with the blood of your slain foes, you step back from the bodies which lie heaped around your feet and sheathe your gore-stained weapon. The alarm bell continues to toll,

warning you that every living creature in Mogaruith is being summoned for the hunt.

Anxious to reach the surface as quickly as you can, you leap over the bodies and stride up the stairs. You are hungry and while you run you must eat a meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **75**.

**84**

Using your innate Magnakai skill of Invisibility, you take care to mask your body heat and scent lest they should stir the curiosity of any keen-nosed denizens of Ruel. Then, with caution guiding your every step, you advance through the knee-high grasses towards the fallen tree. As you approach, you focus your powers of divination and scan the surrounding darkness for invisible or hidden enemies. Sensing no immediate threat, you continue to the forest's edge where you are greeted by an unwholesome warmth. It rises out of a mulch of insects and fungi that are feasting upon the corpse of the tree. Silently you offer up a prayer to Ishir before venturing a step further into this inhospitable domain.

Beyond the dead tree you find a muddy track which is bordered on both sides by the tall trunks and thorny briars of the forest. So dense is this tangle of trees and brush that it is impossible to leave the track. You feel as if you are walking along an endless passage, one so unnatural that its construction could only be the result of evil herbcraft.

At length the track widens and the trees begin to thin

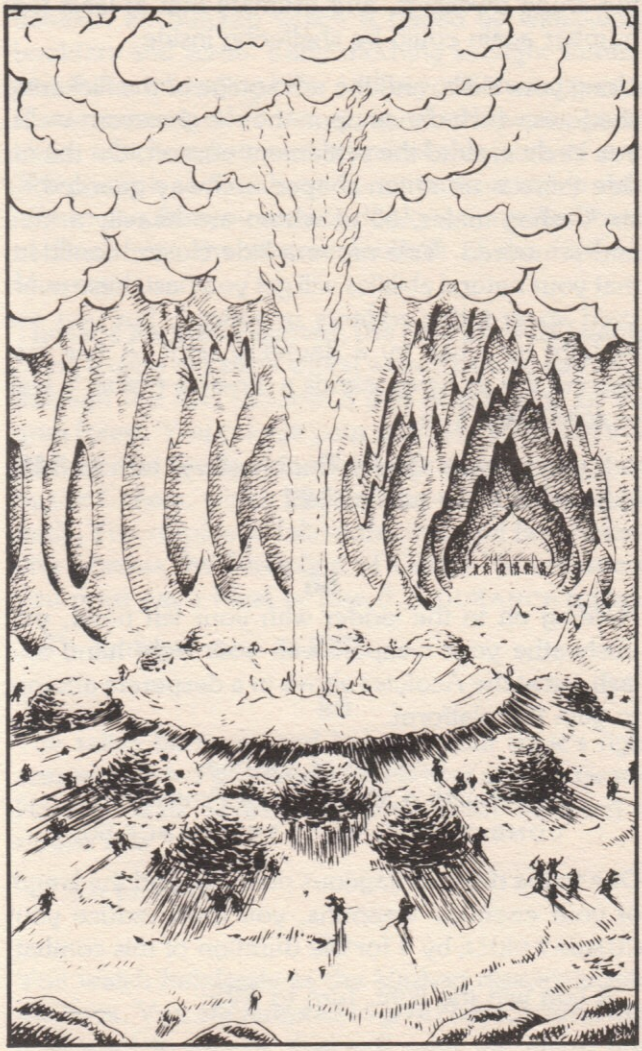
out. Ahead you see a clearing and at once your senses tingle: it is a warning that you are not alone. Instinctively you reach for your weapon and, as your hand closes upon it, you see that the floor of the clearing is alive with a carpet of loathsome scuttling creatures. At once you attempt to use your Magnakai powers of animal control, to determine if these creature are hostile, but your efforts go unrewarded.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **7**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **171**.

**85** – *Illustration V*

There is a slight gradient to the tunnel and, gradually, as the stone floor ascends, you feel a draught of warm air wafting gently in your face. It feels comfortable and yet it is far from welcoming for the air is sticky and humid, as if the breath of some great jungle beast was being exhaled along the passageway.

In the distance you hear a fire-like roar, and another sound – squeaking – which forewarns you that Vazhag lie ahead. You advance, masked by your Magnakai skills, and step forth into a massive chamber which is lit by the fierce light of volcanic fire. From a crater-like pit at the chamber's centre, a jet of red-gold flame roars up to a towering height, and clouds of steam fill the cavernous roof space where it plays upon a ceiling of damp rock. Around the pit are constructed several small, domed huts, all made of volcanic clinker scavenged from the crater's edge. The huts house a colony of Vazhag; you count more than fifty females and their young scurrying around



V. From a pit at the centre of a massive chamber, a jet of red-gold flame roars up to a towering height.

the crude dwellings, and estimate that at least that number again could be sheltering inside.

Using your skills, and the advantage of the flickering shadows which dance upon the rough cavern walls, you circle around the settlement unseen. On the far side there is an onion-shaped archway guarded by six Vazhag males, all of whom are heavily armed and armoured. You move a little closer, confident that your natural abilities will get you past these over-sized spear-toting rodents unnoticed, but you are brought to a halt by a daunting sight. A few feet beyond the archway stands a massive portal, a wall of solid black iron.

If you possess Grand Huntmastery, turn to **342**. If you do not, turn to **127**.

## 86

Holding on to the ladder with your left hand, you unsheathe your weapon with your right hand and lash out at the Acolytes above in a desperate attempt to gain the platform.

Acolytes of Vashna:
*(One with a Medallion of Protection)*
COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 50

Due to the disadvantageous position, and the length of your enemies' weapons, you must reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 4 for the duration of this combat.

If you win the fight, turn to **305**.

## 87

You emerge on a mountainside, at a place hidden

beneath an outcrop which is ringed by wind-worn boulders and scrub. Early morning sunlight illuminates the surrounding hills, and beyond them you see a vast expanse of forest, a sea of sickly grey-green trees, which radiates an unmistakable aura of evil. The position of the sun and your pathsmanship skills inform you that you are now looking upon the Forest of Ruel from the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.

The land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being a wide dirt track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the grim forest. You consult your map and conclude that this must be the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners, which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 88

The saliva burns several holes in your tunic's right arm and back. Fortunately, the power of your Grand Mastery skills saves your body from suffering a similar fate.

Turn to **117**.

## 89

You watch helplessly as the Vazhag disappear into the trees. You are tempted to give chase, fearful that if allowed to escape they will raise the alarm and bring all of Mogaruith down upon you. But the Vazhag are creatures of this forest and tracking two

of them, even for a hunter as gifted as yourself, would be no easy task.

You decide instead to let them go and use the zombie in an attempt to gain entry to Mogaruith. You stoop to retrieve the poor creature's chain and, with pounding heart, walk slowly along the trail towards the crowded drawbridge.

Turn to **12**.

## 90

Mustering all your courage, you abandon your hiding place and rush to attack the Cener. Instantly he spins to face you and screams at his Vazhag to defend him. With a foul, snickering cry the Vazhag race to do their master's bidding and, before you can reach the druid, they leap upon you, hacking and stabbing with their rusty blades.

Vazhag pack:
COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 44

If you win this combat, turn to **149**.

## 91

You focus your gaze upon the creature's eye and will it, with all of your power, to fall asleep. Slowly its lid begins to lower but it does not close completely. The creature is fighting your psychic suggestion and you can sense its resistance is fierce.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Mastery of Kai-surge, add 3 to the number you have chosen. If your current ENDURANCE points score is 20 or higher, add a further 2 to your score.

If your total score is now 7 or less, turn to **281**. If it is 8 or more, turn to **184**.

## 92

Determined not to be defeated by a closed door, you kneel down in front of the keyhole and attempt to pick the lock. It takes you just a few seconds to defeat it, but upon the very instant you do so, the spell which shields the mechanism discharges a powerful bolt of energy.

The bolt runs along the length of your arm and explodes in your head with a blinding flash – lose 5 ENDURANCE points. Your psychic defences lessen the damage you sustain, damage that would have killed a lesser man, but the unexpected shock still causes you to scream involuntarily.

The door is no longer locked and you hurry through it, keen to make up for lost time. However, your scream did not go unheard and as you rush into the hall which lies beyond the door, you are confronted by a creature freshly awoken by your cry of pain.

Turn to **120**.

## 93

Slowly you recover from the trauma and pull yourself to your feet. Ahead, the track crosses the plateau and passes within a few yards of the pits before continuing into a tunnel-like gap in the trees beyond. You advance, but every step that brings you nearer to the site causes your psychic senses to rebel. The images you saw, and the aura of evil that lingers here, are so strong that you find it difficult to

step closer. You resolve to reach the gap at a run but a sudden noise from behind arrests you in mid-step.

Shambling out of the forest come a horde of monstrous shapes, corpse-like beings that exist in a twilight between life and death. Perched atop their withered bodies are hairless heads bearing lidless, red eyes and gaping maws, rimmed with hundreds of needle-thin fangs. As one they utter a deathly groan and you feel an icy chill electrify your spine.

Fighting to suppress your mounting horror, you turn and run towards the gap. You are within a few yards of the rocky spur when a dozen or more of these fearful creatures appear from the shadows to block your escape. Once more they utter their cadaverous cry and advance upon you from both sides.

Desperately you survey the plateau for another means of escape, but there is none: you are trapped. The only choice you have is to face the creatures or retreat towards the pits.

If you wish to fight these creatures, turn to **163**.
If you choose to retreat towards the pits, turn to **148**.

## 94

After observing the tunnel for several minutes, you sense that there are no Vazhag in the immediate area and decide it is safe to enter. Silently you drop down into the passageway and head off towards the north, using the shadows and your Kai skills to shield yourself as you advance.

Turn to **85**.

## 95

You follow this dark passage for several minutes before arriving at what appears to be a dead end. You are about to turn around and retrace your steps when suddenly your senses alert you to an ornately carved brick in the facing wall. On closer examination you discover a keyhole, and a Cenerese engraving which bears the seal of Arch Druid Cadak.

If you possess a Map of Mogaruith, turn to **341**.
If you possess a Gold Key, turn to **234**.
If you have neither of these Special Items, turn to **179**.

## 96

You land with a thick splash in the muddy shallows at the water's edge and, seconds later, a voice echoes from the far side of the lake. It is the rasping voice of a Cener druid, commanding his Vazhag minions to rush forward and prevent you from escaping. You hear clawed feet scrabbling on the bridge timbers, then you catch sight of four of these vile rat-men as they come racing across the bridge, with swords and spears clasped in their hairy paws.

If you possess a Bow and at least one Arrow, turn to **225**.

If you do not, turn to **74**.

## 97

The power of your Grand Pathsmanship repels the insidious vines and sends them snaking towards Exterminus. Rapidly they weave themselves around his muscular frame, pinning his arms and tripping his feet, despite his futile attempts to break free. The

demonic creature screams in frustration and topples forward to crash face first upon the table which stands beside Cadak's black chair. The awesome bulk of the creature's body crushes the table to matchwood and breaks open the crystal sphere that rested upon it. Immediately there is a loud boom and a tremendous rush of putrid air knocks you down. A funnel of darkness engulfs Exterminus and, with stunning suddenness, there is silence. Both the creature and the shattered remnants of the sphere have vanished completely.

You turn to face the Arch Druid. The shock of what he has witnessed has left him open-mouthed and drained of colour. He is mumbling incoherently and trembling with fear. You take up your weapon and advance towards him, determined to rid Magnamund of this evil druid once and for all, but the sight of you drawing closer snaps him out of his trauma and galvanizes him into action. He weaves his staff before his face and, in an instant, he is shrouded in a cocoon of light. You strike out at the light but your weapon passes clean through it, meeting with no resistance. Then the light fades and you are left standing alone in the druid's empty throne room.

Turn to **259**.

## 98

From the darkened doorway you watch the activity taking place in the keep, hoping to see something that will help you locate where in Mogaruith the Cenerese are producing their deadly plague viruses.

From out of the milling crowds of Vazhag there suddenly appears a small group of red-robed Cener druids. They are talking to each other as they walk towards your hiding place.

Quickly you pull away from the open doorway and retreat deeper into the building. A narrow corridor takes you to a flight of steps which descends to where a passage crosses your path. An ornately painted sign, written in Cenerese, indicates what may be found at the end of each passage.



Your Magnakai skills enable you to read this sign. The arrow pointing to the left reads 'Library'; the arrow pointing to the right reads 'Laboratory'.

If you wish to go left towards the Library, turn to **57**.

If you choose to go right and head towards the Laboratory, turn to **285**.

## 99

Your arrow clips the druid's arm but it fails to stop him from making his hasty escape along the forest

track. Cursing your ill luck, you run across the clearing and give chase.

You have been on his trail for less than a mile when you sense danger ahead. The druid has managed to reach another patrolling pack of Vazhag, much larger than his own escort, this one led by six of the druid's brethren. He informs them of your presence and, using their corrupted form of herbcraft, they cause the undergrowth to close in upon you and hold you prisoner. Marshalling all your skills, you manage to cut your way free of its grip, but not before the druids have mustered reinforcements from Mogaruith.

They attack you mercilessly with the full might of their evil craft. Courageously, you defy them, but their combined power is far greater than even a Grand Master can withstand. With the name of your gods and your country on your lips, you finally meet your doom here in the Forest of Ruel.

**100**

With chilling ferocity, the war-dogs throw themselves at you, their slavering fang-filled jaws stretched wide in readiness to clamp upon your flesh. Coolly you unsheathe your weapon and brace yourself to meet their attack, for it is too late to evade these sadistic, slavering hounds.

Ruel War-dogs:
COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 22

If you win and the combat takes 5 rounds or less, turn to **254**.
If the combat takes 6 rounds or more, turn to **37**.

## 101

Still trembling from the shock of your encounter, you stare at the dead Cener's body as you struggle to catch your breath.

If you wish to search his body, turn to **66**.

If you decide to hurry away from this evil chamber, turn to **214**.

## 102

You insert the key and twist it. The lock opens with a satisfying 'clunk', allowing you to open the door and enter a strange and eerie hall.

Turn to **78**.

## 103

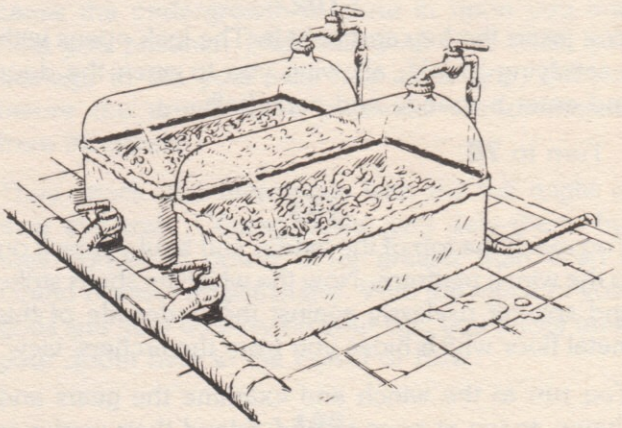
You reach the top of the ladder and haul yourself on to the winch platform. Now the whistling shafts strike and splinter uselessly against the underside of this metal floor which hides you from the archers' view.

You run to the winch and examine the gears and chains, trying at once to understand their workings and find a way to cause the cauldron to discharge its corrosive contents into the hall below. But the device is designed to prevent the chance of this occurring. The only way you can make the cauldron spill its deadly load is by severing a thick metal pin which secures the heavy chain to its rim.

Anxiously you glance over the edge of the platform at the confusion raging in the hall below. Three druids, having recognized your intentions, are trying desperately to gather together virus samples from their cultivation vats. The vats are fixed to the tables,

triple-sealed with protective glass to prevent accidental leaks, and it is precisely this elaborate protection which now confounds the druids' frantic efforts to save their plague cultures.

Out of the corner of your eye you notice that the first of the Vazhag archers is now climbing the ladder to the winch platform, and you know you must act swiftly and effectively if you are to fulfil your quest.



If you possess Grand Mastery of Nexus, and wish to use it, turn to **226**.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **307**.

If you possess neither of these Grand Master Disciplines, or choose not to use them, turn to **81**.

## 104

You unshoulder your bow and draw an arrow from your quiver. Then, with smooth precision, you take aim at the fleeing druid's back. The instant you fix

upon his billowing scarlet robes, you release the bowstring and send your shaft speeding towards the nape of his neck.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Weaponmastery (with Bow), add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is *0–5*, turn to **167**.

If it is *6* or higher, turn to **235**.

## 105

The heavy chain whips towards your face but your reactions are lightning fast. You pull yourself away and it misses you by inches. Then you move forward to the platform's edge to watch, with grim fascination, as the gigantic acid-filled cauldron plummets into the hall below.

Turn to **220**.

## 106

It takes you half an hour to reach the foot of the staircase. There awaits a dank cavern, its uneven floor littered with the bones of creatures who fell from the stairs or were consumed by the spectral being which once commanded this vault. Steeling yourself against the unwelcoming gloom, you advance along an oval, white-walled passageway of mineral rock and emerge in another chamber which is filled by a deep pool of crystal-clear water.

At first it appears to be a dead end, then you notice a faint light reflecting upon the surface of the water and you look up to see a hollow directly above. It is a natural chimney which rises into the ceiling, and at its end you see a warm, yellow, lantern-like glow.

The chimney is rough and pitted, and to someone of your experience it is as easy to climb as a wide-stepped ladder.

Within ten minutes you reach the neck of the chimney and find youself staring through a hole at the floor of a passageway beyond. The source of the light comes from several oil lamps which hang at regular intervals from the roof of this narrow tunnel. You can sense the presence of Vazhag somewhere in the vicinity, and so you choose to wait here in case a patrol is about to pass this way.

During your wait, unless you possess Grand Huntmastery, you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **94**.

## 107

The strength of your psychic defences is such that you can easily withstand the pulse of energy that the druid has launched against you. His attack fragments and fades, leaving him sorely weakened by his desperate effort to thwart your advance.

With a cry of despair, he draws a dagger from inside his robes and prepares to fight you to the death.

Cener Druid:
COMBAT SKILL 20 ENDURANCE 26

If you win the combat, turn to **4**.

## 108

You begin your bogus report and the creature dutifully copies down your words, but what you are

saying soon heightens its suspicions that you are an imposter. Then you notice its free hand gliding slowly towards a button which protrudes from the side of its desk. It is an alarm button.

Before you can prevent it, the creature depresses the button.

Turn to **11**.

## 109

As the two figures turn from the table, you recognize the red robes they are wearing. At first you assumed them to be Cener druids, but their garments are not the same. They have black hoods, and the skull-like motifs which are embroidered upon them identify these two to be members of an evil sect known as the Acolytes of Vashna.

The presence here of two worshippers of Vashna, who was once the greatest of all the Darklords, rekindles chilling memories of past encounters with these fanatics. Following the downfall of the Darklords you had assumed that the last remnants of the sect had vanished forever, yet here before you are two who still wear their robes and practise their vile necromantic art.

Fearful that you have stumbled upon a secret Cenerese conspiracy, you inch your way closer to the robed men to listen to their whispered conversation.

Turn to **247**.

## 110

Your death blow sends the pit agarashi sprawling limply to the chamber floor, but its loathsome body

has barely settled amongst the junk when you glimpse the Vazhag hurl something from the corner of the room. A glint of light on razor-sharp steel reveals the curvy-bladed knife which is now spinning end-over-end towards your chest.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship *and* Grand Nexus, turn to **55**.

If you do not possess *both* of these Grand Master Disciplines, turn to **174**.

**111**

You focus upon the three distant pits and allow your consciousness to pass into the trance-like state that must be achieved to allow your Discipline to work. A tingling sensation runs along your limbs and gradually an image takes form in your mind.

From out of a swirling mist there comes into focus a moving scene that is terrible to behold. A vast procession of partially-clad soldiers are being herded into the pits by packs of blood-hungry Vazhag. They are bound with ropes and many are grievously wounded. They plead for mercy but their pitiful cries go unheeded as the snarling, savage rat-men stab them to death with their cruelly-fashioned spears before casting them down into the three yawning abysses.

Gradually the image fades and, as you return to consciousness, you discover that you are lying face down upon the ground. Your limbs shake uncontrollably and your forehead and chest are bathed in a cold sweat. You have tapped into the powerful residue of psychic force that pervades this

site and the experience has left you in a state of psychic shock: lose 6 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **93**.

## 112

Hanging by your fingertips on to the underside of the descending drawbridge, you are slowly lowered into the icy cold waters of the lake. The bridge stops with a jolt, leaving you dangling waist-deep in the water and feeling all-too-vulnerably like a piece of Dholdaarg bait.

You hear the rasp of clawed feet scurrying across the bridge and a voice, unmistakably Cenerese, echoes from the opposite side of the cave. Despite the pain in your fingers and forearms, you remain absolutely motionless as the rat-like Vazhag cross the bridge and descend to the muddy shore. One or two remain on the bridge directly above you, and you can see them through the cracks in the timbers. They are squeaking and pointing at the oily green pools of blood that stain the surface of the lake.

Drawn by their comrades' squeaking, you see two Vazhag leap from the platform and pad down towards the water's edge.

If you possess Assimilance, turn to **195**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **130**.

## 113

The Vazhag lancer tumbles lifelessly to the ground startling its horse which turns and bolts towards the forest. Instantly you act to prevent its escape by using

your Magnakai ability of Animal Control. Your powers soothe the creature and coax it to return.

Quickly you mount the steed and head off along the trail which leads to the River Storn. You are less than five miles from the bridge where you hope to finally make good your escape to the freeland of Slovia. By keeping to the forest's edge you avoid the traffic of Vazhag troops moving back and forth along the trail and, by the time you reach the banks of the mighty Storn, your spirits are high. Unfortunately, when you do catch your first sight of the bridge, your hopes of making a crossing here are soon dashed.

Turn to **182**.

## 114

The hound crashes to the ground, mortally wounded. But before you can even catch your breath, its master comes charging at you with his sword raised to hack you down.

You sidestep his first blow, gaining the few precious seconds you need in which to compose yourself for this second wave of combat.

Defender: COMBAT SKILL 30 ENDURANCE 30

If you win this fight, turn to **5**.

## 115

You pull the iron lever and at first nothing happens. Then you hear a click followed by the hiss of escaping air as the concealed door unlocks and glides open. Quickly you enter and close the door to avoid being seen by the Vazhag guards.

A narrow corridor lies beyond, lit by a gloomy

crimson light which is filtering through a threadbare curtain hung from hooks in the ceiling. Automatically you cast your eyes around, checking floor, walls, and roof for traps, but detect nothing unduly suspicious. Then you approach the curtain and through its moth-eaten fabric you spy a small bed chamber. A grossly overweight Vazhag, wrapped in furs, lies sprawled upon a divan in the centre of the room. He is snoring fitfully. Around him are strewn heaps of all manner of items: rusty weapons, tarnished armour, boxes and candlesticks, trinkets, baubles and books. In the merchant stores of Holmgard they would be rejected as worthless junk, but here, in the rat-holes of the Skardos Mountains, they no doubt pass for treasure.

Across the chamber, beyond the sleeping Vazhag, you see another curtained archway.

If you wish to enter the chamber and search through the items which litter the floor, turn to **319**.

If you choose to cross the chamber and investigate the curtained archway, turn to **238**.

If you decide to turn around and leave by the secret door, turn to **308**.

## 116

As you approach the sphere, its sparkling crystal core is darkened by a mist. Rapidly this smoky discoloration expands until it transcends the confines of the sphere and begins to take the shape of a swirling funnel which comes closer with every passing second. The moment that the edges of this sinister cone engulf your vision, you sense a dramatic change take place, as if you have suddenly crossed

over the boundary which separates consciousness from dreams.

A sensation of falling assails your senses and, with panic in your heart, you try desperately to extricate yourself from this terrifying cone of darkness.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

Now, consult the following list and modify your number where appropriate:

If you possess Kai-screen add 3.
If you possess Grand Nexus add 1.
If your current ENDURANCE score is 20 or higher add 1.
If your current ENDURANCE score is 19 or lower subtract 1.

If your total score is now *4* or less, turn to **46**.
If it is *5–7*, turn to **269**.
If it is *8* or higher, turn to **143**.

## 117

With the shrieks of the horde and the rasping growl of the Giganite echoing in your ears, you spring to your feet and run headlong into the mouth of the leafy tunnel. Your stamina and fleetness of foot keep you ahead of the ghouls until, two miles later, you sense that the danger has passed and it is safe enough for a few minutes' rest.

Once your pulse has settled, your fear of being followed prompts you to continue along the leafy passage without further delay. You progress in a near-darkness which is broken only by a few

scattered rays of grey light that creep through the ceiling above. At length the tunnel ends and you emerge into a clearing where stand the derelict remains of an ancient stone dwelling. You approach it warily, sensing the presence of magic, yet inside its shattered walls you find nothing but mould and clumps of sickly black grass. Then your skills of divination tingle afresh as the presentiment of sorcery increases. Suddenly you realize that the source of the magic is not here in this ruined hut: it is approaching the hut.

Through a crack in the stones you see a gap appear in the wall of trees opposite and a group of Vazhag enter the clearing, their ratty faces sniffing at the heavy, humid air. Among their number is one who is not of their breed. He is human in size and stature, though his hooded scarlet robes make it difficult to be sure. For a moment you catch a glimpse of the glassy green mask covering his face and at once you know that this being is a Cener druid. In his hand he carries a rod of gold that is radiating the aura of magic which you detected when first you entered the clearing.

The Cener calls his pack to a halt. They cease all movement and watch in quiet awe as he raises his golden rod and uses it to make a slow, deliberate sweep of the clearing. Hurriedly you draw on your Magnakai skills of Invisibility and Pathsmanship to shield you from detection as the Cener sweeps back the rod and levels it directly at the derelict hut.

Waves of psychic energy flow across your mind. Steadily they grow in intensity, probing and testing your defences to breaking point.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **44**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **298**.

## 118

The tunnel continues for more than a mile before it descends, by means of a steep staircase, to another passageway over one hundred feet below the first. Here the air is full of fine dust and you can hear small scratching sounds coming from inside the walls.

In the dark distance, you see clearly a score of crab-like creatures grouped in circles on the tunnel floor. Their shells are bone-white and you hazard a guess that these strange crustaceans have probably never been exposed to the sun. At your approach they scuttle up the walls with surprising speed and disappear into funnel-shaped holes that riddle the ceiling.

Confident that the crabs have taken fright and fled, you advance along the tunnel towards another staircase, the top of which you can just discern in the far distance. You are passing beneath the crab-holes when you hear a faint hissing noise and suddenly you feel droplets of sticky clear liquid spattering your head and shoulders. Then wisps of grey smoke arise from your cloak and you feel a searing pain, as if a fistful of red-hot needles were being stabbed repeatedly into your scalp. You are being attacked by a powerful organic acid and it is rapidly eating its way into your flesh!

If you possess Grand Nexus, turn to **249**.
If you do not possess this Grand Master Discipline, turn to **329**.

## 119

Stealthily you make your way towards the stairwell and descend the steps without being seen. The circular stairs spiral down more than fifty feet to a chamber directly below the hall, empty save for a line of red robes and masks which hang from pegs driven into the marble wall.

If you already possess Cener Robes *and* a Cener Mask, turn to **158**.

If you possess only one, or neither of these items, turn to **77**.

## 120 – *Illustration VI (overleaf)*

The creature's ghastly visage is the very stuff of nightmares. From its bear-like torso there protrude four tentacles and two powerful legs, all sheathed in shaggy scales. The limbs are surmounted with horny talons which glint menacingly in the gloom. Its head, set with huge fishy eyes, is bulbous and disfigured by disease. It rests awkwardly upon a crooked neck which wobbles with every movement the lumbering beast makes. A livid crimson gash just below the eyes serves as its mouth, and a long tail, ridged with sharp spines, swishes behind it.

With unexpected speed the beast is suddenly upon you, stabbing and slashing at your body with its sword-sharp talons.

Degradon: COMBAT SKILL 49 ENDURANCE 36

This creature is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge (but not Kai-surge).

If you win this combat, turn to **296**.



VI. You see a creature advancing towards you whose ghastly visage is the very stuff of nightmares.

## 121

As you step away from the dead Vazhag, you notice a tiny box-like device hanging from a chain around the pit agarashi's neck. At once your natural sixth sense informs you that the device is magical. It controlled the creature's instincts, enslaving it to the commands of the weaker Vazhag.

If you wish to take this Restrainer, record it as a Special Item on your *Action Chart*.

Anxious to leave, you lift the furs which cover the divan and see, protruding from the side, a small lever identical to the one that opened the secret door. You pull it and the door clicks open, enabling you to escape by the way you entered.

Turn to **308**.

## 122

The Vazhag inform you that they are returning from a place called the Temple of Dzenya. Brother Hoylez, the druid in charge of the temple, recently resurrected this human from the temple's grave-pits. They have been ordered to deliver it to Brother Croumah at the Hall of Sacrifice in Mogaruith.

'Excellent!' you reply, convincingly. 'I myself am on my way to seek council with Brother Croumah this very instant. You will escort me there. Now, lead on!'

The Vazhag appear to relax upon hearing your order, as if they had half-expected you to punish them, and they set off readily towards the drawbridge with you following close behind.

Turn to **233**.

## 123

You see the red-robed druid flick his wrist and from his golden rod there leaps a second charge. This lance of crackling fire spirals through the hole in the wall and comes arcing towards your face, like a ravenous vampire let loose upon a maiden's throat.

If you possess Kai-alchemy and wish to use it, turn to **215**.

If you possess Magi-Magic and wish to use it, turn to **51**.

If you have neither of these Grand Master Disciplines, or choose not to use them, turn to **344**.



## 124

You sense a strong aura of power surrounding the druid. He stands only a few feet from where you are crouching and, in order to prevent him detecting your presence, you call upon all of your advanced mastery of camouflage to keep you safe.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table* and add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *0–4*, turn to **213**.
If it is *5–12*, turn to **164**.

**125** – *Illustration VII (overleaf)*

You sense that Cadak's command is no simple trick for you can feel another presence in the room, moving towards your back. You sidestep to your left and turn, keeping the Arch Druid still in sight as you glance across your shoulder at the rest of the chamber.

You had been half-expecting to see one of Cadak's henchmen sneaking forward with a dagger in his hand, and so the terrible sight which greets your gaze now is doubly shocking.

Stepping from out of the tapestry which covers the wall is a gigantic, bull-like creature, with the head and face of a man. Two needle-sharp fangs protrude from its bloodstained upper lip, and its eyes gleam with a murderous lust that chills your soul. What had once, only minutes before, been woven into the fabric of the tapestry, now strides towards you with slow purposeful steps, its taloned hands outstretched in eager readiness to tear you apart.

Exterminus: COMBAT SKILL 50 ENDURANCE 50

You may evade this combat after 4 rounds, by turning to **2**.

If you win the fight, turn to **320**.



VII. A gigantic, bull-like creature steps towards you out of the tapestry.

## 126

A sudden noise startles you and you spin around to face it. A section of the wall is moving inwards, carrying with it the robes that are hanging there. A figure, dressed in a hooded purple cloak and clasping a large leather-bound book, appears in the opening. As he steps into the room the section of wall closes behind him.

'What are you doing here, brother?' he asks, his voice heavy with suspicion. You sense that he is a druid of high rank and you know your answer must be convincing if you are to avoid his wrath.

If you wish to answer by saying that you have come here to help him, turn to **170**.
If you wish to say that you are looking for a lost possession, turn to **156**.
If you decide that actions speak louder than words, you can attack him by turning to **212**.

## 127

You wait in the shadows, camouflaged from detection by your cloak of Kai skills, you patiently observe the portal and guards. After several minutes, the resonant boom of a metal gong echoes in some deep and distant part of the caves. As the echo slowly fades, another sound, that of metal scraping on stone, resounds around the cavern. Then a crack of light appears along the bottom of the portal and, with a grating screech, the great wall of iron slowly rises up into the ceiling.

Through the opening comes a patrol of Vazhag who are escorting a wagon stacked high with wooden boxes, barrels and sacks. A sudden rush of female

Vazhag, all squealing and clamouring for food, brings the wagon to a halt directly beneath the onion-shaped portico. The escort struggles to fend off the hungry females with little effect until, with a spine-tingling screech, the portal begins to descend. A wave of panic washes over the Vazhag and they turn and run back into the cavern, fearful of being crushed beneath the falling iron door.

When it is just a few feet from the wagon, the portal shudders and grinds to a halt. Those few guards and Vazhag escort who remained nearby quickly rush forward to drag the wagon from beneath the portal. You notice that the females are begining to return and you know that you must act now if you are to escape from the cavern before the wagon is pulled clear and the iron door closes.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to help you escape, turn to **270**.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Psi-surge, turn to **68**.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility, turn to **9**.

## 128

Beyond the doorway is a flight of stone steps which ascend into the gloom. You pound up the steps, your heart beating time with your feet, and emerge at a chamber which is lit by foul-smelling torches fixed around the walls. Two passages lead out of this room: one heads towards the west, the other towards the east. You pause for a moment to use your Magnakai senses of Divination and Pathsmanship, but you detect nothing unusual about either passage.

If you wish to enter the west passage, turn to **271**.
If you choose to enter the east passage, turn to **95**.

## 129

Coughing and retching, you haul your way out of the stinking bog and collapse upon the soft forest floor. For a few moments you lie there, unable to see through the mask of filth that hangs down in front of your eyes. Then, with the edge of your hand, you slowly scrape the slime from your face and look back at the threads of dark crimson blood which trace a marbled pattern against the green surface scum. They are testimony to your hard-won fight.

With the memory of your battle against the bog creature still vivid in your mind, you clamber to your feet and hurry along the track heading east.

Turn to **242**.

## 130

Anxious to avoid being seen by the approaching Vazhag, you release your grip and allow yourself to drop silently into the lake. The moment the cold waters close above your head you strike out and swim underwater towards the north bank. The lake is dark and forbidding yet your powerful sight enables you to see the contours of the lake bed as they pass beneath you.

For the most part the water is no more than twenty feet deep, hardly a depth capable of hiding the huge body of a Dholdaarg. But as you are nearing the centre you catch sight of the monster's lair. A yawning black crevasse cuts a jagged line east to west

along the bottom of the lake bed. A strong undercurrent and an inky blackness tell you that this watery abyss could be several hundred feet deep.

You increase your stroke and swim across the crevasse as swiftly as you can, fearful of what lurks in its hellish depths. Like an underwater cliff's edge the lake bed reappears, and beyond it you glimpse the inviting shallows of the north bank.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–4*, turn to **183**.
If the number is *5–9*, turn to **312**.

**131** – *Illustration VIII*

Using your Magnakai power of Nexus, and the strength of your own two hands, you force open the barred door and gain access to the ante-room beyond. It is unlit and every surface is thick with a dust that has lain undisturbed for many years. On a marble dais, which occupies most of the floor, there stands a large rectangular stone casket. It has no lid, and as you approach it you see that it contains the mummified remains of a creature you cannot readily identify.

You can feel no evil in the vicinity of this corpse, and your senses tell you that there is nothing, other than yourself, alive in this room. Confident in this knowledge you lean foward to examine the corpse.

Without warning, a powerful spike of psychic energy penetrates deep into your mind. Its icy-cold attack numbs your senses and leaves you trembling helplessly with shock – lose 6 ENDURANCE points.



VIII. You approach a marble dais containing remains of a creature you cannot readily identify.

Reeling from the unexpected onslaught, you struggle to erect a mind shield as the mummified remains of the corpse slowly stir into life.

Suddenly, a claw-tipped limb snakes towards your throat and grabs you in a choking, vice-tight grip. Desperately you struggle to unsheathe a weapon and free yourself as the grisly remains of a plague agarashi rise up from the casket only inches before your disbelieving eyes.

Plague agarashi (*Undead/magically animated*):
COMBAT SKILL 46 ENDURANCE 36

Due to the speed and surprise of this creature's attack, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 3 for the duration of this fight.

If you win the combat, turn to **18**.

132

Suddenly, above you, there is a loud rattling noise followed by the grating squeal of iron on stone. You spin around to look at the staircase by which you entered and, to your horror, you see a heavy portcullis come crashing down to seal off the exit. Then there is another sound: the hiss of escaping air. Your senses detect it is coming from around the great portal and, as it slowly begins to open, you reach for your weapons in readiness to defend your life.

If you possess a Bow and wish to use it, turn to **221**.

If you do not possess a Bow, or choose not to use it, you can unsheathe a hand weapon instead by turning to **325**.

## 133

The crumbling rock wall and lack of secure hand holds fail to thwart your natural climbing ability. With relative ease you scale the shaft and emerge upon a mountainside, at a place hidden beneath an outcrop which is ringed by wind-worn boulders and scrub.

Early morning sunlight illuminates the surrounding hills. Beyond them you see a vast expanse of forest, a sea of sickly grey-green trees, which radiates an unmistakable aura of evil. The position of the sun and your pathsmanship skills inform you that you are looking upon the Forest of Ruel from the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.

The land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being a wide dirt track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the grim forest. You consult your map and conclude that this must be the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners, which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 134

Desperately you try to swim against the current to avoid the fall of shattered rocks and fire but, despite your valiant efforts, you cannot escape being crushed by the deluge. Death is mercifully swift.

The incredible bravery you have displayed during your quest has brought about the destruction of the plague virus, and the druids who knew the secrets of

its cultivation. This destruction has saved millions from a terrible death, and the selfless courage you have shown in bringing this about will never be forgotten by the free peoples of Magnamund. Sadly, though, death is the price you have paid for your victory.

Tragically, your life and your quest end here beneath the Ghardoz bridge.

## 135

The druid's bolt knocks you flat on your back and surrounds your body with a flashing web of electrical power. Painfully you drag yourself to your feet and, as the spider-like threads of energy begin to fade, you look up to see the Cener shouting and waving at his Vazhag minions. He is commanding them to attack the ruins and rip what remains of you to shreds!

With hatred blazing in their blood-red eyes, the Vazhag advance towards the derelict dwelling, each carrying a rusty weapon poised for the kill.

If you wish to stand and fight these disease-ridden Vazhag, turn to **25**.

If you decide to attempt to evade them, turn to **279**.

## 136

Gasping for air, you are forced to retreat from this seemingly impenetrable cloud of poisonous spores. For several minutes you claw your way blindly up the steep passageway until at last you reach a section where you can breathe more easily. You have

survived, but you have been severely weakened by your encounter with a colony of deadly khloros fungi: lose 8 ENDURANCE points.

Unable to continue in your chosen direction, you turn around and reluctantly head back towards the fissure.

Turn to **332**.

**137**

You descend a few rungs, just far enough to put you beyond reach of the spear blades, and then you utter the words of the Brotherhood spell of levitation. Moments later you feel gravity losing its grip and gently you push yourself away from the ladder to hover in mid-air.

The Acolytes gasp in shocked surprise as you rise up to confront them eye to eye. The nearest allows his spear to waver and instantly you lash out at his vulnerable chest. The impact of your blow knocks him from the platform to fall, screaming, into the midst of the glass boxes on an experiment table far below.

Gracefully you step on to the platform and crouch in readiness to fight the remaining Acolyte. He meets your stare with a sneer that readily conveys his hatred of your race. Then, spurred on by the yells of his confederates in the hall below, he jumps forward and thrusts his weapon at your throat.

Acolyte of Vashna
(*With Medallion of Protection*):
COMBAT SKILL 25 ENDURANCE 40

If you win this combat, turn to **29**.

## 138

You trail the two novices along a series of corridors that end at a large antechamber. This domed hall is decorated with tapestries which depict Cenerese legends, ignoble and infamous deeds that were perpetrated during the Age of the Old Kingdoms, when, for nearly a thousand years, the Cenerese tyrannized Northern Magnamund.

The novices hurry towards a heavy door and, as they swing it open and enter, you hear the doleful sound of chanting. Curiosity prompts you to approach the door, which they have left ajar, and peer through its narrow opening. A chill runs the length of your spine the moment you see what lies in the hall beyond.

Turn to **200**.

## 139

The corpulent Vazhag continues to snore, blissfully oblivious to your presence inside his private chamber.

If you wish to cross the chamber and investigate the curtained archway, turn to **238**.
If you choose to leave the chamber via the secret door, turn to **308**.

## 140

Nimbly you dive and roll across the spongy ground to avoid the falling creepers. Your swift action saves you from the first attack, but another mass descend,

moving faster than the first, and ensnare you in their thorny grasp before you can get back on your feet.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **56**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **291**.

## 141

Suddenly there is a loud crack: the support pin has popped out and, as the massive weight of the cauldron is suddenly removed, the chain whips away like an angry snake. You step back to avoid being hit by it and, from the edge of the platform, you watch with grim satisfaction as the cauldron plummets into the hall below.

Turn to **220**.

## 142

The speed and apparent ease with which you dispatched his minions shocks the Cener druid to the core. Gibbering with fright, he turns and runs for the safety of the tunnel by which he and his now-deceased underlings entered the cave. Anxious not to allow him to escape and raise the alarm, you clamber on to the platform and run across the drawbridge in pursuit of the red-robed figure.

The tunnel beyond the bridge is narrow yet well-lit and you have no difficulty following your prey. Stealthily and speedily you close upon him like a lion running to ground a frightened fawn. He glances over his shoulder repeatedly as you draw nearer, then, in desperation, he skids to a halt beneath one of the many hanging bowls which illuminate the passageway. He raises both hands, as if surrender-

ing, but as you approach him he grasps the underside of the heavy bowl and heaves it at you. Suddenly, with a sizzling rush, a gallon of blazing coal oil spills over the stone rim and comes gushing down towards your unprotected face.

If you possess Grand Nexus, turn to **324**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **22**.

## 143

You draw on all your strength to resist the terrible power which is sucking you towards its heart. In desperation you call upon the gods Kai and Ishir to aid you and, as if in response to your prayers, you sense yourself rising as the swirling vortex begins to recede.

Then, abruptly, the swirling funnel evaporates and you find yourself on your hands and knees, breathless and trembling, staring at the cold stone floor of Cadak's throne room. Slowly you rise to your feet, then a faint sound behind warns you that someone or something is moving about in the antechamber.

Turn to **222**.

## 144

Carefully you form your lips into an 'O' shape in readiness to utter the power word battle-spell you have been taught by Lord Rimoah. Then, the instant the spell-thoughts focus in your mind, you project the power word – *Gloar!* – at the middle of the fleeing druid's back. Like a sledgehammer, the sound hits him between the shoulder blades and sends him

tumbling head over heels into a tangle of forest briars.

Stunned and groaning, the Cener fumbles for his slender golden rod and, as if guided by more than chance, his spindly fingers locate it at once. Yet, before he can use it to retaliate, you sprint across the clearing, weapon in hand, and attack him where he lies:

Cener Druid (*prone*):
COMBAT SKILL 20 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **60**.

## 145

You are within a few feet of the gap when the first of the Vazhag's arrows come screaming towards your legs. You twist aside and avoid one of the shafts, but the other hits you in the left leg and gouges a furrow of flesh from your calf: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

Gritting your teeth against the sharp pain, you drag yourself through the narrow opening and emerge on a mountainside, at a place hidden beneath an outcrop which is ringed by wind-worn boulders and scrub. Early morning sunlight illuminates the surrounding hills, and beyond them you see a vast expanse of forest, a sea of sickly grey-green trees, which radiates an unmistakable aura of evil. The position of the sun and your pathsmanship skills tell you that you are now looking upon the Forest of Ruel from the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.

**146**

The land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being a wide dirt track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the grim forest. You consult your map and conclude that this must be the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners, which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first you hobble away from the ledge least the Vazhag, and their monstrous war-dogs, should decide to give chase.

To continue, turn to **230**.

**146**

You speak your answer and instantly the lid of the box clicks open. Congratulations, Grand Master Lone Wolf, your reckoning was correct. Dividing any number by one half actually doubles that number. Therefore, 80 divided by one half becomes 160. Subtract 14 from 160 and you have the solution to the puzzle.

Inside the box you discover a Map of Mogaruith, which details its dungeon levels. This is a Special Item which you carry tucked into your tunic. You need not discard any other Special Item in its favour if you already carry the maximum allowed.

An unexpected shuffling noise, somewhere in another part of the library, causes you to freeze. Someone else has entered. You look over your shoulder at the door and decide that now would be a very wise time to leave.

Turn to **335**.

**147**

You clear the gap with inches to spare but not entirely without cost. The portcullis snares your Backpack and, as you roll away, it is torn from your shoulders and crushed when the heavy portal slams to the ground. (You must now erase all Backpack Items and Meals from your *Action Chart*.)

You spring to your feet instantly and run headlong across the drawbridge towards the far side. Arrows rain down on you from the battlements, but your speed and agility keep you from being hit. Then, within seconds of reaching firm ground, you are confronted by a group of three Vazhag returning from battle. Two are armed with spears and they face you on foot, but the third sits astride a captured Slovian steed. It is wielding a cavalry lance and you can tell by the way the rat-man balances it that it is skilled in its use.

The two spear-wielders squeal their battle-cry and attack you simultaneously. However, this cry is quickly transformed into a duet of pain when you strike out and kill them instantly. They drop to the ground and almost immediately the rider is upon you, jabbing at your chest with the tip of its lance. You duck the first thrust, and steady yourself to meet the second as the Vazhag lancer turns and bears down on you once more.

Vazhag lancer:
COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 20

If you win this combat, turn to **113**.

## 148

The grim horde shambles nearer and close ranks, in readiness, perhaps, for a concerted attack. But combat is not their intent. As one, they open their mouths and give vent to a ghastly sound that is akin to mocking laughter, the like of which you have never heard before.

As if in answer to their gleeful cacophony there arises, from out of the black shadows of the pits, a dreadful rumbling roar. Something huge is stirring deep within each of those dark forbidding shafts. As the ghoulish laughter reaches its pitch, three giant, misshapen cat-like heads rise up into the light, each perched atop a snaky body as thick as the trunk of a tree. They bare their fangs and shake off the tangle of human bones that cling to their stinking, corpse-green manes.

The sight of these unholy creatures makes you reel back in shock and utter a cry of disbelief. Your cry is lost among the barrage of screeching howls, yet the cat-things react as if they hear it and, together, they come oozing out from their dark, noisome lairs and glide slowly towards where you stand.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-surge, turn to **80**.
If you do not possess this skill, turn to **38**.

## 149

Having witnessed how swiftly you dispatched his entire Vazhag escort, the Cener chooses to escape while he can. He turns and runs along the track which leads away from the clearing, and hurriedly you give chase.

You catch up with him less than fifty yards along the track. In desperation, he tries to cut you down with another blast of energy but your swift reflexes save you from being hit. A well-placed blow knocks the rod from his hand and deflects the blast away into the trees. Cursing you, he unsheathes a dagger and lunges at your heart.

Cener Druid:
COMBAT SKILL 28 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **53**.

**150** – *Illustration IX (overleaf)*

Beyond the door awaits an echoing hall which reeks of decay. Its walls are adorned with gruesome paintings which depict terrible scenes of human slaughter. One in particular catches your eye and, although you try hard to ignore it, you find you cannot turn your head away. It shows a pit of helpless humans, writhing and screaming in anguish as they are slowly consumed by packs of wild-eyed plague dogs. The scene shocks you deeply for the doomed humans all have distinct Sommlending features.

With difficulty you tear your eyes away and force yourself to look elsewhere in this unfriendly hall. You see columns rising to the roof, each wound round with creepers and fungi which give off an unwholesome, pallid light. Ahead you see another door, identical to that by which you have entered, and before it there stands a desk on top of a plinth of green stone. A creature sits at the desk, huddled over the open pages of a ledger upon which it is writing with a feathered quill pen. As you draw closer



IX. As you draw closer the creature stops scrawling and places its quill into an ink pot fashioned from a human skull.

it stops scrawling and places its quill into a nearby pot of ink, fashioned from the crown of a human skull. The creature raises its hairless head and stares at you unblinkingly with its solitary eye.

'Who seeks an audience with He?' it croaks, hoarsely. 'State your name, brother, and your purpose here.'

You are standing in the antechamber of Arch Druid Cadak's throne hall. To enter the hall itself and, hopefully, discover where the deadly virus is being cultivated, you know that you must first persuade this creature to allow you to pass.

If you decide to say that you have come from the battlefront with important news for the Arch Druid, turn to **314**.

If you wish to say that you are an agent who has just arrived from the Lastlands with vital information for Cadak's eyes only, turn to **208**.

If you possess Animal Mastery and wish to use it to exert control over this creature's mind, turn to **91**.

## 151

You call upon the power of your Animal Mastery and hold the rat-man with your piercing gaze as you demand that he grants you entry to Mogaruith without further delay. He does not respond to your power and at once you detect that his mind is shielded by some magical means which enables him to resist your will.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If

you possess the Grand Mastery of Kai Alchemy *and* Kai Surge, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *0–4*, turn to **70**.
If your score is *5* or higher, turn to **175**.



## 152

The flame-creature rises up and hovers little more than an arm's length above your head. Its tentacles lash out and you are forced to sidestep swiftly to avoid them ensnaring you. Then, as if spurred on by the frantic cries of the cave beasts, it advances upon you. For a moment it seems to swell and contract, as if it is inhaling and exhaling a huge lungful of air, then suddenly a wall of blinding white light erupts before your eyes as a blast of psychic energy comes crashing into your mind. You reel from the unexpected shock of its impact, and your Magnakai senses are unable to shield you from its withering onslaught: lose 8 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this massive psychic assault, turn to **301**.

## 153

You hide yourself as best you can, taking advantage of a brace of boulders that lie beside the stone steps, and wait with bated breath as the sound of the approaching group grows louder and nearer. Torchlight flickers, casting a watery yellow beam across the cavern floor, then the first of the group enters and you catch sight of their repulsive forms.

A patrol of six Vazhag file into the cavern. Each one is as tall as a Sommlending youth and all are armed with crude, rusty weapons. Fragments of armour and uniforms, which once belonged to human soldiers, encase their hairy, rat-like bodies. They are more than ten feet from your hiding place, but even so, they give off such a vile aroma of filth and disease that you are forced to draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to prevent yourself from retching out loud.

They come closer and halt at the foot of the stone stairs, barely an arm's length from where you are hiding, and you hear them talking in a high-pitched squeal which reminds you of rusty door hinges. All the while they repeatedly cast furtive glances at the west tunnel entrance as if they are waiting for another of their party to catch up.

Within minutes another member of their patrol does arrive, only this creature is not one of their breed: it is human-sized. However, the hooded scarlet robe it is wearing makes it difficult for you to be absolutely sure that the creature within is human.

The Vazhag cease their squealing when the hooded one raises a gloved hand. In that instant, you catch a glimpse of the glassy green mask which is covering his face, and at once you recognize this mask: it is a jazak, the ritual mask of a Cener druid.

If you possess Grand Mastery of Assimilance, turn to **124**.

If you do not possess this Grand Master Discipline, turn to **213**.

## 154

The inquisitive Tzarg passes within a few feet of your hiding place, but your Grand Mastery saves you from detection. Eventually it waddles into the passageway from which you entered and hurries off with an excited group of Vazhag close on its heels, all of them now convinced by the Tzarg's actions that it has picked up your trail.

Patiently you wait until the sound of their footsteps has faded before you emerge from your hiding place and leave the hall by the stairs.

Turn to **75**.

## 155

Cautiously you advance to the edge of the stagnant pool, your super-sharp senses alert to the slightest hint of danger. Using your innate Magnakai skill of Invisibility you take care to mask your body heat and scent least they should stir the unwanted attentions of any keen-nosed denizens of Ruel. You pause at the pool's edge for a moment where, using your powers of divination, you scan the surrounding

darkness for invisible or hidden enemies. Sensing no threat, you continue to skirt the fetid pond and follow the stream to where it trickles out of the forest. There you are greeted by an unwholesome warmth. It rises from a decaying mulch of roots and fungi that squelch repulsively underfoot. Silently you offer up a prayer to Ishir before venturing further into this inhospitable domain.

For several miles you trudge through the slime that borders the stream. This sickly strip of mud forms a narrow pathway that is, in turn, bordered by the tall trunks and thorny briars of the forest. So dense is this tangle of trees and brush that you feel sure it could only be the result of evil herbcraft.

At length the stream widens and the forest begins to thin out. Soon you are able to leave the foul-smelling brook and enter the forest proper, where after a short while you happen upon the remnants of a track. It descends towards a bog from which arises a cloak of misty vapour. Warily you approach, for the fog clings to the morass and masks its dangers.

Now your senses tingle: there is evil all around. At once you reach for your weapon and, as your hand closes upon it, you feel something snake-like coiling around your left foot.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **19**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **273**.

## 156

'What blasphemy is this!' gasps the druid, horrified by your answer. 'Know you not that it is forbidden for a brother to possess anything! The pursuit of

possessions is a hammer that shatters loyalty to our cause. You will atone for this . . . oh yes. You will atone to me!'

And with these crazed words the druid unsheathes a dagger and raises it above his head. A wave of psychic energy washes over your mind and, for an instant, you see his cold eyes widen with shock as he discovers who you really are. He screams a curse and the blade of his dagger is transformed at once into a yellow spike of glowing luminescence. Swiftly you reach for your own weapon as the crazed druid forces you back, stabbing and slicing the air before him with his sorcerous blade.

High Priest: COMBAT SKILL 47 ENDURANCE 30

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

If you win the combat, turn to **340**.

## 157

You release the creaking bowstring and send your arrow burrowing deep into the Vazhag's chest. The rat-thing utters a strangled cry of pain and surprise as, wide-eyed, it crashes down face first into the midst of its hoard of shoddy treasure.

Immediately, with an angry roar, the dog-creature springs foward with its taloned paws outstretched. You retreat, discarding your bow in favour of a hand weapon with which to fight this ravenous beast.

Pit Agarashi: COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 38

This creature is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge; only Kai-surge can harm it psychically.

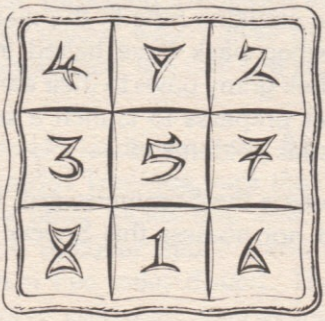
If you win the combat, turn to **297**.

## 158

A narrow corridor connects the chamber to another, where there stands an imposing door made of sheeted copper, inlaid with a filigree of gold and silver. It is the only exit from this otherwise drab chamber.

A closer inspection of the door reveals that it is surrounded by an airtight seal. Furthermore, there is no keyhole, drawbolt, or handle. However, your keen eyesight is drawn to a pattern in the door's centre panel which, thanks to past experience, you recognize to be a sophisticated combination lock.

The gold inlays form three rows of three numbers within a grid of silver lines:



**159–160**

Below these numbers, in ancient Cenerese script, is carved the message:

'Declare ye the true number to pass this way'

Study the grid of numbers. When you think you know the answer to the riddle, turn to the page that bears the same number as your answer.

If you cannot solve this puzzle, turn to **132**.

**159**

A hellish noise echoes around the clearing, a terrifying whip-like crack that sets your ears ringing. From the tip of the Cener's rod there has erupted a stream of crackling blue light. It arcs towards the dwelling and comes bursting through the blocks of ancient stone, ripping them asunder as if they were no more substantial than bales of mildewed corn. Sharp slivers of stone pepper your legs, and the blast's concussion leaves you wide-eyed and gasping for breath: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

Through the smoking hole in the wall you can see that the Vazhag pack have halted in their tracks. They hold their grimy paws to their ears and grimace as the Cener prepares to launch a second blast of power from his golden rod.

If you possess the Sommerswerd, turn to **322**.
If you do not possess this Special Item, turn to **123**.

**160** – *Illustration X (overleaf)*

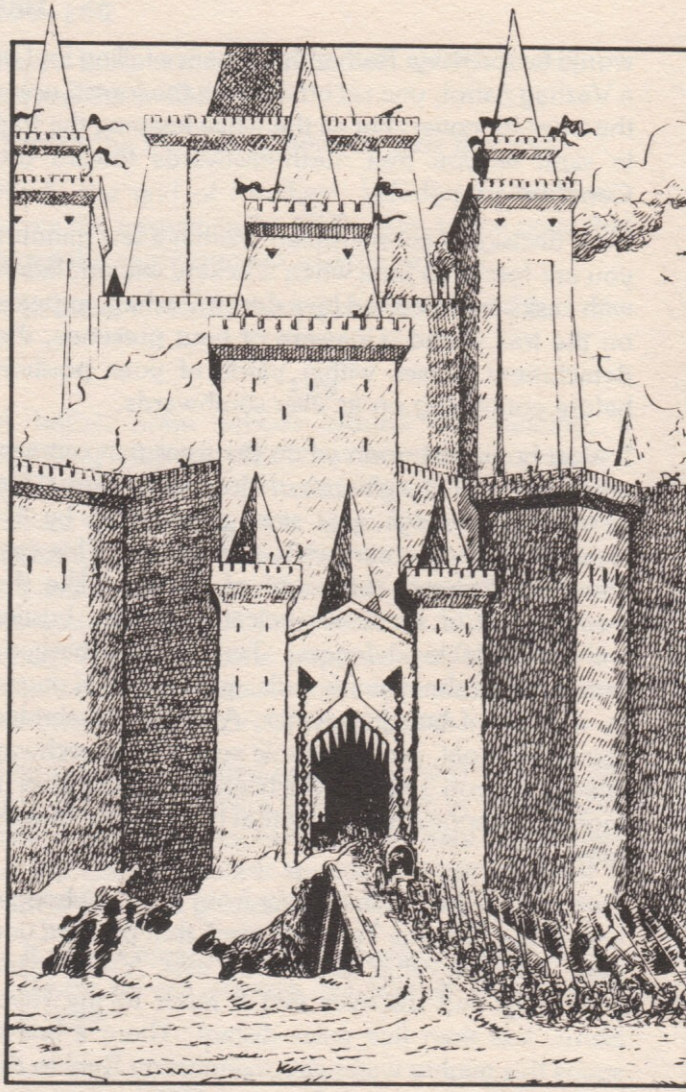
You decide that to travel openly along the track

would be too risky. Rather than chance falling foul of a Vazhag patrol, you set off through the forest, using the trees for cover, but all the while keeping the trail in sight as you trek north-eastwards toward the Cenerese stronghold.

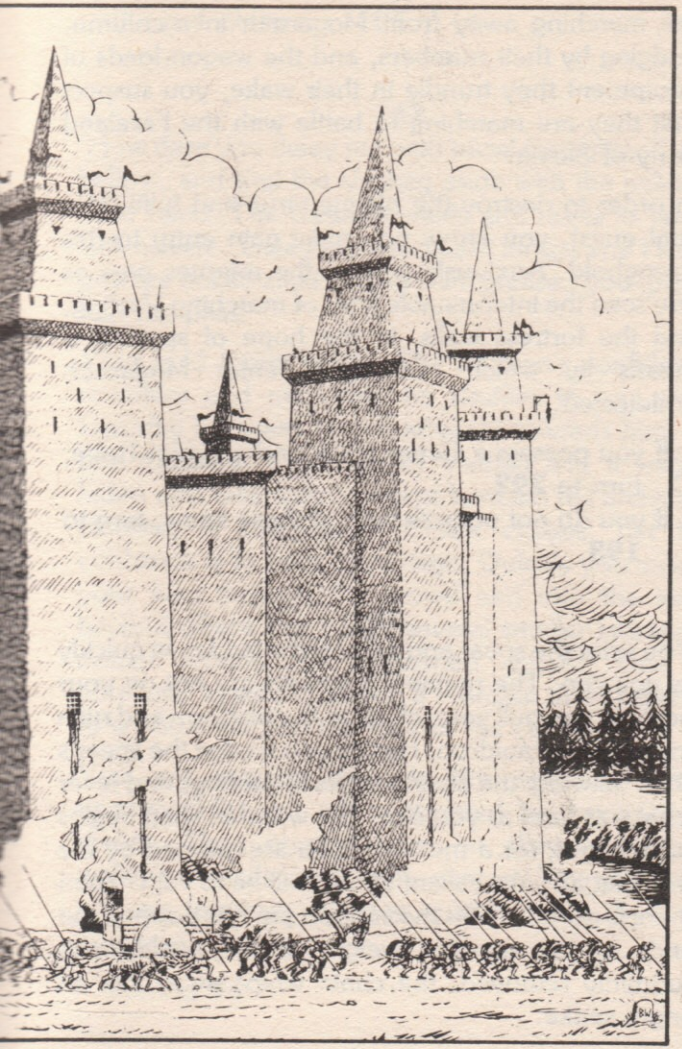
Your decision is soon justified. Within a few minutes you are forced to hide when a rickety wagon, laden with casks and escorted by a dozen Vazhag, appears on the trail ahead. Unaware of your presence, the detachment passes within yards of your position before continuing on its way southwards.

It is an hour past noon when the trees thin out and you catch your first glimpse of Mogaruith. Crouching at the forest's edge, you stare awestricken by the sight of its slime-green walls and towers. This vast Cenerese fortress, rising out of the land like the thrusting fist of some vile volcanic demon, bristles with formidable defences. Turrets and bastions punctuate its sheer stone walls, and its base is ringed by a moat of bubbling water. A single drawbridge spans this moat, providing sole access to an archway lined with iron spikes, which gives the entrance a monstrous appearance, like that of a gigantic fanged maw.

Two muddy tracks lead away from the drawbridge. One is the Skardos Trail, the track that brought you here, and the other heads due east. You consult your map and discover that it leads to the River Storn, less than five miles distant. There a bridge spans this mighty waterway, connecting Ruel to the realm of Slovia. A small army of Vazhag, accompanied by a host of other creatures of doubtful origin,



X. You catch your first glimpse of Mogaruith, the vast Cenerese fortress rising out of the land like the thrusting fist of some volcanic demon.



are marching away from Mogaruith in a column. Judging by their numbers, and the wagon-loads of equipment they trundle in their wake, you suspect that they are marching to battle with the Freeland army of Slovia.

In order to destroy the plague virus and fulfil your vital quest, you know you must gain entry to this stronghold. Anxiously you let the minutes pass as you scan the interminable lines of marching Vazhag, and the fortress walls, in the hope of spotting a means by which you could enter Mogaruith undetected.

If you possess a Cener mask *and* a Cener Robe, turn to **292**.

If you do not possess both of these items, turn to **193**.

## 161

You seize the spear and ascend the ladder as quickly as you can. The remaining archers are hot on your heels as you pull yourself on to the platform and rush towards the cauldron. Hastily you wedge the spear's shaft between the chain and its mounting, and lever it back as hard as you can. The wooden shaft begins to split and, for a moment, you are gripped by the fear that all your valiant efforts will be in vain. Then there is a loud crack: the support pin has popped out and, as the massive weight of the cauldron is suddenly removed, the chain whips away like an angry snake.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–3*, turn to **191**.

If it is 4–9, turn to **105**.

## 162

'How dare you delay me with trivial formalities!' you bellow, and slap the Vazhag aside with the palm of your hand. The creature snarls and raises its spear defensively. 'Delay me a moment longer and I'll see you are boiled alive in your own grease,' you growl. 'Let me pass!'

Your bold threat works. The rat-man's confidence crumbles and nervously he shuffles to one side, lowering his spear as you advance towards him. At that moment, a column of Vazhag and a wagon laden with weapons converge beneath the archway, blocking it completely. Chaos ensues, but the confusion is to your advantage. Quickly you weave your way through the crowd and into the keep beyond where you notice several smaller entrances dotted around the flagstoned square. One in particular looks promising: a staircase that descends to a portal set into the base of the citadel.

You are moving towards this entrance when unexpectedly you are confronted by three Cener druids. They emerge from an alley and come walking towards you in a line abreast. To avoid them you are forced to sidestep quickly into a shadowy doorway.

Turn to **98**.

## 163

Marching shoulder to grisly shoulder the ghoulish horde advances, hungry for flesh untainted by

disease and decay. Hurriedly you draw your weapon and breathe a prayer to the sun god Kai to protect you in this moment of truth. Then, with a rush, the first wave fall upon you with a mindless fury. With blurring speed you deal them blows that would consign any mortal to its doom, but the grievous wounds draw neither blood nor ichor.

Tirelessly you slash and sever their grasping arms to prevent them from clawing you to the ground. They howl, but not in pain; these ghastly cries are joyous and triumphant. For no matter how skilfully you fight, you cannot resist their weight of numbers and, inch by relentless inch, they are forcing you ever nearer to the pits. As soon as you recognize their strategy you change your method of attack, and direct your blows at those parts of the creatures which pass for legs. Yet even now those parted from their limbs still advance, hunching and clawing their way forwards on their bellies whilst those that were once behind trample them underfoot.

Suddenly the advance falters and the howling ceases. The grim wall of creatures draw back a few yards and close their ranks in readiness, perhaps, for a final attack. Then, as one, they open their mouths and give vent to laughter, the like of which you have never heard before. Knots of pain build at your temples and frantically you draw upon your mind defences to repel this tidal wave of evil psychic energy.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-screen, turn to **194**.

If you do not possess this skill, turn to **65**.

## 164

Despite his close proximity, and his powerful sense of tracking, the druid fails to detect your presence here in the cavern. You hear him mumble a few disgruntled comments and then, with all the enthusiasm of a tired sloth, he leads his snickering group of rat-men into the south tunnel.

Patiently you wait for their flickering torches to be swallowed up by its dark depths. When you are surrounded by total darkness once more, you leave your hiding place and hurry away along the west tunnel. For more than five miles you follow this winding route and, despite your mounting fears, you encounter nothing more threatening than a few ragged-winged bats and a frightened rock snake. Gradually, as the tunnel delves deeper into the Skardos range, the air becomes increasingly cooler and more humid. You can smell the strong scent of water somewhere in the distance and you are not at all surprised when, as you round a sharp bend in the tunnel, you see faint shimmering reflections playing upon the rough stone ceiling.

If you possess Telegnosis, turn to **67**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **244**.

## 165

As you return to the chamber, you see the sleeping Vazhag beginning to stir from its slumber.

If you wish to attack the waking Vazhag, turn to **282**.
If you choose to hurry past it and escape from the chamber by means of the secret door, turn to **308**.

## 166

With gleeful malevolence the creature Exterminus takes hold of you in a bear-hug and proceeds to crush the air from your lungs. Then, with a demonic squeal of delight, it buries its needle-sharp fangs into the side of your neck and a flash of brilliant white light explodes in your head.

Consciousness deserts you. The sensation of falling overcomes your senses until you are consumed completely by a spinning vortex of darkness. The creature has taken your life, but more than this, it has sentenced you to a terrible punishment. You have been consigned to a realm where the power of Good holds no sway. You have been ensnared by the soul of Naar himself, the King of the Darkness, and as his prisoner you will remain, doomed to wander his dark domain for all eternity.

Tragically, your quest ends here.

## 167

Your aim is awry and the arrow arcs over the druid's shoulder to disappear among the trees beyond. Instantly he spins to face you and screams at his Vazhag to finish you for good.

With a foul, snickering cry the Vazhag race to do their master's bidding. In a frenzy they leap upon you, hacking and stabbing with their rusty blades.

Vazhag pack:
COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 44

If you win this combat, turn to **303**.

168

Quietly you contemplate your next move as the portcullis slams down, sealing off the main exit from Mogaruith. Within a few moments your thoughts are disturbed by the sound of a large troop of Vazhag ascending the stairs by which you entered this hall. Their approach prompts you to leave by the main door and look for another hiding place outside in the keep.

From the shadows of a disused storeroom doorway, you scour the surrounding battlements and walkways, hoping to see an opportunity for escape. However, it does not take too long to discover that the tower offered the only easy route out of this stronghold, one that is now blocked by the portcullis.

Suddenly you hear an angry squeal and turn to see a rat-man's snout protruding from the window of a turret high up to your left. It has seen you and it is informing its confederates of your hiding place. You are forced to abandon the doorway and run into a nearby alley as a score of Vazhag guards come charging across the keep in hot pursuit. The alley is a dead end, but you find a stone stairway which ascends to the battlements and you take it in order to keep ahead of the bloodthirsty pack.

At the top of the stairs you find yourself sandwiched between two converging Vazhag patrols which are racing along the battlements from both directions. To stand and fight would be futile; you would kill many but you would eventually be overcome by the sheer weight of their numbers.

Now there is only one option left and the very

thought of it sends a chill racing down your spine. Steeling yourself for what must be done, you sheathe your weapon, take a deep breath, then launch yourself over the battlements towards the bubbling moat.

Turn to **283**.

## 169

Ably you sidestep and dodge your way through the throng of female Vazhag who are swarming around the wagon in a food-starved frenzy. One of them runs across your path, forcing you to halt momentarily to avoid crashing into her. But before you can continue, a Vazhag guard is shouldered away from the wagon by the crowd and he collides with you. Swiftly you grab the creature by the throat to stop it from warning its confederates, and drag it one-handedly towards the shadowy cavern wall.

Suddenly you feel something crawling up your forearm. A wave of revulsion knots your stomach when you see a mass of black fleas coursing up your arm, migrating from the neck of the frightened Vazhag. The ghastly sight makes you loosen your grip and allows the disease-ridden creature to squeal a desperate cry for help. As one, the guards respond to the cry. They draw their rusty weapons and narrow their tiny red eyes as they abandon the wagon and advance upon you.

If you wish to stand and fight these Vazhag, turn to **313**.

If you wish to evade them, you can escape through the open portal by turning to **204**.

## 170

'Mmmm . . . I did not request an attendant to assist me during devotions,' he says, narrowing his cruel grey eyes. 'Who ordered you here? Was it Brother Jhordax?'

You hesitate, but he does not seem to be expecting a reply.

'That fool Jhordax. This is not the first time that he has failed to observe the protocol of this hall. You can tell your master that I am not impressed by his incompetence. He will have to answer to Him if this ever occurs again.'

The cloaked druid sweeps past you, opens the door to the prayer hall, then slams it shut behind him to reinforce his displeasure.

Turn to **227**.

## 171

The creatures cease their frenzied movement with an abruptness you find unnerving; it is as if they have suddenly turned to stone. Now that you can see them clearly they remind you of beetles, save that they are far larger and have long segmented tails. You observe them for a few moments longer, then take a tentative step forwards. Instantly they burst into life, only this time they do not confine themselves to the forest floor. With a sound like a thousand squeaky door hinges, they sprout wings and soar into the air in a formation which resembles a small black cloud. Soon they have left the clearing, and as you watch the last of them disappear over the tops of the trees, you can only hope that they are not some form of lookout employed by the Cenerese.

## 172

On the far side of the clearing you discover that the trail continues deeper into the forest. You follow it for nearly an hour until your keen senses warn of danger ahead and immediately you halt in your tracks. You hear a movement: it is above and behind you. With incredible speed you spin on your heel and raise your weapon to parry a possible attack. Your reactions are fast, but they may not be quick enough to protect you from what lurks in the canopy of branches high above.

From out of the darkness there falls a wriggling mass of thorny creepers that come snaking towards your head as if driven by a single mind.

If you possess Grand Pathsmanship, turn to **257**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **140**.

## 172

You struggle to extricate yourself from the bodies of the Vazhag you have slain. As you rise to the summit of the grisly heap, you glimpse the druid scurrying towards the gap in the trees by which he, and his late minions, entered the clearing.

You know that he must not be allowed to escape. If he were to reach Mogaruith and raise the alarm, your mission, and probably your life, would soon be over. With fear in your heart you clamber over the dead Vazhag and work your way back along the passage, determined to stop him before he can get away.

If you possess a Bow and Arrows and wish to use them, turn to **176**.
If you possess mastery of Magi-Magic and wish to use it, turn to **334**.

If you possess Kai-alchemy and wish to use it, turn to **264**.

If you possess none of the above, or choose not to make use of them, turn to **237**.

## 173

You detect that the crystal sphere is the source of the evil which saturates this room. The closer you move towards it, the harder it becomes for you to suppress the feeling of nausea and revulsion which you are currently experiencing.

Turn to **338**.

## 174

Instinctively you flatten yourself against the chamber wall in an attempt to avoid being hit by the spinning blade.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If your current ENDURANCE points score is higher than 20, add 2 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *0–3*, turn to **3**.
If it is *4* or higher, turn to **263**.

## 175

Reluctantly, as your Grand Mastery overcomes the magical shield placed upon this creature's mind to protect it from alien influence, the Vazhag stands aside and allows you to pass into the keep of Mogaruith.

The great flagstoned square echoes with the rhythmic thump of marching troops and the squealed commands of their Vazhag sergeants. By

means of a covered walkway you skirt around this busy plaza and make your way stealthily towards a staircase which descends to a grand portal set into the base of the stronghold's citadel.

You have reached the north side of the keep when you are unexpectedly confronted by three Cener druids, who turn a corner and come walking towards you in a line abreast. To avoid them you are forced to sidestep into a shadowy doorway.

Turn to **98**.

## 176

Swiftly you unshoulder your bow and draw an arrow to your lips. The straining bowstring bites into your fingertips as, with smooth precision, you take aim at the fleeing druid's back. The instant you fix upon his billowing scarlet robes, you release the bowstring and send your shaft speeding towards the nape of his neck.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Weaponmastery (with Bow), add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is *0–5*, turn to **232**.
If it is *6* or higher, turn to **317**.

## 177

Screams of 'Intruder!' echo from below as you run headlong towards the ladder. You reach it and begin your climb towards a secondary platform, located directly below the one which supports the winch.

You are only six rungs away from the platform when

suddenly the faces of two Acolytes of Vashna appear over the edge. They curse and spit on you as they try to stab you with their spears.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, and wish to use it, turn to **137**.

If you possess Magi-magic, and wish to use it, turn to **345**.

If you possess neither of these Grand Mastery Disciplines, or choose not to use them, turn to **86**.

## 178

You hide the bodies of your slain enemies as best you can before you leave the cavern. For more than five miles you follow the west tunnel and, despite your mounting fears, you encounter nothing more threatening than a few ragged-winged bats and a frightened rock snake. Gradually, as the tunnel delves deeper into the Skardos range, the air becomes increasingly cooler and more humid. You can smell the scent of water somewhere in the distance and you are not at all surprised when, as you round a bend in the tunnel, you see shimmering reflections playing upon the rough stone ceiling.

If you possess Telegnosis, turn to **67**.

If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **244**.

## 179

Using your Magnakai skills, you examine the keyhole and discover that the wall is in fact a concealed door. You attempt to pick the lock, but it is

shielded by a powerful spell which you cannot overcome.

Reluctantly, you are forced to abandon your efforts and retrace your steps to the top of the stairs. Once you arrive back at this point you continue your escape by taking the west passage.

Turn to **271**.

## 180

You duck to avoid the sweeping tendrils, then turn and begin to run towards the clearing. You have taken but a few steps when a barbed limb lashes out and rakes the back of your legs (lose 4 ENDURANCE points).

You cry out at the sudden pain and stumble to your knees, but quickly you regain your footing and manage to escape without sustaining further injury. Without looking back, you cross the clearing and press on towards the east.

Turn to **242**.

## 181

Nimbly you sidestep and dodge your way through the throng of rat-men who are gathered around the wagon in a frenzy of activity. One of the Vazhag runs across your path, forcing you to halt momentarily to avoid crashing into him. But before you can continue, another of his comrades steps back from the wagon and collides with you. Swiftly you grab the creature by the throat to stop it from warning its confederates, and then you drag it one-handedly towards the shadowy cavern wall.

Suddenly you feel something crawling up your forearm. A wave of revulsion knots your stomach when you see a mass of black fleas coursing up your arm, migrating from the neck of the frightened Vazhag. The ghastly sight makes you loosen your grip and allows the disease-ridden creature to squeal a desperate cry of help. As one, the guards respond to the cry. They draw their rusty weapons and narrow their tiny red eyes as they leave the wagon and advance upon you.

If you wish to stand and fight these Vazhag, turn to **313**.

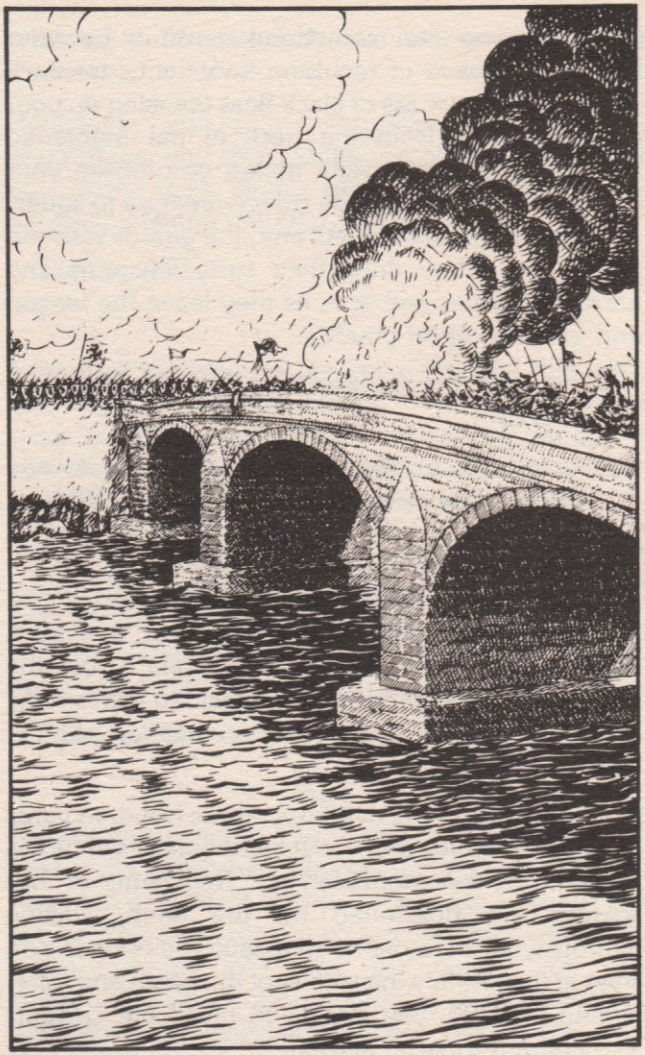
If you wish to evade them, you can escape through the open portal by turning to **204**.

**182** – *Illustration XI (overleaf)*

A fierce and bloody battle is raging upon the Ghardoz, the formidable stone bridge that joins together the lands of Ruel and Slovia across the River Storn. Its central span is wreathed with smoke and flame, and the approaches are heaped with the dead of both armies.

On the far side of the river, over three hundred yards away, you can see the scarlet battle banners of Slovia fluttering in the soot-laden air. Regiments of foot soldiers are positioned on the bank, waiting nervously for their orders to assault the bridge. You stare at the fast flowing waters of the Storn and, after careful thought, you decide to brave the currents and attempt to swim across.

You send your horse away into the forest and then wade into the icy waters. You are only waist-deep in



XI. On the Ghardoz, the formidable stone bridge joining the lands of Ruel and Slovia, a fierce and bloody battle rages.

the Storn when the currents catch you and swiftly bear you away downstream, towards the bridge and the battle. You are passing beneath the central span when suddenly a section of the parapet collapses, showering you with rocks and flame.

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

If your total score is *3* or lower, turn to **134**.
If it is *4* or higher, turn to **350**.

## 183

Seeking a safe place to surface, you swim slowly towards a pair of large, smooth-faced boulders that rest half-buried in the muddy shallows of the north bank. Here you break through the waist-deep water behind the nearest rock and catch your breath. A few moments later a snarling shriek echoes around the walls of the cave and a sudden chill courses down your spine; a Vazhag has seen you.

Blinking the water from your eyes, you focus on the screaming rat-thing which is leaning across the rope hand-rail of the bridge. Excitedly it jabs its spear at the boulder, directing the unwanted attention of its loathsome comrades to your hiding place. The Cener druid screams an order and, with a high-pitched cry, the Vazhag come racing back across the drawbridge, brandishing their rusty weapons. You glance about you for some means of escape but none appears. The only exit from the north bank is the tunnel and that can only be reached from the drawbridge.

As the first of the Vazhag leap from the bridge and land on the shore, you know that battle is imminent. You must make a swift decision if you are to survive this deadly encounter.

If you wish to dive into the lake and swim away, turn to **52**.

If you choose to stand and fight this Vazhag patrol, turn to **258**.

## 184

The creature finally overcomes your will but the exertion leaves it dizzy with exhaustion. Then you notice its bony hand is fumbling for a button which protrudes from the side of its desk. It is an alarm button.

If you possess a Bow and are able to use it, turn to **39**.

If you do not possess a Bow, or choose not to use it, turn to **251**.

## 185

You raise your right hand and call to mind the thoughts of the spell – Lightning Hand – as taught to you by Banedon, and focus the power of this spell upon the tips of your first three fingers. You feel a burning sensation and quickly it becomes almost unbearable: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

You are sorely tempted to abandon the spell, but quickly you stifle this urge and release it at the middle of the fleeing druid's back. There is a crackling sound, like the crumpling of dried leaves, then a bright blue light shoots from the tips of your fingers

and hits the Cener like a hammer between the shoulder blades, sending him sprawling head first into a tangle of thorny briars.

Stunned and groaning, the druid fumbles for his slender golden rod and quickly his spindly fingers locate it. However, before he can use it to retaliate, you sprint across the clearing, weapon in hand, and attack him as he lies on the ground.

Cener Druid (*prone*):
COMBAT SKILL 20 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **349**.

**186**

You are within twenty feet of the archway when suddenly a tremendous roar echoes around the hall. You start to run, hoping to make it through the arch and escape a confrontation, but almost immediately you are brought skidding to a halt by a terrifying sight.

Advancing from the alcove is a creature whose ghastly visage is the very stuff of nightmares. From its bear-like torso there protrude four tentacles and two powerful legs, all sheathed in shaggy scales. The limbs are surmounted with horny talons which glint menacingly, and its head, set with huge fishy eyes, is bulbous and disfigured by disease. It rests awkwardly upon a crooked neck which wobbles with every movement the lumbering beast makes. A livid crimson gash just below the eyes serves as its mouth, and a long tail with sharp spines swishes behind it, gouging furrows in the suface of the marble floor.

With surprising speed the beast is suddenly upon you, stabbing and slashing at your body with its sword-sharp talons.

Degradon: COMBAT SKILL 49 ENDURANCE 36

This creature is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge (but not Kai-surge).

If you win this combat, turn to **40**.

## 187

Instantly your bow is in your hand, an arrow fixed and drawn ready to fire. The Vazhag, no longer fearful now that its protector has arrived, moves away from the corner and issues a high-pitched command. The savage dog-like creature growls in response and you see its muscles tighten as it gets ready to leap for your throat.

If you wish to fire your bow at the growling dog-like creature, turn to **31**.
If you decide to fire at the Vazhag instead, turn to **157**.



## 188

The brilliance and the roar of the crackling fireball threatens to overpower your senses as it comes rushing towards your chest.

If you possess Grand Mastery, turn to **203**.
If you do not, turn to **299**.

## 189

For nearly an hour you follow this empty subterranean passage before your senses alert you to possible danger ahead. You can detect a musty, unwholesome smell that immediately reminds you of rotting vegetables. The further you advance into the darkness, the stronger this smell becomes.

If you wish to go no further in this direction, you can turn around and retrace your steps to the fissure, by turning to **332**.

If you choose to continue to explore this tunnel, turn to **16**.

## 190

As you force your way through the narrow thorny corridor, you are aware that the Vazhag are now streaming into the gap, close on your heels. In desperation, you turn and force your way into the wall of tangled briar and call upon your Kai mastery of camouflage to mask your location.

The rat-men scurry past. You hear them in the distance, burrowing deeper into the thicket, but still you remain exactly where you are. Your caution is well-placed for soon the Vazhag retrace their steps, having lost all trace of you.

The Cener blazes with anger at the failure of his minions to carry out such a simple command. With a flick of his rod you see him reduce one luckless rodent to ashes, and shorten the tail of another by a broadsword's length. Loudly he vents his displeasure and, among the oaths and vile curses, you hear him utter his intention to report to his master,

Arch Druid Cadak, that there is an enemy assassin at large in the forest.

You know that he must not be allowed to make his report. If he were to reach Mogaruith and raise the alarm, your mission, and probably your life, would soon be over.

If you possess a Bow and Arrows and wish to use them, turn to **104**.
If you possess mastery of Magi-Magic and wish to use it, turn to **144**.
If you possess Kai-alchemy and wish to use it, turn to **185**.
If you possess none of the above, or choose not to make use of them, turn to **90**.

## 191

The heavy chain whips towards your face, making you throw yourself to the floor in order to avoid decapitation. Unfortunately, your reactions are not swift enough to avoid being hit. The chain glances your shoulder, knocking you flat on your back with the force of its impact: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

You scramble to your feet quickly and advance to the edge of the platform from where you watch, with grim fascination, as the gigantic acid-filled cauldron plummets into the hall below.

Turn to **220**.

## 192

Using all your stealth and natural Kai agility, you inch your way up the rocky wall of the cavern towards the window-like gap. Your ascent goes undetected by

the Vazhag guards until, by mischance, your foot dislodges a pebble and sends it tumbling down to land, with a hollow *thok*, upon the head of a snoozing war-dog. The dog erupts with a savage howl and hurls itself bodily at the rock wall.

Its frenzied reaction alerts the Vazhag guards and, to your horror, you see them produce bows which they load hastily and aim at your back. Throwing caution aside, you climb towards the distant gap as quickly as your aching fingers will allow, hoping to reach it before the rat-men can open fire.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, turn to **326**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **145**.

## 193

While observing the entrance and the drawbridge for over an hour, you cannot help but notice that the flow of traffic is almost entirely in one direction: out of Mogaruith and away towards the east.

Occasionally a covered wagon, drawn by a team of ox-like Ghorkas and escorted by Vazhag with bandaged wounds, returns along the crowded trail and crosses the moat. The guards at the main arch do not appear to challenge these wagons; they are allowed to pass directly into the keep without slowing. You hazard a guess that they are carrying battle-wounded and you consider the possibility of getting into Mogaruith by stowing aboard the next one that appears.

If you wish to attempt to hide aboard the next wagon, turn to **34**.

*(continued over)*

If you decide instead to trust solely to your Kai skills and experience to gain entry to Mogaruith, turn instead to **318**.

**194**

From deep within your being you summon the psychic energy you need to construct a fortress around your mind. The evil wave crashes against this defence and breaks into a million shards that sparkle for an instant then disappear into darkness. Your psychic energy has saved you from this concerted assault upon your mind. Yet, even as the remnants of the psychic attack are fading, you sense another hostile entity is getting ready to appear.

From out of the black shadows of the pits you hear a dreadful rumbling roar: something huge is stirring deep within each of those dark forbidding shafts. As the ghoulish laughter reaches its pitch, you turn to see three giant, misshapen cat-like heads rise up into the light, each perched atop a snaky body as thick as the trunk of a tree. They bare their fangs and shake off the tangle of human bones that cling to their stinking, corpse-green manes.

The sight of these unholy creatures makes you reel back in shock and utter a cry of disbelief. Your cry is lost among the barrage of screeching howls, yet the cat-things react as if they hear it and, together, they come oozing out from their dark, noisome lairs and glide slowly towards where you stand.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-surge, turn to **80**.
If you do not possess this skill, turn to **38**.

## 195

Drawing upon your special skills and your reserves of physical strength, you pull your lower body out of the cold lake and slowly raise your knees up to your chin. The toes of your boots find footholds between the timbers and there you hold yourself, completely motionless, while your Grand Mastery of Assimilance causes your shadowy outline to blend in perfectly with the underside of the drawbridge.

The Vazhag scour the lake's edge thoroughly. They search beneath the bridge, passing within a few paces of your location and yet, despite their keen senses, they completely fail to notice you. Disappointedly, they report their lack of findings to their Cenerese commander before clambering back on to the platform. You hear the Cener and the remaining Vazhag trooping across the bridge. They stop just long enough to open the Tzarg cage and drag out one of the croaking creatures. Then the cage door squeaks shut, a key jangles in its lock, and briskly the party marches away along the south passage.

For a full minute you remain immobile until you are sure that the enemy have gone. Then you pull yourself up on to the bridge and, without looking back, you hurry across the lake and enter the tunnel on the north side of the cave.

Turn to **306**.

## 196

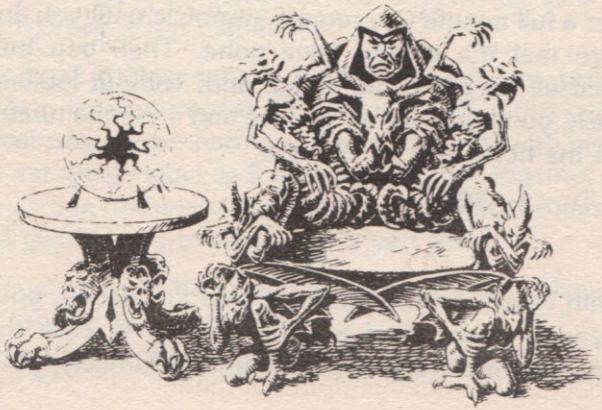
With bated breath you tiptoe past the alcove, your weapon unsheathed and held ready in case the sleeping creature should awaken. Fortunately, your

Kai skills serve you well and you are able to reach the archway and leave the hall without incident.

A short passage leads to a junction where a wider corridor crosses from left to right. Your skin prickles in reaction to the concentration of evil you detect in this subterranean part of Mogaruith, and silently you call upon your creator, the noble god Kai, for protection and guidance before continuing.

Instinct prompts you to turn left, and within a few minutes you arrive at a chamber where a vast staircase of black marble ascends to many levels, lost in the gloom above. Opposite this grand staircase stands a large door, carved from a solid sheet of strange green metal, the like of which you have never seen before. It gives off a pulsating radiance which washes over the empty chamber, illuminating symbols carved into the walls and floor. You focus on these symbols and, in a chilling moment of realization, you decipher their meaning.

Turn to **300**.



## 197

Your weapon strikes the creature's skull with deadly force and the shock of the impact lifts it high out of its hollowed stool. It crashes to the floor, where it wobbles back and forth grotesquely like a giant fleshy egg, before coming to rest on its side.

Turn to **23**.

## 198

Patiently you wait for the flickering light of the Vazhag's torches to be swallowed up by the dark depths of the south tunnel. When you are surrounded by total darkness once more, you leave your hiding place and venture back into the cavern. You are hungry and, unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

For more than five miles you follow the west tunnel and, despite your mounting fears, you encounter nothing more threatening than a few ragged-winged bats and a frightened rock snake. Gradually, as the tunnel delves deeper into the Skardos range, the air becomes increasingly cooler and more humid. You can smell a strong scent of water somewhere in the distance and you are not at all surprised when, as you round a bend in the tunnel, you see shimmering reflections playing upon the rough stone ceiling.

If you possess Telegnosis, turn to **67**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **244**.

## 199

The crackling stream of energy hits the Sommerswerd with a tremendous jolt that knocks you back

a few paces, yet you manage both to maintain your grip and to stay on your feet. The sun-sword absorbs the power directed against you and transfers part of that power through your hand and along your outstretched arm. The transmuted energy revitalizes and emboldens you, (restore 3 ENDURANCE points).

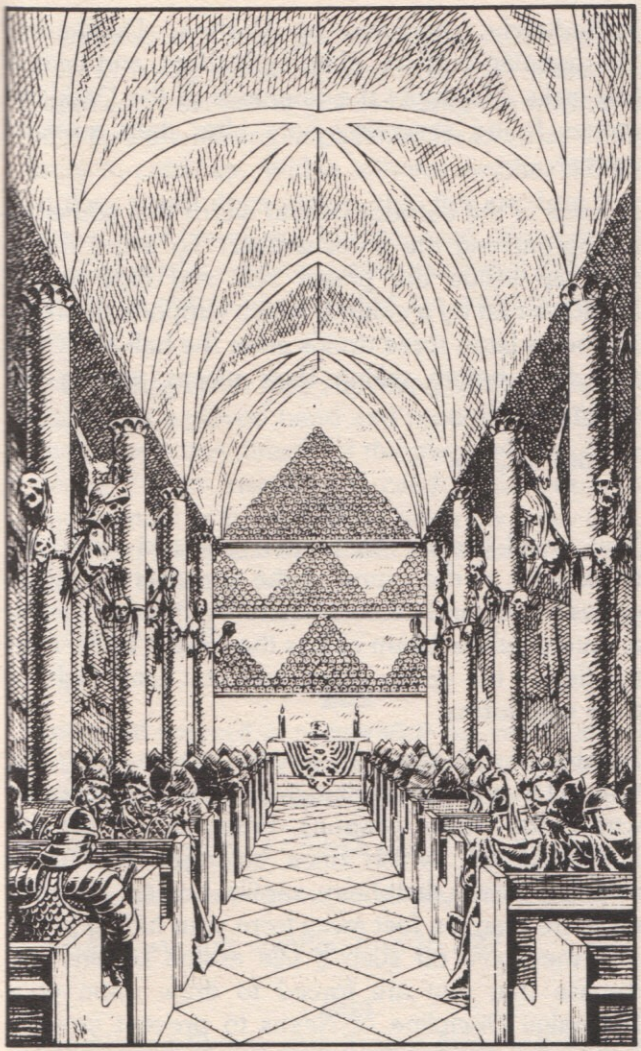
'For Sommerlund!' you cry, and cast this scabbard of sparkling energy back at the priest. Suddenly there is a tremendous flash, followed by a crackling roar as his golden rod is consumed in a blazing ball of flame. He screams as he is hurled backwards against the chamber wall by the force of the blast, then he falls to the floor where he lies completely motionless. You sheathe your sword and stare at his smouldering body, certain in the knowledge that he is no longer a threat.

Turn to **101**.

**200** – *Illustration XII*

Beyond the door lies a secret Cenerese prayer hall, a chapel of evil where the druids worship and make sacrifice to their foul gods. Kneeling in pews before a blood-red altar are dozens of figures. They chant a soulless dirge as they read from books bound in black cloth. Around the walls hang grim decorations: skulls, flayed skins, tattered battle banners, and other ugly tributes to the power that is worshipped and coveted here – the power of death, disease and decay.

You look with loathing at the congregation. In the main they are Cenerese, but there are others among them, old adversaries whose origins you recognize



XII. You look beyond the door into the secret Cenerese prayer hall where the druids worship and make sacrifice to their foul gods.

immediately. Acolytes of Vashna, Drakkarim, Vassagonian outlaws, Hammerlanders, and even a few giaks. No doubt the remnants of the Darkland armies found sanctuary here after their masters' demise.

A noise in the corridor behind warns that someone is approaching the antechamber. To avoid them, you slip inside the prayer hall and hide in the shadows cast by a column which supports the roof. Moments later, three druids enter the hall and close the door before taking their places among the congregation.

Turn to **265**.

**201**

You kneel beside the tunnel wall and wait with trepidation as the sound of the approaching group grows louder and nearer. Torchlight flickers, casting a watery yellow beam across the cavern floor, then the first of the group enters and you catch sight of their ugly forms.

A patrol of six Vazhag file into the cavern. Each one is as tall as a Sommlending youth and all are armed with crude, rusty weapons. Fragments of armour and uniforms, which once belonged to human soldiers, encase their hairy, rat-like bodies. They are no more than ten feet away from your hiding place, and they give off such a vile aroma of filth and disease that you are forced to draw upon your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to prevent yourself from retching out loud.

They halt at the foot of the stone stairs and talk with

each other in a high-pitched squeal which reminds you of rusty door hinges. All the while they repeatedly cast furtive glances along the west tunnel as if they are waiting impatiently for another of their party to catch up. Within minutes another member of their patrol does arrive, only this creature is not one of their breed: it is human-sized. However, the hooded scarlet robe it is wearing makes it difficult for you to be absolutely sure that the creature within is human.

The Vazhag cease their squealing when the hooded one raises a gloved hand and motions to the south tunnel, pointing directly at the place where you are hiding. For an instant, you catch a glimpse of the glassy green mask that is covering his face, and at once you recognize this mask: it is a jazak, the ritual mask of a Cener druid.

Turn to **348**.

## 202

You steel yourself in preparation for what can only be a fight to the death as maniacally the mass of limbs comes swarming towards your throat.

Stragnah: COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 39

This creature is immune to all psychic attacks.

If you win this combat, turn to **327**.

## 203

The blazing flames engulf your body but you feel no pain. Protected by the power of your Grand Mastery, the hungry fire feels no hotter than a

summer's breeze. You laugh as you luxuriate in its warmth, to the angry frustration of your would-be killer.

Turn to **17**.

## 204

With the angry squeals of the Vazhag patrol ringing in your ears, you race through the portal and escape along the winding passageway beyond. For nearly a mile you run without slowing until you turn a corner and are brought skidding to a halt by an unwelcome sight: a group of rat-men advancing along the passageway towards you. Although you have gradually out-distanced your pursuers, the sound of their squealing reminds you that they are still hot on your trail.

Trapped between the two approaching enemy patrols, you look in vain for some other means of escape.

If you wish to use your Kai skills to try to hide from the approaching Vazhag, turn to **82**.

If you decide to ambush the oncoming patrol in an attempt to break through them and escape before your pursuers arrive, turn to **62**.

## 205

You follow a circular tunnel for several minutes until you come to a flight of steps leading down. Here, a few paces before the steps begin, you see a plain wooden door which is set into the tunnel wall. An inquisitive prod with the toe of your boot reveals it to be unlocked.

If you wish to investigate what lies behind the door, turn to **239**.

If you choose to ignore the door and descend the steps instead, turn to **347**.

## 206

Dawn breaks and the sun appears through a rent in the ominous mass of grey cloud that is swirling overhead. You stop and tilt back your head to enjoy the warmth of its life-giving rays upon your face. It is a brief respite, for within minutes the clouds close ranks and you find yourself immersed once more in the forest's gloom.

During the night the track has led you out of the valley and up a steady rise towards a plateau where a jutting spur of slate-grey rock stands surmounted by a score of lightning-blasted trees. There, in the shadow of the rock, your eagle-eyes detect three dark pits which have been dug side by side. You cannot see what lies at the bottom of these excavations, but you can sense that they radiate a powerful aura of evil.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Divination in order to detect any psychic residues which may be lingering at this site, turn to **111**.

If you decide not to use this ability, turn to **32**.

## 207

You focus your power at the Tzarg and will it to leave the hall along the passage by which you entered. At first you sense resistance to your command but this soon collapses and the Tzarg obeys. It waddles into

the passageway with an excited group of Vazhag close on its heels, all of them now convinced by the Tzarg's reaction that it has picked up your trail.

Patiently you wait until the sound of their footsteps has faded before you emerge from your hiding place and leave the hall by the stairs.

Turn to **75**.

## 208

You notice a flicker of suspicion register in the creature's eye.

'The Arch Druid is not present in his chamber at this hour,' he says, reaching once more for his quill. 'Dictate your report to me and I shall see that he receives it this day.'



You approach the desk and, as you draw closer, you see that the creature has no legs. Its body rests in a crevice hollowed out from the seat of its stool. Its bulbous body is wedged there like an egg in a cup.

Carefully it charges its pen with ink and prepares to commence writing.

'Report your news, brother,' it says, impatiently, 'I am waiting for you to begin.'

If you choose to attack the creature, turn to **310**.
If you decide to try and bluff your way past, turn to **108**.

## 209

Calling upon your Grand Mastery, you order the vicious war-dogs to cease their attack immediately. Instantly they obey your psychic command; they scrabble to a halt and turn their eyes to the floor, their once-chilling howls now little more than a weak chorus of kitten-like whimpers.

Having cowed them, you now use your power to redirect their latent aggression against their masters and, suddenly, they are transformed once more into a host of gnashing, snarling beasts. Horror fills the eyes of the Vazhag guards as their dogs turn around and come bounding towards them, hungry for the kill.

In the ensuing chaos, you skirt around the hall and escape through the entrance unchallenged. For a moment you are blinded by the early morning sunlight which illuminates the surrounding hills, but, as you escape along the trail which leads away from the caverns, your vision clears and you see a vast expanse of forest away to the east. This sea of sickly grey-green trees radiates an unmistakable aura of evil that immediately identifies it as the Forest of Ruel.

[continued over]

Your escape is not pursued and, after a few minutes, you stop among a cluster of boulders in order to catch your breath. The surrounding land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being the track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the unwelcoming forest. You consult your map and conclude that this is the Skardos trail, the secret route used by the Ceners which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 210

The Vazhag literally shiver with fright. Frantically they acknowledge your order and set off towards Mogaruith, with you following close behind, but they have only gone a little way when suddenly they drop the zombie's chain and flee headlong towards the forest.

If you possess a Bow and a minimum of two Arrows, turn to **43**.
If you do not, turn to **89**.

## 211

The flame-creature seems to swell and contract, as if it is inhaling and exhaling a huge lungful of air, then suddenly a wall of blinding white light erupts before your eyes as a blast of psychic energy comes crashing into your mind. You reel from the unexpected shock of its impact, but instantly your

Kai senses react by erecting defences to shield you from the onslaught: lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

An unholy screech, full of fear and frustration, echoes loudly in your ears. The flame-thing has detected that you are capable of defending yourself and this realization is far from its liking. For a few fleeting seconds it whirls around your head, and then, with a final howl of anguish, it dives away into the gloomy depths of the stairwell and is gone.

Disappointedly, the caged creatures watch the flame-thing depart before they shuffle dejectedly to the rear of their cells and settle themselves down once more. Shaken, but relatively unharmed by your psychic encounter, you stare down the stone staircase into the gloom below. Tentatively you put one foot forward, but your Kai skills and your common sense tell you that to go any further in this direction would be sheer foolhardiness. With reluctance you turn and leave this landing and retrace your steps all the way back to the junction where you continue instead by way of the north tunnel.

Turn to **85**.

## 212

You draw your weapon and attack the druid with lightning speed, but this Cener is more of a match than he first appears. In the blink of an eye he creates a magical shield which deflects your initial blow, causing you to stumble and nearly overbalance. As you recover you feel a wave of psychic energy washing over your mind and, for an instant, you see his cold eyes widen with shock as he discovers who you really are.

**213**

He screams a curse and suddenly there is a dagger in his hand, its blade a yellow spike of fiery luminescence. He lunges at your throat, forcing you to retreat into the room as he stabs and slices the air with this sorcerous weapon.

High Priest: COMBAT SKILL 47 ENDURANCE 30

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

If you win the combat, turn to **340**.

**213**

At first the Vazhag and the Cener seem unaware of your presence and you feel confident that your Kai skills are keeping your location secure. However, just as they are about to leave the cavern and head off towards the south tunnel, the Cener suddenly spins around and points directly at your hiding place.

'Scarzh – nah!' he screams, and with such vehemence that you are left in no doubt that you have been detected.

The Vazhag draw their weapons and rush towards the steps in response to their leader's cry. The sudden danger galvanizes you into action and, like a panther hungry for the kill, you spring to your feet and leap among the onrushing rat-men, striking down the two nearest with one wide, sweeping blow. Before they have fallen you kick out at the chest of another and feel its ribs crack under the impact. A side-swipe puts paid to a fourth of their number, neatly parting its disease-riddled head from its shoulders and, as you pause to draw breath, you see the remaining enemy backing away in shocked confusion.

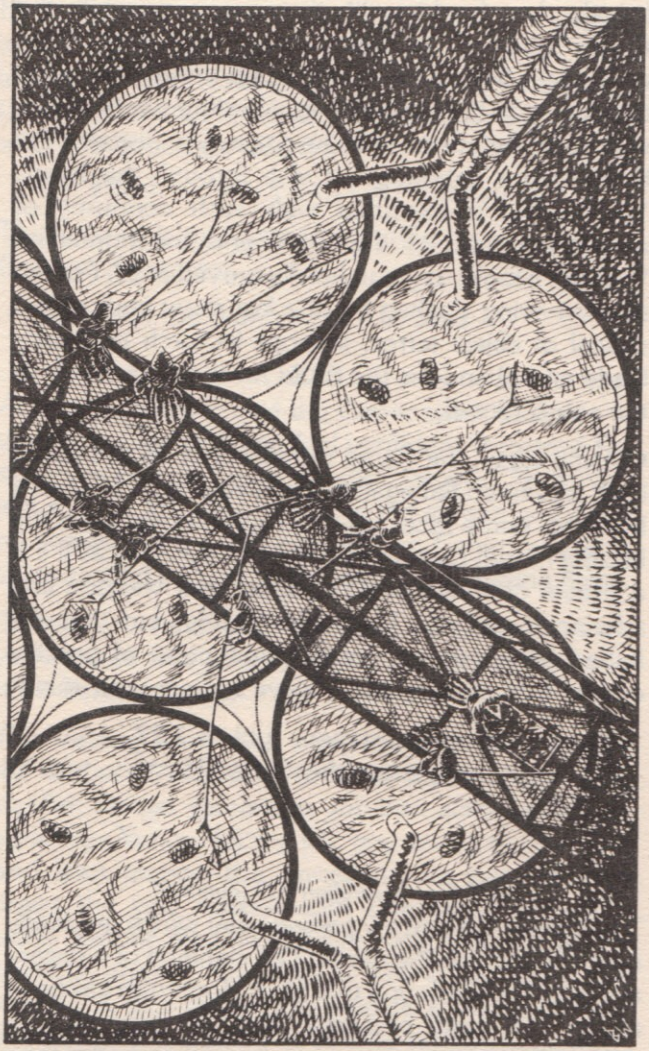
Ineptly they fumble with their weapons while the Cener screams at them to avenge their slain comrades. One Vazhag plucks up enough courage to attack you but you duck its whistling sword stroke with ease. Before it can strike again, you dispatch the beast with a lightning-fast stab through the heart. Your strike is executed with such economy of movement that, to the druid and the remaining Vazhag, it looks as if you hardly moved at all. For the sole surviving Vazhag it is the last straw and, with a squeal of abject terror, it drops its torch and rusty blade and abandons the druid for the dark safety of the south tunnel.

Cursing vilely, the Cener retreats until his red-robed back is pressed flat against the cavern wall. His mask hides his entire face, yet even so you can sense the blazing hatred that is pouring from his eyes, as if it is a stream of liquid fire. You raise your weapon and advance, eager to finish him swiftly, but you are halted by a sudden, unexpected pulse of psychic energy that crashes like a wave against your mind.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **107**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **272**.

**214** — *Illustration XIII (overleaf)*

You follow the narrow passageway which gradually ascends towards the north. The clanging of a distant alarm bell reminds you that all of Mogaruith has been alerted to your presence and, in light of the devastation you have caused, you know better than to expect mercy from the Cenerese if they should catch you now.



XIII. You stare down at the base of the shaft where huge vats filled with a sickly brown fluid bubble and seethe.

After a few minutes the passage arrives at a hall where a railed balcony overlooks a deep circular shaft. A broad stone staircase at the north wall ascends to the next level and you stride swiftly towards it. As you pass the balcony you pause for a moment to stare down at a fascinating sight. Hundreds of feet below, at the base of the shaft, huge vats filled with a sickly brown fluid bubble and seethe as if they are boiling on a hob. You notice scores of robed druids standing on a great iron gantry suspended above these vats, each one equipped with what appears to be a gigantic butterfly net. They are busily scooping up large brown objects which keep bobbing to the surface of the morass. You use your Magnakai skills to magnify your vision and, as the scene looms larger, you see that the objects are alive. Your stomach churns with revulsion when you suddenly realize what it is that you are looking at. These are the spawning vats in which the Ceners create their loathsome, disease-ridden Vazhag.

A noise from the staircase attracts your attention; it is the sound of shuffling footfalls descending the stairs. Moments later your keen sense of smell identifies the threat: a Vazhag patrol is hurrying towards the hall.

If you wish to attempt to hide from this patrol, turn to **8**.

If you decide to stand and fight them, turn to **262**.

## 215

You spit out the words of a Brotherhood spell and instantly you rise into the sky, as if plucked off the ground by some invisible giant. The crackling ray

speeds past below your feet and explodes harmlessly among the ancient rocks. As the dust settles, you arrest your levitation and lower yourself back towards the ground, your muscles tense in readiness to run as soon as your boots touch down.

The druid is visibly stunned by your display of magic. However, he quickly recovers his senses, and as soon as you return to the ruins he shouts at his Vazhag minions, commanding them to attack and rip you to shreds.

With hatred blazing in their blood-red eyes, the Vazhag advance towards the ancient ruins, each carrying a rusty weapon poised for the kill.

If you wish to stand and fight these disease-ridden Vazhag, turn to **25**.

If you decide to attempt to evade them, turn to **279**.

## 216

The sound of scraping metal and rattling chains echoes in your ears. You stoop to retrieve your weapon and, as you spin around, the first thing you see is the knife-like glint of fangs. From a semi-circular hole in the wall a pack of war-dogs come charging into the hall, their jaws agape and their claws scrabbling on the shiny flagstones as they race towards the desk. With the cool battle-confidence of a Grand Master you brace yourself in readiness to meet their attack.

Ruel war-dogs:
COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 22

If you win this combat, turn to **323**.

## 217

The glass orb explodes on impact with a loud bang and you are engulfed by a cloud of sickly grey gas. At once you feel your throat tighten and your stomach churn as the deadly bacteria-infested vapour penetrates deep into your lungs: lose 5 ENDURANCE points.

Coughing and retching, you stagger towards the entrance, your escape hidden by the cloud of poisonous gas. You have inhaled a deadly cocktail of plague viruses to which the Vazhag are naturally immune, a cocktail which would have killed an average human within seconds; only your Magnakai skills have saved you from an agonizing death.

In the ensuing chaos, you escape through the entrance unchallenged. For a moment you are blinded by the early morning sunlight which illuminates the surrounding hills but, as you stumble along the trail which leads away from the caverns, your vision clears and you catch sight of a vast expanse of forest away to the east. This sea of sickly grey-green trees gives off an unmistakable aura of evil that immediately identifies it as the Forest of Ruel.

Your escape is not pursued and, after a few minutes, you stop among a cluster of boulders in order to catch your breath. The surrounding land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being the track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the unwelcoming forest.

**218**

You consult your map and conclude that this is the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow that trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

**218**

The wagon is filled with the bodies of dead soldiers – human soldiers – all of whom have perished from the effects of a virulent disease. They have been stripped of weapons and armour but their tunics bear a scarlet crest emblazoned with a black stallion, readily identifying them as Slovians. Several have minor wounds caused by tiny fragments of glass. The wounds are a tell-tale sign that these troops were killed by narbul bombs: spheres of glass filled with a mixture of explosive and deadly plague spores. They have become one of the most feared battlefield weapons used by the Cenerese against the Freeland armies.

As the wagon trundles across the drawbridge you ponder why the Vazhag should be transporting a wagonload of dead Slovian soldiers to Mogaruith. Before you can fathom an answer, the wagon passes through the great arch and comes to a halt on the north side of the stronghold's keep, close to an open doorway. Before the Vazhag disembark, you leap from the wagon and hide just inside this shadowy entrance to avoid being seen.

Turn to **98**.

## 219

Your killing blow decapitates the monstrous lake creature, sending its vile head, with its fanged jaws still clashing madly, spinning through the air to splash into the foam-flecked waters close to the platform. For a few moments the weaving neck, its scaly stump oozing reptilian gore, thrashes the surface before it, too, is swallowed up by the cold dark waters of this underground lake.

Aching and breathless, you sheathe your weapon, then wipe the spatterings of Dholdaarg blood from your face with the back of your trembling hand. The Tzargs, who were silent throughout your titanic struggle with the lake monster, now rattle the bars of their cage and croak incessantly. You recognize their crude language enough to realize that their captors are returning. However, before you can act on their warning, a shudder runs through the timbers of the drawbridge and you are forced to grip tightly with both hands as jerkily it begins to descend.

Inexorably the bridge approaches the platform, inching you nearer and nearer to the cold, blood-stained waters of the lake.

If you wish, you can leap for the shore of the lake before the drawbridge fully descends, by turning to **96**.

If you choose to remain where you are, clinging to the underside of the bridge, turn to **112**.

## 220

The cauldron smashes down into the centre of the hall and explodes with devastating effect, spewing its deadly contents in all directions. A tidal wave of acid

engulfs the tables, submerging and burning everything not made of stone, porcelain or glass. The pitiful screams of the druids rise above the thunderous din as they and their deadly work are consumed by a merciless sea of corrosive.

Suddenly an arrow passes within a few inches of your face. The Vazhag archers have reached the top of the ladder and are poised to rush on to the platform itself. Anxiously you look around for some means of escape, but when none readily appears you fear you are trapped. Then you notice an observation platform jutting out of the wall. It is over on the far side of the hall, more than thirty yards away, and lies some ten feet below your present position.

A daring escape plan forms in your mind's eye and hurriedly you cast off your Cener Robe and Mask, a disguise which is now redundant, and prepare to enact your vision (erase the Robe and Mask from your *Action Chart*). You reach out and grab hold of the chain which once supported the cauldron. Then, using all your strength, you draw it back and leap into the air as the momentum carries you off the platform.

Your stomach churns as you swing across the hall and glance down at the dreadful carnage taking place a hundred feet below. Angry squeals and a clutch of arrows follow in your wake as the Vazhag archers try desperately to prevent you from getting away. Grimly you cling to the chain as it nears the end of its arc, and try to ignore the arrows that are whistling by on either side.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If

you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 2 to the number you have chosen. If your current ENDURANCE score is 28 or higher, add 1.

If your total score is now *0–2* turn to **42**.
If it is *3–6*, turn to **267**.
If it is *7* or higher, turn to **71**.

## 221

There is a moment of terror when first you glimpse the hideous visage which emerges from the portal. It is of a gigantic hound with mad red eyes that burn into your mind with a furnace-like intensity. It sees you and howls ferociously, baring yellow fangs dripping with foam.

Before it can leap up you release your arrow and plant it deep into the creature's ghastly skull. The beast roars as the arrow penetrates its head but the wound does not stop it from attacking. Aghast, you drop your bow and unsheathe a weapon to meet its assault. Moments before it strikes, you glimpse the outline of an armoured warrior standing in the open doorway. He is shouting at the beast, commanding it to rip you to shreds.

Plague hound (*wounded*):
COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 36

This creature is attacking you simultaneously with a powerful psychic blast. Unless you possess the Grand Mastery of Kai-screen, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 3 for the duration of this fight.

If you win the combat in 4 rounds or less, turn to **64**.

If the combat lasts 5 rounds or longer, turn to **114**.

**222** – *Illustration XIV*

You spin around to see a figure standing in the doorway. He is tall and his sharp features are framed by a mane of flowing platinum hair. In his left hand he carries a wizard's staff and in his right he holds a feathered quill, the pen of the creature who was once his scribe.

'Was it you who murdered Cordask?' he asks, his powerful voice devoid of the slightest emotion. But when you do not answer him immediately his voice and his expression undergo a dramatic change. His eyes radiate an unearthly glow and your skin tingles as you feel his psychic energies probing at your mind.

'You are not a brother,' he growls, like a rabid dog, and casts the quill aside.

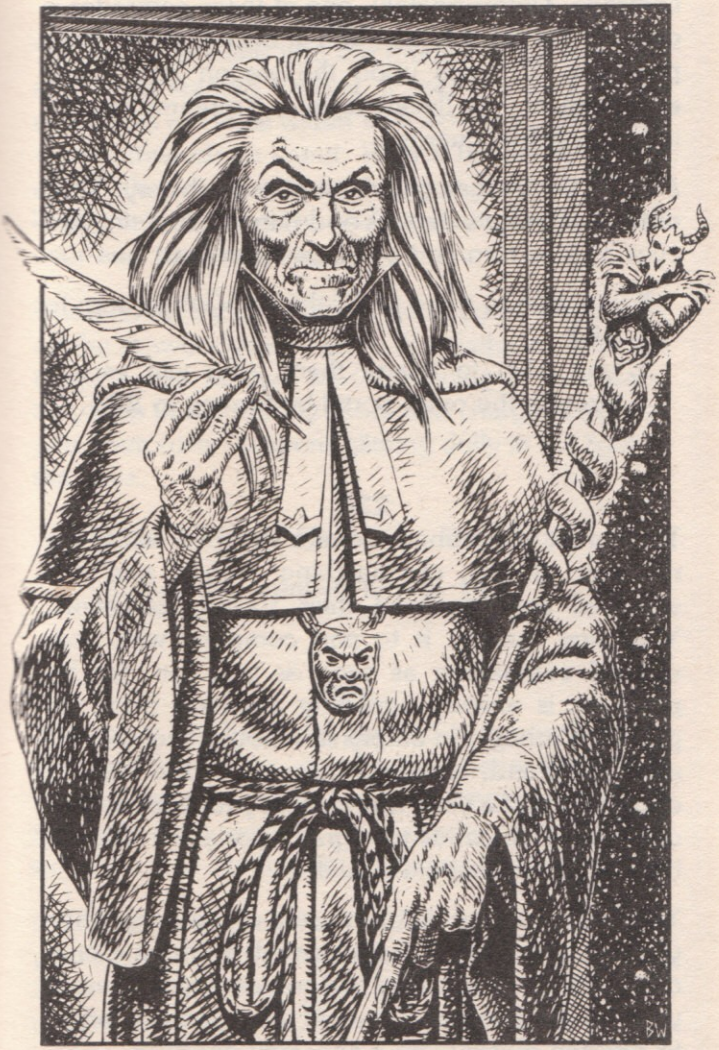
'Take off your mask and show your true self . . . assassin!'

And with that he advances towards you with his staff pointing straight at your heart. You raise your weapon defensively and, in the blink of an eye, a crackling flame lights at the tip of his staff and comes roaring towards your chest.

If you possess the Sommerswerd, turn to **61**.
If you do not possess this Special Item, turn to **188**.

**223**

You set off towards the open portal whilst the rat-men gather inquisitively around their injured



XIV. A tall figure with a mane of flowing platinum hair stands in the doorway.

comrade. Unforturnately, one of these comrades is gifted in the psychic arts, and at once it senses your presence. It jumps upon the wagon and points accusingly at your fleeing form as it screams a warning to its fellow guards.

As one, the Vazhag guards respond to the cry. They draw their rusty weapons and narrow their tiny red eyes as they turn and advance upon you.

If you wish to stand and fight the Vazhag, turn to **313**.

If you wish to evade them, you can escape through the open portal by turning to **204**.

## 224

The great flagstoned square echoes with the rhythmic thump of marching troops and the squealed commands of their Vazhag sergeants. Your first concern is to part company with your undead companion as soon as you can, for his presence is already attracting attention from the passing Vazhag. An empty storehouse becomes his new home and, after you have paused to bolt the door, you make your way stealthily towards a staircase which descends to a grand portal set into the base of the stronghold's citadel.

You have reached the north side of the keep when you are unexpectedly confronted by three Cener druids, who turn a corner and come walking towards you in a line abreast. To avoid them you are forced to sidestep quickly into a shadowy doorway.

Turn to **98**.

## 225

You dig your heels into the muddy shore and take aim at the leading Vazhag. It sees you and, for an instant, its red eyes widen with horror as your shaft speeds towards its snout. With a hollow '*thok*' the arrow skewers the beast's scrawny throat, lifts it bodily from the bridge and sends it toppling end-over-end into the lake.

Undeterred, the remaining Vazhag come thundering off the drawbridge and on to the platform. With the magic curses of their leader echoing in their ears, they leap to the muddy shore and charge straight at you, their rusty weapons glinting dully in the light of the cave.

Vazhag: COMBAT SKILL 23 ENDURANCE 23

If you win this combat, turn to **142**.

## 226

You focus on the metal pin and summon forth all your psychic power, condensing it and directing it towards this piece of iron in an attempt to disrupt its structure from within. Faint cracks appear in its surface as the bombardment exacts its toll.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If your current ENDURANCE score is *25* or higher, add 2 to the number you have picked. If your ENDURANCE score is *15* or lower, deduct 2.

If your total score is now *3* or less, turn to **328**. If it is *4* or higher, turn to **141**.

227

Mindful of how near you have just come to being detected, you hurry to the section of wall from where the druid appeared and search for a way to make it open once more. You discover a lever and, within seconds of pulling it, the concealed panel glides inwards allowing you access to a secret passage.

The narrow passageway descends by steps and slopes to a chamber which is lit by two large black candles, fixed into holes in the surface of a marble slab. On a nearby table lie the following items:

2 Arrows
Enough food for 2 Meals
2 Daggers
1 Sword
Mirror
Rope

If you wish to take any of these items, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Opposite the slab there is a door which opens into a narrow corridor. You step through and follow this corridor to a room where stands an imposing door made of sheeted copper, inlaid with a filigree of gold and silver. It is the only exit from an otherwise drab and gloomy chamber.

A closer inspection of the door reveals that it is surrounded by an airtight seal. Furthermore, there is no keyhole, drawbolt, or handle. However, your keen eyesight is drawn to a pattern in the door's centre panel which, thanks to past experience, you recognize to be a sophisticated combination lock.

The gold inlays form three rows of three numbers within a grid of silver lines.



Below these numbers, in ancient Cenerese script, is carved the message:

'Declare ye the true number to pass this way'

Study the grid of numbers. When you think you know the answer to the riddle, turn to the entry which bears the same number as your answer. If you cannot solve this puzzle, turn to **132**.

## 228

Shortly before midnight, you and the Captain ride out of Stonewatch on two fine Slovarian steeds. It is another moonless night and the plain is shrouded by darkness, yet you have no difficulty in seeing the terrain that lies ahead. Using your natural Magnakai skill of Huntmastery, every flowing contour of the grassy plain is revealed to you. The Captain is not so

gifted, but the special spectacles he wears fully compensate for his lack of night vision. They were a token of gratitude from the Arch-Chief of Chaman for his services in defence of the city of Gleesh during the war against the Darklords, and often they have been of use to the Captain when scouting his country's border with Ruel.

In less than an hour you arrive at a grassy knoll which overlooks the dense, forbidding wall of trees that is the Forest of Ruel. You are dismounting when something causes you to halt mid-way. You perceive a scent being carried on the night air: it is the heavy, cloying stench of decay.

'There is great evil here,' says the Captain, observing your reaction. 'You would not be thought faint-hearted were you to return with me to Stonewatch.'

'I will return to your fortress, Captain,' you reply, your voice quietly resolute, 'but not until my task at Mogaruith has been completed.'

The Captain smiles and raises his steely hand in a salute to your brave determination. 'Very well, my lord. So be it. Until that glad day dawns I shall pray for your safety and success.'

Then he brings his horse about, takes yours by the reins, and bids you a final farewell before heading back to Stonewatch. 'May the gods watch over you and deliver us swiftly from the darkness of Mogaruith.'

You return his salute and watch as he gallops away with your steed in tow. Then, when finally he disappears, you turn to observe the gloomy forest

perimeter. At first, the tangle of underbrush and trees appear to be so interwoven that they form an impregnable wall. Yet, at length, you see that there are two points where entry is possible. The first is where a sickly stream emerges from the forest to feed a stagnant, scum-encrusted pond; the second is where a tree has fallen and torn a hole in the thorny briars.

If you wish to enter the Forest of Ruel by way of the stream, turn to **155**.

If you choose to enter through the gap created by the fallen tree, turn to **84**.

## 229

The inquisitive Tzarg passes within a few feet of your hiding place, but your Magnakai skills save you from detection. Eventually it waddles into the passageway from which you entered the hall and hurries off with an excited group of Vazhag close on its heels, all of them now convinced by the Tzarg's actions that it has picked up your trail.

Patiently you wait until the sound of their footsteps has faded before you emerge from your hiding place and leave the hall by the stairs.

Turn to **75**.

## 230

Using your camouflage skills to mask your passage, you enter the forest and follow the track into the deepening gloom. Your senses come alive to the evil that permeates every root and branch of this forbidding place and, as darkness closes in, your fears are heightened by a sickly mist which seeps out of the

ground. Its corpse-like chill leaves you shivering, despite all your efforts to shield yourself from its clammy touch.

You are a Grand Master and night no longer restricts your vision. As the track ascends towards a wooded peak, you see the outline of a ruined stone watch-tower perched atop a rocky knoll. You sense that the tower is deserted and, keen to escape from the mist, you climb towards a crack in its granite base. You crouch to enter the jagged breach and, in doing so, you disturb a host of crab-creatures nesting within. In a frenzy they scuttle away from the tower, disappearing among the surrounding rocks in the blink of an eye.

Aching with fatigue, and mindful of the perils which still lie ahead, you settle yourself into a corner of the rubble-strewn tower and try to snatch a few hours of sleep. This night your slumber is disturbed by strange and unwholesome dreams, formed from the fears suppressed by your conscious mind. You are hunted by phantom shapes which take the form of friends and fellow countrymen. Kai initiates under your tutorage and simple Sommlending folk, their heads bowed and their faces pitted and disfigured by plague, drift past you in a seemingly endless procession.

You awake with a start, your pulse racing and your forehead glistening with beads of sweat. At first a sense of hopelessness washes over you, brought on by the vivid memory of your nightmare, but as your consciousness returns, so too does your inner strength. You perceive the dreams as a warning of what will happen should your quest fail, and this

realization strengthens your resolve to reach Mogaruith and thwart the Cener's evil plan.

You have slept for several hours and, physically at least, you feel refreshed (restore 3 ENDURANCE points). In the half-light of early morning you gather together your equipment and weapons in readiness to resume your perilous journey to Mogaruith.

Turn to **160**.

## 231

An agonizing pain shoots up your left leg, forcing a scream from your lips. With fearful trepidation you glance down and see that a Vazhag arrow has found its mark. The shaft has skewered your calf: lose 5 ENDURANCE points.

You draw upon your healing skills to deaden the searing pain just long enough so that you can reach down and snap the arrowhead from the shaft. Then, as swiftly as you can, you withdraw the shaft and cast it down into the hall.

A wave of nausea leaves you trembling, but the sensation soon passes and, aided by your determination and your healing skills, you force yourself to resume the ascent towards the winch.

Turn to **103**.

## 232

Your arrow misses its mark and arcs harmlessly into the trees, allowing the druid to effect a hasty escape along the forest track. Cursing your luck, you run across the clearing and give chase.

**233**

You have been on his trail for less than a mile when you sense danger ahead. The druid has managed to reach another patrolling pack of Vazhag, much larger than his own escort, this one led by six of the druid's brethren. He informs them of your presence and, using their corrupted form of herbcraft, they cause the undergrowth to close in upon you and hold you prisoner. Marshalling all your skills, you manage to cut your way free of its grip, but not before the druids have mustered reinforcements from Mogaruith.

They attack you mercilessly with the full might of their evil craft. Courageously, you defy them, but their combined power is far greater than even a Grand Master can withstand. With the name of your gods and your country on your lips, you finally meet your doom here in the Forest of Ruel.

**233**

Walking across the age-blackened drawbridge towards the spiky arched tower of Mogaruith is an unnerving experience. It is as if you are walking along a blackened tongue towards the gaping throat of some gigantic dragon. On either side the bubbling moat releases foul fumes which fill your nostrils with a terrible sugary stench that clogs your lungs and blurs your vision. You draw upon your Magnakai skills and your vision clears, but the sight which lies ahead looks no more inviting than it did before.

At the tower you are challenged by a troop of Vazhag guards. Using your Magnakai Disciplines of Animal Control and Pathsmanship to aid your deception, you inform them that you have come to

deliver the zombie to Brother Croumah at the Hall of Sacrifice. Immediately, the guards scurry aside, bowing subserviently as they part to allow you entry to the great keep of Mogaruith.

Turn to **224**.

## 234

You insert the gleaming key into the keyhole and twist it clockwise. There is a faint click and, as you push, the wall glides inwards then moves away to your right. It reveals a small well-kept chamber, its walls lined with shelves containing hundreds of stoppered jars, each one neatly labelled.

The jars contain all manner of compounds and elements, from worthless dirt to precious gold dust, and many herbs besides. You search along the shelves and take down half a dozen jars whose contents you recognize:

LAUMSPUR (Enough for 5 doses) Restores 4 ENDURANCE points when swallowed after combat.

ALETHER (Enough for 4 doses) Increases COMBAT SKILL by 2 points for duration of one fight only.

GALLOWBRUSH (Enough for 2 doses) Induces 10 hours' sleep and loss of 2 ENDURANCE points per dose.

SABITO (Enough for 2 doses) Enables user to breathe underwater.

LAUMWORT (Enough for 3 doses) Restores 2 ENDURANCE points if swallowed before or after combat.

OEDE (Enough for 1 dose) Very rare and valuable. Many healing properties. Cures serious diseases.

If you wish to keep one or more of the above jars, remember to record your choice on your *Action Chart*. All of these jars are Backpack Items.

Apart from the secret door by which you entered, you notice that there is a narrow passageway which leads out of this room.

If you wish to leave the room by this passageway, turn to **214**.
If you wish to leave by the secret door and retrace your steps all the way back to the west passage, turn to **271**.

## 235

Your arrow strikes the druid in the back and its tip skewers his evil heart. He takes a few faltering steps, then raises his arms and vents his death cry before collapsing into the undergrowth.

You run to where he has fallen and, as you reach his lifeless body, the Vazhag pack appear, alerted by his scream. The moment they see you, standing over their leader like a hunter over his kill, their nerve appears to crumble. They lower their weapons and begin to edge away. Then the leading rat-men panic; they turn and run, and the others quickly follow suit, leaving you alone with the body of the dead druid spreadeagled at your feet.

Curiosity prompts you to prise away the druid's green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in

shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (if kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 236

Your powerful psychic defences shield you from this mind scan as it passes over your body. The light, reflecting from the Cener Mask you are wearing, activates a sensor in the door and, as you walk forward, slowly it begins to slide open.

Turn to **150**.

## 237

You race after the fleeing druid and catch up with him less than fifty yards along the path. In des-

peration, he tries to cut you down with another blast of energy but your swift reflexes save you from being hit. A well-placed blow knocks the rod from his hand and deflects the blast away into the trees. Cursing you, he unsheathes a dagger and lunges at your heart.

Cener Druid: COMBAT SKILL 28 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **53**.

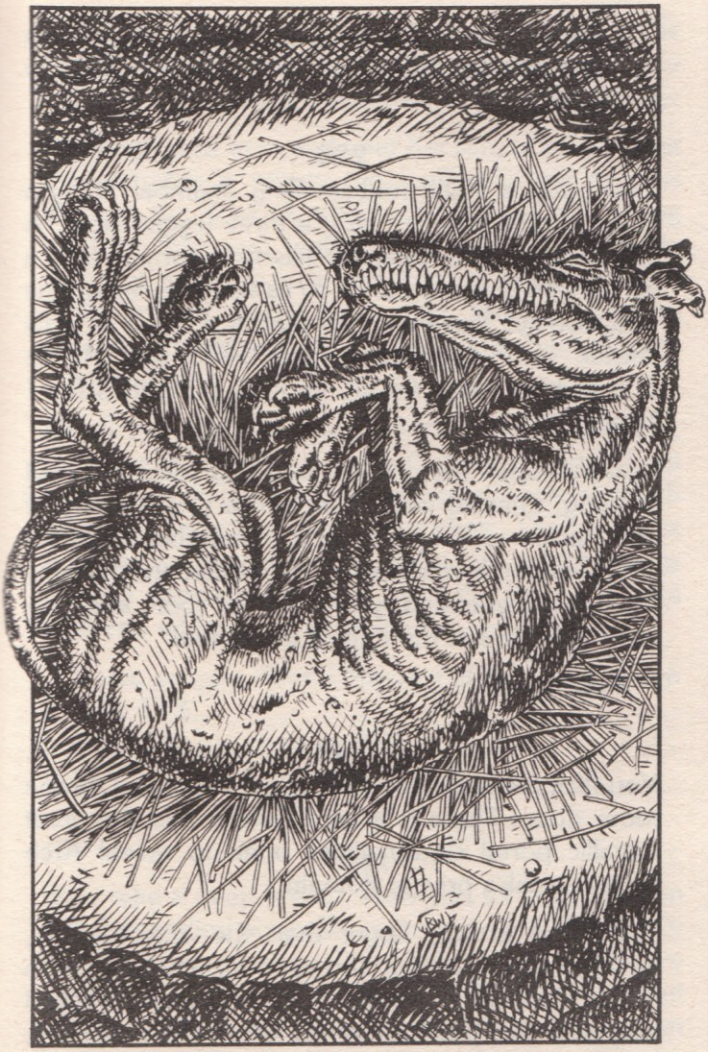
**238** – *Illustration XV*

You draw aside the mouldy velvet curtain and at once your senses are assailed by an unwholesome aroma redolent of decaying flesh. Beyond the curtain a narrow passage descends, by means of a wooden ramp, to the edge of a dark circular pit. Cautiously you approach the rim and peer down into this reeking hollow. There, lying asleep on a mouldering bed of straw, ten feet below, is a gigantic dog-like creature. It has a shiny blue-black hide and a huge crocodile-like jaw. It is muscular, although its powerful limbs are scarred and pitted with an unsightly disease.

A few thin rays of light are descending from a shaft in the rocky ceiling directly above the pit. Intrigued, you look upwards and notice a clump of sickly foliage at the very top of the shaft which is partially covering the entrance. You focus on this gap and conclude that the shaft must lead directly to the surface, at a place somewhere in the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.

If you wish to attempt to scale the shaft and escape into the foothills, turn to **336**.

*(continued over)*



XV. Peering into a dark pit, you see lying asleep on a mouldering bed of straw a gigantic dog-like creature.

If you decide not to attempt to climb the shaft, you can turn around and leave the pit area. Turn to **165**.

## 239

You enter a small foul-smelling chamber lit by a single candle perched atop a three-legged stool. A bed with a straw mattress fills one corner, and a bench with drawers stands by its side. A shelf on the wall displays three cracked plates, a lump of stale cheese, some dried meat, some bread, and a bottle of brownish water (in all, enough provisions for 1 Meal).

You pull open the drawers and find some assorted clothing, infested with fleas, and a Copper Key. If you decide to keep the Key, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly. Satisfied that nothing has been overlooked, you leave the room and descend the stairs at the end of the tunnel.

Turn to **347**.

## 240

You flick the lever and turn to approach the throne room door. There is a faint rumble and the great metallic portal slowly glides open to reveal Arch Druid Cadak's private domain.

The room is little larger than the antechamber, however its furnishings and appointments are lavish in the extreme. Ornately carved furniture, inlayed with gold and precious gems, lines walls hung with priceless tapestries and paintings. At the centre of the chamber stands a great black chair, sculpted to display demonic creatures paying homage to the

Cenerese. Glowing orbs hang suspended from the ceiling, bathing the chamber in a multi-hued light which is continually changing in colour and intensity.

Although your eyes and your Kai senses tell you that the chamber is empty, you are reluctant to pass through the door. A stench of pure evil is flooding out from this room, wafting over you like an invisible sea that seeks to soil and corrupt all it touches. Fighting back your nausea, you force yourself to cross the threshold and search the chamber before its owner returns.

Of all the precious items which crowd this room, your eye is attracted to three that seem to stand out from the rest. The first is a large crystal sphere which rests on a table beside the great chair. The second is a tapestry, the largest of them all, which hangs directly opposite the door. And the third is a gold statuette which rests on a shelf to your left.

If you possess Grand Mastery of Telegnosis, turn to **173**.
If you do not, turn to **338**.

## 241

You take a deep breath, then you fix your eyes on the descending portcullis as you race out of the door and sprint across the cobblestoned keep. The heavy portcullis is less than three feet from the ground when you enter the arch of the tower. In desperation you dive at the shrinking gap and, as you hit the ground, you roll over in the hope of avoiding being crushed by this heavy iron-tipped portal.

**242**

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 2 to the number you have picked. If your current ENDURANCE score is *25* or higher, add 1.

If your total score is now *3* or less, turn to **321**.
If it is *4* or more, turn to **147**.

**242**

For an hour you follow the muddy track as it twists a tortuous route through the trees of this accursed realm. Baleful eyes observe your passing yet you choose to ignore them for you sense that these watchers pose no real threat to your safety. They are lowly animals that possess little intelligence and even less courage (though you fancy the latter would not be so if you were weak or wounded). The path ascends a ridge, then drops steeply towards the floor of a mist-enshrouded valley where you happen upon something that brings you to a halt.

A moss-grown skull lies on the path ahead, its jawbone agape as if uttering a silent scream. Beyond it lie two skeletons in rotting mail, half-buried in a nest of saw-toothed briar. Then, through the mist, you see weapons, rusted and mouldering, and the grisly remains of a warhorse, its armoured rider slumped astride its ruined back. You are advancing towards the horse when you hear a sound that draws your eyes away to the east. It is a busy, squeaking noise, muffled by the dense undergrowth.

You leave the path and melt into the tangled trees. With careful steps you edge towards the noise, your senses straining to extract information from your

surroundings until you become almost a part of the forest itself. Then you detect movement ahead and, from the cover of a thorny bough, you draw your weapon and wait in readiness.

A line of rat-like creatures, each as tall as a youth, is wending its way along the forest path. They are armed with crude and rusty weapons and clothed in rags that once were worn by human soldiers. Your keen sense of smell detects the vile aroma of disease which hangs heavy about these loathsome rat-men, and at once you realize that these must be the Vazhag that Rimoah spoke about. Shielded by your Magnakai skills, you watch in silence as they file past your hiding place and slowly disappear. When you are sure they have gone, you sheathe your weapon and continue your trek towards Mogaruith.

Turn to **206**.

## 243

You have climbed little more than halfway up the shaft when a snickering growl echoes from below. Awoken by falling clods of earth and dust, the gigantic dog-like creature now stands erect with its head tilted back and its fiery red eyes fixed on you. It gives a hungry roar and, with terrifying agility, it leaps from the pit and starts to claw its way up the shaft after you. Hurriedly you press on in the hope of reaching the entrance before this creature reaches you.

You are less than ten feet from the top when the creature slashes at your legs with its razor-sharp claws. A searing pain shoots through your calves,

making you cry out with shocked surprise: lose 4 ENDURANCE points. Quickly you draw up your injured legs before it can strike again, and you glimpse the beast's huge fang-filled jaw. It snaps at your feet ravenously, spraying them with its foul saliva, and at once you know that you cannot hope to out-climb this horror. If you are to escape from the shaft in one piece, you must fight this creature to the death.

Pit Agarashi: COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 38

Owing to your precarious position you must reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 6 points for the duration of this fight. If the weapon you are using is a Broadsword, a Spear, or a Quarterstaff, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by a further 3 points. This creature is immune to Mindblast and Psi-surge; only Kai-surge can harm it psychically.

If you win the combat, turn to **24**.

## 244

Slowly you advance towards the shimmering lights and, as the tunnel begins to level off in the distance, you see that it opens out into a huge cave. The shimmering is caused by a line of glowing beacons hung by chains from the vault-like ceiling of the cave. Their warm amber light is reflecting upon the cold dark waters of a lake.

At first there appears to be no way across the lake, but as you draw nearer to the tunnel's end you see a spur of rock and a raised drawbridge on the opposite side. On the near side, close to a platform upon which the bridge rests when lowered, there

stands a large iron cage filled with giant frog-like creatures. These must be the Tzargs that Lord Rimoah spoke of, the scouts bred by the Ceners to guide them through the swamps of Caron. A pair of Vazhag are teasing and taunting the Tzargs with sharpened sticks, jabbing them through the criss-crossed bars of their rusty cage.

After a while the rat-men tire of their spiteful game. Casually they cast their sticks into the lake and then settle themselves down upon the muddy shore. The larger of the two produces a hunch of maggoty meat from a haversack slung over its shoulder, and eagerly the two Vazhag proceed to devour this vile food. Both are seemingly oblivious to the hungry cries of the caged Tzargs.

Turn to **41**.



**245**

The thorny vines hold you in a vice-like grip. With Cadak's cold laughter ringing in your ears you struggle to escape before the hands of his demonic servant, Exterminus, close around your throat.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If you possess Kai-alchemy or Magi-magic, add 3 to the number you have chosen (if you possess both of these Grand Master Disciplines, add 7). If your current ENDURANCE points score is higher than 16, add a further 1 to your score.

If your total score is now 6 or lower, turn to **166**. If it is 7 or higher, turn to **73**.

## 246

With your lungs aching desperately for air, you propel yourself towards the shimmering, pale blue light and burst through the surface, choking and spluttering like a netted fish. You gulp at the cool air hungrily and try simultaneously to take stock of your new surroundings. You have surfaced in a vaulted chamber, small by comparison with the one from which you have just escaped, but substantial nevertheless. Here, there is no shoreline, just sheer rock walls, but to your left you see a narrow ledge of flat stone and you swim towards it. As you clamber out of the water you notice the source of the pale light that drew you to this chamber. Directly above the ledge there is a natural chimney which rises into the ceiling, and at its end you see a warm, lantern-like glow. The chimney is rough and pitted, and to someone of your experience it is as easy to climb as a wide-stepped ladder.

Within ten minutes you reach the neck of the chimney and find yourself staring through a hole at the floor of a passageway beyond. The source of the light comes from several oil lamps which hang at regular intervals from the roof of this narrow tunnel.

You can sense the presence of Vazhag somewhere in the vicinity, and so you choose to wait here in case a patrol is about to pass this way.

During your wait, unless you possess Grand Huntmastery, you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **94**.

## 247

The two figures look down at their ghastly handiwork and shake their heads in dismay. As you watch, the Sloat shudders beneath its bonds and becomes abruptly still. One of the robed figures stoops to inspect the creature's exposed heart, then you hear him whisper words of disappointment that, yet again, their experiment has failed.

They wipe their bloodied hands on their robes before leaving the laboratory, locking the door behind them. Sensing that you are now alone, you take the opportunity to search the laboratory, including seven of its eight smaller ante-rooms, but you find nothing that remotely resembles the cultivation of a plague virus. The eighth ante-room, the door to which is bolted and barred, is the only area of the laboratory you have not investigated.

Although the main door is now locked, during your search you have discovered one other exit.

If you wish to leave the laboratory by this door, turn to **333**.
If you decide to investigate the eighth ante-room, turn to **131**.

## 248

Straining with all of your might, you pull back on your weapon in a desperate attempt to prise the heavy chain from its mounting. Then there is a loud crack: the support pin has popped out and, as the massive weight of the cauldron is suddenly removed, the chain whips away like an angry snake.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–1*, turn to **294**.
If it is *2–5*, turn to **191**.
If it is *6–9*, turn to **105**.

## 249

With little effort you are able to draw on your mastery of Nexus to protect yourself from the effects of the corrosive acid. Where you have been splashed, you cause the affected skin to exude a strong alkaline that immediately neutralizes the acid. Quickly the pain recedes and you are able to escape along the tunnel, away from this deadly shower.

You reach the distant staircase and stop to cut away the parts of your cloak and tunic that have been eaten by the acid. To your annoyance you find a smouldering hole in the top of your backpack and, when you check the contents, you discover that two items have been damaged beyond repair. (Erase from your *Action Chart* those items which you have noted second and fourth on your list of Backpack Items.)

To continue, turn to **28**.

## 250

Your arrow strikes the druid in the back and its tip skewers his evil heart. He takes a few faltering steps, then raises his arms and vents his death cry before collapsing into the undergrowth.

You run to where he has fallen and curiosity prompts you to prise away his green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search his body and discover the following items:

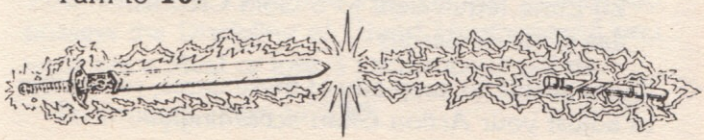
Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.



## 251

Desperate to prevent the creature from sounding the alarm, you unsheathe a hand weapon and throw it at its hairless head.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Huntmastery, add 4 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now 6 or less, turn to **69**.
If it is 7 or more, turn to **197**.

## 252

As the smoke from the explosion clears, you see a jagged, flame-blackened hole where once there had been a lock. You kick the door and it creaks open, allowing you to enter the hall which lies beyond.

Unfortunately, the sound of the explosion did not go unnoticed and as you rush into the hall you are confronted by a creature freshly awoken by the noise.

Turn to **120**.

## 253

A thorough search of the druid's body uncovers the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)
Jar of Black Berries

If you decide to keep any of these items, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

If you possess Kai-alchemy, turn to **58**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **306**.

## 254

Triumphantly, you clamber over the corpses of the slain war-dogs and advance menacingly towards their handlers. The sight of your stern, blood-flecked face is enough to break the nerve of these Vazhag guards, especially now that their canine protectors lie sprawled in a lifeless heap upon the cavern floor. Shivering with fear, the rat-men retreat and allow you to escape unchallenged.

For a moment, as you emerge from the hall, you are blinded by the early morning sunlight, but as you escape along the trail which leads away from the caverns, your vision soon clears and you see before you a vast expanse of forest away to the east. This sea of sickly grey-green trees radiates an unmistakable aura of evil that immediately identifies it as the Forest of Ruel.

Your escape is not pursued and, after a few minutes, you stop among a cluster of boulders in order to catch your breath. The surrounding land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being the track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of that unwelcoming forest. You consult your map and conclude that this is the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 255

You run through a maze of corridors and narrow passageways, up flights of stairs and across dingy halls and chambers. On several occasions you are forced to hide when a Vazhag patrol passes within a few feet, but your wits and your camouflage skills keep you safe and undetected.

At length you reach a pillared hall on the surface level where you hide from the patrols until the coast is clear. Daylight is streaming in through the hall door, and from where you are hiding you can see the keep and tower beyond. Your hopes rise when you notice that the keep is deserted and the drawbridge is still lowered, tempting you with a direct escape route out of Mogaruith.

Suddenly another bell tolls, adding to the persistent din of the alarm. It is coming from the tower and it signifies that the portcullis is being lowered.

If you wish to make a dash for the tower and escape across the drawbridge before the portcullis seals off this route, turn to **241**.

If you decide to try and find some other way of escaping from Mogaruith, turn to **168**.

## 256

'How dare you delay me with trivial formalities!' you bellow, and slap the Vazhag aside with the palm of your hand. The creatures snarls and raises its spear defensively. 'Delay me a moment longer and I'll see you are boiled alive in your own grease,' you growl. 'Let me pass!'

Your bold threat works. The rat-man's confidence

crumbles and nervously he shuffles to one side, lowering his spear as you advance towards him. At that moment, a column of Vazhag and a wagon laden with weapons converge beneath the archway, blocking it completely. Chaos ensues, but the confusion is to your advantage. Quickly you abandon your undead companion and weave your way through the crowd, into the keep beyond. There you notice several smaller entrances surrounding the flagstoned square. One in particular looks promising: a staircase that descends to a portal set into the base of the citadel.

You are heading towards this entrance when unexpectedly you are confronted by three Cener druids. They emerge from an alley and come walking towards you in a line abreast. To avoid them you are forced to sidestep quickly into a shadowy doorway.

Turn to **98**.

## 257

Forewarned by your powerful senses, you are able to avoid the wriggling creepers by diving and rolling across the spongy forest floor. As you begin to rise to your feet, you fix your eyes on those vines and suddenly you realize that they are not plants after all – they belong to a creature that is hiding in the canopy above. The creeper-like tendrils are part of its natural camouflage.

Suddenly another mass of the tendrils descend and spread out in an attempt to locate you. One brushes against your foot and immediately the others hone in on your position like a swarm of hungry eels. You

raise your weapon and strike a mighty blow which tears away a great swath of the creature's wriggling limbs. A fountain of ichor erupts from every severed end and, from somewhere above the canopy of branches, you hear an unearthly roar of pain. Once more the remaining tendrils seek you out; this time they are no longer soft and fibrous, but stiff and studded with barbed thorns.

The swirling mass strikes out for your throat. Desperately you hack at them with devastating effect yet more and more emerge from above to replace them.

If you wish to evade this creature, turn to **180**.
If you choose to stand and fight it, turn to **202**.

## 258

The Vazhag huddle together on the shore, snarling and spitting as they await the right moment to strike. On a signal they fan out in a semi-circle and confidently begin their approach. They growl curses and one hurls its spear at your chest which you sidestep effortlessly and catch in mid-flight. In an instant you send this rusty shaft whistling back to skewer its owner's heart. Shock ripples through the ranks when the Vazhag victim emits a strangled squeal and falls snout-first into the mud, but their sudden fear is soon dispelled when, from the safety of the bridge, the druid bellows an angry command. He orders the Vazhag to kill you and, as one, they surge forward and attack.

Vazhag pack: COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 40

If you win the combat, turn to **288**.

## 259

The overpowering aura of evil that filled this room has now vanished. You close your eyes and, for a few seconds, you allow your Magnakai sense of Divination to analyse the psychic residues lingering at the place where Exterminus disappeared. Shapes take form in your mind and, in a moment of chilling discovery, you fathom the secret of the crystal sphere.

The sphere was not of this world. It was fashioned in the Plain of Darkness, the domain of Naar, King of all that is Evil. Through the sphere the Dark God maintained contact with Arch Druid Cadak, directing him to fulfil his schemes of vengeance. The destruction of the sphere has rid your world of a terrible device, a channel through which the concentrated Evil of Naar had been allowed to pour unchecked.

You open your eyes once more and a feeling of well-being envelops your senses, as if you have just awoken after a deep and refreshing sleep (restore 8 ENDURANCE points). A rustling sound draws your keen eyes towards the tapestry from where Exterminus appeared; it is crumbling to pieces. As the rotting scraps of material fall away, a portal is revealed through which you glimpse a scene that revives your hopes for your quest's success.

Turn to **50**.

## 260

Banedon issues the order to his dwarven crew to set a course for Palmyrion. Then, as the hum of the craft's powerful engine rises in pitch, he ushers you

into his cabin where a welcoming meal awaits. Effortlessly the *Skyrider* ascends into the moonless sky and speeds southwards across Sommerlund's forested heartland, while you endeavour to enjoy your friend's good food and company and try not to dwell too much on the daunting task that lies ahead. Together you reminisce about past times spent aboard the *Skyrider*, and recall the adventures you shared in the far-away lands of Anari and Vassagonia.

A few hours later, as your airborne voyage is nearing completion, the conversation turns to the quest in hand. Banedon tells you that you are bound for the Palmyrion city of Holona where your guide, Captain Cearmaine, is patiently awaiting your arrival. At once you recognize the name; you recall having heard tell of the Captain's feats of bravery during the Darklands War where his actions won more than a single battle and earned him commendations from more than a dozen Freeland nations. Lord Rimoah has served you well, for in all of central Magnamund you could not have wished for a better guide than Cearmaine.

It is an hour after midnight when the *Skyrider* passes over the glimmering waters of the River Reloni and descends towards the flat-roofed Canatarium, the largest of Holona's eight municipal halls. There you are greeted by the Captain, a man whose proud face bears the scars of his many battles. He offers his hand in friendship and you are mildly shocked when your fingers close around a palm crafted of cold steel.

'A keepsake from the Battle of Vellino,' he says,

raising his metal hand so that you may inspect it in the light of the *Skyrider's* bow lanterns. 'Alas, the first was stole away by a Drakkar's axe.'

Captain Cearmaine is eager to leave Holona before sunrise. His carriage awaits to take you south to his command at Stonewatch, a military fortification which stands within sight of the Forest of Ruel. Before you leave, Banedon wishes you success and godspeed. He and his crew will be awaiting you here in Holona in readiness to return you to Sommerlund once the quest has been accomplished. You bid your old friend a fond farewell then settle yourself down into the plush comfort of the Captain's carriage.

For four hours you are lost in dreamless slumber as the carriage wends its way across a hundred miles of open grassland trail. When next you open your eyes it is to the sight of a grey dawn breaking over the Palmyrion plain, and the sound of a sentry's war-horn announcing your arrival at Stonewatch. A company of horsemen, each clad like the Captain in ring-mail armour and a flowing chequered tunic of crimson and blue, emerge from the outpost and ride forward to meet the carriage. The Captain acknowledges their salute and watches with pride as faultlessly they change formation to escort the carriage through the outpost's stout wooden gate. Beyond lies a drill square that, even at this early hour, resounds to the shouts of command and the measured stamp of soldiers' feet. You disembark near a watchtower and swiftly the Captain ushers you inside and leads you to his quarters on the uppermost level.

**261**

You spend the day in his company and together you discuss your approach to Mogaruith while you wait for night to fall. After careful study of his maps, the Captain proposes two possible routes by which you can reach the Cenerese stronghold. The most direct way is to enter the Forest of Ruel and journey due east. This is by far the shortest way, but it could also prove to be the most perilous. You recall Rimoah's account of what lurks in this dread forest and the memory alone is enough to send a shiver coursing down your spine. The alternative is to journey southwards into the Skardos Mountains and enter one of the many subterranean passages that pass through that range. If you can find your way to the Skardos trail, the secret route by which the Cenerese enter and leave their realm, you should be able to follow it all the way to Mogaruith. Consult the map at the front of this book before making your decision.

If you decide to approach Mogaruith via the Forest of Ruel, turn to **228**.

If you choose to make your approach via the Skardos Mountains, turn to **309**.

**261**

Confidently you draw on your Magnakai power of Nexus and focus it at the lock. You will the crude mechanism to open but, to your surprise, you sense that it is protected by magic.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Kai-alchemy, turn to **330**.

If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **92**.

**262**

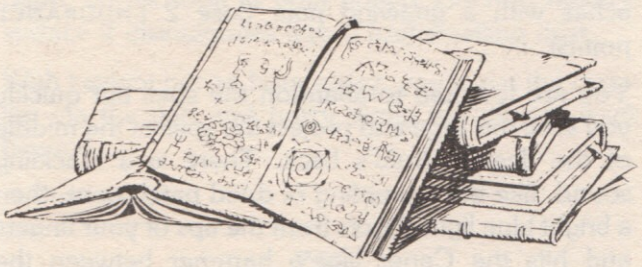
You move to the centre of the hall and unsheathe your weapon in readiness to receive the approaching patrol. A frog-like Tzarg is the first thing you see. It is tethered on a chain, and its ugly face is pressed close to the stone steps. It shuffles down the stairs, snuffling and snorting like a bloodhound as it locates your scent.

Close behind it come eight Vazhag warriors, armed with swords and maces. The instant they see you they squeal with delight and fan out in an attempt to surround you. Freed from its cruel handlers, the Tzarg waddles away into the passage as quickly as it can to avoid the fight which is about to commence.

Vazhag patrol:
COMBAT SKILL 40 ENDURANCE 40

You cannot evade this combat. The Vazhag attack simultaneously and you must fight them as one enemy.

If you win the combat, turn to **83**.



## 263

With deceptive ease you reach forward and pluck the spinning blade from the air when it is barely inches in front of your chest. The Vazhag looks at you aghast, frozen momentarily by the shock of what it has witnessed, but it is galvanized into action upon the instant you send the blade spinning back across the chamber, aimed at its head.

The knife misses the creature's head by a finger's length, strikes the chamber wall, and rebounds with a dull metallic clang. It falls at the Vazhag's feet and is snatched up in its defence as you advance swiftly upon the creature, weapon in hand.

Fat Vazhag: COMBAT SKILL 18 ENDURANCE 28

If you win this combat, turn to **121**.

## 264

Raising your right hand, you call to mind the thoughts of the Brotherhood spell of Lightning Hand, as taught to you by Guildmaster Banedon, and focus the power of this spell upon the tips of your first three fingers. You feel a burning sensation. It becomes more intense until your whole hand aches with a gnawing pain (lose 2 ENDURANCE points).

You are tempted to abandon the spell but quickly you stifle this urge and project the spell at the middle of the fleeing druid's back. There is a crackling sound, like the crumpling of dried parchment, then a bright blue light shoots from the tips of your fingers and hits the Cener like a hammer between the shoulder blades, sending him sprawling head first into a tangle of thorny briars.

Stunned and groaning, the druid fumbles for his slender golden rod and quickly his spindly fingers locate it. However, before he can use it to retaliate, you sprint across the clearing, weapon in hand, and slay him with a single blow to the head. Curiosity prompts you to prise away the druid's green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity.

Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 265

In case there are any among the congregation who have the power to sense your presence, you draw

upon your Disciplines of camouflage and mental defence to minimize the risks of being detected.

A few uneventful minutes pass until another druid enters the hall, ascending from a circular stairwell to your left. He is a tall, imposing figure, dressed in glittering blue robes edged with black velvet. The congregation rises as he walks to the altar, where he turns to face them.

'Be seated my brothers,' he commands, in a voice that is deep and resonant. At once you suspect that he is Arch Druid Cadak himself, but his opening address soon dispels this idea.

'The battle against the Slovians goes in our favour. We have repulsed their puny attacks and our defences along the Storn remain intact. The Slovians are beaten. They are too weak to threaten us again. I, Kadrian, have seen the great river running red with the blood of their slain.'

Upon hearing this the congregation screech their approval until Kadrian calls for silence. Then, from a tome lying on the altar, he begins to read the opening passages of a service dedicated to Xuzargha, the Cenerese god of pestilence. The gathering fall to their knees, raise the hoods of their robes, and close their eyes in reverence as they listen devoutly to Brother Kadrian's sonorous voice.

Anxious to leave this hall, you look around for a means of escape. Two opportunities present themselves: the circular stairwell by which Brother Kadrian entered the hall, and a door to your right marked 'Vestibule'.

If you wish to descend the circular staircase, turn to **119**.

If you decide to enter the door marked 'Vestibule', turn to **280**.

**266** – *Illustration XVI (overleaf)*

The tunnel floor is mostly solid stone but heavily littered with powdered rock and mouldering rubble. Slowly you advance, treading carefully among this debris to avoid making any sound that could betray your presence. The unwholesome stench becomes stronger the deeper you explore this eerie passageway, and you feel a warmth radiating from within your chest, as if your lungs had been replaced by two gently glowing coals. Your Magnakai curing skills are working to keep you safe from harm, for the air of this passageway is thick with a host of microscopic organisms, a virulent airborne cloud of disease.

At length the tunnel descends to a wide landing where a stone staircase plummets into darkness. Here, to your left and right, you see two small cave mouths criss-crossed with rusty iron bars. Only the slow drip of dank water punctuates the silence, but your supersenses detect that these cave-cells are not devoid of life. Huddled in the shadows are several blue-black shapes, hunched and entangled so as to form one unseemly mass upon the floor. Languidly an eye blinks open, then another, then three more. Slowly, limbs and torso disengage themselves from the mass and rise up unsteadily. For an instant you catch sight of the whole creature and you are shocked by its awful visage. A shaggy goat-like head



XVI. Confronting you now at the top of the stairs there hovers a monstrous shape, fashioned from shimmering green flame.

is perched atop a snaky neck, and it wobbles repulsively as the beast staggers upright. Like its fellow creatures, its bloated trunk is riddled with disease and decay. As it shuffles drunkenly towards the bars, you see in its hellish eyes a baleful green glow. At first you feel a mixture of revulsion and pity for these creatures, but this feeling is suddenly replaced by cold fear when you notice that the green glow does not radiate from their eyes – it is reflected in them!

Swiftly you spin on your heels, your hand reaching instinctively to unsheathe your weapon. Confronting you now at the top of the stone stairs there hovers a monstrous shape, fashioned as if from shimmering green flame, Two whip-like tentacles extend menacingly from its core and a toothless fiery maw gapes like a death wound from where, if it were human, its face should be.

Frantically the caged beasts claw and rattle the bars of their cells as the flaming creature comes gliding towards you, borne silently on moth wings of green fire.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **211**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **152**.

## 267

You fix your eyes on the observation platform as you wait for the chain to reach the end of its arc. Upon the instant that momentum stops, you release your grip and hurtle through the air towards the platform's rail. You have timed your jump to perfection, but your landing leaves much to be desired. You collide

heavily with the rail, bloodying your nose and bruising your hands and shins, yet you still manage to hold tight and prevent yourself from falling backwards to your doom (lose 2 ENDURANCE points).

Winded and bleeding you drag yourself over the rail and stagger toward the inviting darkness of the doorway which services this platform.

Turn to **128**.

## 268

One of the rat-men pushes his snout to within inches of your face and says, to your surprise, that you can seek an audience with the Arch Druid so long as you first register your arrival. He points to a door in the tower wall and asks you to enter it. 'There,' he says, 'you can make your registration.'

Immediately your Magnakai sense of Divination warns that the Vazhag is lying; a prison cell awaits you beyond that door.

If you wish to do as the Vazhag requests and enter the door, turn to **30**.
If you refuse to enter the door, turn to **162**.

## 269

With all your strength you resist the terrible power that is sucking you towards its heart. In desperation you call upon the gods Kai and Ishir to aid you, and as if in response to your prayers, you sense yourself rising as the swirling vortex begins to recede. A

terrible pain wracks your mind and body (lose 5 ENDURANCE points) but it does not break your will to survive this supernatural ordeal.

Then, abruptly, the swirling funnel evaporates and you find yourself on your hands and knees, breathless and shivering, staring at the cold stone floor of Cadak's throne room. Slowly you rise to your feet, then a faint sound behind warns you that someone or something is moving about in the antechamber.

Turn to **222**.

## 270

Using your Magnakai skill of Nexus, you cause several of the boxes and sacks to fall from the rear of the wagon. They splinter and tear open, spilling foul-smelling foodstuffs which immediately incite the hungry females to rush forward once more. In the ensuing chaos you leave your hiding place and attempt to escape unseen through the portal.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Mastery of Assimilance, add 2 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now 4 or less, turn to **169**. If it is 5 or more, turn to **14**.

## 271

The west passage continues for several hundred yards before ending at a heavy oak door. As you approach it you can sense an evil at work

somewhere beyond, and the stench of its corruption stirs your anger.

With weapon in hand you run at the door and give it a mighty kick, sending it crashing open. With ease you have gained access to the chamber beyond, but you are stunned by the awful sight which greets your eyes.

Turn to **290**.

## 272

Your psychic defences buckle under the sudden onslaught and a wave of red-hot pain sweeps unchecked through your mind: lose 5 ENDURANCE points.

Almost immediately you muster your psychic Magnakai skills and the pain melts away, but the attack leaves you shivering with psychic shock. Seeing a slender advantage, the druid acts quickly to exploit it. He draws a dagger from inside his robes and hurls himself forward in a desperate attempt to drive it into your heart.

Cener Druid: COMBAT SKILL 23 ENDURANCE 27

Owing to the speed and desperation of his attack, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 20 points for the first round of this combat only.

If you win the fight, turn to **4**.

## 273

You strike and sever the plant-like tendril, but immediately there is another, then another. With the speed of striking snakes they ensnare your legs and

wrench you into the morass. Desperately you fight to free yourself as you are dragged deeper into the foul-smelling mire. Repeatedly you strike out below the surface, in the hope of dealing your attacker a mortal wound, and you feel something burst upon your weapon's tip. Momentarily, the creature's grip falters, but only to recover with renewed strength and tenacity.

Then sharp pain lances through your thighs as row upon row of barbed claws spring out from the unseen creature's tendrils and puncture your skin. You scream in agony and your cry is echoed from beneath the surface of the bog pool by the sound of a malicious, bubbling laugh.

If you possess Animal Mastery, turn to **339**.
If you do not possess this Discipline, turn to **47**.

## 274

As the smoke from the explosion clears, you see a jagged, flame-blackened hole where once there had been a lock. You kick the door and it creaks open, allowing you to enter the hall which lies beyond.

Turn to **78**.

## 275

No matter how hard you try you cannot prise the chain from its mounting; you need to use a longer weapon in order to exert more leverage on the pin. Looking around you see nothing that can aid you, but then the image of the ideal object springs into your mind and you rush to the platform's edge. Below you, lying on the first platform, you see one of the slain Acolyte's spears.

Swiftly you grab hold of the ladder and begin a hurried descent. As you leap the last few feet to the platform you are confronted by the first of the Vazhag archers. A kick to the snout sends this slavering rat-man tumbling to his doom, but no sooner has he disappeared than another pops up to take his place. You draw your weapon and steel yourself for combat as the Vazhag comes leaping from the ladder with a knife held ready to cut you down.

Vazhag archer: COMBAT SKILL 22 ENDURANCE 21

If you win the combat, turn to **161**.

## 276

Suddenly the Vazhag stops snoring and the silence freezes you in your tracks. The creature prises open its beady eyes, caked with dried sweat, and its whiskered nose sniffs the air suspiciously. Then, as if suddenly electrified, the pudgy rat-man rolls off the divan and reaches with its paw for something hidden beneath the fur covers. You decide to make an escape and pull at the secret door, but it will not open. Somehow the Vazhag has locked it.

You turn to face the nervous creature, your hand on the hilt of your weapon as you advance threateningly. In response it darts towards a corner of the chamber and huddles there, shivering with fright. But before you can reach the Vazhag and pull it to its feet, there is the sound of heavy footfalls and suddenly something comes bursting through the curtained archway.

Before you now stands a gigantic dog-like creature

with fiery red eyes. Its shiny blue-black hide ripples over a muscular frame and a huge crocodile-like jaw protrudes from its cruel, canine face. It is sleek and powerful, yet, as it draws nearer, you see that its hide is pitted and scarred by a virulent disease.

If you possess a Bow and Arrow and wish to use it, turn to **187**.
If you do not, turn to **45**.



**277**

Instinct alone prompts you to take a chunk of the fungi from your backpack and swallow it whole. Within seconds of consuming the tinder-dry flesh you feel a core of resurgent stength welling deep within your chest. Your spore-choked lungs burn no longer and you can breathe once more with ease.

Immune to the insidious effects of the spore-cloud you battle your way through the tunnel to a clearer section several hundred yards beyond. Aided by a fungus from another world, you have survived an encounter with a colony of deadly khloros spores. Few can claim as much!

Turn to **79**.

## 278

Arrows ricochet from the iron rungs and pass perilously close to your legs, but your agility and the speed of your ascent save you from being hit. Undaunted by the barrage, you continue climbing towards the winch with increased determination.

Turn to **103**.

## 279

You clamber out of the derelict hut and run towards a narrow gap in the trees. A thorny corridor lies beyond it, leading away into darkness. With the fanatical shrieks of the Vazhag echoing in your ears, you muster your courage and leap into the gap.

If you possess the Grand Master Discipline of Assimilance, turn to **190**.
If you do not possess this ability, turn to **315**.

## 280

Once inside, you close the door gently and breathe a sigh of relief. You find yourself alone in a small room which reeks of a heady mixture of incense and sulphur. Scarlet robes line the walls, hanging from wooden pegs driven into the crumbling plaster, and upon a solitary table are heaped a pile of green masks, fashioned from a glass-like mineral.

If you possess a Cener Robe *and* a Cener Mask, turn to **126**.
If you possess neither (or only one) of these items, turn to **304**.

## 281

The creature finally overcomes your will and, in that instant, you see its eyes widen with fearful recognition. Then you notice its bony hand is gliding rapidly towards an alarm button which protrudes from the side of its desk. You advance towards the desk but it is too late: the button has been pressed.

Turn to **11**.

## 282

The Vazhag's eyes widen in alarm when it sees you approaching. It opens its mouth as if to scream, but a sharp blow to the side of its neck with the edge of your hand renders it instantly unconscious. You are about to search its pockets when a faint scrabbling sound warns you that the pit creature is on the prowl. Rather than face that nameless horror, you hurry across the chamber to the secret door and make a hasty escape.

Turn to **308**.

## 283 — *Illustration XVII (overleaf)*

You hit the surface with a mighty splash and sink like a stone. Foul fluids fill your nose and mouth, causing you to cough and retch as you struggle to rise to the surface. You are submerged in a deadly cocktail of acids and toxic wastes from the dungeons of Mogaruith and, were it not for your Magnakai Disciplines of Nexus and Curing, you would have perished within seconds of entering the moat.

The Vazhag on the battlements are squealing in triumph for they are certain that you have jumped to



XVII. You are spotted by a Vazhag returning from battle, sitting astride a captured Slovian steed.

your doom. They leave the wall and return to their duties for, in their experience, no living thing has ever survived a dip in the moat. When you do break the surface and strike out for the bank, you do so unseen. It is not until you are pulling yourself out of the moat that your luck suddenly fails you.

You are spotted by a group of three Vazhag returning from battle. Two are armed with spears and they face you on foot, but the third sits astride a captured Slovian steed. It is wielding a cavalry lance and you can tell by the way the rat-man balances it that it is skilled in its use. The two spear-wielders squeal their battle-cry and attack you simultaneously. However, this cry is quickly transformed into a duet of pain when you strike out and kill them instantly. They drop to the ground and almost immediately the rider is upon you, jabbing at your chest with the tip of its lance. You duck the first thrust, and steady yourself to meet the second as the Vazhag lancer turns and bears down on you once more.

Vazhag lancer: COMBAT SKILL 32 ENDURANCE 20

If you win this combat, turn to **113**.

## 284

Beyond the narrow opening you discover a dusty passage sandwiched between two walls of rough, unyielding stone. Worm casts and a myriad animal tracks mark the surface of the dirt floor, revealing at once to your expert eye that no creature larger than a domestic cat has trodden the floor of this passage in the past three months. Confidently you explore and, unhindered by the darkness, you experience no difficulty in following its sinuous course towards the heart of the Skardos Mountains.

## 285

You have been walking for two miles before you reach a junction where a wider tunnel leads away, both to the east and the west. Unlike the passage, this tunnel has been excavated from the rock and its walls still bear the scars of shovels and picks. Your Magnakai sense of Divination reveals no imminent dangers and your Pathsmanship can detect no unusual tracks.

If you possess Grand Huntmastery, turn to **49**.
If you do not possess this Grand Master Discipline, you can investigate either the east tunnel (turn to **118**), or the west tunnel (turn to **189**).

## 285

Silently, like a cat, you pad along the corridor towards a distant light. The promise of finding a laboratory has raised your hopes of a swift victory for perhaps it is here that you will find the Cenerese crafting their evil diseases.

The entrance to the laboratory is unguarded, so you slip inside its open door and hide behind one of the many stone pillars that support a cavernous roof. At the centre of the chamber you see two robed figures huddled over a stone table. Surrounding them are wooden racks filled with strange implements, scrolls, books, jars and other paraphernalia. They appear to be tending to a large frog-like creature which lies spreadeagled upon the table, its limbs secured by coarse ropes. It is not until you are two steps away from the table that you recognize the creature to be a Sloat – a beast of burden much used to tow barges along the River Storn. Your stomach churns when

you see that the poor creature is being dissected whilst alive and conscious.

If you have ever visited the town of Quarlen in a previous Lone Wolf adventure, turn to **109**.
If you have never been to Quarlen, turn to **247**.

## 286

The instant you slay the last creature an eerie silence envelops the site. The howling horde have ceased their dreadful caterwauling and now their mindless faces contort with sorrow as they stare at the sundered remains of the pit beasts, twitching and convulsing in the last throes of death.

You spin around to face the horde, your steely gaze taunting them to approach you if they dare. But none possesses the will to continue and slowly, one by one, they turn and melt away into the surrounding trees, like phantoms into a mist. Lying on the gore-stained ground close to the pit's edge, you notice a coil of fine copper chain. You pick it up and, in doing so, discover that it is attached to a key embedded in the mud. You can sense no aura of evil surrounding this key, and its cut and crude markings tell you nothing about its origins.

If you wish to keep this Copper Key, remember to record it on your *Action Chart*.

You leave the pits and hurry on your way along the leafy tunnel. For several miles you progress in a near-darkness that is broken only by a few scattered rays of grey light creeping through the ceiling above. At length the tunnel ends and you emerge into a clearing where stand the derelict remains of an

ancient stone dwelling. You approach it warily, sensing the presence of magic, yet inside its shattered walls you find nothing but mould and clumps of sickly black grass. Then your skills of divination tingle afresh as the presentiment of sorcery increases. Suddenly you realize that the source is not here in this ruined hut: it is approaching the hut.

Through a crack in the stones you see a gap appear in the wall of trees opposite and a group of Vazhag enter the clearing, their ratty faces sniffing at the heavy, humid air. Among their number is one who is not of their breed. He is human in size and stature, though his hooded scarlet robes make it difficult to be sure. For a moment you catch a glimpse of the glassy green mask covering his face and at once you know that this being is a Cener druid. In his hand he carries a rod of gold that is radiating the aura of magic which you detected when first you entered the clearing.

The Cener calls his pack to a halt. They cease all movement and watch in quiet awe as he raises his golden rod and uses it to make a slow, deliberate sweep of the clearing. Hurriedly you draw on your Magnakai skills of Invisibility and Pathsmanship to shield you from detection as the Cener sweeps back the rod and levels it directly at the derelict hut.

Waves of psychic energy flow across your mind. Steadily they grow in intensity, probing and testing your defences to breaking point.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **44**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **298**.

## 287

The statuette is carved from solid gold. It depicts a delicate female figure with flowing hair and slender limbs. Were it not for the goat-like horns protruding from her forehead, and her long barbed tail, you would have thought this statuette to have been modelled on a beautiful human girl.

Propped against the statuette you notice a Gold Key. If you wish to take this key, record it on your *Action Chart* as a Special Item.

You are staring thoughtfully at the statuette when suddenly your daydreaming is disturbed by a faint sound; someone or something is moving in the antechamber.

Turn to **222**.

## 288

As the last of the rat-men succumbs to your fatal blows, you look towards the bridge to see the Cener druid gibbering with fright. He is horrified by the ease with which you disposed of his escort. Nervously he gathers up his robe and runs for the safety of the tunnel by which he and his now-deceased underlings entered the cave. Anxious not to allow him to escape and raise the alarm, you clamber out of the shallows and pull yourself on to the drawbridge in time to see his red-robed figure disappearing along the passage.

The tunnel beyond the bridge is narrow yet well-lit and you have no difficulty following your prey. Stealthily and speedily you close upon him like a lion running to ground a frightened fawn. He glances over his shoulder repeatedly as you draw nearer,

then, in desperation, he skids to a halt beneath one of the many hanging bowls which illuminate this passageway. He raises both hands as if surrendering, but as you approach him he grasps the underside of the heavy bowl and heaves it at you. Suddenly, with a sizzling rush, a gallon of blazing coal oil spills over the stone rim and comes gushing down towards your unprotected face.

If you possess Grand Nexus, turn to **324**.
If you do not possess mastery of this Discipline, turn to **22**.

## 289

Without a sound you raise your weapon and tense yourself in readiness to strike. The Vazhag and the Cener are unaware of your presence and, as they move to enter the south tunnel, they turn their backs on where you are hiding. It is a fatal mistake, for in this instance you launch your attack.

Like a tiger hungry for prey, swiftly and silently you bound into the cavern and strike down the two nearest rat-men with one scything blow. A mighty kick sends a third Vazhag crashing head-first into the cavern wall, and a back-handed slash puts paid to a fourth of their number, neatly parting its disease-riddled head from its shoulders. Shocked and confused, the remaining Vazhag fumble ineptly with their weapons whilst the Cener screams frantically at them to avenge their slain comrades. With ease you duck a whistling sword stroke, then dispatch the beast with a lightning-fast stab to its heart. Your strike is executed with such economy of movement that, to the druid and the remaining Vazhag, it looks as if you

hardly moved at all. For the Vazhag it is the last straw and, with a squeal of terror, it drops its torch and rusty blade and scurries for the dark safety of the south tunnel.

Cursing vilely, the Cener retreats until his red-robed back is pressed flat against the cavern wall. His mask hides his entire face, yet even so you can sense the blazing hatred that is pouring from his eyes, as if it were a stream of liquid fire. You raise your weapon and advance, eager to finish the druid swiftly, but you are halted by a sudden, unexpected pulse of psychic energy that crashes like a wave against your mind.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **107**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **272**.

## 290

You have entered a chamber constructed entirely of black marble and illuminated by artificial light. A dozen spheres of white flame hang motionless in mid-air near the ceiling, each positioned directly above an operating table bearing the corpse of a Slovian soldier. You are shocked to see that their skulls are open and empty. The brains float in glass tanks standing at the head of each table, yet still connected to their respective bodies by coils of thin copper wire.

Two Cenerese initiates are attending to the corpses. Their hands are sheathed in transparent gloves and they are clad in close-fitting papery suits. Startled by your dramatic entrance, they abandon their grisly work and seek the protection of their mentor, a druid

who wears the hooded purple cloak of a Cenerese High Priest. He faces you across this hellish chamber, his lips drawn back in a silent, gasping snarl as he fumbles for a golden rod which is tucked into his belt.

'Kill him!' he commands, and he pushes his terrified students towards you. Hesitantly they draw their daggers and, being far more frightened of their tutor than of you, they advance. With swift and deadly precision you dispatch the two initiates and stride towards the priest, your weapon poised to deal a third fatal blow. The Cener spits a curse and instantly a sparking web of energy appears, writhing around the golden rod which he is now holding in his hand. Another curse, and the web becomes a lance of crackling power that comes surging towards your face.

If you possess the Sommerswerd, turn to **199**.
If you do not possess this Special Item, turn to **316**.

## 291

The creepers coil around your limbs and neck in an attempt to crush the life from your body, but you resist this attack just long enough to raise your weapon and strike back. Your first blow tears away a great swath of the writhing vines and, unexpectedly, you see a fountain of ichor erupt from every severed end. Then the realization hits you that you are fighting a creature – not a plant!

From somewhere above the canopy of branches you hear an unearthly roar of pain. Once more the

remaining tendrils seek you out; this time they are no longer soft and fibrous, but stiff and studded with barbed thorns. The swirling mass strikes out for your throat. Desperately you hack at them with devastating effect, yet one of the limbs avoids your blows and wraps itself tightly about your neck. Pain fills your head and chest as its razor-sharp thorns bite deeply into your flesh and release a powerful acid.

Stragnah: COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 39

Due to the surprise of its attack, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 3 points for the first two rounds of this combat. This creature is immune to all psychic attacks.

If you win this combat, turn to **327**.

## 292

Quickly you unshoulder your pack and remove the Cener Robe and Mask. The garment and the mask still bear the vile smell of the creature that once owned them, making you hesitate before putting them on, but you are determined to enter Mogaruith undetected and, by wearing this Cenerese outfit, you hope to achieve that aim.

Once you have donned your disguise, you crawl to a clump of dense foliage at the edge of the forest and wait patiently for your opportunity to act. Eventually your patience is rewarded when you spy two Vazhag approaching Mogaruith from the Skardos Trail. They are leading on a chain what appears at first glance to be a man, although this impression is soon dispelled when they draw closer to your hiding place.

Trailing behind the Vazhag is a creature with no free will of its own, a being that was once human but is now consigned to the twilight world of the un-dead. The sight of this stiff-limbed zombie, propelling itself forward on withered grey limbs, fills you with revulsion and pity. With difficulty you suppress your anger at the creatures who have caused this transformation and, as the Vazhag draw level, you emerge from the foliage and order them to stop. At once the rat-men obey, deceived by your disguise and your command of the Cenerese dialect. Nervously their red eyes regard you and they shuffle uneasily as they wait for your next command.

If you wish to ask them what they are doing, turn to **122**.

If you wish to order them to accompany you into Mogaruith, turn to **210**.

## 293

A sharp pain runs up your left leg and, with fearful expectation, you glance down to see that a Vazhag arrow has gouged your thigh: lose 2 ENDURANCE points.

You draw upon your healing skills to numb the stinging pain and, as it fades, you continue your ascent towards the winch with increased determination.

Turn to **103**.

## 294

There is a blinding flash followed by a terrible pain which fills your head. Then the pain subsides and you feel as if you are falling forwards into a dark, bottomless pit. The end of the heavy chain has

lashed out and struck your skull, fracturing it badly. As you are plunged into unconsciousness, you lose your footing and fall to your doom in the hall below.

Your brave action causes the cauldron to tip its contents into the hall, thereby destroying the plague virus and the druids who know the secrets of its cultivation. This destruction has saved millions from a terrible death, and your courage in bringing this about will never be forgotten by the free peoples of Magnamund. Sadly, though, death is the price you must pay for your victory.

Your life and your quest end here in the plague hall of Mogaruith.

**295** – *Illustration XVIII (overleaf)*

You catch sight of something huge and grey, moving just below the surface of the foaming water. For a moment it disappears, then, with a mighty splash, a great scaly head emerges with two cold reptilian eyes that flare like yellow flames. It soars up from the icy depths of the lake, perched atop a neck as stout and as long as a toa tree.

One-handedly you struggle to unsheathe your weapon as the feral-eyed beast hovers above you, its open mouth set with jagged, jet-black fangs. Hungrily it watches you and a rumble issues from its gullet as it steadies itself to strike.

Dholdaarg: COMBAT SKILL 43 ENDURANCE 56

Owing to your precarious position you must reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 5 points for the duration of this fight. If the weapon you are using is a Broadsword, a Spear, or a Quarterstaff, reduce your



XVIII. A great scaly head emerges with two cold reptilian eyes that flare like pits of yellow flame.

COMBAT SKILL by a further 3 points. This creature is immune to Mindblast (but not to Psi-surge or Kai-surge).

You may evade combat after 6 rounds by turning to **63**.

If you win the combat, turn to **219**.

## 296

The hideous degradon roars in agony as your killing blow seals its fate. It crashes forward and you leap aside just in time to avoid being pinned beneath its loathsome carcass. Breathless and shaking with the fatigue of combat, you lean against the wall and survey your surroundings.

Before you stretches a cavernous hall, lit by the glow from fire-filled orbs hanging by chains from the ceiling. Facing each other are two rows of stone statues which form a grotesque corridor leading to an archway on the far side. Although they are human in shape extreme expressions of pain and despair twist and contort their faces.

You advance cautiously. You are wary of the statues and your body is tensed to react should they show the slightest hint of animation. Fortunately your caution is unnecessary and you are able to reach the archway and leave the hall without further incident. A short passageway leads to a junction where a wider corridor crosses from left to right. Your skin prickles in reaction to the concentration of evil you detect in this subterranean part of Mogaruith, and silently you call upon your creator, the noble god Kai, for protection and guidance, before continuing.

Instinct prompts you to turn left, and within a few minutes you arrive at a chamber where a vast staircase of black marble ascends to many levels, lost in the gloom above. Opposite this grand staircase stands a large door, carved from a solid sheet of strange green metal, the like of which you have never seen before. It gives off a pulsating radiance which washes over the empty chamber, illuminating symbols carved into the walls and floor. You focus on these symbols and, in a chilling moment of realization, you decipher their meaning.

Turn to **300**.

## 297

You step over the bodies of your attackers and stoop to retrieve your bow. As you are rising, you notice a tiny box-like device hanging from a chain around the pit agarashi's neck. At once your natural sixth sense informs you that this device is magical. It controlled the creature's instincts, enslaving it to the commands of the weaker Vazhag.

If you wish to take this Restrainer, record it as a Special Item on your *Action Chart*.

Anxious to leave, you lift the furs which cover the divan and see, protruding from the side, a small lever identical to the one that opened the secret door. You pull it and the door clicks open, enabling you to escape by the way you entered.

Turn to **308**.

## 298

The psychic protection afforded you by your Magnakai Disciplines buckles under the Cener's

concentrated assault. You feel an unbearable pressure behind your eyes, then a white-hot core of pain erupts inside your head and you are sent reeling to the ground in agony: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

As gradually the pain fades, you hear the Cener's harsh voice barking an order to his Vazhag escort. You have been detected!

Turn to **159**.

## 299

The flames explode upon your chest and fan out to engulf your entire body. You call upon the protection of your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to save you, but it cannot overcome the incredible temperature of this magical fire: lose 4 ENDURANCE points.

Within a few seconds the flames have gone, leaving you singed and smouldering but (to the angry frustration of your attacker) still alive.

Turn to **17**.

## 300

The symbols form concentric circles which spell out a grim message:

'Humble thyself for thou art worthless like the dust before He who dwells herein. Pay homage to the emissary of the Lords of Decay for He is the instrument of their intention. Abase thyself afore his power. Hail, mighty Cadak of Mogaruith!

Fear and uncertainty knot your stomach as you stand and stare at the door to Arch Druid Cadak's throne hall. Your senses scream at you to turn and

run from this place for the air is so heavy with evil that you feel as if you are being slowly suffocated to death. But on this occasion you resist your instincts, for you have yet to discover where the Cenerese are cultivating their deadly plague virus and you know that the answer to that question can most likely be found here.

With fear running cold in your veins, you steel yourself and step towards the glowing door. As you come within a few feet of its pulsating surface, a band of intense light washes over you from head to toe.

If you possess the Grand Mastery of Kai-screen, turn to **236**.
If you do not possess mastery of this skill, turn to **6**.

## 301

With a chilling howl, the spectral creature swoops down to exploit its advantage, but you are too quick for it. You roll across the rock-strewn floor and lash out as it passes overhead, and feel a cold shock run up your arm as your weapon passes clean through its fiery, ghost-like body. The creature howls again, this time with pain. Heartened by the realization that it is vulnerable to your attack, you rise to your feet and prepare for combat as it comes swooping down to attack once more.

Pechdrazil: COMBAT SKILL 40 ENDURANCE 26

This creature is especially susceptible to high-level psychic attacks. If you possess Kai-surge, and wish to use it, increase your COMBAT SKILL by 10 points (instead of 8) for the duration of this combat.

If you win the fight, turn to **20**.

## 302

The Tzarg croaks excitedly when it discovers where you are. Cursing the creature, you abandon your hiding place and step into the light, your weapon drawn in readiness for combat.

The instant the Vazhag see you they squeal with delight and fan out in an attempt to surround you. Freed from its cruel handlers, the Tzarg waddles away into the passage as quickly as it can to avoid the fight which is about to commence.

Vazhag patrol: COMBAT SKILL 40 ENDURANCE 40

You cannot evade this combat. The Vazhag attack simultaneously and you must fight them as one enemy.

If you win the combat, turn to **83**.

## 303

You struggle to extricate yourself from the bodies of the Vazhag you have slain. As you rise to the summit of this grisly heap, you glimpse the Cener druid scurrying towards the gap in the trees by which he, and his late minions, entered the clearing. He must not be allowed to escape!

Carefully you take up your bow and aim at this enemy for a second time, determined to stop him in his tracks. Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you have Grand Weaponmastery (with Bow), add 3 to the number you have picked.

If your total score is *0–4*, turn to **99**.
If it is 5 or higher, turn to **250**.

## 304

A Cener Robe and Mask would provide you with a useful disguise as you explore the chambers of Mogaruith, a disguise that would undoubtedly raise your chances of success. With this in mind you take and put on what you need from the pegs.

Remember to record your choice on your *Action Chart*. A Cener Robe takes up two spaces in your Backpack; a Cener Mask takes one space. If you already carry the maximum number of Backpack items allowed, you must discard one item(s) in favour of the Mask and/or Robe.

To continue, turn to **126**.

## 305

As the last Acolyte drops lifelessly to the platform, you sheathe your weapon and take hold of the ladder which ascends to the winch. All eyes in the hall below are watching your ascent and, when they suddenly realize what it is you are trying to do, pandemonium breaks out. Hysterical screams of anger and fear merge into a dreadful cacophony which fills the hall with clamouring echoes. You glance down at their faces, contorted by rage, and as you do so you glimpse a new threat to your safety.

A handful of Vazhag archers are scurrying from out of the portal which connects Cadak's chamber to the gallery. They spread out along the parapet and begin firing at you with their lacquered bows. Black-fletched arrows whistle past on either side, their barbed heads passing dangerously close to your legs and feet.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Grand Huntmastery, add 4 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *0–2*, turn to **231**.
If it is *3–6*, turn to **293**.
If it is *7* or higher, turn to **278**.

## 306

You follow this illuminated tunnel with your nerves on edge, your every sense stretched to breaking point to detect anything that could forewarn you of an ambush or a trap. You follow it for almost a mile, and it is not until you reach a junction where the tunnel branches off in two directions, north and south, that your vigilance and skill are finally rewarded.

To the north you detect the greasy smell of Vazhag hide, and another aroma that reminds you of boiled offal. To the south you detect a completely different stench, a sickly gangrenous smell, rank and fetid, its origin unknown.

If you wish to investigate the north tunnel, turn to **85**.
If you choose to follow the south tunnel, turn to **266**.

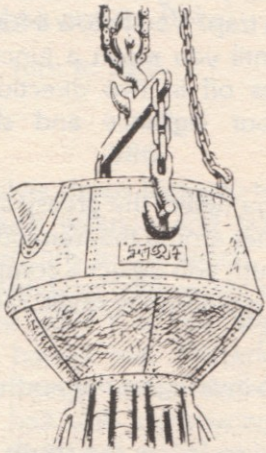
## 307

You breathe the words of the Brotherhood spell 'Lightning Hand' and point towards the iron pin. A core of heat wells up in your chest and then surges along your outstretched arm to manifest itself at the tip of your index finger as a crackling ball of magical fire. This fire arcs towards the pin and explodes on

impact amid a shower of hissing sparks. As these sparks fade you see faint cracks appearing in the surface of the flame-scorched pin.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If your current ENDURANCE score is *25* or higher, add 2 to the number you have picked. If your ENDURANCE score is *15* or lower, deduct 2.

If your total score is now *3* or less, turn to **328**. If it is 4 or higher, turn to **141**.



**308**

The secret door clicks shut behind you and you find yourself back in the vast, lava-lit cavern once more. Unseen, you advance towards the iron portal and wait close by, camouflaged from detection by your cloak of Kai skills, as patiently you observe the doorway and its guards.

After several minutes, the resonant boom of a metal gong echoes in some deep and distant part of the caves. As the echo slowly fades, another sound, that of metal scraping on stone, resounds around the cavern. Then a crack of light appears along the bottom of the portal and, with a grating screech, the great wall of black iron slowly rises up into the ceiling.

Through the opening comes a patrol of Vazhag who are escorting a wagon stacked high with wooden boxes, barrels and sacks. A sudden rush of female Vazhag, all squealing and clamouring for food, brings the wagon to a halt directly beneath the onion-shaped portico. The escort struggles to fend off the hungry females with little effect until, with a spine-tingling screech, the portal begins to descend. A wave of panic washes over the Vazhag and they turn and run back into the cavern, fearful of being crushed beneath the falling iron door.

When it is just a few feet from the wagon, the portal shudders and grinds to a halt. Those few guards and Vazhag escort who remained nearby quickly rush forward to drag the wagon from beneath the portal. You notice that the females are beginning to return and you know that you must act now if you are to escape from the cavern before the wagon is pulled clear and the iron door closes.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Nexus to help you escape, turn to **270**.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Psi-surge, turn to **68**.

If you wish to use your Magnakai Discipline of Invisibility, turn to **9**.

309

A little after midnight, you and Captain Cearmaine ride out of Stonewatch on the backs of two swift Slovarian steeds. It is another moonless night and the plain is shrouded by darkness, yet you have no difficulty in seeing the terrain that lies ahead. Using your natural Magnakai skill of Huntmastery, every flowing contour of the grasslands south of Stonewatch is revealed to your eagle eyes. The Captain is not so gifted; however, the special spectacles he wears fully compensate for his lack of night vision. They were a token of gratitude from the Arch-Chief of Chaman for his services in defence of the city of Gleesh during the war against the Darklords, and they have often been of use to him when scouting his country's border with Ruel.

It takes an hour to reach the foothills of the Skardos Mountains. Here, the fertile grasslands of Palmyrion give way to a hilly, weed-choked terrain which is broken by deep canyons and sharp, frowning cliffs. In the pitch blackness your eyes pick out a trail that loops down the rugged slopes towards a deep canyon floor. The Captain takes the lead and you follow closely as he descends towards the mouth of a narrow gorge, situated at the far end of the canyon. Within this gorge, the trail writhes and twists like the track of a serpent as it cuts its way between two towering walls of solid rock. Strange animal-like sounds issue from hollows in the rock high above, and you feel a chill of premonition as you ride deeper into this unwelcoming gorge.

At length, the trail widens, then divides in two. The Captain veers left and, within a few minutes, you

espy a fissure in the rock wall ahead. Silently you dismount and approach the opening with caution.

'Yonder passage leads to the Skardos Trail,' whispers Captain Cearmaine. 'It is a sure route to Mogaruith, but one that is perilous in the extreme. More than a dozen of my bravest scouts have ventured here, alas, never to return. You would not be thought fainthearted were you to forego entry and ride back with me to Stonewatch.'

'I will return to your fortress, Captain,' you reply, your voice quietly resolute, 'but not until my task at Mogaruith has been completed.'

The Captain smiles and raises his steely hand in a salute to your brave determination. 'Very well, my lord. So be it. Until that glad day dawns I shall pray for your safety and success.'

Then he brings his horse about, takes yours by the reins, and bids you a final farewell before turning back to Stonewatch. 'May the gods watch over you and deliver us swiftly from the darkness of Mogaruith.'

You return his salute and watch as he rides along the gorge with your steed in tow. The moment he passes out of sight you turn around and steel yourself to enter the gloomy fissure.

Turn to **284**.

## 310

The creature is totally unprepared for your attack. You strike out and hit the back of its head, killing it instantly, the force of the blow lifiting it clean out of

its hollowed stool. It crashes to the floor where it wobbles back and forth grotesquely, like a giant fleshy egg, before coming to rest on its side.

Turn to **23**.

## 311

No matter what you say or do, the lid of the box refuses to open. In one last effort you use your Kai skills in an attempt to overcome the magical spell which keeps this container secure, but the radiating evil of the surrounding books saps your strength and you are soon forced to abandon the attempt.

As you discard the box you hear a shuffling noise. It is coming from somewhere in another part of the library and it makes you freeze. Someone else has entered the archives. You look over your shoulder at the door and decide that now would be a very wise time to leave.

Turn to **335**.

## 312

Slowly you swim towards a pair of large boulders that rest half-buried in the muddy shallows of the north bank. Here you break through the waist-deep water behind the nearest rock and press yourself against its cool, smooth surface as you fight to catch your breath. Blinking the water from your eyes, you look across the lake to see the Vazhag scouring the south shore. They search beneath the bridge, passing within a few paces of where you were hanging only minutes before. Disappointedly, they report their lack of findings to their Cenerese commander before clambering back on to the platform.

The Cener and the remaining Vazhag cross the bridge. They stop just long enough to open the Tzarg cage and drag out one of the croaking creatures. Then the cage door is slammed shut, locked, and briskly the party march away along the south passage.

For a full minute you remain immobile until you are sure that the enemy have gone. Then you pull yourself up on to the bridge and, without looking back, you enter the north tunnel.

Turn to **306**.

## 313

With a sudden rush, the leading five Vazhag fall upon you, hacking and stabbing with rust-dulled weapons. Expertly you feint and parry their attacks, then answer their assault with such mind-numbing speed and accuracy that it is as if all five have been dispatched with one solitary blow. Their sudden deaths cool their comrades' courage and, as the horde retreat nervously, you seize your chance and escape through the portal.

A few yards along the passage you happen upon a lever protruding from a grating in the floor. Instinct prompts you to pull it, and at once the great iron door descends to crush the wagon and seal off the lava-lit cavern. Safe now from the wrath of the rat-men, you explore this new tunnel in the hope of finding your way back to the surface.

The passage continues eastwards for several miles and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, it is virtually deserted. At length you arrive at

the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track which disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Directly above the archway, a thin ray of sunlight comes streaming through a window-like hole in the rock. Sorely aware that the main entrance is so heavily guarded that it will be very difficult, even for someone as gifted as yourself, to escape that way undetected, you resolve instead to escape by means of the smaller opening in the rock wall.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now *5* or less, turn to **192**.
If it is *6* or more, turn to **346**.

## 314

The creature looks you up and down. Then, with a suspicious tone, it asks:

'Who is High Priest of your chapter?'

You hesitate, unable to answer, and in that instant you see the creature's eye widen with fear. Then you notice its bony hand is gliding slowly towards a button which protrudes from the side of its desk. It is an alarm button.

If you possess a Bow and are able to use it, turn to **39**.

If you do not possess a Bow, or choose not to use it, turn to **251**.

## 315

You force your way through the narrow, thorny corridor but it soon comes to an abrupt end. The Vazhag are now streaming into the gap, close on your heels; in seconds they will be upon you.

Then you see them. With a foul, snickering cry the Vazhag swarm comes leaping towards you, three abreast. You steady yourself, then raise your weapon in readiness to meet their attack. The leading rat-men throw themselves upon you in a blood-crazed frenzy, hacking and stabbing with their rusty blades, yet you dispatch them in seconds with such precision and economy of movement that it would appear to an onlooker that you had hardly moved at all.

But for every Vazhag that falls, three more take its place, and within minutes you are in danger of being suffocated to death by the press of their loathsome bodies.

Vazhag pack: COMBAT SKILL 34 ENDURANCE 44

If you win this combat, turn to **172**.

## 316

You sidestep to avoid the oncoming pulse of energy, but it twists in mid-air and catches you in the right shoulder. Pain lances across your chest and you are sent reeling backwards by the force of the impact: lose 6 ENDURANCE points.

If you have survived this wounding, turn to **54**.

## 317

Your arrow skewers the druid's wicked heart. He takes a few faltering steps, then he raises his arms and vents his death cry before collapsing into the saw-toothed briar.

You run to where he has fallen and curiosity prompts you to prise away his green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 318

Drawing upon all of your Kai skills for aid and

protection, you raise the hood of your cloak and emerge from your hiding place. The columns of armoured rat-men seem to pay little attention to you as you march boldly along the trail towards their mighty stronghold. Your skills of camouflage are working well; you can only pray that they will sustain you when you reach the archway itself.

Walking across the age-blackened drawbridge towards the spiky arched tower of Mogaruith is an unnerving experience. It is as if you are walking along a blackened tongue towards the gaping maw of some gigantic dragon. On either side the bubbling moat releases foul fumes which fill your nostrils with a terrible sugary stench that clogs your lungs and blurs your vision. You draw upon your skills and your vision clears, but the sight which lies ahead looks no more inviting than it did before.

At the tower you are challenged by a troop of Vazhag guards who regard you with suspicion and demand to know your purpose here. They will not let you pass until you answer.

If you wish to tell them that you are one of Arch Druid Cadak's agents and that you have vital information for his ears only, turn to **268**.

If you have the Discipline of Animal Mastery and wish to use it, turn to **151**.

## 319

Carefully you tiptoe around the divan, taking care not to make any noise that could wake the recumbent Vazhag. A search of the various items confirms your first impression: this is nothing more

than a hoard of junk. From the hundreds of pieces you manage to sift the following few which could be of some use to you during your quest:

Sword
Dagger
16 Lune (equivalent to 4 Gold Crowns)
Pouch of Tobacco
Rope
Copper Bowl

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Now, pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess Assimilance *and* Grand Pathsmanship, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is *0–5*, turn to **276**.
If it is *6* or more, turn to **139**.

## 320

The demonic Exterminus screams in agony as your killing blow pierces its heart. It sways for a moment, defying gravity, then reels backwards and crashes down upon the table which stands beside Cadak's black chair. The awesome bulk of the creature's body crushes the table to matchwood and breaks open the crystal sphere that rested upon it. Immediately there is a loud boom and a tremendous rush of putrid air knocks you down. A funnel of darkness engulfs the body of Exterminus and, with stunning suddeness, there is silence. Both the creature and the shattered remnants of the sphere have vanished completely.

You stagger to your feet and turn to face the Arch Druid. The shock of what he has witnessed has left him open-mouthed and drained of colour. He is mumbling incoherently and trembling with fear. You take up your weapon and advance towards him, determined to rid Magnamund of this evil druid once and for all, but the sight of you drawing closer snaps him out of his trauma and galvanizes him into action. He weaves his hands before his face and, in an instant, he is shrouded in a cocoon of light. You strike out at the light but your weapon passes clean through it, meeting with no resistance. Then the light fades and you are left standing alone in the druid's empty throne room.

Turn to **259**.

## 321

As you roll, your Backpack hits the falling edge of the portcullis and jams. In the next moment you are crushed to death by twenty-five tons of oak and iron. Death is mercifully swift.

The incredible bravery you have displayed during your quest has brought about the destruction of the plague virus, and the druids who knew the secrets of its cultivation. This destruction has saved millions from a terrible death, and the selfless courage you have shown in bringing this about will never be forgotten by the free peoples of Magnamund. Sadly, though, death is the price you have paid for your victory.

Your life and your quest end here at the entrance to Mogaruith.

## 322

You unsheathe the sun-sword and point the tip of its golden blade at the red-robed druid. From his rod leaps a second charge, a lance of crackling fire that spirals through the hole in the wall and fixes itself to the Sommerswerd like a ravenous vampire let loose upon a maiden's throat. Instantly there is a sizzling splash of blue-white sparks and flashing webs of electrical power run back and forth along your arm. Yet you experience no pain; the dark power of the druid's rod is no match for the goodly might of the Sommerswerd.

Slowly and deliberately you draw back your sword then cast away its unwelcome sheath of fire. The ball of crackling fire arcs across the clearing and scythes through a pair of trees with a splintering roar. The severed trunks teeter for a moment, then come crashing to the ground, narrowly missing the Cener. The druid screams in fury and frustration. He curses you, then he shouts at his Vazhag minions, commanding them to attack and rip you to shreds.

With hatred blazing in their blood-red eyes, the Vazhag advance towards the ruins, each with a rusty weapon poised for the kill.

If you wish to stand and fight these disease-ridden Vazhag, turn to **25**.

If you decide to attempt to evade them, turn to **279**.

## 323

Bloodspattered and drenched with sweat, you stagger away from the bodies of the slain hounds. It takes you a few moments to recover fully but, once

you have, you set about a systematic search of the drawers of the desk. You find many scrolls and ledgers which you scrutinize for clues as to where in Mogaruith the virus is being cultivated. Unfortunately the papers yield no useful information, but your search is not entirely fruitless. Beneath the ink pot you find two small levers recessed into the desk's surface.

As you examine them your Kai senses reveal that they operate the two metal doors to this antechamber. You flip the right-hand lever and the door by which you entered glides shut. Then you pause for a moment to prepare yourself before flipping the left lever, for you know that this will open the door which leads to Cadak's throne room.

Turn to **240**.

**324**

The flaming oil hits you like a fiery shower full in the face yet, protected by your Grand Mastery of Nexus, you suffer no harm. The Cener freezes with shock and gurgles inanely as, unhurriedly, you wipe the blazing oil from your face with the edge of your hand and pat out the tongues of flames which have sprung from parts of your tunic splashed by the oil.

Numbly the Cener fumbles for a weapon. He draws a curvy-bladed knife from a hidden sheath and holds it out unsteadily in front of his chest. You tell him to drop the dagger but he is deaf to your command. He lunges, you deflect his weak attack with your right forearm and counter it with a left hook to the chin which shatters the druid's glassy mask. He reels

backwards and crashes to the floor, his bony fingers clutching his throat. For a moment he writhes around on the dusty ground, then his body stiffens and he lies completely still. Cautiously you step nearer, expecting trickery. Then you see that a shattered fragment of his mask has severed his jugular vein and thus sealed his fate.

If you wish to search the druid's body, turn to **253**.
If you do not, turn to **306**.

**325** – *Illustration XIX*

There is a moment of horror when first you glimpse the hideous creature which emerges from the portal. It is a gigantic hound with mad red eyes that burn into your mind with a furnace-like intensity. It sees you and howls ferociously, baring yellow fangs dripping with foam.

Aghast, you raise your weapon to meet its assault. Then, mere moments before it strikes, you glimpse the outline of an armoured warrior standing in the open doorway. He is shouting at the beast, commanding it to rip you to shreds.

Plague hound: COMBAT SKILL 36 ENDURANCE 34

This creature is attacking you simultaneously with a powerful psychic blast. Unless you possess the Grand Mastery of Kai-screen, reduce your COMBAT SKILL by 3 for the duration of this fight.

If you win the combat in 4 rounds or less, turn to **64**.
If the combat lasts 5 rounds or longer, turn to **114**.



XIX. You glimpse the gigantic hound with mad red eyes emerging from the portal.

## 326

Swiftly you recall the words of the Brotherhood spell 'Invisible Shield', and cast it by circling your right palm around your lower body as you breathe the words of the incantation. A few seconds later, a pair of Vazhag arrows come screaming towards your legs and rebound from your magical shield with a sizzling splash of sparks.

Saved by your mastery of Brotherhood magic, you are able to reach the gap unharmed and make your escape. You emerge on a mountainside, at a place hidden beneath an outcrop, which is ringed by wind-worn boulders and scrub. Early morning sunlight illuminates the surrounding hills, and beyond them you see a vast expanse of forest, a sea of sickly grey-green trees, which radiates an unmistakable aura of evil. The position of the sun and your pathsmanship skills inform you that you are now looking upon the Forest of Ruel from the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.

The land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being a wide dirt track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the grim forest. You consult your map and conclude that this must be the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners, which leads all the way to Mogaruith itself. You resolve to follow the trail, but first you hurry away from the ledge lest the Vazhag, and their monstrous war-dogs, decide to give chase.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 327

As you sever the last of the flailing tendrils, the roar-

ing above is replaced by a deathly silence. For a moment you remain where you stand, gasping for breath, the blood pounding in your ears. Your Kai tunic is soaked with the ichor of your unseen attacker and its rising stench is making it difficult to draw breath. Then you hear the sound of snapping branches and quickly you move aside as the body of the beast comes crashing down to earth.

With weapon poised you approach the huge shape. It resembles a bear, but covered in leaves rather than fur, and it possesses a bulbous head with four hooded orange eyes. Its bloated black and yellow striped body is a mass of severed stumps, and from the back of its neck there protrudes a clump of spines, like those of a porcupine, but these ooze a sticky black venom.

The sight and smell of this unnatural creature makes you linger no longer than necessary once your curiosity has been satisfied. Quickly you sheathe your weapon and press on towards the east.

Turn to **242**.



## 328

Your efforts have cracked the pin but it is still intact and supporting the cauldron. You have no option now but to use a hand weapon.

Turn to **81**.

## 329

In desperation, you muster your Magnakai skills and try to neutralize the terrible effects of the acid. At once the searing pain abates, but your skills are insufficient to rectify the damage you have already sustained: lose 8 ENDURANCE points.

Cursing your luck you hurry along the tunnel, away from this deadly shower. You reach the distant staircase and stop to cut away the parts of your cloak and tunic that have been eaten by the acid. To your dismay you find that your scalp and your tunic are not the only things to have been damaged. There is a smouldering hole in the top of your backpack and, when you check the contents, you discover that two items have been corroded beyond repair. (Erase from your Action Chart those items which you have noted first and third on your list of Backpack Items.)

To continue, turn to **28**.

## 330

One of the basic skills that Guildmaster Banedon taught you was how to mix together seemingly harmless materials in order to create explosive energy. With that lesson in mind you search your Backpack and pockets and, eventually, you manage to pull together small quantities of sulphur, charcoal and loamsalt.

Carefully you mix them together before packing them in a strip of cloth and wedging it tightly into the keyhole. You leave a few strands of the cloth trailing from the hole and, with the help of a wall torch, you set them alight.

Hurriedly you move away from the door. You have taken only a few paces when suddenly there is a sharp bang and a jet of orange flame shoots from the keyhole.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–3*, turn to **274**.
If it is *4–9*, turn to **252**.

## 331

The Vazhag are totally unaware of your presence as you slip through the milling throng and escape into the empty passage which lies beyond the iron portal. A few minutes later, as you are exploring this new tunnel, you hear their anxious squealing cease and the great door close with a rumbling boom.

The passage continues eastwards for several miles and, with the exception of an occasional Vazhag sentry, it is virtually deserted. At length you arrive at the entrance to another hall, smaller than the lava-cavern but equally as crowded. Daylight streams into this hall through a large archway guarded by armoured Vazhag, and pairs of horny-skinned war-dogs which they hold on the leash. Beyond the archway you can see a track that disappears towards a distant ridge of hills.

Directly above the archway, you notice a thin ray of sunlight streaming through a window-like hole in the rock. Sorely aware that the main entrance is so heavily guarded that it will be very difficult, even for someone as gifted as yourself, to escape that way undetected, you resolve instead to escape by means of the smaller opening in the rock wall.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*. If you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery, add 3 to the number you have chosen.

If your total score is now 5 or less, turn to **192**.
If it is 6 or more, turn to **346**.

## 332

Your familiarity with the tunnel enables you to retrace your steps all the way back to the fissure in less than twenty minutes. However, all this walking has made you hungry and (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must now eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, you can explore the east tunnel by turning to **118**.

## 333

On the far side of the door awaits a series of narrow passages which eventually end at a large antechamber. This domed chamber is decorated with tapestries which depict Cenerese legends, ignoble and infamous deeds that were perpetrated during the Age of the Old Kingdoms, when, for nearly a thousand years, the Cenerese tyrannized Northern Magnamund.

A single heavy oaken door in the opposite wall offers the only exit from the antechamber. As you approach it, you notice that it is slightly ajar. Suddenly you hear the doleful sound of chanting emanating from beyond this door. Curiosity prompts you to peer through its narrow opening and, as you do so, a chill runs the length of your spine when you see what lies beyond.

Turn to **200**.

## 334

You open your mouth and form your lips into an 'O' shape in readiness to utter the power word battle-spell you have learned from Lord Rimoah. Then, the instant the spell-thoughts focus in your mind, you project the power word – *Gloar!* – at the middle of the fleeing druid's back. Like a hammer, the sound hits him between the shoulder blades and sends him tumbling head over heels into a tangle of thorny briars.

Stunned and groaning, the Cener fumbles for his slender golden rod. His spindly fingers locate it, but before he can use it to retaliate, you sprint across the clearing, weapon in hand, and slay him with a single blow to the head. Curiosity prompts you to prise away the druid's green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity.

Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 335

You hurry out of the library and follow a series of corridors which end at a large antechamber. This domed hall is decorated with tapestries which depict Cenerese legends, ignoble and infamous deeds that were perpetrated during the Age of the Old Kingdoms, when, for nearly a thousand years, the Cenerese tyrannized Northern Magnamund.

A single heavy oaken door in the opposite wall offers the only exit from the antechamber. As you approach it you notice that it is slightly ajar. Suddenly you hear the doleful sound of chanting emanating from beyond this door. Curiosity coaxes you nearer. You approach and peer through its

narrow opening, and a chill runs the length of your spine when you see what lies beyond.

Turn to **200**.

## 336

Stretching upwards, you grasp a spur of rock and begin your ascent towards the tiny patch of daylight, fifty feet above the pit. The rock walls are caked with fine dirt which has settled into the cracks over the years, and all too readily it crumbles beneath your fingers, forcing you to test every handhold carefully before trusting it with your weight.

Pick a number from the *Random Number Table*.

If the number you have chosen is *0–4*, turn to **133**.
If it is *5–9*, turn to **243**.

## 337

Calling upon your powers of Telegnosis, you slip easily into the trance-like state which is necessary in order for you to effect complete transcendency. At once you see yourself in spirit form, rising out of your physical body and floating effortlessly along the tunnel beyond.

As you drift towards the shimmering lights, you see that the tunnel opens out into a huge cave. The shimmering is caused by a line of glowing beacons hung by chains from the vault-like ceiling of the cave. Their warm amber light is reflecting upon the cold dark waters of a lake. At first there appears to be no way for you to cross the lake in physical form, but, as you draw nearer to the tunnel's end you see a spur

of rock and a raised drawbridge on the opposite side. On the near side, close to a platform upon which the bridge rests when lowered, there stands a large iron cage filled with giant frog-like creatures. You sense that they are the Tzargs that Lord Rimoah spoke of, the scouts bred by the Ceners to guide them through the swamps of Caron. A pair of Vazhag are teasing and taunting the Tzargs with sharpened sticks, jabbing them through the criss-crossed bars of their rusty cage.

After a while the rat-men tire of their spiteful game. Casually they cast their sticks into the lake and then settle themselves down upon the muddy shore. The larger of the two produces a haunch of maggoty meat from a haversack slung over its shoulder, and eagerly the two of them proceed to devour this vile food. Both are seemingly oblivious to the hungry cries of the caged Tzargs.

You sense that it is time you rejoined your physical body and so you will yourself back to where it stands in the tunnel, entranced and unmoving. The moment that your two beings are re-united, you are able to wake from your trance feeling refreshed, as if you have just awoken after a few hours' sleep. Yet, unlike a dream, the memory of all you saw during your spirit-walk is still fresh in your mind.

Aware now of what lies ahead, you advance to the end of the tunnel and take up a position at the entrance to the cave, from where you observe the two Vazhag consuming their unwholesome meal.

Turn to **41**.

## 338

You are sorely aware that time is running out. It can not be long before either Cadak returns to his chamber or the Cenerese discover that they have an intruder in their midst. With this thought in mind you set about searching the throne room for clues that could reveal the whereabouts of the lethal plague virus you have come to destroy.

If you wish to examine the glass sphere, turn to **116**.

If you choose to investigate the large tapestry, turn to **33**.

If you wish to take a closer look at the golden statuette, turn to **287**.

## 339

You draw upon your Kai power to repel the creature, to force it away by the strength of your will alone, and instantly it responds as if you had run it through with a red hot sword. The creature retreats towards the depths of its slimy pool, but its barbs are snagged in your tunic and, as it slinks away, you are drawn deeper into the mire. If you are to survive this encounter you must cut yourself free.

Plaghatar: COMBAT SKILL 24 ENDURANCE 30

This creature is immune to all psychic attacks. If the weapon you are using is non-edged (eg, a Mace, a Quarterstaff, or a Warhammer), deduct 4 points from your COMBAT SKILL for the duration of this combat.

If you win the combat, turn to **129**.

340

As you land your killing blow, the druid crashes down upon the floor, driving his magical blade deep into the flagstones. For a moment he writhes in the throes of death, then he stiffens and lies still.

As you step away from his body you suddenly sense a new danger. A number of the congregation are approaching the door, prompted to investigate by the noise of your fight. Quickly you hurry to the section of wall from where the druid appeared and search for a way to make it open once more. You discover a lever and, within seconds of pulling it, the concealed panel glides inwards, allowing you access to a secret passage. You enter, dragging the body of the High Priest behind you by the heels, then push shut the panel just as the inquisitive congregation push open the vestibule door.

You abandon the body and pass along the narrow passageway, descending by steps and slopes until you reach a chamber which is lit by two large black candles, fixed into holes in the surface of a marble slab. On a nearby table lie the following items:

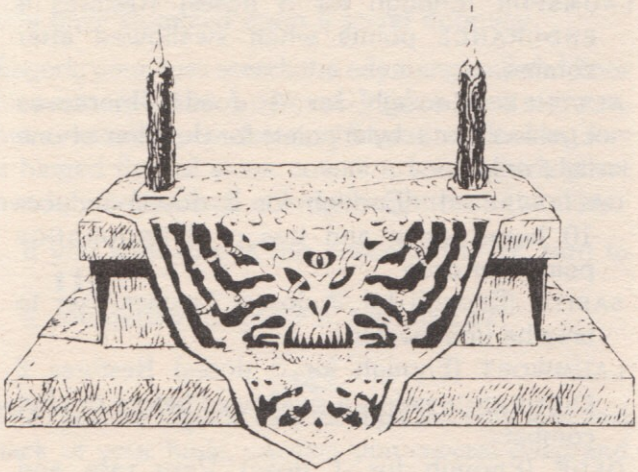
2 Arrows
Enough food for 2 Meals
2 Daggers
1 Sword
Mirror
Rope

If you wish to take any of these items, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Opposite the slab there is a door which opens into a

narrow corridor. You step through and follow this corridor towards a distant chamber.

Turn to **158**.



**341**

You unfurl the map and try to find your present location. At length you discover where you are and, marked by a tiny cipher, you see that there is a hidden lever which activates the wall. You examine the surrounding bricks carefully and soon discover the false panel which contains the lever. You pull it and the wall glides inwards before moving away to your right. It reveals a small well-kept chamber, its walls lined with shelves containing hundreds of stoppered jars, each one neatly labelled.

**341**

The jars contain all manner of compounds and elements, from worthless dirt to precious gold dust, and many herbs besides. You search along the shelves and take down half a dozen jars whose contents you recognize:

LAUMSPUR (Enough for 5 doses) Restores 4 ENDURANCE points when swallowed after combat.

ALETHER (Enough for 4 doses) Increases COMBAT SKILL by 2 points for duration of one fight only.

GALLOWBRUSH (Enough for 2 doses) Induces 10 hours' sleep and loss of 2 ENDURANCE points per dose.

SABITO (Enough for 2 doses) Enables user to breathe underwater.

LAUMWORT (Enough for 3 doses) Restores 2 ENDURANCE points if swallowed before or after combat.

OEDE (Enough for 1 dose) Very rare and valuable. Many healing properties. Cures serious diseases.

If you wish to keep one or more of the above jars, remember to record your choice on your *Action Chart*. All of these jars are Backpack Items.

Apart from the secret door by which you entered, you notice that there is a narrow passageway which leads out of this room.

If you wish to leave the room by this passageway, turn to **214**.

If you wish to leave by the secret door and retrace your steps all the way back to the west passage, turn to **271**.

## 342

As you inch your way towards the iron portal, your super-senses alert you to a hairline crack which runs vertically through the cavern wall. You run your fingers along the seam and your fingertips detect a faint change in air pressure. At once you realize that you have stumbled upon a secret doorway.

Eagerly your eyes search the adjoining wall and floor for a concealed latch or lever. It takes a few minutes, but eventually you detect what you are looking for: a hinged flap of stone covers a lever which is set nearby into the wall at knee-height from the floor.

If you wish to pull this concealed lever, turn to **115**.
If you decide to ignore it, turn to **127**.

## 343

The creature's spittle eats through the right arm and back of your tunic, causing you several deep and painful burns: lose 6 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this grievous wounding, turn to **117**.

## 344

A sizzling splash of blue-white sparks erupts in front of your eyes as the bolt of crackling energy lances deep into your chest: lose 10 ENDURANCE points.

If you survive this wounding, turn to **135**.

## 345 — *Illustration XX (overleaf)*

You drop back a few rungs, just far enough to put you beyond reach of the spear blades, and then you perform the movements of a battle-spell that Lord

Rimoah calls 'The Invisible Fist'. You clench your right fist, then extend your arm and open your palm towards the enemy. A tingling rush of power surges along your arm and, an instant later, you see the Acolytes tumbling backwards, knocked over by the concussive force of the spell.

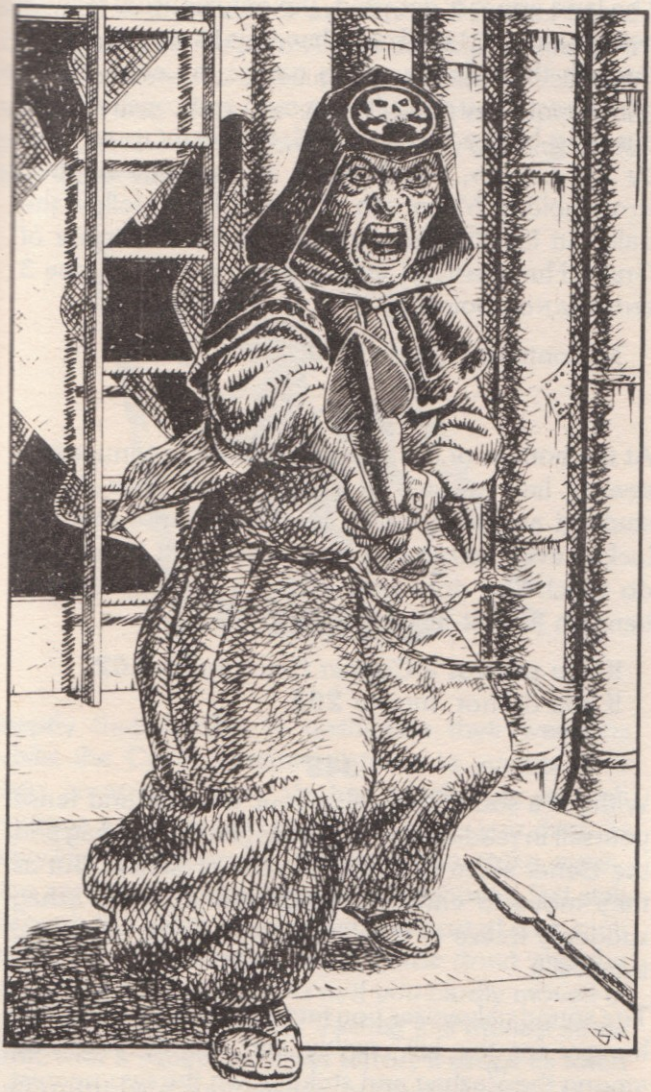
You seize your chance and swiftly ascend to the platform. A well-aimed kick sends one of the Acolytes toppling over the edge to fall, screaming, into the midst of some glass boxes on an experiment table far below. His partner is back on his feet, weapon in hand, and he meets your stare with a sneer that readily conveys his hatred of your race. Then, spurred on by the yells of his confederates in the hall below, he jumps forward and thrusts his weapon at your throat.

Acolyte of Vashna
*(with Medallion of Protection)*:
COMBAT SKILL 25 ENDURANCE 40

If you win this combat, turn to **29**.

## 346

Your ascent to the gap goes undetected by the Vazhag guards and you emerge on a mountainside, at a place hidden beneath an outcrop which is ringed by wind-worn boulders and scrub. Early morning sunlight illuminates the surrounding hills, and beyond them you see a vast expanse of forest, a sea of sickly grey-green trees, which radiates an unmistakable aura of evil. The position of the sun and your pathsmanship skills inform you that you are now looking upon the Forest of Ruel from the eastern foothills of the Skardos Mountains.



XX. One of the Acolytes meets your stare with a sneer that readily conveys his hatred of your race.

The land appears deserted, the only unusual feature being a wide dirt track which wends its way eastward through the hills towards a gap at the edge of the grim forest. You consult your map and conclude that this must be the Skardos Trail, the secret route used by the Ceners, which leads all the way to their stronghold of Mogaruith. You resolve to follow the trail, but first (unless you possess the Discipline of Grand Huntmastery) you must eat a Meal or lose 3 ENDURANCE points.

To continue, turn to **230**.

## 347

At the bottom of the stairs the tunnel continues in a straight line towards a stout wooden door that is studded and braced with iron. You sense that it is locked even before you have reached it. When you do reach the door you notice a keyhole located beneath its rust-pitted handle.

If you possess a Copper Key, turn to **102**.
If you do not, turn to **261**.

## 348

Without a sound you raise your weapon and tense yourself in readiness to strike. At first the Vazhag and the Cener seem unaware of your presence. But as they move to enter the south tunnel, the Vazhag suddenly freeze in their tracks and begin squealing frantically.

The sound galvanizes you into action. Like a panther hungry for the kill, swiftly and silently you leap among the Vazhag and strike down the two nearest with one scything blow. Before they have fallen you

kick out at the chest of another and feel its bones crack under the impact. A side-swipe puts paid to a fourth of their number, neatly parting its disease-riddled head from its shoulders. You pause for breath, and see the remaining enemy backing away in shocked confusion.



Ineptly they fumble to unsheathe their weapons whilst the Cener screams at them to avenge their slain comrades. One Vazhag plucks up enough courage to attack you and, with ease, you duck its whistling sword stroke. Before it can strike again, you can dispatch the beast with a lightning-fast stab through the heart. Your strike is executed with such economy of movement that, to the druid and the remaining Vazhag, it looks as if you hardly moved at all. For the sole surviving Vazhag it is the last straw and, with a squeal of abject terror, it drops its torch and rusty blade and scurries for the dark safety of the north tunnel.

**349**

Cursing vilely, the Cener retreats until his red-robed back is pressed flat against the cavern wall. His mask hides his entire face, yet even so you can sense the blazing hatred that is pouring from his eyes, as if it were a stream of liquid fire. You raise your weapon and advance, eager to finish the druid swiftly, but you are halted by a sudden, unexpected pulse of psychic energy that crashes like a wave against your mind.

If you possess Kai-screen, turn to **107**.
If you do not possess this Grand Mastery, turn to **272**.

**349**

The Cener's dying scream alerts the Vazhag pack and they come scampering back to investigate the sound. The moment they see you, standing over their leader like a hunter over his kill, their nerve appears to crumble. They lower their weapons and begin to edge away. Then the leading rat-men panic; they turn and run, and the others quickly follow suit, leaving you alone in the clearing with the body of the dead druid lying crumpled at your feet.

Curiosity prompts you to prise away the druid's green mask and look upon the face of this servant of evil. It is an ugly, disease-riddled face, human in shape yet lacking any trace of humanity. Reluctantly you search him and discover the following items:

Dagger
Cener Robe (If kept, this item will occupy 2 spaces in your Backpack)
Cener Mask
20 Lune (equivalent to 5 Gold Crowns)

If you decide to keep any of the above, remember to adjust your *Action Chart* accordingly.

Your Magnakai skills tell you that the golden rod no longer possesses any magical aura; its destructive powers vanished the moment its wielder breathed his last. You stoop to prise it from the dead druid's hand, but as soon as your fingers touch its metallic surface it disintegrates into a fine, foul-smelling dust.

With twilight but an hour away, you leave the clearing via the gap and hurry along the muddy track beyond.

Turn to **10**.

## 350

Drawing upon your very last reserves of strength, you fight against the powerful current and succeed in avoiding being hit by the deluge of rocks and flames. As your strength subsides, you are swept under the bridge and, minutes later, you find yourself washed up on the west bank of the Storn. A company of Slovian archers drag you from the icy water and, fearing you to be a Cenerese spy, they take you to their Captain. Fortunately he recognizes your Kai cloak and tunic, and at once you are afforded the treatment and respect which befits one who holds the title of Kai Grand Master.

The Captain sends word of your survival to the Palmyrions at Holona where, the following day, you are reunited with Captain Cearmaine and Guildmaster Banedon. Later that same day, the president of Palmyrion – Elector Manatine – arrives with his entourage and, upon learning of the success of your

daring mission, he orders that an official celebration take place throughout the republic. You receive the thanks of a grateful nation and, in recognition of your bravery, the Elector presents you with the 'Golden Star of Palmyrion', the highest award his country can bestow upon a warrior.

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 2 |
| 3 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| 5 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| 0 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| 9 | 8 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 |
| 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| 8 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| 4 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 |

# COMBAT RULES SUMMARY

1. Add your COMBAT SKILL to any extra points given to you by your Kai Disciplines.
2. Subtract the COMBAT SKILL of your enemy from this total. This number = Combat Ratio.
3. Pick number from *Random Number Table.*
4. Turn to *Combat Results Tables.*
5. Find your Combat Ratio on the top of chart and cross reference to random number you have picked. (*E* indicates loss of ENDURANCE points to Enemy. LW indicates loss of ENDURANCE points to Lone Wolf.)
6. Continue the combat from Stage 3 until one character is dead. This is when ENDURANCE points of either character fall to 0.

## TO EVADE COMBAT

1. You may only do this when the text of the adventure offers you the opportunity.
2. You undertake one round of combat in the usual way. All points lost by the enemy are ignored, only Lone Wolf loses the ENDURANCE points.
3. If the book offers the chance of taking evasive action in place of combat, it can be taken in the first round of combat or any subsequent round.

# COMBAT RES

## Combat Ratio

| Random Number | −11 OR GREATER | −10/−9 | −8/−7 | −6/−5 | −4/−3 | −2/−1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | E −0 | E −0 | E −0 | E −0 | E −1 | E −2 |
| | LW K | LW K | LW −8 | LW −6 | LW −6 | LW −5 |
| 2 | E −0 | E −0 | E −0 | E −1 | E −2 | E −3 |
| | LW K | LW −8 | LW −7 | LW −6 | LW −5 | LW −5 |
| 3 | E −0 | E −0 | E −1 | E −2 | E −3 | E −4 |
| | LW −8 | LW −7 | LW −6 | LW −5 | LW −5 | LW −4 |
| 4 | E −0 | E −1 | E −2 | E −3 | E −4 | E −5 |
| | LW −8 | LW −7 | LW −6 | LW −5 | LW −4 | LW −4 |
| 5 | E −1 | E −2 | E −3 | E −4 | E −5 | E −6 |
| | LW −7 | LW −6 | LW −5 | LW −4 | LW −4 | LW −3 |
| 6 | E −2 | E −3 | E −4 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 |
| | LW −6 | LW −6 | LW −5 | LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −2 |
| 7 | E −3 | E −4 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 |
| | LW −5 | LW −5 | LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −2 | LW −2 |
| 8 | E −4 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 |
| | LW −4 | LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −2 | LW −1 | LW −1 |
| 9 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 |
| | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −2 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 |
| 0 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | E −11 |
| | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 |

E = ENEMY LW = LONE WOLF

# ULTS TABLE

| 0/0 | +1/+2 | +3/+4 | +5/+6 | +7/+8 | +9/+10 | +11 OR GREATER | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E −3 | E −4 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | 1 |
| LW −5 | LW −5 | LW −4 | LW −4 | LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −3 | |
| E −4 | E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | 2 |
| LW −4 | LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −2 | |
| E −5 | E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | E −11 | 3 |
| LW −4 | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | |
| E −6 | E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | E −11 | E −12 | 4 |
| LW −3 | LW −3 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | |
| E −7 | E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | E −11 | E −12 | E −14 | 5 |
| LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −1 | |
| E −8 | E −9 | E −10 | E −11 | E −12 | E −14 | E −16 | 6 |
| LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −2 | LW −1 | LW −1 | LW −1 | LW −1 | |
| E −9 | E −10 | E −11 | E −12 | E −14 | E −16 | E −18 | 7 |
| LW −1 | LW −1 | LW −1 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | |
| E −10 | E −11 | E −12 | E −14 | E −16 | E −18 | E K | 8 |
| LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | |
| E −11 | E −12 | E −14 | E −16 | E −18 | E K | E K | 9 |
| LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | |
| E −12 | E −14 | E −16 | E −18 | E K | E K | E K | 0 |
| LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | LW −0 | |

K = AUTOMATICALLY KILLED



JOE DEVER is the prolific author of over 30 fantasy and science fiction adventure books. His award-winning *LONE WOLF* series has become an international bestseller with more than 7 million copies sold worldwide.

Joe Dever

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LONE WOLF 13

# THE PLAGUE LORDS OF RUEL

JOE DEVER

RED FOX