

Sagas of the Demonspawn

Book One FIRE*WOLF

Book Two THE CRYPTS OF TERROR

J. H. Brennan

THE CRYPTS OF TERROR

SAGAS OF THE
DEMONSPAWN

BOOK 2

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CONTENTS

FIRE*WOLF: The History	7
Weapons Armour Damage Modification Table	17
THE CRYPTS OF TERROR: The Adventure	23
Pelimandar	
Offices of the State Oracle	
The Cryptmaster	
King Voltar the Magnificent	
The Palace Fortress	
Shamar Wizard bar Jain	
Ship of the Air	
Fire*Wolf Triumphant	
Spell Table	183
Character Statistics	186
The History of the Doomsword	189

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FIRE*WOLF: THE HISTORY

This is an odd sort of book. When I'm feeling fancy, I call it a participation novel. You can think of it as a game book. It's a sort of cross between a fantasy adventure and a Fantasy Role Play game. You can't just read it: you have to play it.

In order to play it, you'll need a couple of ordinary six-sided dice and a notepad or something to write on. A pocket calculator would be useful, but it's not essential unless your arithmetic is even worse than mine.

The central character in this book is called Fire*Wolf. The asterisk in the middle of his name stands in place of a Barbarian guttural which has no English language equivalent.

Fire*Wolf picked up his name — and several of his more violent habits - during his formative years in the subterranean stone village of a Barbarian tribe inhabiting the Wilderness of the Kingdom of Ham. He might have remained an unknown Barbarian all his life if it hadn't been for a little bit of an adventure with the chief's daughter which led to his expulsion from the village.

As you will already know if you've had the good sense to read FIRE*WOLF, Book One in the Sagas

of the Demonspawn, the exile nearly killed him. But it also placed his feet firmly on the road of his own Destiny. For it transpired that Fire*Wolf was not Barbarian by birth, but rather the son of a Kaandor sorcerer and noble called Lord Xandine.

Strictly speaking, Fire*Wolf should now be called Lord Xandine since the title passed to him on his father's death. But somehow it does not sit all that easily on his shoulders. Neither does the geist his father placed upon him. The original Lord Xandine was mortal enemy to the House of Harkaan, rulers of Kaandor, a kingdom neighbouring Harn, but separated from it by a high mountain chain. The House of Harkaan, in turn, had formed some sort of alliance with a race of part supernatural, part artificial creatures called the Demonspawn and there were clear indications that a massive Spawn attack on Harn was imminent.

In point of fact, such an attack was forecast by the State Astrologers of Harn some time before. But while the prophecies caused a great deal of concern (and not a little panic) it had been generally believed that the realm was safe so long as the mountain passes remained closed by the winter snows.

This belief proved tragically ill-founded, as Fire*Wolf discovered when he reached Belgardium, the major Harn sea-port, and found it razed to the ground by an aerial attack of Spawn greenships. By dint of skill, courage, fighting ability or possibly just dumb luck, Fire*Wolf managed to kill the Spawn Regent who had been



Fire*Wolf

unwary enough to remain after the main force had withdrawn. But this was a hollow victory, for it did little really to safeguard the realm. It was also a troubled victory, for the Regent intimated that he had been expecting Fire*Wolf and our hero did not know why.

Thus, in the ruins of Belgardium, Fire*Wolf now stands poised to launch himself into another epic adventure, if anything more dangerous than his last. At this point, if we were dealing with an ordinary novel, I would tell you to read on and you would turn the page with a deep sigh of pleasurable anticipation.

But since it is not an ordinary novel, I can't. We have a little way to go together, you and I, before Fire*Wolf can be unleashed upon his enemies.

You may have noticed, if only by default, that I have so far failed to give any real description of Fire*Wolf himself. I have not told you that he is big, or strong, or brave, or fast or any of those things which usually go to build a hero.

There is a reason for this. At this precise moment, Fire*Wolf does not exist, not even as a character in a writer's mind. He is a name with a background and a field of potential action. That is all; and that is not enough. But that is also where you come in.

In a very real sense, Fire*Wolf is you. As you playread through this book, you will make the decisions which will lead him to death or glory; you determine the outcome of his conflicts; you

will even decide when he falls in love with a beautiful woman or delicately refuses her advances. If Fire*Wolf has a Wilderness god, it is you. Because of this, Fire*Wolf must be your creation, not mine.

You will create him with your dice, your notepad and possibly your calculator. The process will take you substantially less than seven days. You may well manage it in seven minutes.

Take a look at these characteristics:

STRENGTH
SPEED
STAMINA
COURAGE
SKILL
LUCK
CHARM
ATTRACTION

They are not a definitive statement of a human personality, but when you think of it, they go a long way. But like everything else in this Computer Age, you need to quantify them before your character will start to come to life.

You do that by rolling dice.

Take your dice and roll them once together. Multiply the result by 8 and write the final figure down opposite the characteristic STRENGTH. Now do the same for every other characteristic except SKILL.

If you've already run Fire*Wolf through the first adventure of the series, this will be old hat to you. You will also have a figure carried over to set against the SKILL characteristic. But if this is your first time out, Fire*Wolf will have to make do with an arbitrary SKILL figure of 10. (If you ran Fire*Wolf through the first book miraculously without managing to notch up a SKILL score of 10, then you can set his SKILL at 10 this time. But try to do better for the poor fellow in the adventure ahead.)

SKILL increases as the adventure continues. Every time our hero survives a fight (or occasionally does something rather clever) you can — and should - add 1 to his SKILL figure.

If you glance down the figures you've written beside the various characteristics and read them as percentages (even though they aren't really), you will begin to get a very real feel for the character right away.

Since 50 is about average, a Fire*Wolf with a STRENGTH of 90 is a pretty massive brute indeed. If his SPEED is only 10, you can see him as a lumbering ox. And so on. The figures beside the characteristics begin to tell their own story.

However he is being created, Fire*Wolf lives in a dangerous place at a dangerous time. There is every possibility — indeed every probability - that he will quickly find himself in hand to hand conflict with somebody who wants him dead. In order to determine the outcome of situations like this, you need to know how to quantify Fire*Wolf's life

as well as his characteristics. You need, in other words, to know his LIFE POINTS.

LIFE POINTS are easy. All you do is add up the values of his various characteristics. The total is his LIFE POINTS.

In a moment we'll discuss how Fire*Wolf fights (which he tends to do quite often). For the moment you should know that during a fight he will lose LIFE POINTS. If the loss brings his LIFE POINTS figure down to zero or below, he's dead. That's the bad news. The good news is that you can reincarnate him. You'll find out how during the course of the book.

So now you've got your character and know at least a little of where he lives and the sort of nastiness Fate probably has in store for him. But before you can get weaving, you need to know a couple more things. One we've already mentioned: how he fights.

Probably the best way to explain this is to reproduce the Rules of Combat as they appeared in the first book of the Demonspawn. Here they are:

Rules of Combat

Straight fights and other combat situations in a participation novel are decided by dice rolls, with results subject to certain modifications. The way it works is this:

1. First Strike.

Unless otherwise stated, you start by deciding

who gets in the first move. This is done by rolling two dice for your character and two dice for the enemy he's facing. Add your SPEED, COURAGE and LUCK figures to the result of your character's roll. Add the enemy's SPEED, COURAGE and LUCK figures to his result. Compare the final figures. Whoever has the highest gets his move in first.

2. Beginning Combat.

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

Successful Hit.

For each blow aimed in combat, roll two dice. Fundamentally, a score of 7 or better indicates that the blow has landed. Anything less than 7 counts as a miss. But this figure will always be modified by your SKILL and, to some extent, by your LUCK. For every 10 points of SKILL you acquire, you can take 1 point off the score you need to hit. If, for example, you find yourself with 20 SKILL points, then you only need a 5 to hit. But it must be 10 *full* SKILL points. Until your SKILL reaches 10, there is no SKILL modification. Even when it reaches 19, you still modify by only 1. And so on. Naturally, your enemy's ability to hit you is modified in exactly the same way.

The LUCK modification is easier and you can

work it out right now. If your LUCK figure stands at 72 or better, you can subtract 1 from the score you need to hit. In other words, if your LUCK is 72 or higher, you need only throw a 6 or better to indicate your blow has been successful. And again, the same goes for your opponent.

4. Damage.

Once the dice and modifications show you've successfully bashed your opponent, the time comes to calculate the damage you may have caused him. This is easily done.

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

But damage too is always modified. For every 8 points of STRENGTH you have, you can add 1 point to any damage you score. Furthermore, if you hit your opponent with a weapon, you will obviously do more damage than if you simply used your fist, so various weapons also add to damage scored. You'll find an easy reference table on page 17 showing the additional damage associated with various weapons. Equally obviously, the use of armour or a shield subtracts from any damage caused. On the same table, you will find the figures related to various types of armour.

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

5. Avoiding Death.

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

6. Endurance.

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

All that's straightforward enough and shouldn't

give you too many problems once you get used to the system. But information on combat would not be complete without some information on arms and armour. Here is a little table which will be of some use during the adventure:

WEAPONS/ARMOUR DAMAGE MODIFICATION TABLE

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

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

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

When it comes to weapons, you'll find Fire*Wolf's adventures so far have left him linked in a rather nasty way with a magical weapon of considerable - if somewhat unappetizing potency. He carries Doombringer, a demonic and telepathic sword, which absorbs LIFE POINTS from slain enemies and delivers them to Fire*Wolf whether he likes it or not. You'll find more details of the Doomsword in the section on Fire*Wolf's enemies at the back of the book.

Magic

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

ARMOUR
CRYPT
FIREBALL
INVISIBILITY
PARALYSIS
POISON NEEDLE
RESURRECTION
RETRACE
TIMEWARP
XENOPHOBIA

Their effects and POWER are shown on page 183.

The use of any spell requires POWER expenditure. (It is governed by some other rules which we'll come to in a minute.)

During his first adventure, Fire*Wolf built up a store of POWER by facing up to a number of particularly nasty initiatory tests set by his father. Any POWER which remained unused at the end of the first adventure can be carried through into this one. If you haven't run him through the first adventure, don't worry too much. Early on in this one, he will have a special opportunity to renew (or add to) his POWER.

But POWER isn't everything, even when you have it. Sorcery is a funny old business and Fire*Wolf doesn't like it very much. Because of this, you need to know the following rules:

1. Before Fire*Wolf can use any spell, you must make a check roll to determine his natural inclination. Roll two dice. If our hero fails to score 4 or better, he will not use ANY sorcery in the current section, however hard pressed he may be.
2. However much POWER Fire*Wolf has at his disposal, he will never use the same spell twice in a single section. He may use different spells in the same section or the same spell in different sections.
3. Every spell has its Fundamental Failure Rate. There is a 50 per cent chance it won't work. This means that when Fire*Wolf casts a spell, he must throw a 6 or better on two dice before it succeeds. The problem with this is that spell *casting* uses up the POWER, so even when a spell doesn't work, the POWER used to cast it is gone for good.

POWER Renewal

Once Fire*Wolf is equipped with a store of POWER (with any reserve from his last adventure added on) the figure becomes part of his basic stats, like STRENGTH and ATTRACTION. Throughout the remainder of the adventure, he can never rise above this figure, except in one special circumstance, but as you've gathered, he can certainly drop below it by using spells.

He may, however, renew POWER in different ways.

1. He gets 1 POWER point for each new section he enters. This is automatic.
2. He may trade off LIFE POINTS for POWER on a point for point basis. In other words, he can sacrifice (say) 10 of his LIFE POINTS for 10 POWER points by an act of will.
3. He can return to his place of initiation (about which more when the adventure starts) by using the Crypt Spell, if he has enough POWER to do so. POWER gained in this way can actually take him above his original total - trading LIFE POINTS or the automatic section increase cannot do this.

Check Rolls

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

relation to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

A check roll is made in the following way:

Roll two dice and add the figures shown.

Multiply the result by eight.

Compare your final total with the characteristic stat being checked.

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

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

The Quest for POWER

Should Fire*Wolf manage to emerge from the Crypts alive on his first attempt, he will gain a POWER total of 100 points, plus 20 additional points for each enemy he manages to kill in the process.

If, however, he does not succeed in completing the Ordeal until a second or subsequent attempt, then he earns only 50 POWER POINTS plus an additional 10 for each enemy killed.

And that's about as far as I can take you for now. from here on Fire*Wolf's fate is up to you. Treat your creation well.

And good luck.



Fire*Wolf in Belgardium

PELIMANDAR

In Pelimandar, the capital of Harn, the seats of power were in the suburbs. Olric's Monastery was there, as was the Shaman Temple of Lilethus, the Military Barracks, the Headquarters of the Imperial Guard, the Esoteric Convent of the Gegum and the black-draped Palace of the unfortunate King Voltar. But there was power of a different sort in Old Pelimandar, the square mile of warrens and labyrinthine alleyways of the Old City, where the streets were too narrow for all but the smallest of carts.

The Old City housed the Guilds whose traditions reached back more than fifteen centuries, the esoteric Gegum, whose witch crafts made them the most feared creatures, male or female, in the Kingdom, the solitary sorcerers, practising black arts in gloomy basements, the thieves, beggars, murderers and outcasts who sought safety in a district with its own laws.

in many ways, the Old City was a state within a state, for while it owed and paid allegiance to Voltar (and now to his appointed Regent, Olric), the relationship between Kingdom and Old City has more one of equals than of Sovereign and ruled. For this reason, while there was Law of a

sort in the Old City, it was not necessarily the Law of the Kingdom, nor was it enforced by the might of the Kingdom.

Fire*Wolf moved through the maze of alleyways on foot, his hand seldom far from the hilt of the Doomsword. He was more cautious than nervous, for it remained light and the sorcerer's robe given him by his father, Lord Xandine, afforded its own protection. Thieves and robbers might risk attacking a magician (and frequently did, if the tavern tales were true), but a stranger in the trappings of a mystic was an unknown quantity and one to be left alone until his strengths and weaknesses became evident. More to the point, Fire*Wolf carried himself as much in the manner of a fighting man as a magician. Where the robe did not deter, the slim black blade at his side spoke silent warning.

He was guided by an urchin, a slim, grubby girl of nine or ten with street-wise eyes who had secreted his silver coin in the folds of her tunic and promised to see him safely to his destination. So far she had neither betrayed nor abandoned him, but he was uncomfortably aware that if she chose to vanish, his likelihood of finding her was as small as his chance of finding his way out of the maze of alleyways before nightfall.

But it was not in his Wilderness-shaped nature to meet imaginary problems before they arose in reality, so he followed her in silence for more than an hour, plunging deeper and deeper into the labyrinth before some small shell of unease

prompted him to ask her if they had much further to go.

'Not much, Master,' she told him shortly. The house of ...'

She was cut off by a sudden, piercing scream. The sound came from an alley on their right. Instinctively, Fire*Wolf swung towards it. No more than a hundred yards away, in daylight, an old man was under attack by half a dozen burly youths, one of whom was handling a trained panther. The great cat, in the manner of its kind had attacked, then withdrawn leaving the old man's right arm bleeding and dangling from the shoulder. The youths were now moving in, following what must have been a familiar, well-tried strategy.

'What's this?' growled Fire*Wolf, swinging back towards his urchin guide. But she was no longer there. Either from fright or opportunity, she was running down the street as quickly as her skinny legs would carry her.

*So our hero faces the first dilemma of his new adventure. Should he leave the old man to his fate and try to catch his fleeing guide? Or should he risk his life for a total stranger in battle with six robbers and a viciously trained great cat? Only you can decide, for Fire*Wolf's fate is in your hands. If he chases the urchin girl, turn to 50. If he decides to aid the old man, turn to 100.*

1

Fire*Wolf smiled at the burly Sergeant. 'It is not my pleasure to accompany you today,' he said politely enough, although the humming blade of the naked Demonsword in his hand gave point to his argument.

'Your pleasure is not at issue here,' the Sergeant said. 'What's at issue is keeping the peace, which is what the boys and I are paid to do.'

Then keep it,' Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'You can start by apprehending the woman who stole my purse and her accomplices who prevented me from pursuing her.'

'If you have a complaint to make, you can make it to the proper authorities,' the Sergeant told him and stepped forward. At once Fire*Wolf brought up his sword, and at once felt the sharp prick of a dagger at his neck.

'Do as the Sergeant says,' a soft voice advised him grimly, 'for I can have your throat cut before you can use that blade.'

Fire*Wolf dropped his sword point and turned with obvious caution. The King's Guards numbered twelve, it seemed, not six: and the remaining half dozen were ranged behind him. One, with a dagger, had stepped forward to aid the Sergeant.

Fire*Wolf grinned and shrugged philosophically. 'You may have a point there,' he said.

But there is still the possibility of escape. If

*Fire*Wolf decides to make a break and run, go to 14. If he feels it better to go quietly, turn to 65.*

2

It was gloomy inside and the panelled walls retained the sickly sweet scent of death and incense. Fire*Wolf followed his guide along a narrow lamplit corridor to a sparsely furnished antechamber where he was told to wait.

But he did not have to wait long. In a moment he was joined by a tall, saturnine man, black-haired, black-robed and cleanly-shaven, who bowed gravely before introducing himself as Levarus, acting secretary to the Necromancers' Association. 'And you,' he added, 'are Lord Xandine — a name known to me ...'

Fire*Wolf frowned. 'We have not met before.'

'No, indeed. Nor does the Lord Xandine I knew have aught of your appearance.'

'You knew my father,' Fire*Wolf told him shortly.

'Doubtless that is the answer,' Levarus said smoothly. 'Is he well?'

As can be expected for a dead man,' Fire*Wolf said drily.

I am happy to learn of my old friend's demise,' Levarus remarked. Then, catching Fire*Wolf's expression, added, 'We of the Association view death somewhat differently from most. Your father too, from what I knew of him.'

'Was my father one of your members?'

Levarus shook his head. 'No, but the Association and he had common interests from time to time. We aided one another.' He bowed again. 'And now the opportunity arises for us to aid his son. How may I do so?'

For just the barest moment, Fire*Wolf hesitated. He had not his father's taste for sorcery and liked the idea of necromancy - sorcery involving the dead - even less. But the Association had its own means of raising POWER and that was something Fire*Wolf needed badly. And urgently. Who knew when the Spawn might fly again?

'I am, as you can see, a sorcerer,' Fire*Wolf said. 'But I lack that which enables spells to work.'

'Ah, the problems of POWER,' Levarus murmured. 'So you come seeking Ordeal and initiation?'

Fire *Wolf nodded.

'Then, since you are the son of my friend Lord Xandine, I must warn you that the Necromancer's Ordeal may prove considerably more dangerous than any you may have undertaken previously to generate your POWER. It shall not be refused you, but it is our custom to require all applicants to meditate for one hour before making the final decision. Please consider carefully ...'

*Consider we will. While Fire*Wolf meditates, you must decide whether he will undergo the Necromancer's Ordeal for the sake of the*

*POWER - and specialist spells - it will bring him. Or whether he should leave in good faith and continue to seek his original goal, the Alchemists' Guild, where POWER and special spells are also to be had, perhaps at a lesser price. If it is Fire*Wolf's destiny to become a Necromancer, turn to 74. If you wish him to continue seeking the Alchemists' Guildhouse, turn to 29.*

3

They took him roughly, but without real rancour. With a sword point at his throat, he had no option but to submit to his hands being tied. He watched with interest as the Doomsword was unbuckled from his side, wondering how long these men would be able to hold on to the sorcerous blade. But for the moment, Lucifuge Rofocal, the infernal entity mystically locked within the sword, remained quiet.

A rough push in his back sent him moving forward and in a moment he was marching flanked by this small contingent of the King's Men to gods knew where.

But we can guess, can't we? Turn to 69 to find out if we were right.

4

So the purse remains mine,' the woman said, not in the least put out. 'Now we can move on to more important matters. My name is Tanith. My companions are Tis and Gazzard. And you, it seems, are in some need of our assistance. If you

will tell us your name in turn, we may agree a fee for helping you.'

Fire*Wolf swallowed a Barbarian surge of fury. Ironical though it was, the woman was right. He was a man with a mission, a sorcerer with insufficient POWER, a lost seeker of the Guild of Alchemists. In short a man in no real position to bargain much with anyone. But once again his sense of humour came to his rescue and he smiled broadly. 'I am Fire*Wolf,' he said simply.

'A Barbarian name,' mused Tis, the smaller man. 'But why should a rude Barbarian come amongst us dressed in the silk robes of a sorcerer?'

'I am also Lord Xandine,' Fire*Wolf shrugged.

He found the woman looking at him with renewed interest. 'Lord Xandine of the Enchanted Valley? I have heard your name, Xandine, though I would have expected a much older man.'

'The wizard whose fame reached you was my father,' Fire*Wolf told her. 'I have neither his talent nor his love for sorcery, but sorcery has been thrust upon me in my quest.'

'Quest for what?' asked Gazzard.

'The Demonspawn.'

Disconcertingly, Tis began to giggle. 'No need to seek the Spawn, Lord Fire*Wolf Xandine. If you will but wait a while, they shall surely seek out you — and all the rest of us if the astrologers are to be believed.'

'The predictions are worthy of credence,' Fire*Wolf told him soberly. 'I have lately come from Belgardium.'

At the name of the city so recently razed by the Demonspawn, Tis sobered instantly and made a warding sign against supernatural evil. 'Aye,' he said, 'we all live on borrowed time unless something can be done about that hellish horde.'

'It may be that something can,' Fire*Wolf said. 'They are not invulnerable, for I have personally slain a Spawn Regent.'

'You?' asked Tanith. 'I heard the story of a hero in Belgardium, but did not believe it.'

'Believe it,' Fire*Wolf told her simply. There was silence for a moment, then he said, 'I am a sorcerer with little POWER. I seek the Guild of Alchemists. If I survive their initiations, then perchance I may do more than rid the world of a single Regent.'

There has been talk of a Messiah,' Gazzard murmured.

But the woman cut across him. 'So you seek the Guild. Well, we can help you find it, and avoid the King's Guards, which is more important. But we claim our reward.'

How so?' asked Fire*Wolf. 'Since you already have my purse.'

She shrugged. 'You must undertake to grant us the request, if it be in your power.'

'And what request is that?'

Tanith shrugged. 'Something may occur to us. Now, or in a decade's time ...'

*Fire*Wolf might be forgiven for concluding he is being sold a pig in a poke. But what alternative has he? You must decide. Does he agree for the sake of their help? If so, turn to 96. Or does he go his own way free of any additional responsibilities? If so, turn to 81.*

5

As Fire*Wolf felt his way in the dank, foul darkness, he became aware of a sound.

At first he could not precisely determine its nature, but as it grew louder, closer, he realized what it must be. In sudden panic he began to run, stumbling in the stygian darkness.

But no human foot could outran the torrent of the flash flood which coursed along the sewers behind him. In only moments the waters hit him, sweeping him off his feet, while he fought desperately for his very life.

*Fight he will, for that is Fire*Wolf's nature. But will he win? Make check rolls against his STRENGTH, STAMINA and LUCK. Unless our hero wins ALL THREE, the flood will kill him. (Go to 13.) Should he succeed, however, you should turn to 42.*

6

Fire*Wolf was undressed to his loincloth and

anointed in a sickly-sweet smelling oil, then handed a leather arms harness to put on. His mentors in the ritual were two young men in the distinctive Guild robes, who moved so quietly he actually considered they must be dumb until one suddenly spoke.

'You may take only the weapons within this harness, Aspirant,' he said. 'None other is permitted.'

For a moment, Fire*Wolf wondered if he should conceal the truth about the Doomsword, which would always return to his side whether he willed it or not. But then he recalled that these were no arbitrary rulings of the Guild, but rather means by which the forthcoming Ordeal would minimize his POWER. Thus he said, 'I fear I must retain my sword, for it is bound to me by a sorcery I cannot break.'

The young men glanced at one another, but the one who had spoken only shrugged and said, 'It may influence your reward, but there is no help for it.'

The harness, he found on examination, carried two slim daggers, a slingshot with a pouch of rounded pebbles, and two razor-edged discs of a type he had never seen before, weighted for use as a throwing weapon. It was little enough if all he had heard of the Ordeal was accurate, although the Doomsword would help.

He turned to the young Guildsmen. 'I am ready.'

They led him along a sloping corridor to a stout oaken doorway. As he stood before it, he was

irresistibly reminded of his first POWER initiation when his father had led him to a similar door. Beyond, as he well knew, lay danger and quite possibly death. But beyond lay POWER as well, a commodity to be purchased only by risk. He stepped forward and knocked firmly on the door. It swung open at once, revealing a steep flight of narrow steps leading downwards into darkness.

The Guildsman to his right handed him a lighted torch.

Fire*Wolf stepped forward and began to descend the steps. Behind him the door slammed closed, cutting him off, perhaps forever, from the world above.

The steps, so far as he could judge, ran due south. When he reached the bottom, he was faced with a gloomy stone-lined corridor, also running due south, while two further corridors branched off at right angles due east and due west. Nothing immediately distinguished one from the other.

So which shall our hero take? If due south, then turn to 15. If due east, then turn to 25. If due west, then turn to 35.

7

Her eyes closed fully and the last remnants of colour left her cheeks so that she seemed transformed to the granite of her massive throne. When she spoke again, her voice had changed subtly, developing a rich contralto which echoed without effort throughout the huge, high-ceilinged chamber.

'I know you, Fire*Wolf, of the Xandine bloodline. I know your appetites and lusts. I speak thus to you. Soon, very soon, your lusts will carry you towards your Destiny... or to death. In this, there is no middle course.'

The voice was silent. After a moment, Selena began to breathe normally again and opened her eyes. She stared at Fire*Wolf in brief incomprehension, then said, 'The oracle is finished.'

'But what does it mean, My Lady?' Fire*Wolf asked.

She shook her head. 'I do not know. I am merely the channel through which the gods communicate, not their interpreter.'

'What am I to do?'

She shrugged. 'Go about your business — and remember the oracle.'

Unsatisfactory. Not at all what our hero came to discover. But the words of Minerva may yet prove useful to him. For the moment, however, there is nothing else for it but to return to his search for the Guildhouse and the renewal of his POWER. Turn to 90 where you will find him again in the Old City.

8

A weight of death that stretched back for century upon century was collected in this place. These were the bones of living creatures, men like himself who had felt their lives important, women

who had felt the fire of love. All were now reduced to *things*, unnamed remnants of what once had been, enduring unseen in an ancient crypt, desolate, useless, alone —

'You do go on a bit for a Barbarian!'

Fire*Wolf started back as if a snake had bitten him. One of the skulls had spoken! Bleached jawbones had moved, rotting teeth had rattled and, despite the lack of a tongue, words had issued clearly from the grinning mouth! It was incredible, unbelievable.

'Well, no, not really,' said the skull.

It was reading his thoughts! In something akin to panic, Fire*Wolf reached for his Doomsword.

The skull giggled. 'What are you going to do - *kill me?*'

Fire*Wolf froze, then forced his arm to relax. He could see the idiocy of his position, about to mount an attack on something that had been dead for perhaps five centuries.

'More like seven,' the skull said. 'But I take your point. My name is Harold, by the way.'

'Fire*Wolf,' Fire*Wolf gritted. Was he really introducing himself to a talking skull?

'I don't see why you're so surprised,' Harold remarked. 'If you're big into necromancy, you must be well accustomed to this sort of thing.'

The turn of phrase was odd to his ears. 'Big into' was an expression current in another age. But the

meaning seemed clear enough. 'I am no necromancer, Skull -'

'Harold,' the skull said.

'I am no necromancer, Harold. The arts are alien to me.'

'That would explain it.' Harold actually nodded, the empty cranium actually levitating slightly in order to do so. 'Although it doesn't explain what you are doing here?'

'I seek POWER,' Fire*Wolf said simply.

'You'll find plenty of that down here,' Harold told him. 'The Crypts are positively sodden with it. The problem, of course, is surviving long enough to take it out. I didn't do so well in that department as you can see.'

'You?'

'Oh, yes. I wasn't always a skull you know. At least not always just a skull. Before my arms and legs fell off I was actually quite a fighter. Before some other things fell off I was quite a ladies' man as well. But that was a long time ago and it all comes back to bare bones in the end, I always feel,' Harold added philosophically.

'What do you do all day?' Fire*Wolf asked curiously. He was now fully adjusted to the lunacy of the situation - if lunacy it was: the Guild of Necromancers were notorious for their ability to revive corpses and a skull was only a short step on from a newly dead cadaver.

'Oh, just lie around, you know,' said Harold easily. Two nearby shoulderbones twitched briefly in a spasmodic shrug. 'Chat to the ghouls, wraiths and vampires. Sing the odd song to pass the time. That sort of thing.'

Fire*Wolf's blood chilled. 'There are vampires here?'

'Several,' Harold said. 'Quite pleasant fellows in the main, although they do tend to be a little obsessive about where their next meal is coming from. There's one over there in that coffin. Now he's somebody you really should meet. Lots of POWER locked up keeping him undead. I don't suppose you brought a stake, did you?'

'No,' Fire*Wolf admitted.

'Pity. It would have been easy with a stake. But you might win a straight fight, big fellow like yourself. And it would be worth a reasonable POWER charge if you did. Even if you didn't, we could always keep one another company.'

'I fear not,' Fire*Wolf told him. 'For even if I am slain, I shall reincarnate.'

'Really? I've never believed in reincarnation myself. We must discuss it more fully someday. Now, are you going to tackle the vampire?'

*A good question. If Fire*Wolf's answer is no, his only option is to try the western door at 62. But should he decide to tackle the vampire by going to 47, he is entitled to an automatic first strike thanks to Harold's timely information.*

9

Fire*Wolf had moved west no more than fifteen paces before he noticed a branch corridor on his left, running due south. Beyond it, also on his left, was a stout wooden door set into the southern wall of the corridor which he was in. Beyond that, at the very limits of his torchlight, was a second branch corridor, also running south.

*Decisions, decisions! If Fire*Wolf is to take the first branch corridor, turn to 12. If he goes on to take the second branch corridor, turn to 23. If, however, he decides to try that wooden door, turn to 31.*

10

Panting, Fire*Wolf stepped back from the bloody carcase of the great cat and swung to face his next opponent. But the expected attack from the six louts never came. They were still in the alley, still apparently unwounded, but each one of them stood frozen as a statue, eyes glazed and locked, unseeing, on the middle distance.

Fire*Wolf stared, momentarily uncomprehending. They were still alive, for he could see the rise and fall of their chests as they breathed, but none so much as moved an eyelid. The old man, by contrast, erstwhile victim of their attack, was walking towards Fire*Wolf with a sprightly step, despite the ruined arm which still hung uselessly from his shoulder.

'I thank you, Stranger, for your assistance,' he said gravely. 'Those young men have not the wit to

cause me trouble, but their pet proved to lie beyond my powers.'

Powers? Fire*Wolf glanced again at the six youths. It was sorcery at work without a doubt. They were seized by mass hypnosis, or in the grip of a paralysis spell of considerable potency. He turned back with increased respect towards the old man.

'I am Amien,' the old man said. 'You must permit me to reward you.' With his uninjured hand, he began to fumble in his robe for a purse.

Fire*Wolf gestured to him to desist. I have no need of gold, sir. It was my pleasure to render you what small assistance I could.'

'Nobly said,' the old man nodded. 'But you must at least allow me to examine your wounds, for I have some small healing abilities and may be able to assist you in my turn.'

'I would welcome other assistance more,' said Fire*Wolf. 'My guide has fled and I seek the Guild of Alchemists. Perhaps you could direct me?'

'Direct you? I can do better than that,' Amien said. 'I can escort you there.' He glanced at the silken robe. 'You dress as a sorcerer, Stranger, yet you bear yourself like a warrior. An unusual combination.'

Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'I have no love of sorcery, but a certain destiny has been thrust upon me.'

'Such is the manner of destiny,' Amien nodded. To Fire*Wolf's astonishment he abruptly flexed

his ruined arm. 'The creature you killed was a savage brute, but fortunately it did not sever my limb otherwise the healing would have proven troublesome. But come - you seek the Guild.' With which he started down the street as if the attack had never taken place.

They walked in silence for some fifteen minutes before the old man abruptly halted before a downward descent of worn stone steps that led to a gloomy, unmarked building.

'The Guildhouse,' he explained briefly. 'May I ask if you are expected?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head. 'I am a stranger to this city.'

'So I suspected by your accent. If you have come uninvited, the Guild will require a sponsor. May I ask your business with them?'

For a moment, Fire*Wolf hesitated, then shrugged. 'I am a sorcerer with little POWER.'

'Ah,' Amien nodded. 'So you will be seeking the initiatory tests?'

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'In that case, I shall be your sponsor.'

'You are known to the Guild?'

'Well enough,' said Amien. 'Well enough.' And he started down the worn stone steps. Fire*Wolf recovered from his surprise in time to follow before the old man reached the wooden door.

We too must follow. Go to 60.

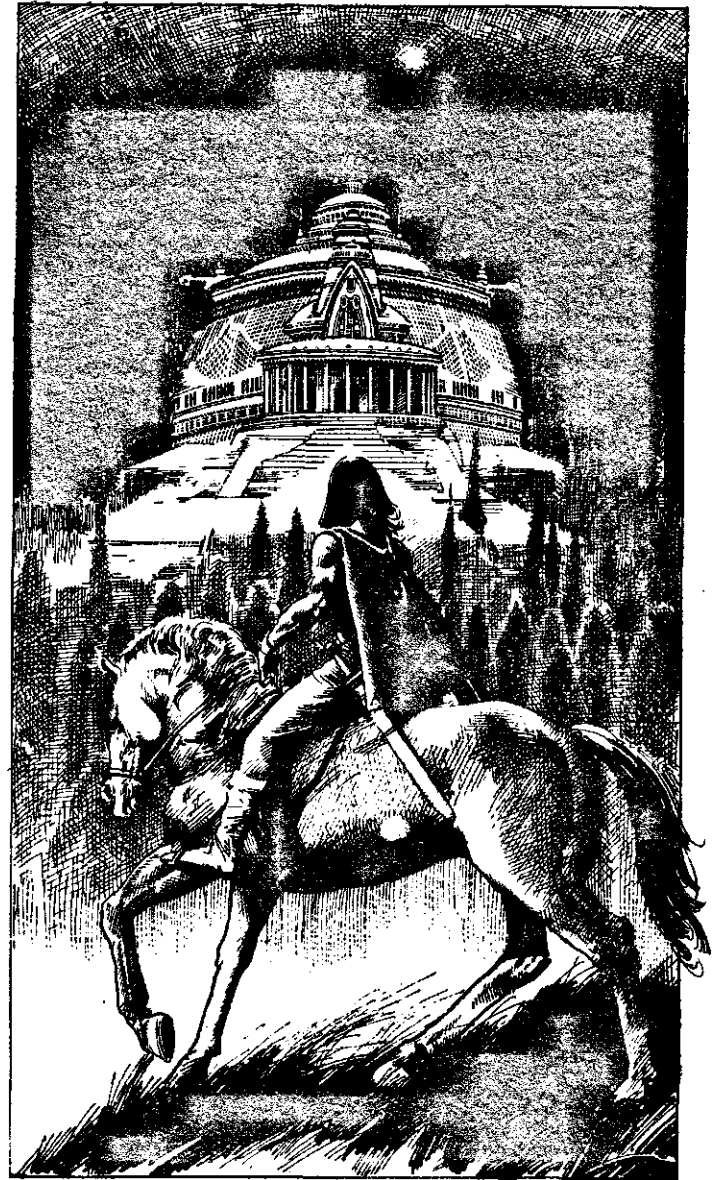
OFFICES OF THE STATE ORACLE

11

There was no pursuit and the jailhouse, he quickly discovered, was well, outside the labyrinthine warrens of the Old City, so he soon had his bearings. Once oriented, it was a small thing to return to the inn where he was lodging. There he bathed and exchanged the now somewhat tattered sorcerer's silk for the vastly more comfortable tunic and leggings of a fighting man. A sorcerer might carry more prestige - and the robe would certainly be necessary when he returned to seek the Alchemists' Guild - but he was at heart a warrior and his mood was considerably improved by the fact that he now looked like one.

He sought directions from the landlord and discovered the Offices of the State Oracle were situated in the grounds of the great Temple of Minerva, itself part of the Pontime Parkland which swept in a vast crescent around the southern reaches of Pelimandar.

Fire*Wolf rode out at dawn, partly to avoid the pious crowds, partly because time was always pressing. But even at that early hour, he had frequent reminders of the urgent threat to Harn as he reached the outskirts of the capital. Soldiers



Fire*Wolf approaches Minerva's Temple

and fortifications were everywhere, with more structures in the course of hasty construction. If there had ever been any doubt about the validity of the Vernal Predictions of a Spawn invasion, they had died with the population of Belgardium.

But for all the frenzied activity, Fire*Wolf felt no sense of relief. Once they had marched, the Spawn could not be stopped by any normal military means. Only the most powerful sorceries could touch them, and there was little certainty even of these.

Minerva's Temple, a glittering marble edifice of public worship, stood on top of a landscaped hill dominating the surrounding parkland. The Offices of the Oracle were more discreet, an interlocking series of small sandstone buildings half hidden by a belt of pines. They seemed deserted as Fire*Wolf approached, but an ostler appeared to take his horse to stable when he entered the courtyard and two white-gowned Vestals guided him from the entrance hall to the Chamber of Donations.

An elderly Vestal, her robe limned with the blue trimming of professional virginity, held court here beside twin statues of Minerva and the glowering Shaman God Lilethus. Despite the early hour he noticed there were already coins within the offering bowls. Fearful times meant good business for the gods.

'Welcome, Pilgrim.' The gaze of the elderly Vestal swept over him with professional expertise, doubtless calculating the expected size of his

donation. But he was pleased to note the puzzled look which crept into her eyes. He retained, in his stature and dress, the crude power of his Barbarian upbringing. But his accoutrements were fine and his bearing more aristocratic than that of the Wasteland savages. Nor had she missed the sorcerous sheen on the Doomsword at his side. He was not an easy man to judge.

Fire*Wolf bowed. 'My Lady, I bring a modest offering.'

'The gods thank you.'

Fire*Wolf reached into his tunic and produced a purse. Gold coins cascaded from it into the offering bowl. He saw her eyes widen slightly.

He bowed again. 'If it is the will of the gods, I seek an oracle.'

'The public readings do not begin until noon,' the Vestal said. Then, as Fire*Wolf produced a second purse, she added hastily, 'But doubtless you referred to a private reading.'

Fire*Wolf smiled. 'Such was my intent.' He placed the second purse on a small table by her chair. She reached out and took it without a word.

*But Fire*Wolfs second offering is more vital than his first. If it is not enough, the Vestal will refuse and he will have no second chance. To discover how much Fire*Wolf has in that purse, roll one die and multiply the result by 100. (Generous Barbarian!) Turn to page 188 to find the minimum necessary for an oracle. If*

11-13

*Fire*Wolf meets it, turn to 30. If not, you may assume he will get no further with this endeavour and must begin searching for the rotten Guildhouse again, in which case turn to 90.*

12

The branch corridor ran due south for fifty yards before forming a T junction with another corridor running east-west.

Which way? If west, then turn to 43. If east, turn to 32.

13

Death has come to Fire*Wolf.

But in the strange universe inhabited by your creation, death is not the end. For here, reincarnation is the Law. The essential entity that is Fire*Wolf is quite indestructible. Only the body/personality mask he wears may perish.

Roll new stats for him as instructed at the beginning of this book. He will retain the Doomsword and his sorcerous robe, but nothing he may have collected during this adventure, including POWER.

To set his feet again on the long road to his Destiny, you may, if you wish, begin the adventure from the very start, perhaps making different decisions at crucial points.

Alternatively, a double dice roll which scores higher than 10 (i.e. 11 or 12) will permit you to return him directly to the section he has just left.

13-14

You have one chance only to make this roll. If it fails, you may make a further double roll, multiplying the result by ten. Provided the end figure is *less* than the number of the section he has just left, you may take him directly to the section indicated by the dice. (Which may, incidentally, prove a confusing experience for you both.) If the roll shows a section *higher* than any he has visited, subtract 10 and continue to subtract 10 until the figure is lower than the last section visited, then take him directly to the section indicated.

14

Fire*Wolf half turned, as if prepared to go willingly, then abruptly elbowed the nearest of the King's Guards in the stomach, hitched the sorcerer's robe above his knees and took off along the narrow street like a frightened rabbit.

For a moment, the Guards stood stunned. The burly Sergeant was the first to recover. 'After him, lads!' he roared.

*And after him they went. But will they catch him? Turn to page 186 and compare the combined SPEED and STAMINA stats of each King's Guard with the combined SPEED and STAMINA stats of our hurrying hero. Any Guard whose figures are higher than Fire*Wolf's will catch up with him and a fight will ensue. If Fire*Wolf can remove more than 150 LIFE POINTS from each Guard in this fight, he will still make good his escape — but if the Guard(s) remove 150 of Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS then he is recaptured. Any Guards*

WITH THE SAME SPEED + STAMINA as Fire*Wolf will catch up with him and strike him for a loss of 50 LIFE POINTS (per Guard) but will be unable to prevent his escaping. Guards with lower combined stats will not be able to catch him at all. If Fire*Wolf makes good his escape, go to **45**. If he is captured, turn to **3**.

15

The corridor ran due south for a little over fifty feet, then ended in a second downward flight of steps.

Fire*Wolf descended cautiously, the torchlight casting monstrous shadows on the rough stone walls. He counted twenty-five steps down before he found himself in another corridor, this one running east-west.

*Which way now? If west, go to **9**. If east, turn to **22**.*

16

Without further hesitation, Fire*Wolf drew the Doomsword and launched himself upon the monster.

*And in doing so, earned himself the first strike. But that is all the good news for Fire*Wolf just now. He will discover the Doomsword functions only as an ordinary sword here, giving + 10 damage and no question of leeching any enemy LIFE POINTS for our hero. The Worm's stats are on page 186. If Fire*Wolf kills it, move*

*on to **35**, noting an additional 10 POWER points for our hero's store. If not, it's the dreaded **13**.*

17

He was in a lighted room, totally unlike the tomb where he had lain down to rest. It had all the appearances of a cell: unfurnished except for a single wooden bunk, with no windows except for a small barred window on the door. But the door was ajar, so he was not a prisoner.

*Fire*Wolf, now mysteriously transposed to some new section of the Crypts, has only two practical options open to him. He can search his cell (go to **17**) or leave by that open door (go to **51**).*

18

Fire*Wolf turned and found the door tight shut behind him!

*So there's nothing for it but to return to **51**.*

19

The statues, he quickly realized, were some form of golem. They were unlike any golem he had ever heard of since no mechanical contrivances were within. They shattered before his sword and lay in broken pieces as if they had never been aught but ordinary stone.

In the excitement of the contest, he almost missed the scrap of parchment lying amongst the fragments of the second statue.

Fire*Wolf picked it up. Scrawled on it in a monkish hand was a cryptic message:

This marble room may yet become
A warrior tomb when all is done
So take your leave when finished here
By-

And there the message ended, obviously incomplete since the parchment had been torn in the combat.

*Which leaves poor Fire*Wolf with a bit of a problem: notably what to do next. He may, of course, simply opt to exit through the door by which he entered — in which case go to 27. Or he may elect to search thoroughly for a secret door in the marble chamber: if so, go to 48. He might even decide to -take a little nap on the bier, since the fight with the statues must have exhausted him, in which case go to 56.*

20

The urchin moved with the darting speed of a lizard. Perhaps Fire*Wolf's stamina might have permitted him to catch her on an open road. But here, in this winding maze of alleyways and side-streets, she disappeared from view in moments, leaving him alone, without a guide, and lost.

Fire*Wolf scowled. Despite his robe, what reluctant sorceries he might have at his command were all but useless for lack of POWER. He badly needed to reach the Guild of Alchemists, and the Guildhouse was in the Old City - that he knew.

What he did not know was how to find it.

He paused to take stock of his surroundings. In chasing the child, he had reached an open, cobbled square, a marketplace by the look of the various stalls. The area was busy, bustling with plump, bearded merchants and their jostling customers. Most stalls, he noticed, had a guard, mute token of the dangers of this district.

Although he disliked showing weakness (what sorcerer remained lost when a simple spell of divination would point him in the right direction?), there was nothing else for it but to ask directions and trust his strong right arm to keep him out of trouble.

He was moving towards a merchant selling brassware when a touch on his arm halted him.

'You look troubled, Sorcerer. Perhaps I can provide you with some small diversion from your woes.'

woman was slim, dark and strikingly attractive, less voluptuous than his Wilderness-bred tastes might have liked, but exuding a subtle eroticism like a jasmine cloud. She was dressed strangely for a courtesan, in velvet breeches and a high-necked white blouse.

At any other time, Fire*Wolf might have been tempted. But his Destiny was pressing and his present mission urgent. Nevertheless, he smiled and said politely, 'I am honoured by your offer, but my business today lies elsewhere.'

'Ah, business. With some men it is always business first and pleasure later ... if at all.' She shrugged and turned away.

'A moment,' called Fire*Wolf, reaching for his purse. She might, after all, know the location of the Guildhouse and a few coins could purchase the information he needed. But his purse was gone!

For an instant he stood stunned, then plunged into the throng in pursuit of the young woman. At once he found his way blocked by a broad, red-bearded individual in a tattered leather jerkin, carrying a club. The villain grinned at him. 'Seems the lady doesn't want to do business with you, Stranger.'

'Stand aside!' Fire*Wolf hissed, furious at the theft of his purse.

'Stand aside, is it? And if I do not, will you blast me with your wizard ways, Sorcerer?'

Fire*Wolf dropped his hand to the hilt of the Doomsword, already whining with anticipation in its scabbard. He had no wish to kill this man, but his anger was roused and he had no intention of allowing the woman to get away with his purse either.

But the man reached across to place a broad hand on his chest and pushed. Fire*Wolf stepped back in surprise, then tripped and fell heavily, realizing too late that a second man, small with weasel features, had crouched directly behind him. Fire*Wolf twisted in the Wilderness way and

sprang to his feet, all in a single movement. But both the redbear and the weasel-faced man had melted into the throng along with the slim woman and Fire*Wolf's purse. A small knot of onlookers began to laugh at his plight, but fell silent suddenly as the howling Doomsword screamed from its scabbard.

In fury and frustration, Fire*Wolf turned this way and that, scarcely able to control the demon blade in his hands. The crowd around him fell back, began to thin and finally disperse. He caught the sound of marching feet and turned to find a six-man contingent of the King's Guards bearing down on him.

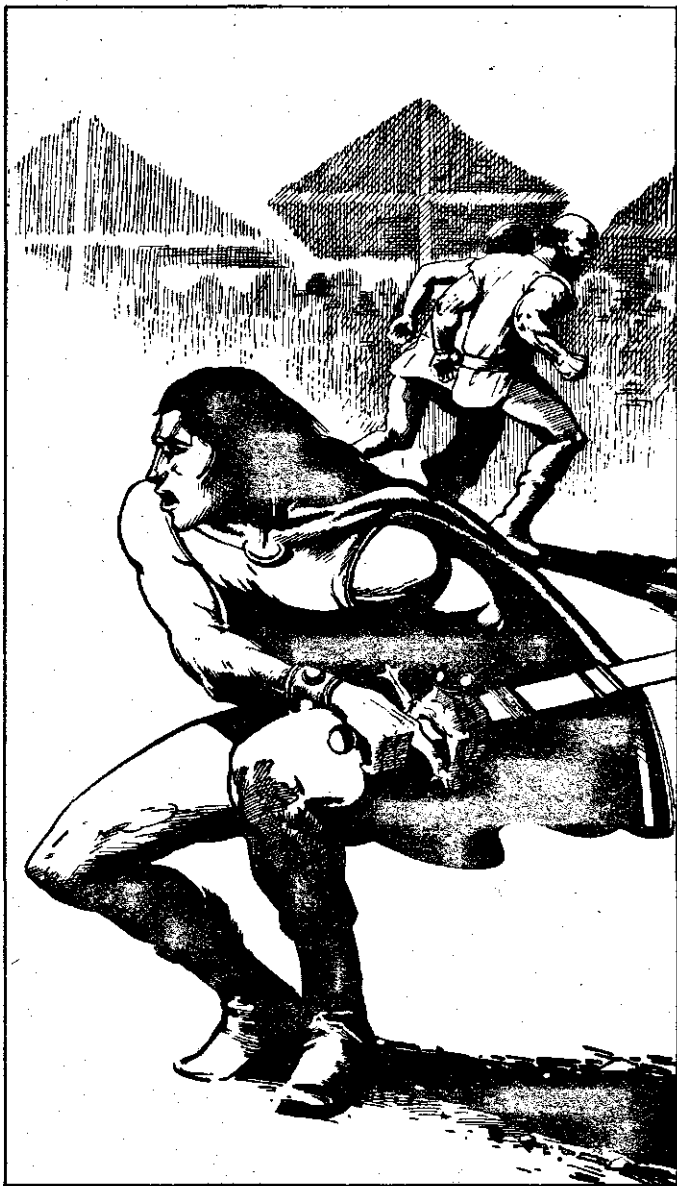
A burly Sergeant stepped forward as the contingent stopped. 'Put the sword away, Stranger,' he ordered gruffly. 'You don't want more trouble than you can handle.'

*But it's prison for sure if Fire*Wolf is taken by the Guards. Perhaps only for a night or two, but with a realm to be saved, Fire*Wolf can afford to lose no time. If he decides to fight the Guards, turn to 1. If he goes with them quietly, turn to 65.*

21

The woman's body contorted violently, shivered, then was still. At once the hall was filled with a booming basso-profundo which seemed to emanate from the very air rather than her delicate lips.

Fire*Wolf, son of Xandine, I know you!' it boomed. 'I have watched your battle skills in-



Fire*Wolf and Doomsword

crease with pleasure. But this I say to you. The Spawn may not be stopped by brute force alone, nor sorcery either, although you must gain POWER before you proceed against them. The realm must be strong and you must be subtle. Only this combination will prevail. Your time is short. Already the Spawn are massing. They will not attack any more in greenships, for they have insufficient of them to meet the needs of their ambition. When next they come, they will not fly, but march.'

'So we are safe until the thaw,' Fire*Wolf breathed.

The huge voice laughed harshly. 'Safe? Safe? Of course you are not safe! The hellcreatures are guided now and it is this guidance which which ...'

But even as it spoke, the voice was fading. The prophetess on the granite throne stirred, writhed, as if she could no longer support the alien strength of the spirit which possessed her. Then her eyes opened and the voice was silent.

'I can endure no more,' she told him weakly. 'Lilethus is not of my nature and so strains me greatly. But perhaps you have heard sufficient?'

*Well, hardly- although Fire*Wolfis, of course, too courteous to tell her so. Half an oracle is better than no oracle at all. Perhaps later he will find more clues to its full meaning. In the interim, he may take the advice of the Shaman God and seek to renew his POWER. Which*

means returning to that warren of an Inner City, of course. But what else is there to do? Turn now to 90 where you will find him once again in search of the Guildhouse.

22

Moving eastwards, Fire*Wolf discovered almost immediately that there was a corridor branching south to his right; and fifty yards beyond that another, also branching south. He could see no doorways anywhere.

So where does he go next? If the first southern corridor, turn to 38. If the second, turn to 58. Otherwise he can always return to 15 and reconsider his options.

23

The corridor took him south fifty yards before turning at right angles to run east. He saw a branch corridor to the north and beyond it, a flight of steps running downwards to the south. Beyond the steps, still in the corridor he had entered, there was a second corridor to the north. More to the point, he could see two doors, both in the northern wall of his corridor: the first just beyond the junction with the steps, the second just beyond the second corridor running north.

*This is getting complicated, but who said being a hero was easy? If Fire*Wolf takes the first corridor north, turn to 54. If the second north, turn to 66. If he tries the first door, you try 77. If he tries the second door, go to 85. Should he decide to take the steps, turn to 88. Otherwise,*

of course, he can go back the way he came, which, as you may recall, will lead him to 9.

24

He heard the rattle of the chain, then the door swung back just enough to allow him to enter a dimly lit hallway. He had a fleeting impression of a slim female form which seemed somehow strangely familiar before the door closed again and the chain and bolts went firmly back into place.

'I thank you,' Fire*Wolf began, anxious to reassure her.

'Shhh! The Guards are directly outside and may hear you!' There was something familiar about the voice as well.

As he tried to work out where he had heard that voice before, a slim hand closed on his wrist and he allowed himself to be led from the hallway along an even worse lit corridor, through a door into a lamplit room.

At once Fire*Wolf's hand dropped to the hilt of his sword as recognition flooded in on him. Velvet breeches, high-necked blouse... it was the woman who had stolen his purse! And warming themselves by an open log fire were the two men who had helped her: the burly fellow who had challenged Fire*Wolf and the little weasel who, had so successfully tripped him.

To his surprise, his threatening gesture was met with a gust of laughter. 'Let your weapon lie,' advised the burly man cheerfully, 'for if we squab-

ble amongst ourselves now, the Guards will surely find you. And us. And that would be in no one's interest.'

The manner more than the words caused Fire*Wolf to relax a little. 'Who are you?' he asked suspiciously.

'Honest thieves,' the smaller man said, grinning. 'With no love for the King's Guards. You are among friends, for we are outlaws like yourself.'

'No outlaw I,' Fire*Wolf growled.

'No?' asked the little man politely. 'Then why do the Guards seek you?'

Fire*Wolf stared at him in astonishment, then, slowly, the funny side of his situation began to dawn on him and he smiled, then laughed aloud. These three villains were the reason why he was pursued; yet because he was pursued, they were willing to help him. They had set him foul of the law with their roguery and now welcomed him as a fellow rogue because of it.

As his laughter died away, Fire*Wolf said, 'Perhaps you're right. But there is still the matter of my purse.'

This time it was the woman who spoke. 'Your purse was honestly earned in the pursuit of our profession.'

'A matter of opinion,' Fire*Wolf told her gravely. 'And since I suspect my swordarm is more skilled than any here, my own opinion must carry weight.'

'A challenge!' cried the smaller man delightedly. 'A challenge from a sorcerer!' He looked from one to another of his companions. 'Everybody shake with fear.'

'If you forgo magic, I will accept your challenge,' the woman said quietly.

'You?' asked Fire*Wolf, disconcerted.

She half turned away from him. 'If the prospect does not frighten you too much. We will fence with swords in fair combat. The winner shall be he, or she, who draws first blood. Is it agreed?'

*A challenge from a woman? Like most fighting men, Fire*Wolf was a chauvinist pig at heart. He could not imagine himself seriously fencing with any woman. Yet could he back down gracefully in the face of her insistence? If Fire*Wolf refuses the challenge, go to 4. If he accepts, turn to 61.*

25

The corridor ran east for approximately fifty yards before ending in a blank wall. Fire*Wolf searched it carefully for secret doors, but could find none. There was, however, a very obvious door on his left immediately before the corridor ended.

But should he try to enter? If so, go to 71. If not, he may return to 6 and reconsider his options.

26

With a sinking feeling that he might be signing his own death warrant, Fire*Wolf flattened

himself against the tunnel wall, drew his sword as a modicum of insurance . . . and waited.

The Worm moved with a curious undulating motion until it was no more than a few feet away from him, then stopped. The forward segment swung from side to side like an animal sensing the air, sometimes turning towards him with its eyeless gaze, sometimes turning away.

Then the Worm moved again, far more quickly than before. Fire*Wolf gasped at the unexpected speed, but the creature did not attack, did not even indicate that it had sensed him, but instead plunged on down the tunnel in the direction Fire*Wolf had come.

Fire*Wolf released a heartfelt sigh of relief.

*As well he might. His pacifist decision was even wiser, perhaps, than he realizes, for if our hero has not already killed the vampire at 47, the Worm will do it for him, releasing 10 POWER points which automatically accrue to Fire*Wolf. Now turn to 34.*

27

Fire*Wolf moved towards the door. At once the counterbalanced weights began to swing it shut.

Will our hero be trapped forever in this marble tomb? Only SPEED can save him now. Throw a check roll against his SPEED stat. If he makes it, go to 63. If not, return to 19 so that he may reconsider his options.

28

The cell was as barren as it appeared to be at first glance. But Fire*Wolf persevered until he had diligently searched every inch ... without result.

Frowning, he sat on the bunk, still more than half convinced that something must be here. Then it struck him. The bunk! It seemed to be fixed to the floor, and he had not attempted to look underneath it.

He jumped up quickly, determined to see if he could move the bunk.

*A question of STRENGTH. Make a check roll against his STRENGTH and if successful, go to 57. Otherwise, Fire*Wolf must return to 17 and reconsider his (limited) options.*

29

Levarus returned at the appointed time. 'Have you made your decision, Son of Xandine?'

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'I mean no offence,' he said gravely, 'but I have little taste for sorcery and none at all for necromancy. Thus I feel it best to seek the Guild of Alchemists. Can you direct me there?'

'I can wish you well, for your father's sake,' Levarus said, 'but as to directions, the ancient enmity between the Alchemists and the Necromancers forbids me to assist you.'

'As you will,' Fire*Wolf shrugged and took his leave.

Back in the narrow streets once more, he took the

opportunity of seeking directions elsewhere, from passers-by. But while a number of them proved helpful enough, their directions did not. For anyone unfamiliar with the Old City labyrinth, the landmarks they mentioned were meaningless. Thus he wandered for almost an hour without sight of his goal.

He paused to take stock of his surroundings. He had reached an open, cobbled square, a marketplace by the look of the various stalls. The area was busy, bustling with plump, bearded merchants and their jostling customers. Most stalls, he noticed, had a guard, mute token of the dangers of this district.

He was moving towards a merchant selling brassware when a touch on his arm halted him.

'You look troubled, Sorcerer. Perhaps I can provide you with some small diversion from your woes.'

The woman was slim, dark and strikingly attractive, less voluptuous than his Wilderness-bred tastes might have liked, but exuding a subtle eroticism like a jasmine cloud. She was dressed strangely for a courtesan, in velvet breeches and a high-necked white blouse.

At any other time, Fire*Wolf might have been tempted. But his Destiny was pressing and his present mission urgent. Nevertheless, he smiled and said politely, 'I am honoured by your offer, but my business today lies elsewhere.'

'Ah, business. With some men it is always

business first and pleasure after ... if at all.' She shrugged and turned away.

'A moment,' called Fire*Wolf, reaching for his purse. She might, after all, know the location of the Guildhouse and a few coins could purchase the information he needed. But his purse was gone!

For an instant he stood stunned, then plunged into the throng in pursuit of the young woman. At once he found his way blocked by a broad, red-bearded individual in a tattered leather jerkin, carrying a club. The villain grinned at him. 'Seems the lady doesn't want to do business with you, Stranger.'

'Stand aside!' Fire*Wolf hissed, furious at the theft of his purse.

'Stand aside, is it? And if I do not, will you blast me with your wizard ways, Sorcerer?'

Fire*Wolf dropped his hand to the hilt of the Doomsword, already whining with anticipation in its scabbard. He had no wish to kill this man, but his anger was roused and he had no intention of allowing the woman to get away with his purse either.

But the man reached across to place a broad hand on his chest and pushed. Fire*Wolf stepped back in surprise, then tripped and fell heavily, realizing too late that a second man, small with weasel features, had crouched directly behind him.

Fire*Wolf twisted in the Wilderness way and sprang to his feet, all in a single movement. But

both the redbeard and the weasel-faced man had melted into the throng along with the slim woman and Fire*Wolf's purse. A small knot of onlookers began to laugh at his plight, but fell silent suddenly as the howling Doomsword screamed from its scabbard.

In fury and frustration, Fire*Wolf turned this way and that, scarcely able to control the demon blade in his hands. The crowd around him fell back, then began to thin and finally disperse. He caught the sound of marching feet and turned to find a six-man contingent of the King's Guards bearing down on him.

A burly Sergeant stepped forward as the contingent stopped. 'Put the sword away, Stranger,' he ordered gruffly. 'You don't want more trouble than you can handle.'

*But it's prison for sure if Fire*Wolf is taken by the Guards. Perhaps only for a night or two, but with a realm to be saved, Fire*Wolf can afford to lose no time. If he decides to fight the Guards, turn to 1. If he goes with them quietly, turn to 65.*

30

The Vestal rose. 'Your gift is much appreciated,' she said smoothly. 'Will you come with me?'

Fire*Wolf followed her between twin pillars and along a colonnaded corridor into a broad, high-ceilinged chamber of the oddest structure he had ever seen. It appeared to have been constructed over a natural fissure for the

stone-flagged floor gave way to a stretch of what could only have been rough-hewn bedrock from a crack in the centre of which emerged a constant, curling plume. Half-hidden by this smoke was a huge granite throne on which, white-robed and slimly built, sat one of the most beautiful women Fire*Wolf had ever seen.

The elderly Vestal at his side bowed deeply and gestured for him to do the same. 'Our reigning sibyl,' she hissed in explanation. 'One of the most powerful prophetesses this Kingdom has ever known, despite her youth.'

'What is her name?' asked Fire*Wolf, intrigued, and not entirely on account of her psychical abilities.

'Selina,' the Vestal whispered back. 'Although that is no concern of yours. You will refer to her only as My Lady.'

'As you wish,' Fire*Wolf murmured, smiling slightly.

He was escorted to the foot of the granite throne, then left since oracles, as he had been told, were personal affairs - especially when the petitioner paid well as Fire*Wolf had done. He stared up at the woman on the throne, drinking in the beauty of her face and form. If his stare disturbed her, she did not show it, for she only said gravely, 'You require me to seek out your Fateline, sir?'

'My name - '

But she cut him off with a wave of her delicate



Selina

hand. 'Names are unimportant here. You are who you are and an oracle may not be influenced by worldly titles. But you may tell me what it is you wish to know.' She smiled slightly. 'The name of your next lover, perhaps, or whether you will be fortunate in trade or war.'

Fire*Wolf shrugged. 'I am no merchant, My Lady. My wealth is sufficient for my needs and consequently of little interest to me. I am, as you can see, a fighting man, but if I am to die in battle tomorrow, then that is my Destiny and I would not seek to avoid it. As to the name of my next lover, it may be that I have already heard it and recently. But my real interest does not lie in matters personal. I wish a prediction on the coming of the Spawn.'

This time she did react, for he saw her face pale a little. But she said levelly enough, 'Your tribute of gold may be wasted, Warrior, for my predictions on the coming of the Demonspawn are public knowledge. As the State Astrologers have announced, there is likelihood of an invasion in the spring, not before.'

'The State Astrologers did not predict the destruction of Belgardium,' said Fire*Wolf bluntly.

They did not,' she agreed.

'Was it not then foreseen?'

'Not by the State Astrologers.'

When it became obvious she was not going to elaborate, he said, 'We are alone and I have been

told the private predictions of the oracle are confidential. Will you tell me then of the Spawn?'

This time it was her turn to shrug. 'An oracle is not to be bought like a side of mutton, however generous the donation. If the gods wish to give you knowledge, they will do so: I am merely the instrument.' She leaned across and inhaled deeply of the fumes emerging from the fissure. At once her body stiffened into dreadful rigidity, as if she had been poisoned. Fire*Wolf started forward, then stopped himself as she slumped back on the granite throne, breathing deeply, her eyes glazed, unseeing.

*A critical point in the whole weird operation, as it happens, for the gods may well decide not to favour Fire*Wolf at all. (He has, after all, paid them little tribute in his lifetime: even those Wilderness gods to whom he will occasionally throw a scrap of prayer when they deliver him safely out of battle.) Throw two dice. Score 8 to 12 inclusive and Fire*Wolf will have his oracle: turn to **46**. Score anything else and he will be politely but firmly escorted from the Temple grounds with no option but to go to **90** and continue searching for the Guild of Alchemists.*

31

The door opened easily. Fire*Wolf stepped quickly inside, his Doomsword drawn, but a quick glance told him the chamber was empty. At least, empty of life. But hanging on the southern wall was what appeared to be a fisherman's net.

Fire*Wolf approached it cautiously, noting the sorcerous sparkling of the knotting. An errant memory nibbled at the edges of his mind: he had heard of such a net somewhere before. He stared, trying to think.

*He will remember eventually, of course. And when he does, he will realize he has discovered a Web of Warding. This magical net will hold fast anything having STRENGTH less than 150, which means it can be used to capture all humans and a good many members of the Demonspawn. A useful artifact indeed. Make sure he takes it with him and return now to **9** to reconsider his options.*

32

Almost immediately, Fire*Wolf saw steps leading downwards and south to his right. Beyond them to the north was a door, a northern running corridor and a second door.

*If he tries the first door, go to **77**. If the second door, go to **85**. If he takes the northern corridor, turn to **66**. If he goes down the steps, turn to **88**.*

33

Time meant nothing in the darkened cell, so Fire*Wolf had no means of telling how long it was before the key eventually turned and the door creaked open.

For a moment he thought he was being taken for trial - or possibly just execution. But then he realized only a single guard had entered, his face

pale and strained in the illumination of the lamp he carried.

At once Fire*Wolf's hand moved into the straw which served him as a mattress and closed on the handle of the Doomsword. The sorcerous blade had been taken from him when he was cast into the cell and had returned with that fearsome magical inevitability he had now learned to accept almost as a matter of course.

But it seemed he had no need of the weapon, for the guard placed a warning finger to his lips and gestured furtively.

Wondering, Fire*Wolf rose and followed. They made their way through dimly lit and empty corridors until they reached a solid door. The guard took a key from his tunic and unlocked it.

'Go!' he whispered urgently; and opened the door to the world outside.

Grateful though he was for this unexpected turn of fate, Fire*Wolf nevertheless hesitated. 'Why?' he whispered back. 'Why are you doing this?'

For a moment it seemed as though the man might not answer, but then he said, 'My name is Stel. I am brother to Huildana, a virgin in the Temple Office of the State Astrologers. She has told me of the latest predictions. The Spawn will come much sooner than our leaders pretend. They have ordered that the information be kept secret in order to avoid panic.'

'But what has this to do with releasing me?'

They predict a Messiah, who will deliver us from the demon horde. I have reason to believe you may be this man.'

Fire*Wolf stared at him, astounded. 'Me? But why?'

But Stel was shaking his head urgently. 'No time to speak of this now. Leave while you still can.' And so saying, he pushed Fire*Wolf through the open doorway into the Pelimandar night.

*A lucky break indeed. But what now? Fire*Wolf remains limited in sorcerous POWER. If you feel he should renew his search for the Guild of Alchemists, turn to 90. If you think a better course might be to learn more of the astrologers' secret predictions, go to 11.*

34

The tunnel widened eventually, much to Fire*Wolf's unspoken relief. Shortly afterwards the roof rose sufficiently to allow him to stand upright. He emerged first into a broad corridor, then, by way of a door which slid upwards on counterbalanced weights, into a triangular tomb.

By contrast with anything he had so far seen, this tomb seemed to be a recent construction, and a costly one. Floor and walls were lined with fine white marble. Black and dark red velvet drapes hung tastefully with not the slightest sign of rot. Two marble statues of brawny Barbarian warriors guarded the doorway. But there was no smell of death here and the marble bier set in the centre was devoid of corpse or coffin.

Fire*Wolf stepped inside, half expecting the door to close behind him of its own accord. But it remained open. He noticed that this tomb did not seem to have an exit, other than the door by which he entered. He wondered if the few chambers he had now explored could possibly comprise the whole of the Necromancers' Crypts. He did not think so: but how then did one gain access to the rest? And where, come to that, were the perils of this place — perils so necessary to generate the trials which would earn him POWER?

He examined the chamber with greater care, peering behind the velvet drapes, searching for a possible clue or inscription on the bier. There was nothing. Eventually, in bitter disappointment, he knew there was nothing for him here and turned to leave, half imagining he must have missed a passage somewhere, or possibly a secret door.

He was directly between the two marble statues when they attacked him, fiercely and simultaneously.

*A weird development, although one perhaps not completely unwelcome. You will find the stats of the statues on page 186. If Fire*Wolf succumbs to their onslaught, go to 13. If he wins through, turn to 19.*

35

The corridor ran west for approximately fifty yards before ending in a blank wall. Fire*Wolf searched it carefully for secret doors, but could find none. There was, however, a very obvious

door on his right immediately before the corridor ended.

But should he try to enter? If so, go to 53. If not, he may return to 6 and reconsider his options.

36

Fire*Wolf took a deep breath, drew his partly functioning Doomsword and launched himself across the chamber. As before, the weapons detached themselves instantly from the walls and hurled themselves towards him!

*A tricky situation to evaluate. Three factors obviously come into it - SPEED, SKILL and LUCK. Make check rolls against SPEED and LUCK to determine whether he makes it at all. If either fails, go to 13. If the rolls succeed, then you must determine whether he got across without injuries — a matter of SKILL. // a check roll against his SKILL fails, then he will automatically lose half his current LIFE POINTS. But even if Fire*Wolf succeeds right down the line, his troubles are not over. There is still that closed door, which may or may not be locked. If a second check roll against his LUCK succeeds, the door is unlocked and you can go to 64. If this roll fails, then you will have to make ALL the check rolls again from the beginning and abide by their new results.*

37

Fire*Wolf stepped boldly across the bodies (which were already beginning to putrefy) and pushed the door.

At once he felt himself lifted high into the air, levitating uncontrollably as if he were no weightier than a feather. Indeed, he seemed lighter than any feather, for errant air currents in the chamber blew him hither and thither.

Only luck can say where he will end up. Throw one die. Score 1-3 and he will strike a glowing pillar, losing 75 LIFE POINTS multiplied by the result of your roll in the process. If this kills him, go to 13. If not, then he will at least cease to levitate, in which case he may explore 92 or 52. Score 4-6 and he will drift into the mural above the door and drown. (For the stormy seascape is actually a sorcerous gateway to the depths of the Northern Ocean.) In this case, go to 13.

38

The corridor ran south for fifty yards before joining in a T junction with a further corridor running east-west. On the northern wall of this cross corridor were two doors, one to his right, the other to his left. Almost opposite the door to his right was a flight of steps running downwards and south. Beyond the door was a corridor running north, while the extreme western end of the corridor turned due north.

*If Fire*Wolf takes the steps, go to 88. If he follows the cross corridor west and turns north at the end, it will take him to 9. (First branch corridor north will also take him to 9.) If he enters the door on his right, turn to 77. For the door on his left, turn to 85. As always, he has*

the option of returning direct to the section he has just left in order to try another direction.

39

On all fours, half regretting his decision, Fire*Wolf followed the shaft for a distance he could not accurately calculate before discovering it ended in a second wooden ladder upwards.

He scaled the ladder cautiously until he could climb no further, but probing swiftly, he revealed the second trap door. He pushed it open and emerged in the middle of a chamber which had the appearances of an armoury. Swords and shields hung from the walls, spears and lances stood in racks. A glance behind showed him a shallow antechamber and beyond that a half-open, door which he assumed must lead into the cell he had just left. Ahead of him was another door, closed.

Fire*Wolf pulled himself up into the room. At once he found himself under concerted attack! Swords and shields detached themselves in pairs from the walls and flew at him as if guided by invisible hands. He fell back in shock, almost stumbling down the shaft he had just vacated, to find that while he remained within a foot of the trapdoor, these sorcerous weapons would not touch him. But it was no more than a temporary haven, for to leave this place he had to cross the armoury and, arrogant though he was, he knew his martial skills could not sustain him long against such a combined attack.

*Fire*Wolf has a problem here and no mistake. Should he simply go back to the prison cell? If so, turn to 17. Or should he risk a dash across the armoury- in which case turn to 49.*

40

She was fast, but Fire*Wolf was faster. His hand gripped her tunic as she attempted to turn into a narrow gateway. She twisted like an eel, but he held her fast.

'Now,' he said, 'you contracted to lead me to the Guild of Alchemists and whether you like it or not, that is what you will do!'

The urchin struggled for a moment longer, then quietened. Fire*Wolf set her back on her feet. 'No more nonsense now,' he warned. 'I must reach the Guildhouse before nightfall.'

'It will cost you an extra silver piece,' the girl said sourly. She seemed not at all overawed by his size, his Doomsword or his sorcerer's cloak.

Fire*Wolf sighed and dipped into his purse. Since he had emerged from the Wilderness, he had learned that money was a major god in Harn, worshipped by young and old alike.

The girl took the coin, bit it in the traditional test for genuine silver, then hid it away in her tunic 'Before nightfall?' she asked, regarding him warily.

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'Before nightfall,' he confirmed.

'Then you are in luck, Master,' the child told him. The Guildhouse is across the street.'

He followed her pointing finger to an old, but imposing greystone building guarded by a solid oaken door. It was unmarked, as he had been told it would be. Those with business with the Guild of Alchemists were expected to show initiative.

'Can I go now?' asked the urchin, adding cheekily, 'Without you chasing after me?'

Fire*Wolf nodded briefly and started across the street as his former guide scurried off. He would have no need of guides if his mission proved successful.

He paused at the door and knocked. After what seemed like an eternity, it opened, first a crack, then wider. An emaciated old man, dressed in a faded purple robe, stared out at him sullenly from the gloomy interior.

'I am Lord Xandine,' Fire*Wolf introduced himself, using the title that had replaced his Barbarian name on the death of his aristocratic father. 'I have business with the Alchemist Superior.'

For a moment, the old man said nothing. Then he gave a small, mean smile. 'In that event, you had better present yourself at the Guildhouse of Alchemists, Lord Xandine,' he said.

Is this not the Guildhouse?' Fire*Wolf asked, seized by a mixture of amusement and anger at the way the child had so easily tricked him.

The old man shook his head. 'This is the head

quarters of the Association of Necromancers,' he said. His eyes travelled along Fire*Wolf's burly frame, taking in the sorcerer's robe and fixing on the Doomsword nestling in the scabbard at his belt. 'But perhaps you will find what you seek here.' He stood to one side in pointed invitation. 'You may enter.'

*What now for Fire*Wolf! He has still no idea how to reach the Guildhouse — or even how to find his way out of the warren he has entered. Necromancers, by all accounts, have their own means of generating POWER. If he decides to enter and do business with the Association, go to 2. Should he decide to continue his search for the Guildhouse, turn to 90.*

41

The Wilderness gods were with him! The door opened easily and in a moment, Fire*Wolf was inside, closing it quietly behind him.

For a moment he was tempted to wait to find out if the Guards had seen where he had gone, but common sense prevailed. There was no bolt to this door and if they had seen, they would be following him soon enough. He must make good his escape while the opportunity presented itself.

The house he had entered was deserted, as he soon discovered; and by all appearances had lain empty for some time. He moved through the empty rooms with silent stealth until he found a door which opened into a narrow, empty backstreet, with neither sign nor sound of the King's Men.

Fire*Wolf slipped outside with a muttered prayer of gratitude. Perhaps his luck had changed now. He certainly hoped so, for he still had the Guild of Alchemists to find.

So he has. Perhaps he will find it in 90.

42

Sweet, clean fresh air pervaded his nostrils like perfume. Fire*Wolf breathed deeply, glorying in his escape from the sewers. He was bedraggled and filthy, but alive. The Doomsword, linked to him in a sorcerous destiny which seemed inescapable, remained by his side.

Grimly he moved off, more determined than ever to find the Alchemists' Guild and renew his POWER before the Spawn invasion made futile his best efforts.

A brave attitude. But is it warranted by circumstances? Will he ever reach the Guildhouse? Or will some other fate befall him? Turn to 90.

43

The corridor ran west, then turned due north.

By following it, our hero arrived at 9.

44

Tanith looked down at her wounded arm in something approaching amazement. 'You are more skilled than I had imagined.'

'I have had considerable practice in combat,' Fire*Wolf told her drily.

When she had staunched the flow of blood and bandaged her arm, she handed him his stolen purse without a word.

'What now?' asked Fire*Wolf, still half-expecting he might have to fight her two companions as well.

'What now?' Tanith echoed. 'You have defeated me fairly. You have regained your purse. What more do you wish?'

'Guidance to the Guild of Alchemists,' Fire*Wolf said impulsively.

The three glanced at one another, then Tanith shrugged. 'A small thing,' she said. 'We will guide you.'

*So it seems Fire*Wolf has at last found the luck he needed. Turn to 70.*

45

Panting from the effort, Fire*Wolf made sufficient headway to gain some two hundred yards on the Guards, and in doing so turned a corner out of their sight. At once he plunged down a narrow alley, stepped into the shadow of a darkened doorway and waited.

In a moment he heard the shouts and tuning footsteps of the Guards on the other street. He held his breath and waited, hoping against hope they would be less than thorough in their

excitement. But the King's Men were well trained. Nine ran on, but three broke away to begin a search of the sidestreet where he was hidden.

Fire*Wolf glanced to his left. As luck would have it, he had chosen a cul-de-sac. There was no escape that way and the Guards were approaching.

In desperation, he tried the handle of the door behind him then, finding it locked, knocked gently. To his delight, he heard a bolt slide back almost immediately. The door opened a crack and a woman's voice asked, 'Who's there?'

Fire*Wolf pushed the door, but the woman, it seemed, was no fool, for it was held securely on a chain. 'I must come in!' he said urgently. 'I am pursued!'

*But will she let him in? At times like this, there are attributes far more important than fighting skills. Only CHARM or possibly ATTRACTION will get Fire*Wolf through that door. Roll two dice and multiply the result by eight. Compare the final figure with our hero's CHARM statistic. If your latest roll is higher, then the door stays closed. In this case, roll again quickly in the same way and compare results with Fire*Wolf's ATTRACTION statistic. Once again, if the latest roll is higher, the door stays closed. Should you find the woman allows Fire*Wolf to enter, go to 24. If not, go to 84.*

46

The prophetess Selena seemed to have difficulty breathing, but after a moment she said softly, 'Two deities grant oracles through me, each in accordance with the nature of the prediction. Minerva, the gentle Goddess of Wisdom, will speak of matters pertaining to learning, magic, mystery and love. The harsh Lilethus, God of Shamans, predicts on such matters as pertain to death, battles, power, politics and destruction. Which voice you hear depends entirely on the nature of your Destiny.'

*An intriguing development. Which voice will Fire*Wolf hear? Roll two dice. Score 2-6 and go to 7. Score 7-12 and go to 21.*

47

The coffin bore no inscription, carving or other insignia. Nor was there really any way to determine its age.

Except, of course, by opening it.

Fire*Wolf examined the lid carefully, then, with something akin to a shrug, since he was, of course, in this crypt to risk life and limb in pursuit of POWER, he reached down and flung it open in a single movement.

The vampire was up and at him almost before he could draw a startled breath.

*Not entirely unexpected, of course, for anyone with experience of necromantic crypts. Fire*Wolf is no necromancer, he will need prior*

*warning in order to gain an automatic first strike. Without prior warning, he rolls for first strike in the normal way. You will find the vampire's stats listed on page 186. But before you go racing off there, it is as well to know that Fire*Wolf is in for a nasty surprise: the Doomsword works here only as a normal weapon, scoring +10 damage but absorbing none of the enemy's LIFE POINTS for our hero's use. If the vampire does for Fire*Wolf, go to 13. If Fire*Wolf wins the day, he gains 20 POWER points and can move to either 8 or 62.*

48

Fire*Wolf searched methodically and diligently, walls, floor and ceiling. But it quickly became obvious that if there was a secret door here, it was hidden beyond his powers of observation.

Better return to 19 so that he can reconsider his options.

49

Fire*Wolf took a deep breath, drew his partly functioning Doomsword and launched himself across the chamber. As before, the weapons detached themselves instantly from the walls and hurled themselves towards him!

*But fortunately Fire*Wolf is close to the door, so it is really only a question of SPEED whether or not he reaches it safely. Make a check roll against his SPEED stat and if successful, you can assume he reaches the door without injury.*

(If it fails, the flying weapons still will not have time to kill him, but he will lose half his current LIFE POINTS.) Once at the door, there is the question of whether or not it is locked. This is largely a matter of LUCK. Make a check roll against his LUCK stat and if successful, go to 64. If unsuccessful, he's dead-go to 13.

50

'Hold!' Fire*Wolf called loudly and started off in the direction of the fast-disappearing child. He knew that if he did not catch her quickly, he was lost in these labyrinthine alleyways and narrow, overhanging streets. Nor would he be simply lost, but prey to those inhabitants who went about their business in the hours of darkness.

*But whether Fire*Wolf catches his erstwhile guide is not entirely a matter of chance. Compare our hero's SPEED stat with that of the urchin girl given on page 186. If Fire*Wolf is slower, go to 20. If faster, then make a check roll, using two dice and multiplying the result by eight. If the check roll is less than Fire*Wolf's LUCK figure, go to 40. If the check roll is greater than Fire*Wolf's LUCK figure, go to 80.*

51

The door opened into a tiny antechamber, little larger than a cupboard, which in turn led into what appeared to be an ancient armoury. Swords shields and spears hung on the walls and to his left stood racks of arrows, crossbow bolts and metal lances. Although possibly still serviceable

most of the weapons were tarnished and rusted. At the far side of the armoury was a closed door.

Fire*Wolf started towards it. At once he found himself under concerted attack! Swords and shields detached themselves in pairs from the walls and flew at him as if guided by invisible hands. He fell back in shock, to discover that while he remained in the tiny antechamber, these sorcerous weapons would not touch him. But it was no more than a temporary haven, for to leave this place he had to cross the armoury and, arrogant though he was, he knew his martial skills could not sustain him long against such a combined attack.

*Fire*Wolf has a problem here and no mistake. Should he simply go back to the prison cell? If so, turn to 18. Or should he risk a dash across the armoury-in which case turn to 36.*

52

The pillars turned the hall into a maze, but they stopped eventually to reveal what must have been the centre of the chamber, an open square about thirty feet long and broad. Set exactly central in this square was a small, open, wooden casket. Within it, resting on a velvet cushion was a glittering blue-green gemstone, cut, polished and easily as large as an egg.

*And valuable as all getout, by the looks of it. This jewel could be worth upwards of 100,000 gold pieces, quite possibly more. But should Fire*Wolf take it? As a sorcerer, he may test the*

*stone for magic by sacrificing 25 of his LIFE POINTS and turning to page 188 for the necessary information. Alternatively, he can simply take the stone - turn to **102** - or leave it severely alone, in which case he may explore either **92** or **76**.*

53

The door opened easily, giving access to a small, low-ceilinged chamber. At first it seemed totally empty, then Fire*Wolf noticed a three-inch metallic cube apparently thrown carelessly in one corner. He approached the cube and after satisfying himself there were no traps near it, picked it up. A few moments' examination convinced him, with growing excitement, that he had found a prize indeed. Unless he was very much mistaken, he was holding a POWER accumulator.

*As it happens, he is not very much mistaken. You will find more about this type of artifact on page 188 Meanwhile, Fire*Wolf should take it with him for future use and return now to **35** where he can decide where to go next.*

54

Fire*Wolf walked the northern corridor until he reached a T junction. A glance convinced him he had travelled full circle, much to his annoyance.

*Go to **9**.*

55

A mistake.

He realized it the moment he emerged. The King's

Men were far closer than he had imagined. Nine of them together were far too many to fight.

Fire*Wolf halted.

*Go to **3**.*

56

Exhausted, Fire*Wolf stretched out on the marble bier. Laid out like the corpse at his own funeral, he was too tired even to consider the irony of his position.

The marble surface was cold, a cold that seeped through his clothing to numb his limbs as thoroughly as arctic frost. He tried to turn and found he could not: he was paralysed by the cold. There was a ringing noise in his ears and his head began to swim so that it seemed he was sinking through the very surface of the marble. The sensation grew stronger until he imagined himself falling. Faster and faster he fell, losing touch with reality. Then, momentarily, it seemed he blacked out completely.

*Is this Fire*Wolf's ultimate doom - frozen to death and hallucinating wildly in a marble tomb? Turn quickly to **17** to discover the awesome truth.*

57

It was a strain, for the bunk was firmly fixed. Fire*Wolf's massive muscles knotted and rippled, and sweat broke on his forehead. Then, with the sound of splintering wood, the bunk abruptly broke free.

57-59

There was a trap door underneath!

Fire*Wolf opened it with Wilderness-bred caution. A rickety wooden ladder led downwards into the darkness of a narrow shaft, which ran horizontally beneath the floor of his cell in the general direction of the cell door.

*Should Fire*Wolf enter this shaft? It is too narrow to give him any real chance of fighting should he meet anything nasty therein. Of course, he has no means of telling where it might lead. If he does enter, go to 39. If not, better return to 17 so that he may reconsider his options.*

58

The corridor ran south for approximately thirty-five feet then reached a dead end. Fire*Wolf made a cursory search for secret doors, but soon convinced himself he had simply wandered into a cul-de-sac.

Return to 22.

59

For no discernible reason, the chamber had been painted blue. The cautious Fire*Wolf stared around him, more than half expecting an attack. None came ... as yet.

He entered the room cautiously. There was a chest set against the eastern wall, while the entire southern wall was covered by an elaborate tapestry. Drawn to this wall hanging, Fire*Wolf examined it minutely. It depicted an ancient battle



Fire*Wolf and the tapestry

between human soldiers and the Demonspawn. The weaver had done her work well, for the whole took on a life of its own and the carnage depicted almost turned his stomach. What battle this was, he knew not: but the Spawn were clearly winning, as history attested they had always won.

There was, however, one curious detail. To the right of the picture, near the bottom corner, a hooded figure was depicted, obviously human, yet untouched by any of the blood-crazed Spawn. This figure held an ornate wooden staff in one hand, a metallic sceptre in the other, while around his neck he wore a tiny blue-green crystalline pendant. The sceptre seemed vaguely familiar to Fire*Wolf, though he could not quite place where or when he might have seen it. The remaining artifacts stirred no memories whatsoever. But the cameo within the greater picture intrigued him greatly. Why did the Spawn not attack this figure? He was unguarded and, apart from the staff, appeared unarmed.

Fire*Wolf turned away from the tapestry.

He turned towards a decision. Should he risk examining this chest, which might well be trapped? If so, turn to 68. Should he search behind the tapestry? If so, turn to 99. He may, of course, simply leave the room, in which case turn to 88.

THECRYPTMASTER

60

The Guildhouse was full of strange aromas and stranger, hooded figures, but it was warm and oddly welcoming. The old man, Amien, had entered with an easy familiarity. Fire*Wolf noticed instantly, with considerable surprise, that those within deferred to him as if he were a man of some importance.

Amien led him to an inner chamber, draped with tapestries into which had been woven symbolic representations of various alchemical processes - the Creation of the Stone, the alembic of the Red Dragon, the Mystical Marriage of Christian Rosenkreuz, the Castle of the Regnum Piscator...

'I must ask you to remain here for a while in meditation,' Amien told him, 'while I make the preparation for your testing.'

'You?' asked Fire*Wolf. 'What have you to do with the Guild's source of POWER?'

'Quite a lot as it happens,' Amien said cheerfully. 'I am the Master of the Crypts.'

'Cryptmaster?' Fire*Wolf hissed in astonishment. Here was a powerful ally indeed. But could it be

true? The old man, after all, had been rendered near to helpless by a handful of street louts.

'Scarcely helpless,' said Amien without rancour, as if reading his very thoughts. 'The young men did not recognize me and would have fled swiftly enough when they did. But their cat was a different matter. The beast was fast and took me unawares. Had it not been for your timely intervention, it might have caused me considerable difficulties. I am grateful: and to show my gratitude, I have a small gift for you.' With which he produced from his robe a miniature rosewood casket about the size of a snuffbox, delicately carved by a master hand.

'I thank you,' said Fire*Wolf politely, 'although there is no necessity for the gift.'

'Perhaps. Perhaps not,' said Amien. 'But do not open it now, for it contains something of mystic worth which may be of value to you in your initiation tests. You should use the box only in the most dire extremity, for it is destroyed utterly once opened.' He smiled. 'And now I must prepare your tests.'

When you decide to open the box, you will find details of its power on page 188. Once you read these details, the box must be used in the current section. In the interim, turn to 6 where our hero will begin the Initiation Ordeal which will renew his POWER.

61

'Very well.' Fire*Wolf stepped back, dropped his

hand to his sword and waited. The girl, he noticed, appeared to be unarmed.

She smiled. The larger of her two companions, also smiling, tossed her a weapon, a slim, supple blade of some unusual blue metal. The smaller of her companions began to smile as well.

For an uneasy instant, Fire*Wolf wondered what everybody was smiling about.

But if you turn to page 186 for the woman's fighting stats (her name is Tanith, incidentally) you may possibly find out. First to score 100 LIFE POINTS or throw a straight double 6 takes first blood and wins. If this is our hero, go to 44. If Tanith, go to 4.

62

The door opened inwards into a narrow, low-ceilinged corridor that seemed little more than a tunnel cut through dried-out clay. As Fire*Wolf ventured into it, the roof dipped even further, so that he was forced to stoop and eventually drop on to all fours in order to progress.

It was in this uncomfortable position that he met the Worm.

The creature was huge as worms go, its body easily as thick as Fire*Wolf's own, segmented in platelets which looked as though they might serve as a most efficient armour. It was eyeless and mouthless, but it almost filled the tunnel so that Fire*Wolf would have some difficulty at least in getting past.

62-64

*So what to do? Fire*Wolf may, of course, retreat to an earlier available section, but there seems little point in doing so. He may decide to attack the Worm, in which case turn to 16. Alternatively, he may decide to flatten himself against the wall in the hope that it will pass him unmolested: in which case turn to 26.*

63

The door slammed shut behind him. But Fire*Wolf's SPEED was sufficient for his needs. He was safely through!

*Yet, is this really such good news? Fire*Wolf has already explored the earlier sections without discovering an exit - certainly there is no question of his leaving the Crypts the way he entered, as was made perfectly clear to him by the Necromancers. It would seem then that leaving the marble tomb was the wrong decision. Our hero faces slow starvation with only the talking skull at 8 for company. Tarry a while if you will, but eventually turn to 13.*

64

Heart pounding, he found himself in a broad, well-lit, but heavily colonnaded hall. It was like nothing he had ever seen before, for the pillars themselves glowed warmly, illuminating the room more fully than lamp or torch could ever hope to do. Yet there were so many pillars he was unable to see the whole of the chamber, nor to determine what lay within it.

Nothing for it but to explore, one might

64-67

*suppose. Fire*Wolf could, of course, make closer examination of one of those glowing pillars since all knowledge is potentially useful. If he examines a pillar, go to 82. If he decides simply to explore, he has a three way choice of direction - left, right or straight ahead. If left, go to 76. If right, go to 92. If straight ahead, go to 52.*

65

Fire*Wolf smiled again. 'Since you seem so anxious for my company,' he murmured and held his hands wide in surrender.

'A wise decision, Stranger,' growled the burly Sergeant.

Go to 3.

66

Fire*Wolf walked the northern corridor until he reached a T junction. A glance convinced him he had travelled full circle, much to his annoyance.

Go to 9.

67

The chamber was empty. Fire*Wolf's relief was so profound that he almost forgot to examine it. Not that the oversight would have mattered in all probability, since the only thing in the entire chamber was a battered horn hanging from a thong on the southern wall.

Fire*Wolf turned to leave, but some niggling instinct brought him back. He lifted the horn from the wall and looked it over carefully. It was made from some alloy that might even have been

bronze, although it was difficult to tell beneath the dirt. The mouthpiece was bone, or possibly antler. It seemed like a perfectly ordinary hunting horn and obviously had not been used for years.

Experimentally, Fire*Wolf placed it to his lips. Then paused.

*As well he might. If there is one thing certain, a second-hand hunting horn has no place in this subterranean nightmare. Without doubt the horn is magic, possibly cursed. Should Fire*Wolf sound it! If your decision is yes, then turn to page 188 where the mystery of the horn will be revealed. If not, he may take the instrument with him to try later, or leave it where it is. In all cases, you should return to **88** from whence he can take another direction.*

68

The chest looked fairly new, with little to distinguish it from any similar container which might be purchased in any village market. The wood was stout enough, uncarved, and the banding was of brass. It closed with a hasp, but there did not appear to be any lock.

Fire*Wolf bent down to open it.

*He discovered to his horror that the chest was indeed trapped! A spring-loaded poison needle is buried in that hasp. Make a check roll against his LUCK to find out if the needle pricks him. If the roll is successful, go direct to **78**. If not, make a second check roll against his STRENGTH to find out if he can throw off the*

*effects of the poison. If this check succeeds, go to **78**, but with only half his current LIFE POINTS remaining. If the check fails, carry the corpse to **13**.*

69

The cell was stygian, cramped, damp and extremely smelly, lacking as it did the most rudimentary sanitary arrangements.

After twelve hours without food, water or light, Fire*Wolf began to wonder about the system of justice in Harn. After twenty-four hours, he was no longer wondering. His thoughts were solely concentrated on the possibility of escape.

*But can he escape? This is one place where only LUCK or SKILL can aid Fire*Wolf. Unknown to our hero, there is, in fact, a secret tunnel leading from the prison cell, dug and disguised by an enterprising former occupant with sufficient funds to bribe the guards while engaged on this mammoth engineering work. Only SKILL will permit Fire*Wolf to find this tunnel during what quickly become obsessive searches of his prison.*

*Throw two dice. Multiply the result by eight and compare the final figure with his SKILL stat. If the figure you have just rolled is higher, then he does not — and never will - find the tunnel. If, on the other hand, he succeeds, go to **87**. With insufficient SKILL, he may yet get lucky. Make a check roll against his LUCK stat in the same way as before. If your roll is higher than his stat, then his LUCK has finally run*

*out. Fire*Wolf remains until he rots: go to 13. If your roll is lower than his LUCK stat, then go to 33.*

70

So, at last, Fire*Wolf reached his destination. The building was unmarked, like all the Guild Houses in this Quarter, but he had no doubts whatsoever as he descended the short flight of steps to the door. He knocked and waited until a hooded figure opened the door and bade him enter as if he had been expected, as perhaps he was, since the Alchemists, it was said, were skilled in mundane prediction.

With a sensation of profound relief, he followed the figure inside to claim the initiation that would renew his POWER.

*But his relief may be short-lived. After all, the bards sing of those same initiations with awe. Fire*Wolf is once again taking his life in his hands. Turn to 6 to determine whether he will survive.*

71

Fire*Wolf pushed the door open and stepped inside.

The creature who attacked him was definitely human, although one might be forgiven for concluding otherwise from the speed at which he moved. He was smallish in stature, lightly built and dressed entirely in black, with a full-face black mask. He carried a small, curved sword and though Fire*Wolf had the Doomsword ready, the

assailant moved so quickly that he had first strike before Fire*Wolf could react.

*So the fight is oh. The attacker is a member of the dreaded martial order of Alchillers, fighters with a fearsome reputation. You will find typical stats of an Alchiller on page 187. The Doomsword functions as an ordinary sword here and will not absorb enemy LIFE POINTS. If Fire*Wolf succumbs to the attack, go to 13. If he survives, he will find nothing of interest in the chamber or on the person of his attacker. He should return to the section he has just left and try another direction.*

72

The door abruptly opened inwards, tearing the handle from Fire*Wolf's hand. He had a brief impression of a maelstrom before a monstrous wind sucked him bodily into the roaring blackness.

*Does Fire*Wolf die so helplessly? Is this yet another example of the dreaded 13? Who knows - but it's not yet 13 for our hero: turn to 93.*

73

Fire*Wolf sat by the window of the tavern, lost in thought. Distorted through the flawed glass of the panes, he could see the life of the city pass by as though no danger threatened. Street vendors plied their trade. Soldiers marched. The idle gossiped. Could the citizenry of Harn's great capital really be so uncaring of the threat that faced them?

Yet as he pondered, he knew the reason for this

seeming normality. For the average citizen, what else was there to do? The rulers might consider plans. The generals might create their strategies. The armies might prepare to fight. The rich might flee. But for the average citizen, there was nothing at all to do but wait, and try to forget. He was in a country of condemned men and like condemned men everywhere, they ate a hearty breakfast.

But inaction was not Fire*Wolf's way. He had POWER sufficient for his sorcerous needs, the strength of his right arm and his accursed Doomsword. He had his knowledge and his spells; and most of all he had his Destiny, laid upon him by his father, the sorcerous Lord Xandine. All he needed now was a decision.

But what decision shall he take? Let us examine some of his alternatives, any one of which may determine the subsequent course of his adventure.

**He might attempt to revive the sleeping King Voltar, in the hope that His Magnificence might rally the realm to an effective defence. If so, go to 79.*

**He might seek audience with Olric the Knight Regent, whose warrior monks, he knew, were already preparing to do battle with the Spawn. If so, turn to 86.*

**He might attempt to ally himself with Ben beni bar Jain, Wizard and leader of the Shaman Temple, who must surely be preparing his own defences against the forthcoming attack. If so, turn to 89.*

**He might present himself to General Mandar, the old Phlogistine warhorse commonly rumoured to have been placed in charge of the nation's defences. If so, go to 97.*

**Or he might attempt to go it alone, a one-man expedition against the most hideously dangerous foe humanity had ever faced. If so, turn to 116.*

74

The corridor degenerated into a tunnel cut from solid rock, ending in a heavy, cobwebbed door.

His guide, a saturnine Initiate with the smell of death on his robes, handed him a lantern without a word.

'My weapons?' Fire*Wolf asked, recalling that his father had insisted he take the first POWER initiation virtually unarmed.

But his dour companion merely shrugged. 'They may be of less use to you than you imagine.'

'So what now?' asked Fire*Wolf.

The man shrugged again. 'Enter. You will emerge with POWER if you emerge at all.' With which, to Fire*Wolf's surprise, he turned and walked away.

Cautiously, Fire*Wolf tried the door. It swung openeasily with a hollow creaking sound. Inside wasdarkness, but before he entered, Fire*Wolf struck his flint and lit the lamp.

The smell of must was everywhere as he stepped inside, sensing the door begin to close behind.

him. And close it did; nor, he swiftly discovered, could he open it at all from the inside. No matter. The Ordeal was of his own choosing and if he could not obtain POWER, then he would be helpless in the face of his Destiny, little better than dead in any case.

He looked around him. He was in what seemed to be the entrance chamber of some ancient charnel house, for niches in the walls were filled with the bleached skulls of a thousand dead. In the centre was a granite coffin. Beyond it, in the western wall, lay a half-open door.

*If Fire*Wolf examines the skulls, turn to 8. If he examines the coffin, turn to 47. If he heads for the western door, turn to 62.*

75

With the sound of the Guards fast approaching, he had time to try one door only. Swiftly he made his move.

*But speed is less important here than LUCK. That door will either open or it won't. Roll two dice and multiply the result by eight. If your end figure is higher than Fire*Wolf's LUCK statistic, go to 3. If lower, then the door opens. Go to 41.*

76

Fire*Wolf moved through the pillars until he reached a wall. By following the wall, he reached doorway, above which was set an uncommon

realistic mural of a stormy sea. The door was not unguarded. Two slim, quite naked creatures, armed with swords, stood on either side. While vaguely humanoid in form, their skin was a uniform grey and their eyes were huge, black, nocturnal. Although he had not seen their like before, Fire*Wolf recognized them from the descriptions given in the ancient grimoires: they were wights.

*Rather silly wights at that, since they have not seen him. Which gives him the option of stealing quietly away and exploring 92 or 52. As against that, guards of any sort usually suggest something valuable or important behind a door, so he may decide to attack them. If so, you will find the wights' stats on page 186. If Fire*Wolf wins, turn to 37. If not, carry him gently to 13.*

77

As Fire*Wolf entered the chamber, two black-clad figures, masked and armed with short, curved swords, launched themselves upon him with frightening speed. Fire*Wolf raised the Doomsword in a desperate attempt to parry, but both attackers achieved first strikes almost simultaneously and the big Barbarian was suddenly fighting for his life.

*His attackers are members of the Order of Alchillers. You will find typical stats on page 187. Fire*Wolf's Doomsword will not absorb LIFE POINTS here but functions purely as an ordinary sword. If, nonetheless, Fire*Wolf survives, he will discover each attacker carries*

*100 pieces of gold and one has secreted on his person a tiny razordisc which may be used to free our hero if he is ever captured and bound. (But the disc, which will never be discovered on a search, has a limited working life: it is good for three escapes only before it becomes blunted and useless.) Fire*Wolf should now return to the last section he visited and choose another direction. If his attackers kill him, he will, of course, find himself at 13.*

78

There was a small ebony wand within the chest, no more than a foot long, plain and unadorned, save for a golden tip at one end and a silver tip at the other.

As a sorcerer, albeit a reluctant one, Fire*Wolf knew better than to touch the golden tip. He picked up the wand gingerly, pointed it towards the wall and squeezed the silver tip to activate the power.

Nothing happened. The wand, it seemed, did not work against solid objects. Perhaps against animate matter? He did not know. But he determined to keep the wand in any case and test it again when the opportunity arose.

*When Fire*Wolf does decide to test the wand again, turn to page 188 for a full description of its effects. In the interim, return to 59 if you wish Fire*Wolf to explore the room further, or 88 if you wish him to try somewhere else.*

KING VOLTAR THE MAGNIFICENT

79

Brought up, if not born, in the deep caves of the Wilderness rock villages, Fire*Wolf was not nearly as familiar as a city dweller with the history and political background of Harn. But even in the Wilderness, some whisper had reached him of the curious fate of King Voltar the Magnificent. It was a fate of which legends—even myths—were made.

Voltar came to the throne of Harn almost by accident. He was the youngest son of five brothers and thus fifth in the line of succession. His father, King Heinrich the Bald, had a reign distinguished only by its length: he died with great reluctance at the age of ninety-eight. At that time, Voltar was already middle-aged and his eldest brother, also called Heinrich, was positively elderly.

This elderly Heinrich, ironically called Heinrich the Younger to distinguish him from his late father, was crowned at the Equinox and settled down to rule with as little distinction as the elder Heinrich. Not even the maddest of the soothsayers would have predicted an imperial future for Voltar. Heinrich the Younger looked good for at least a decade and there were three potential throne fillers between him and Voltar.

Certainly Voltar himself had no particular ambition to rule. In his youth he had been something of a playboy prince. Now, with his wild oats sown, his most abiding passion was the study of astronomy.

But only three months after he had succeeded to the throne, Heinrich the Younger was, astonishingly, killed by a rabbit. The rabbit was, of course, dead and when Heinrich ate it, he contracted food poisoning. He was a sturdy man and wasted away slowly for almost six weeks. State officials, who realized the end was inevitable, made quiet preparations for the Coronation of the next eldest brother, Prince Jantang. It was not to be. Three days before Heinrich actually died, Jantang and his brothers Percival and Midrut were crushed by a falling tree while en route to offer prayers at the Temple.

Voltar, to his consternation, became King when Heinrich died.

The curious sequence of events encouraged the superstitious to suspect the hand of the gods; and they may well have been right, for to everyone's surprise, not least his own, Voltar quickly became one of the most impressive rulers the realm had ever seen. He had a talent for kingship which bloomed like a summer rose. He was efficient, hard-working, fair-minded and totally dedicated to the welfare of his subjects.

Perhaps more to the point, he proved to be 2 superb military strategist. Within four years, Hanhad extended its boundaries dramatically at the expense of neighbouring states and was, or

seemed, more secure than it had been for centuries. Whether Voltar's highly trained armies could have outfought a Spawn invasion was always a matter of conjecture; but it was one which was never put to the test, for in his day the Spawn did not invade.

His day proved unhappily short, however, five years and three months. At the end of that time something happened. It may have been an illness or a hunting accident: the reports were confused and some said it was witchcraft, the result of the King's affair with a young sorceress. Whatever the cause, King Voltar fell asleep and did not waken.

He was not dead. Court physicians were quite sure of that. But the sleep was far from natural. He lay on the royal bed and nothing could awaken him. He required no food and passed no waste and as the months drifted into years, it became evident he did not age.

The malady caused a constitutional crisis in its day. The King was not dead and so could not be succeeded. At the same time, he was manifestly unable to rule. There was provision for the appointment of a Regent in the case of serious royal illness; and one was duly appointed. But a Regent's rule was supposed to be a purely temporary affair, to be terminated by the King's death or recovery.

Voltar refused to recover or die. Seven generations of Knights Regent had ruled in his name since that distant time almost two centuries ago. The latest, Olric, still ruled in his name. All the time

the undead body of King Voltar lay, unageing and unchanged in its enchanted sleep.

Could the great King be awakened? On the face of things, it seemed unlikely. Many had obviously tried without success. But Fire*Wolf considered himself possessed of one small piece of knowledge which might make all the difference. Before his death, his father, the sorcerous Lord Xandine, had taught him something of the mysteries of the Time Lock.

The Time Lock was a sorcery so powerful and so desperately dangerous that it was seldom ever attempted even by those skilled in the Dark Arts. Xandine himself had used it to preserve the valley of his exile — and paid a fearful price when the magic finally ran its course. But the Time Lock, Fire*Wolf knew, could be used in other ways and everything he had heard about Voltar suggested a form of Time Lock had been used on him.

If Fire*Wolf was correct, then Voltar could be awakened, albeit at considerable risk to himself and those around him. But before Fire*Wolf could be certain, he had to examine the sleeping King — and that might be a more difficult procedure than it sounded.

Different Regents had had different attitudes towards the problem of King Voltar. One tried to claim he had quietly died. Two placed him on public display as an object of veneration. One permitted him to be viewed on State occasions, crowned, enthroned, but still fast asleep. And so on. The present Knight Regent, Olric, had decreed

that the living corpse of Voltar remain permanently guarded within the original Royal Palace. Only high officials and priests were permitted to view it, and then only rarely.

Fire*Wolf considered how he might approach his dilemma.

And a difficult one it is. Should he attempt a furtive entry of the Palace? If so turn to 104. Should he apply for permission, using his new status as the present Lord Xandine? If so, go to 114.

80

Fast as he was, the urchin proved faster, or perhaps just substantially more lucky.

Turn to 20.

81

Much though he needed their assistance, Fire*Wolf knew he could not make any commitments while the Demonspawn threatened the realm. His father's geist and his own inclination both combined to insist that he remain free to act as where and when he wished without additional responsibilities.

Thus, reluctantly, he shook his head.

If Tanith and the others were surprised, they did not show it. 'In that case,' she said, 'we must take our leave of you.'

In no more than minutes, Fire*Wolf was back in

the labyrinthine streets, still searching, without guidance, for his vital goal.

Turn to **90**.

82

Despite its glow, no heat emanated from the pillar, nor could Fire*Wolf determine how its light was produced. He puzzled momentarily before cautiously placing the palm of one hand on the glowing surface ...

*Which was not, in fact, a particularly good move since the pillar will instantly absorb a massive 150 LIFE POINTS to keep itself glowing. If this kills our hero, go to **13**. If he survives, he at least knows to avoid touching these pillars: go back to **64** and pick another option.*

83

Fire*Wolf knew he was in trouble the moment the door opened. Four martial Alchillers fell upon him with not so much as a moment's warning.

*Which is certainly bad news for our hero and could quite easily mean death. Check Alchiller stats on page 187 and calculate the outcome of the combat, with two of the four opponent gaining first strike before Fire*Wolf has time to react. Remember that the Doomsword functions only as an ordinary blade here. If Fire*Wolf dies, as he most likely will, turn to **13**. If he succeeds in besting all four opponent he will be 4,000 gold pieces the richer from purses he will find on their bodies. In this case turn to **88** and pick another direction.*

84

"There he is!"

The excited shout told Fire*Wolf he had been discovered. He stepped from the doorway, hand dropping to the hilt of his sword, as he made a fateful decision.

*Fateful indeed. He has the choice of fight or capture. It may be that he will go quietly now, in which case turn to **3**. Or he may elect to fight, in which case you will find the Guards' stats on page 186 (the first three listed). If he is killed, go to **13**. If he succeeds in killing all three Guards, go to **95**.*

85

As Fire*Wolf entered the chamber, two black-clad figures, masked and armed with short, curved swords, launched themselves upon him with frightening speed. Fire*Wolf raised the Doomsword in a desperate attempt to parry, but both attackers achieved first strikes almost simultaneously and the big Barbarian was suddenly fighting for his life.

*His attackers are members of the Order of Alchillers. You will find typical stats on page 187. Fire*Wolf's Doomsword will not absorb LIFE POINTS here but functions purely as an ordinary sword. If, nonetheless, Fire*Wolf survives, he will discover each attacker carries 100 pieces of gold and one has secreted on his person a tiny razor disc which may be used to free our hero if he is ever captured and bound. But the disc, which will never be discovered*

*on a search, has a limited working life: it is good for three escapes only before it becomes blunted and useless.) Fire*Wolf should now return to the last section he visited and choose another direction. If his attackers kill him, he will, of course, find himself at 13.*

86

Harn, Fire*Wolf knew, was a monarchy in theory only. When, generations ago, King Voltar the Magnificent fell into his enchanted sleep, he became, in effect, the last of the royal line. He was not dead: even now he was not dead. And while he remained alive, tradition ensured there could be no legitimate claim to the throne itself.

But if Voltar was not dead, he was in no position to rule either. Thus Regents ruled in his name. At first, the post of Regent had been seen as a purely temporary affair, a taking up of the reins of State until such time as the King awoke. Now, of course, no one believed the King would ever awake and the Regents had become a dynasty in their own right.

It was not, however, an hereditary dynasty. The Supreme Council, acting in the King's name, appointed a Regent from the best candidates available. While it was a lifetime appointment which carried powers close to supreme authority, the system ensured substantial changes over to generations in the way that Harn was ruled.

Olrlic, the present Knight Regent, represented something near unique in a ruler. Prior to his appointment when Danzar, the old Knight Regent

died, Olric was known as a mystic rather than a statesman. He wore the dun of the Order of Saint Clement, an organization of martial monks which, by reason of piety and a remarkable talent for personal combat, he had come to head.

Despite the trappings of supreme office, it was widely rumoured that Olric continued to lead an ascetic, spartan existence within the walls of the Regent's Palace. His personal quarters, some said, were little better than a monastery cell. His inner guards were Clementines to a man.

But how to approach him? Fire*Wolf sat in his tavern room pondering the problem. As Lord Xandine, he might successfully seek an audience. But what then? He, Fire*Wolf, had the skeleton of a plan which might be used against the Spawn. Would Olric listen? Having listened, would he cooperate? In his Wilderness way, Fire*Wolf wondered if some different approach might not give better results, an approach that might convince Olric he was a man to be reckoned with . . .

Dangerous thoughts for our hero. He is really wondering if Olric might not be more impressed by him if he gained access to the Regent's inner sanctum by stealth rather than requesting a formal audience. If he decides to take this dangerous course, turn to 117. If good sense prevails and he decides to seek a formal audience, turn to 105.

87

ere was something odd about a flagstone in the floor. Even though he could see only dimly,

Fire*Wolf could feel something amiss under his questing fingers. Weakly, for he had lost strength now through lack of food, he managed to get his fingertips underneath the edge and with an enormous effort, prised the stone upwards.

There was an opening underneath, just wide enough to permit him to squeeze in. Without a second thought he did so.

The tunnel was dark, steep and claustrophobic, but no worse than the filthy cell he had just left. He wriggled along it for what he judged to be some fifty feet, then reached an apparent dead end.

Once again he searched. Once again he found a covered opening in the floor. He dropped down again, but though this opening too was narrow, he dropped suddenly into a much more open space, falling almost fifteen feet before splashing into waters so foul smelling that he knew at once he must be within the subterranean sewers of the city.

But which way should he go? It was pitch dark with neither light nor experience to guide him. Carefully he felt for a wall and eventually found one, slime-covered and dripping dampness. He had a choice of two directions — no, by the gods, three! For his fumbling hands discovered an opening in the tunnel wall.

So which way? Let us call the tunnel directions North, South and East, although in truth, the actual direction scarcely matters. Use your intuition to make the best choice for our hero: if

of course, there is any such thing as a best choice here. Choose North and go to 5, or South and 91, or East and 101.

88

The steps took him to a third level and again led on to an east—west running corridor. This time, however, he could see no branch corridors at all. But directly facing him was a door, with three further doors set into the southern wall of the corridor to the east, while two more again were set in the southern wall to the west.

*Six doors in all - a daunting choice for our hero, especially since there is nothing but sheer instinct to guide him. For convenience, let us call the door directly facing him No. 1. The three to the east become Nos. 2, 3, and 4, while the two to the west are Nos. 5 and 6. Fire*Wolf may enter any chamber he wishes. If No. 1 facing him, go to 59. If No. 2, go to 67. If No. 3 then 83. If No. 4 then 94. If No. 5 then 103. If No. 6 then 115. And one more thing: whichever door he enters ... wish him luck.*

89

There had been a time, and not so long ago at that, when Fire*Wolf had considered sorcery something to be avoided. But since he had reluctantly donned his father's mantle, he had come to realize there were almost as many styles of magic as there were gods in the heavens. The Guild of Necromancers drew power from the spirits of the dead. The Guild of Alchemists studied the magic of metals and the hidden forces of the human

body. The Gegum nuns, so it was rumoured, drew power and authority from the Earth Mother herself. Ben beni bar Jain, the Shaman Wizard and head of the Shaman Order, reached into the world of plants and nature to achieve his mystic ends. His magic was a very different kind to Fire*Wolf's own. If they were to pool resources, their combined abilities might be just enough to turn the tide against the Spawn.

But how to convince the Shaman Wizard that such cooperation was both feasible and necessary. Fire*Wolf knew Ben beni bar Jain only by reputation, but that reputation suggested a formidable and eccentric character, one not easily swayed.

Meeting with him would prove simple enough. He might be consulted, for a fee, at the Shaman Temple, provided one presented reasonable credentials. But impressing him was quite a different matter. Although perhaps in these difficult times, he might be prepared to listen.

*Or he might not. One alternative is for Fire*Wolf to present himself for audience at the Temple and trust the Wilderness gods to guide his tongue. If he decides on this course, turn to 123. But our hero is actively considering a vastly more dangerous course, for if he were to challenge the Shaman Wizard to a magical duel — and win — then surely he could command cooperation. If he decides on this madness, turn to 111.*

90

Fire*Wolf walked the warren of the Old City, street upon narrow street, confusion upon confusion, with those he stopped to ask directions as unhelpful as before. And Fire*Wolf was tiring, his will sapped by frustration.

Yet he continued onwards, trusting to the luck which had taken him thus far in his adventures.

*Which is perhaps as good a time as any to check that LUCK. If the check roll succeeds and Fire*Wolf does indeed get lucky, go to 70. If not, you may continue to make check rolls against his LUCK until he does succeed - but each additional roll, successful or not, will cost him 10 full points of STRENGTH and STAMINA. (If he is unlucky enough to lose all his STRENGTH and STAMINA in this way, he will become sufficiently depressed to commit suicide, in which case go to 13.)*

91

There was a noise ahead, pitched high and quite melodious, like the friendly chatter of small birds ...

Or rats!

The swarm hit him like a tidal wave: hundreds, thousands of the filthy creatures running with such speed that the impact actually swept him off his feet.

He struck out blindly, knowing he had little chance to survive such an attack, knowing that sheer weight of numbers must inevitably spell

doom to a single man. They were everywhere: on his body, his face, his arms. He could scarcely breathe.

Then they were gone.

Fire*Wolf picked himself up, surprised and relieved, well aware how closely he had brushed the wings of the Dark Angel of Death. Then, as the chirping of the rat pack faded, he heard another sound and the savage instinct bred in his Wilderness years told him instantly his danger was not over.

It remained dark in the sewer, but his eyes had now adjusted to faint traces of phosphorescence so that he could just make out the looming shadow of the shape that hurtled towards him, eyes glinting red and feral. This too was a rat, but a monstrous rat, a creature larger than a nightmare, standing half as high or more as Fire*Wolf himself. No wonder the pack had run!

*But there can be no flight for Fire*Wolf. It is fight or die. You will find stats for the giant rat on page 186. Calculate the outcome of this unfortunate encounter. If Fire*Wolf dies, go to 13. If he kills the rat, he will eventually find his way out of these ghastly sewers: go to 42.*

92

Although the pillars were no impediment, there were so many, so closely set, that they turned the hall into a maze. More than once Fire*Wolf considered he must have lost his way, might even be wandering around in circles, but then suddenly

the forest of pillars thinned and he found himself in an open space at the centre of which was a small elevation, surmounted by a large, ornately carved, ebony throne. Upon the seat of the throne lay the trappings of regal power - an ermine-trimmed robe, a golden crown, a silver sceptre. But Fire*Wolf's eyes were drawn away from these to a much more grisly relic: at the foot of the throne lay an ancient corpse, now rotted almost to a skeleton.

*A nasty sight, but what is Fire*Wolf to do? Should he examine the corpse? If so, go to 98. Should he simply sit on the throne and indulge in delusions of grandeur? Turn to 106. Should he don the ermine cloak? Turn to 112. Should he wear the crown? Turn to 124. Should he take up the sceptre? Turn to 118. Alternatively, of course, he may ignore all these interesting invitations to trouble and return to 64 where he can take another direction.*

93

Bright sunlight.

He was lying dazed, but otherwise unharmed, atop a small hillock in a meadow overlooking the city. How he had reached this spot he knew not, although it was obvious some form of transportation sorcery was involved.

He stood up. At his side, the Doomsword hummed actively again, functioning once more as a sentient blade now it had left the environment of the Alchemical Initiations.

*Fire*Wolf has earned himself a solid 200 basic POWER total by surviving the Ordeal, with an additional 25 points for each enemy slain (or otherwise defeated) during the experience. He has too the use of any artifacts he may have collected. From the meadow he will return to the city to formulate his plans for a move against the threatening Demonspawn. Turn to 73 to find out how his mind is working now.*

94

*A bad choice. Fire*Wolf is faced with four martial members of the Order of Alchillers and they look as if they wished him no good at all. Turn to page 187 for typical Alchiller stats and calculate the outcome of this encounter. If Fire*Wolf is killed, turn to 13. If he survives, he will discover 200 gold pieces on each of the Alchillers and may return to 88 to pick another direction.*

95

Fire*Wolf stared down at the corpses of the three Guards with a feeling of fleeting regret. They had, after all, only been doing their duty. But he had more pressing concerns than guilt, for already he could hear the remainder of the Guards attracted by the sound of conflict, running back towards him.

*A simple choice. Fire*Wolf may attempt to run from the cul-de-sac where he is trapped and take his chances with the approaching Guards. Or he can try another door in the hope at*

finding refuge in a house. If he runs, go to 55. If he tries another door, go to 75.

96

Another call on his loyalties. But as the woman said, it might not be immediate. Fire*Wolf nodded slowly. 'Very well,' he said. 'I agree.'

Tanith nodded briefly in her turn. 'So now let us take you to the Guild you seek without further ado.'

Which means a journey to 70, to which you should turn right away.

97

The young officer was polite but insistent. 'I'm sorry, Lord Xandine, but the General is hard pressed by matters of State and can see no one, for at least a month.' He smiled deprecatingly. 'Not even so obviously an important personage as yourself.'

'Save the flattery,' Fire*Wolf growled, reverting back to Wilderness habits despite the aristocratic silks he had donned in an effort, vain as it now transpired, to impress the military. 'In a month it will be too late. My business concerns the Spawn.'

'Ah, the Spawn,' said the young officer easily. 'A great many people seem to be concerned about that little problem since the Astrologers announced their Vernal Predictions. But I can assure you, sir, the military have the matter completely under control.'

Tell that to the citizens of Belgardium!'

Fire*Wolf muttered. But he knew he would get nowhere. This young man in the Military Barracks was obviously doing no more than his duty. He had been given orders that the old General was not to be disturbed and he was carrying them out to the letter.

*But understandable or not, that isn't much use to Fire*Wolf. Should he try to bribe the officer? If so, turn to 107. Should he threaten him? If so, turn to 113. His other alternative is, of course, to return to 73 and pick a different option.*

98

The body was in such an advanced stage of decomposition that it was difficult to determine how the man had died. The skull, however, showed some signs of injury: the bony structure was discoloured and crumbly, as if it had been subjected to intense heat. But how this injury had come about, or what had caused it, there was no way of telling.

*Not much to go on, but at least Fire*Wolf has been thorough. Return to 92 and decide what he should do next.*

99

There was a door concealed behind the tapestry. Fire*Wolf reached for the handle, then paused on a momentary instinct.

Should he enter? If so, go to 72. If not, return to 59 to explore the remainder of this chamber or 88 to take another direction.

100

With no more than a momentary hesitation, Fire*Wolf plunged into the alley. In a purely reflex action, the Doomsword seemed to leap into his hand, emitting the familiar low howl of anticipation as the demonic entity locked within the metal sensed a renewed draught of life essence.

The six louts turned at the sound of his approach, but evinced no fear of his attack. One called a brief command at the trained panther and the creature whirled with the speed of its kind and bounded to meet him.

*So now Fire*Wolf must defeat the great cat before he can rescue the old man from his attackers. You will find the panther's stats on page 186. Calculate the outcome of the encounter. If Fire*Wolf perishes, as he may well do, turn to 13. If he slays the panther—and it is by no means impossible that he will - then turn to 10.*

101

Fire*Wolf stumbled onwards, his eyes gradually adjusting to the faint phosphorescence which clung to the walls of the sewer so that he could make out, if only just, a step or two ahead.

He moved forward for what seemed like an age before a tightening in the lungs alerted him that something was wrong. For a moment he could not decide what was happening, but as the tightness increased, changing gradually to a burning sensation with waves of nausea and dizziness, he realized he was suffering from the effects of gas.

He had, he knew, entered a pocket of poisonous fumes. But how far it extended forward, or back, he had no means of telling.

What to do?

*Not a lot he can do, in fact, except try to keep going and hope he gets through the pocket before it kills him. It's largely a question of endurance. So make a check roll against his STAMINA. If it fails, go to **13**. If it succeeds, then you can take it Fire*Wolf will escape from the sewers and go to **42**.*

102

As Fire*Wolf touched the stone, the realization of his ghastly fate flooded through his consciousness. The gem was indeed magic - one of the most potent artifacts he had ever seen. But it was cursed magic, sorcery turned back upon itself to create a horror that could not be avoided.

*From this point until his death, the stone will absorb so much of Fire*Wolf's STRENGTH that all damage he may score against an enemy will be halved, while all damage scored against him will be doubled. Like his Doomsword, there is no way Fire*Wolf can rid himself of the stone, although fortunately it will NOT follow him from incarnation to incarnation. Go to **76** or **92** and see how long he can survive with this handicap.*

103

*A bad choice. Fire*Wolf is faced with four martial members of the Order of Alchillers...*

*and they look as if they wished him no good at all. Turn to page 187 for typical Alchiller stats and calculate the outcome of this encounter. If Fire*Wolf is killed, turn to **13**. If he survives, he will discover 200 gold pieces on each of the Alchillers and may return to **88** to pick another direction.*

THE PALACE FORTRESS

104

The massive Palace Fortress of King Voltar the Magnificent stood stark against the skyline on a rise overlooking the suburbs of Pelimandar. Even in daylight it was a forbidding building. A century after the King had first fallen into his mystic sleep, the Regent of the day ordained, as a token of respect, that the entire building be draped in mourning linens.

It was a massive enterprise that kept the mills and weavers busy for almost seven years. But at least when their work was finished, someone had the common sense to have the vast sheets of material treated by the Guild of Alchemists, with the result that it endured to this very day, undamaged and unrotted by rain or snow or frost, unbleached by sun and generally resistant to the scissors and knives of souvenir hunters.

By night, as Fire*Wolf approached, the shrouded fortress had the veritable aspect of a building in a nightmare. But what unnerved him more than its appearance was its sound. The vast black linen drapes groaned, creaked, flapped, snapped and boomed like sails at every wind, creating a



The Palace Fortress of King Voltar

perpetual cacophony that sounded like an announcement of doom.

The Palace itself, he knew, was lightly guarded. Although officially the administrative centre of the Kingdom, the High Council met elsewhere and Knight Regent Olric divided his time between his Clementine Monastery and his own Regent's Palace. Voltar's great Palace Fortress had become a mausoleum and as such warranted no more than an honour guard. It was well known that little of any real value remained inside; and the undead body of the sleeping King was well enough protected by the labyrinthine twists and turns of the Palace itself, not to mention the perpetual sorceries woven like a web around the inner sanctum by generations of State Wizards.

It was that sorcerous web which concerned Fire*Wolf most at this precise moment in time. He could, he knew, slip past the guards with little difficulty. Even the labyrinth within cost him little thought since he had managed to purchase (at exorbitant cost) a plan of the interior from a greedy archivist of the Masonic Guild. But the ancient magics were a different story. They were set to permit entry by the Knight Regent and those of the High Council who possessed the mystic keys. Unless temporarily neutralized - as happened on certain State occasions when the sleeping King was revealed to public view - they permitted no one else to enter and slaughtered those who persisted very efficiently indeed.

Still, he was a sorcerer himself now, albeit a re-

luctant one. By skill and daring, he should be able to breach the defences. Fire*Wolf drew his robe closer about him and moved forward to meet his fate.

And Fate must decide what happens next. Make a check roll against our hero's LUCK. If successful turn to 108. If not, turn to 119.

105

Fire*Wolf swore aloud with frustration and fury. Almost four days had elapsed since he had made formal application for audience with Knight Regent Olric, four full days since the missive embossed with the seal of Xandine had been delivered. And now this!

The message scroll was courteous to an almost emetic degree, drafted no doubt by some minor scribe, but the answer might have been enscribed in seven short words: 'Olric is too busy to see you.'

*So much for formal applications. Fire*Wolf will have to return to 86 - or even 73 - and reconsider his options.*

106

Gingerly, Fire*Wolf lowered his bottom on to the throne. For a moment, nothing happened so that he relaxed and sat back, musing briefly on the way a throne always seemed to make a man feel curiously larger than life.

Then he leaped up, howling. His backside felt as if it were on fire!

On the instant he thought this might be the literal

truth and contorted in an attempt to view the flames emerging from his own posterior. But there were none and gradually the high intensity of the pain died down to a dull ache.

*An embarrassing lesson; and one which has cost Fire*Wolf 15 LIFE POINTS, not to mention certain difficulties in sitting down for a while. If the loss of LIFE POINTS kills him, go to 13. If not, return cautiously to 92 where he may consider another option.*

107

The young officer looked stunned. Then his face flushed with indignation. 'You forget yourself, My Lord,' he muttered, then called loudly, 'Guards!'

On the instant, Fire*Wolf found himself surrounded by military guards who overpowered him with practised efficiency. Moments later, he was in a barrack cell, meditating on the folly of trying to bribe an honest man.

*They will not keep him in jail forever, of course, however indignant the young officer may be. Fire*Wolf is, after all, an aristocrat by birthright and that does count for something in a class-conscious society like that of Harn. But it will cost him a hefty gold sum to buy his way out. When he does so, the option of reaching General Mandar will be lost to him forever. Return to 73 and allow him to pick a different option.*

108

The interior of the Palace Fortress was lit but dimly. Tiny oil lamps threw flickering, ghostly shadows from the wall niches in which they sat. But the plan Fire*Wolf had purchased at such cost proved true and he moved through the labyrinthine corridors with neither difficulty nor challenge.

King Voltar slept at the exact centre of this looming mausoleum, four unsleeping golem guards stationed one each at the corners of his bed. But before a man could gain access to that central chamber, there remained the net of ancient sorceries; and such was their nature that it was said each man experienced them differently.

He was, he knew, approaching the protected area now. Yet nothing suggested he was in any danger whatsoever. These corridors looked exactly like all the others he had walked successfully so far. And yet...

He heard a sound.

Fire*Wolf swung round. Bare yards distant from him was a living manticore, eyes glowing redly and claws clicking in preparation for attack.

*What an unpleasant surprise — and not the last this palace holds, you may be sure. The manticore's stats are on page 187. If Fire*Wolf dies in the encounter, turn to 13. If he survives, move on to 120.*

Bright sunlight.

He was lying dazed, but otherwise unharmed, atop a small hillock in a meadow overlooking the city. How he had reached this spot he knew not, although it was obvious some form of transportation sorcery was involved.

He stood up. At his side, the Doomsword hummed actively again, functioning once more as a sentient blade now it had left the environment of the Necromancers' Crypts.

*Fire*Wolf has earned himself a solid 200 basic POWER total by surviving the Ordeal, with an additional 25 points for each enemy slain (or otherwise defeated) during the experience. He has too the use of any artifacts he may have collected. From the meadow he will return to the city to formulate his plans for a move against the threatening Demonspawn. Turn to 73 to find out how his mind is working now.*

Bent over gasping, Fire*Wolf was only just aware of a door opening behind him.

'What's this?' a brisk voice asked. 'What the hell is going on here?'

The young officer snapped to attention. 'Beg pardon, General Mandar. A little trouble with a visitor.'

'So I see,' remarked the General drily. 'Still, you seem to have coped with it efficiently. Throw him

out and make sure he doesn't bother us again.'

*An ignominious end to this portion of the adventure. The option of meeting General Mandar is now closed to Fire*Wolf. When he recovers his breath, return to 73 so that he can select another course of action.*

Dark eyes twinkled in a wizened face. 'A Wizard Duel?' asked Ben beni bar Jain. 'I have not had such a challenge in nearly twenty years!'

'But will you accept it, Holiness?' Fire*Wolf asked anxiously.

They were seated opposite one another across a small table in a private audience chamber of the Shaman Temple, bar Jain was considerably older than Fire*Wolf had imagined and considerably smaller, a dark-skinned man in a homespun jacket which would have looked more in keeping on a farmer or a fighter than the spiritual leader of the Shaman Priesthood.

'Dare I refuse it, Lord Xandine?' asked bar Jain. 'For surely if I do, a sorcerer of your might would surely blast me into fragments with a flick of your smallest finger?' He grinned, infectiously.

'Then you will accept?' pressed Fire*Wolf.

'Did I say that? Perhaps I did. How do you see this duel actually progressing?'

Fire*Wolf took a deep breath. 'Any standard spell may be used except the Needle Spell. No magical artifacts may be used.' (At his side, the Dooms-

word groaned slightly.) The duel to end if either of us loses half his LIFE POINTS or when POWER fails or when the first of us fails to cast the spell he has chosen, whichever is the sooner. We roll dice to determine who casts the first spell.'

bar Jain nodded. That seems reasonable. But what is to be the winner's prize?'

This was, of course, the difficult part. Fire*Wolf knew exactly what he wanted, but what could he offer that would interest the old Shaman Wizard? He must have gold aplenty and the only magical artifact likely to attract him was the Doomsword, which Fire*Wolf could not give away however much he tried. There was really only one alternative, although Fire*Wolf knew the offer he was about to make would cost him dearly if he lost the duel.

He hesitated briefly, then said, 'For my part, I wish only your assistance in an enterprise I must undertake. I can tell you even now it is an enterprise which, if successful, will be of great benefit to Harn.'

'Agreed,' said bar Jain promptly. 'And if I win?'

'I shall donate to you all my remaining POWER,' said Fire*Wolf grimly.

*Is our hero mad? Perhaps so, but the words are spoken now and bar Jain is nodding his agreement. Should Fire*Wolf lose, it means he must return to the Crypts of Terror to regain his POWER. (Your choice of 74 or 6 as the starting point.) If he wins, turn to 125. Now calculate the outcome of the duel.*

112

He wrapped the ermine cloak around him and was immediately seized by a sensation of well-being.

*As well he might. Fire*Wolf has discovered a Cloak of Healing. This wondrous garment will restore him - or anyone to whom he loans it - to full LIFE POINTS after a battle. But not immediately after. Fire*Wolf is obliged to survive three more sections following the one in which he lost the LIFE POINTS originally before the cloak can take effect. All the same, it is a pleasant and very useful discovery. Now turn back to 92 and decide what he will do next.*

113

Without pausing to consider the consequences, Fire*Wolf unleashed the Barbarian instincts of his Wilderness upbringing and seized the young officer by the throat.

The man was unarmed and startled, but all the same he reacted quickly. Fire*Wolf felt the knee explode into his groin and doubled over, retching. Before he could recover, the officer followed his initial move with a vicious punch to the stomach.

A lesser man might have collapsed, but Fire*Wolf was battle-hardened and simply tensed his muscles to absorb the blow, then replied with a punch of his own to the side of the officer's head.

in a moment they were locked together, crashing through the office furniture like two wild animals locked in combat to the death.

113-114

*Except, of course, that this fight will not be to the death for once. You will find the young officer's stats on page 187. If either opponent is brought below 50 LIFE POINTS the combat finishes. If the first to drop below 50 is Fire*Wolf, turn to 110. If the officer succumbs first, turn to 121.*

114

The decision was the worst Fire*Wolf had ever taken. His initial application, by messenger, was directed to the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service and elicited the reply that he must apply in writing.

This Fire*Wolf did, but the missive was returned with a request for an application in triplicate. Never much of a scholar, Fire*Wolf hired a scribe and two days later dispatched the completed scrolls. A week went by before he received a note informing him that he had made application to the wrong department and suggesting he contacted the Secretary General of the Ancient Monuments Commission.

Impatiently, Fire*Wolf did so, only to learn that the Commission had delegated part of its function to the newly appointed Committee of Royal Affairs, to whom he should now make fresh application.

*Meanwhile time is awasting. If you think Fire*Wolf should continue this course, turn to 122. If not, he may still decide on furtive entry by going to 104. Or then again, he may throw*

114-116

his hat at the whole sorry business and decide on a totally new course of action by returning to 73.

115

Fire*Wolf sucked in breath sharply. The chamber he had entered was empty, except for one thing. On a central pedestal, nestling on a velvet cushion, was a golden orb. Even before he touched it, he could feel the cool vibrations of its mystic power.

*A remarkable find if our hero can live long enough to bring it out. The orb is the Orb of Invincibility, an artifact - and possibly the only artifact — that guarantees limited immunity from Demonspawn attack. You will find the full story on page 188. In the interim, be glad that Fire*Wolf found it. Now turn to 88 and pick another direction.*

116

It was three days' journey from Pelimandar to the foothills of the mountain chain which separated Harn from neighbouring Kaandor. Fire*Wolf viewed the craggy peaks with a growing feeling of dismay. He had been assured by no less than four experts that a solitary traveller might negotiate the snow-filled passes at this time of year, provided he was properly equipped. Now, seeing the towering mountains for the first time, he felt far from confident.

But should he turn back? If so, return to 73 where he may consider alternative options. If not, press on to 126.

117

Olric, the Knight Regent, was an unusual man. He had been a mystic and a monk before election to high office and even now, so it was said, divided his time between the Monastery of Saint Clement, of which he remained head, and the Regent's Palace.

Both lay on the outskirts of Pelimandar. But which should Fire*Wolf attempt to infiltrate?

*Which indeed? The Monastery would possibly be the easier of the two: if this is Fire*Wolf's decision, then you should turn to 130. But would it not be more impressive if he attempted the more difficult task? If that is his decision and he tries for entry into the Palace, turn to 143.*

118

Fire*Wolf's hand closed on the sceptre. At once his surroundings vanished in a soundless explosion of brilliant blue light.

Is it death? Perhaps not, for he will next find himself at 109.

119

What foul misfortune! Despite his stealth and all his careful precautions, Fire*Wolf found himself abruptly face to face with two of the sepulchral Palace guards.

Too late to flee, he did the only thing possible. The Doomsword leaped howling to meet his hand.

You will find stats for the Palace guards or

*page 187. Since Fire*Wolf has no real desire to kill them, you may take it that should he lower their LIFE POINTS below 20, they will flee. As against that, they will certainly do their best to kill him. If they succeed, turn to 13. If not, return to 104 and proceed as if he had succeeded in his LUCK roll.*

120

Panting, Fire*Wolf surveyed the bloody corpse of the manticore at his feet. The beast seemed real enough, even in death, yet he knew it had to be a magical construct, one slim strand in the web of ancient sorceries which protected the sleeping King Voltar. What other terrors faced him, he wondered?

But in the Barbarian way, he was not given to much introspection. He sheathed his sword and moved onwards.

At once he realized something was very, very wrong.

*What was wrong was that the plan he was following no longer agreed with his physical environment. As a sorcerer himself, our hero can guess that the essential problem is an Illusion Spell, cast to distort perceptions of reality. To break this spell requires will, determination and sacrifice. Before he can proceed, Fire*Wolf must utterly destroy one magical artifact in his possession. (Only the Demonsword is immune here.) If he has collected no such artifacts during his adventure so far, he may proceed*

only at the cost of half his current LIFE POINTS. When the sorry deed is done, turn to 127.

121

'What's going on here?'

Fire*Wolf rolled from the prostrate form of the young officer and picked himself up a little sheepishly. The burly form, the closely cropped grey hair, the gruff voice all helped identify the newcomer even without the insignia on his uniform. Fire*Wolf was facing General Mandar himself.

With an effort, he steadied his voice. 'My name is Lord Xandine, General. I wish to speak with you.'

'An aristocrat is it? And a sorcerer to boot, by your garb. Well kindly behave like one, sir, and desist from attacking my officers!' But while the tone was angry, the General's eyes betrayed a glint of pleasure. He was obviously a man who enjoyed a scrap and admired the victor.

'Your officer will recover his senses shortly, Fire*Wolf said easily. The perils which face Harn will not be cured so easily.'

'What do you know of the perils which ...' The General stopped abruptly, frowning. 'Xandine, did you say? The same Xandine who tackled the Spawn Regent in Belgardium?'

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'Why didn't you say so? I've had men out looking for you for weeks.' He glanced around at the shambles of the outer office. 'Better come inside.

Nowhere to sit down here.'

Fire*Wolf followed him into an inner office, sparsely furnished in the military manner, but at least with chairs on which they could sit and with a cabinet from which the General produced a bottle and two glasses.

'You said you had men searching for me?' Fire*Wolf asked as the old General poured two generous libations.

'Of course I had. If you've been that close to a Spawn and survived, you may have valuable information in your head. We are going to need everything we can get before the war starts.'

'So you agree there is going to be an attack?'

'You've been to Belgardium, what do you think? I admit I had some doubts about the original predictions, but not any more. We're in for trouble soon.'

Fire*Wolf accepted the drink. It tasted sweet, but very strong. 'Can your army handle it, General Mandar?'

'We have our plans and our strategies, Xandine. Well-trained men. Good morale. An open budget from the Royal Exchequer. Full cooperation from the wizards.'

That doesn't answer my question.'

The army has never managed to turn the Spawn yet,' Mandar snorted. 'If this is to be the first time, will cost a lot of blood.'

'But what,' asked Fire*Wolf, 'if the attack could be prevented? What if the Spawn never came at all?'

'For that favour I would run bare-assed round the Temple as a tribute to Minerva,' growled the old General bluntly.

'Perhaps the goddess might be spared that sight,' Fire*Wolf remarked.

General Mandar glanced at him. 'You have a plan by the sound of that.'

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'A preventive strike.'

The Phlogistine General shrugged. 'That's been considered. Won't work. We'd never get sufficient ordnance through the mountains, even when the snows clear.'

'I was not thinking of a full-scale attack,' Fire*Wolf said. 'My father was a Kaandor sorcerer, a lifelong enemy of the ruling House. Before he died, he told me that the House of Harkaan had formed some sort of alliance with the Demon-spawn. In days gone by, the Spawn have attacked and retreated in accordance with their demon whim. They were a blight on this land, but ultimately no more destructive than any force of nature: an earthquake, say, or a whirlwind. This time they will be directed by the House of Harkaan. If Ham falls, it will fall forever: Harkaan means to enslave this realm.'

'That is ill news indeed,' muttered the General grimly.

'Both ill and good,' Fire*Wolf corrected him. 'It may mean that if we can eliminate the head of Harkaan, the Spawn invasion will never take place.'

'You are suggesting we assassinate the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom?'

'Not we, General, I. With your help.'

The moment dragged out to an eternity of silence. Then the General said, 'What help do you require from me?'

'First that you acquaint the Knight Regent of this plan and convince him it is in the national interest. Second, that I shall be welcome to remain in Harn despite my Kaandor bloodline if my mission succeeds. Third, that you detail three well-trained men to accompany me. Fourth, that a regiment be stationed in the foothills near the border to stop any pursuit that may come after us should we succeed. That is all.'

'Agreed!' said Mandar promptly. 'At least to those conditions which are within my power. Whether or not I can convince Olric is in the lap of the gods. But we shall see.'

So we shall, without delay. Roll two dice. Score 2 to 4 and turn to 128. Score above 4 and turn to 142.

122

The reply from the Committee was surprisingly prompt: it was brought by Fire*Wolf's messenger by return. He was politely referred to the Keeper of the Public Archives.

Unfortunately, as Fire*Wolf was to discover, the Keeper of the Public Archives had died a week previously and a new Keeper had not yet been appointed. The Assistant Keeper was, however, extremely helpful. He suggested Fire*Wolf should contact the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service.

*Fiie*Wolf is getting nowhere here. Fortunately, he may still decide on furtive entry by going to 104. Or then again, he may throw his hat at the whole sorry business and decide on a totally new course of action by returning to 73.*

123

The Shaman Temple of Lilethus with its crudely powerful stone block structure stood in stark contrast with the classical lines of the Temple of Minerva no more than half a mile away. Yet even in this masculine environment, the goddess was still represented: a delicate marble statue in her honour guarded one side of the entrance.

Inside, however, Lilethus himself held unchallenged sway. Representations of the god were everywhere, beetle-browed, muscular, lowering, powerful, earthy. Fire*Wolf felt strangely at home with them. They reminded him of the Wilderness gods of his youth.

There was, he found, little organization here. Although the Temple Was open to the public Minerva had captured the common fancy with the result that while the edifice gave an impression of bustling activity, most of the people here were monks of the Order of Lilethus or fully-fledged Shaman Wizards.

For want of a sensible idea, Fire*Wolf stopped one of the latter and asked how he might go about meeting with Ben beni bar Jain.

That door,' the man said, pointing, then hurried off about his business.

Fire*Wolf followed his directions. He knew not what he had expected to find behind the door, but it was certainly not what he did find: two monks engaged in a game of dice.

Fire*Wolf coughed politely and one of them looked up. 'What can I do for you, Sorcerer? Or is it Warrior?'

'Perhaps both,' said Fire*Wolf. 'I seek the Shaman Wizard Ben beni bar Jain.'

'So does everybody else,' the monk said. 'The question is, does he seek you? By which I mean, has he agreed to an appointment?'

Since there was nothing to be gained by lying, Fire*Wolf shook his head.

Then you have a problem indeed,' said the monk, 'for he is unlikely to make time for you.'

'Unlikely?'

'Unlikely, but not impossible. Do you have influence with those who have his ear?'

'I am a stranger to Pelimandar. I know no one who might have his ear.'

The monk grinned. 'Yes, you do. I have his ear. He is in fact my cousin.' He held up a cautioning

hand. 'But it is useless to offer me a bribe, for we monks are pledged to poverty, more's the pity.'

Fire*Wolf returned the grin. 'How then may I influence you in my favour, noble Monk?'

bar Jain's cousin glanced at the dice. 'You look like a gambling man to me, Stranger. I certainly am. If you can defeat me in a straight throw of the dice — no sorcery involved, mind, no Luckstones or anything of that nature - I will arrange everything.'

'Agreed!' Fire*Wolf told him promptly.

*The eccentricity of those in Monastic Orders appears endless, but at least our hero has an opportunity to progress. This is a sudden death situation. Roll two dice on behalf of the monk. Roll two dice on behalf of Fire*Wolf. Neither roll should be modified in any way. If the monk scores higher, then Fire*Wolf loses all opportunity to meet with the Shaman Wizard and must return to **73** where he may pick another option. If Fire*Wolf gains the higher score, congratulate him and turn to **125**.*

124

Gingerly, Fire*Wolf placed the crown upon his head. To his surprise it was a perfect fit. Too perfect, perhaps, for when he tried to remove it, he could not.

And the crown was growing hot...

Too hot for comfort. We will spare you the agony of any detailed description of how the

*accursed crown glows red, then white, searing through skin, flesh and finally bone in a sunburst of pure terror as Fire*Wolf's brains begin to melt and ooze disgustingly out of his ears. Far better simply to suggest you turn now to **13**.*

SHAMAN WIZARD BAR JAIN

125

That was well done,' remarked the Shaman Wizard Ben beni bar Jain expansively. There are few with the skill or luck to match your achievement. Now, since you obviously wish something from me, perhaps you will inform me what it is.'

'My name is Lord Xandine,' Fire*Wolf began.

'Xandine? The same Xandine who tackled the Spawn Regent in Belgardium?'

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'Little wonder you have managed to impress me,' bar Jain told him. 'Have you come to help us stave off the Demonspawn attack?'

'So you agree there is going to be an attack?'

'You've been to Belgardium. I should not have thought there was much doubt about it. Our own predictions agreed with those of the State Astrologers in any case.'

'Can the army handle it?'

The army has never managed to turn the Spawn yet.'

'But what,' asked Fire*Wolf, 'if the attack could be prevented? What if the Spawn never came at all?'

'You have a plan by the- sound of that,' bar Jain said soberly.

Fire*Wolf nodded. 'A preventive strike. My father was a Kaandor sorcerer, a lifelong enemy of the ruling House. Before he died, he told me that the Harkaan had formed some sort of alliance with the Demonspawn. In days gone by, the Spawn have attacked and retreated in accordance with their demon whim, they were a blight on this land, but ultimately no more destructive than any force of nature: an earthquake, say, or a whirlwind. This time they will be directed by the House of Harkaan. If Ham falls, it will fall forever: Harkaan means to enslave this realm.'

That's ill news indeed,' said bar Jain.

'Both ill and good,' Fire*Wolf corrected him. 'It may mean that if we can eliminate the head of the Harkaan, the Spawn invasion will never take place.'

'You are suggesting we assassinate the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom?'

'Not we, I. With your help.'

The moment dragged out to an eternity of silence. Then the Wizard said, 'What help do you require from me?'

'First that you acquaint the Knight Regent of this plan and convince him it is in the national interest. Second, that I shall be welcome to remain in Harn despite my Kaandor bloodline if my mission succeeds. Third, that you detail three well-trained

wizards to accompany me. Fourth, that a magical barrier be placed in the foothills near the border to stop any pursuit that may come after us should we succeed. That is all.'

'Agreed!' said bar Jain promptly. 'At least to those conditions which are within my power. Whether or not I can convince Olric is in the lap of the gods. But we shall see.'

So we shall, without delay. Roll two dice. Score 2 to 4 and turn to 135. Score above 4 and turn to 142.

126

As he climbed higher, the trail became rougher, more difficult to follow, until he reached the snowline where it vanished altogether.

Hardy though he was, Fire*Wolf found it exceptionally tough going, but persevered until the afternoon which found him moving slowly below the towering sweep of a glacial snowface.

Close to exhaustion though he was, some instinct warned him of impending danger. But warned or not, there was little he could do. He heard the avalanche like distant thunder before the tidal sweep of snow engulfed him.

Go to 13.

127

There was no respite. The creature approaching him had a light, ethereal quality as if it had no real solidity. But it had form and the form was that of an ancient crone.

In earlier years, Fire*Wolf would certainly have assumed this to be a ghost, the shade of some old departed woman. But no longer. His sorcerous experience had taught him he was facing something infinitely more dangerous, an artificial elemental, astrally created by the Mystic Arts.

Such creatures were difficult to form, but even more difficult to disperse. Yet if he did not disperse it, Fire*Wolf knew it would attach itself to him and sap his life energies like a leech.

*Sad to say that only Fire*Wolf's SKILL will aid him here. Make a check roll against this characteristic. If Fire*Wolf succeeds, the elemental will be successfully dispersed with a POWER drain of only 5 points. If he fails, then the creature will attach itself to his back and feed off his LIFE POINTS at the rate of 50 per new section he reaches. He may make a fresh check roll against his SKILL in every second section until the creature is dispersed or he himself dies. He has lost an immediate 50 LIFE POINTS to the creature right now in this situation: if this kills him, turn to 13. If not - and indeed if his check roll succeeds - turn to 144.*

128

Fire*Wolf looked at the old General in despair. 'You can't mean it!'

'Fraid I do,' Mandar told him sadly. 'Olric wouldn't listen. Maybe you would have better luck if you tackled him yourself. I tried to arrange an audience, but he won't see you through official

channels. But maybe there's some other way. Or maybe there's some other plan you can try.'

*What a disappointment! And what a waste of precious time. Return Fire*Wolf to 73 and reconsider the options in the light of this experience.*

129

For a moment he could scarcely believe his luck. The door he had entered led into a gallery. Below him was a richly ornamented chamber. In its centre was an ornate golden bed.

And in the bed lay a tall, heavily bearded sleeping figure.

He had reached King Voltar!

The chamber itself was guarded only by statues and all the information he had suggested there were no protective sorceries at all here. But there was something. He could sense it in the very air. In sensing it, he knew his earlier suspicions had been correct. The feel was all too familiar from the enchanted valley which had been his father's demesne. Voltar was bound into a Time Lock!

Fire*Wolf descended the steps down from the gallery. Close to, the sleeping King looked like a waxen image. There was danger upon danger here. Breaking the Time Lock might actually destroy him, might destroy the entire palace. Much depended on the actual nature of the Lock and Fire*Wolf's skill in breaking it.

For a long moment he hesitated, then turned away

with a shrug. He had no option but to try.

*He must try in the following manner. Roll two dice to discover the mystic strength of the Lock. Note the total. Roll again for Fire*Wolf. If the second roll is greater than the first, then the Lock is broken. Should the second roll prove to be twice or more the figure of the first roll, go to 132. If it is greater than the first roll, but not twice or more the first roll, then go to 138. If the second roll is less than or equal to the first roll, go to 141.*

130

The Monastery of Saint Clement was not a building, but rather a series of buildings set in a hollow almost four miles distant from the city limits. It had, until a century ago, been a closed community, dedicated to the perfection of the spirit and the martial arts, and even today signs of its past state were clearly evident. The whole complex was, for example, walled and the main gates closed and guarded. The original moat was now devoid of water, but the ditch remained, requiring the use of a footbridge to make a comfortable crossing. Even the approach road indicated the xenophobic past: at several points, Fire*Wolf had passed vicious traps, now thankfully fenced in with notices describing their historical importance.

He had chosen night for his attempt to reach Olric. But possibly he had chosen the wrong night for a gibbous moon illuminated the landscape clearly. Nonetheless, he did not relish waiting for

a better time and approached the Monastery obliquely, dropping down into the ditch of the dry moat and seeking an area of wall distant from the main gate which might be fairly easily scaled. Eventually he picked his spot and in the moonlight began to climb.

Will he make the top safely? Check rolls are called for against his STRENGTH and STAMINA. If both succeed, you may proceed to 145. If even one of them fails, turn to 155.

131

Fire*Wolf turned away from the immobile bodies of the three monks, and at once found himself facing a fourth, taller than the others and with something in his stance that suggested easy authority.

That was neatly done,' the stranger said. 'Would you care to test your mettle further against one who is, perhaps, a more skilful opponent?'

But Fire*Wolf made no move to attack. Instead he said quickly, 'Lord Olric, I must have words with you!'

Olric appeared to hesitate, but only momentarily. 'It seems you may have earned that right. Come with me.'

In moments they were seated face to face in a monkish cell. And Fire*Wolf was explaining his plan.

'I consider myself to be a citizen of Harn,' he said 'but my father was not. He was of the noble line of

Kaandor, an enemy of the Harkaan and a Kaandor sorcerer to boot. From him I learned that the Spawn invasion your astrologers predict will assuredly come about. But the circumstances are different now to those which pertained when the Spawn invaded in the past. Then they followed their own nature, as bees swarm in summer. Now, they will invade at the behest of the House of Harkaan, who have formed an unholy alliance with them. My plan is simple. I shall undertake to assassinate the head of the Harkaan. Thus may the invasion be prevented before it even begins.'

'A simple plan indeed,' Olric nodded noncommittally. 'And you come to me to seek a reward for your endeavours?'

Fire*Wolf shook his head. 'Success shall be my reward - that and the lifting of a geist my father placed upon me. I come to you only for assistance.'

Olric regarded him steadily, as if trying to make up his mind.

*Which is, of course, exactly what he is trying to do. At this stage, essentially, it all comes down to trust, to the impression Olric has formed. Make a check roll against Fire*Wolf's CHARM. If it succeeds, turn to 142. If not, then Fire*Wolf will be sent off and must approach Olric again, perhaps less directly: return to 73 and reconsider the options.*

132

The air itself was rent asunder as the Time Lock

132-133

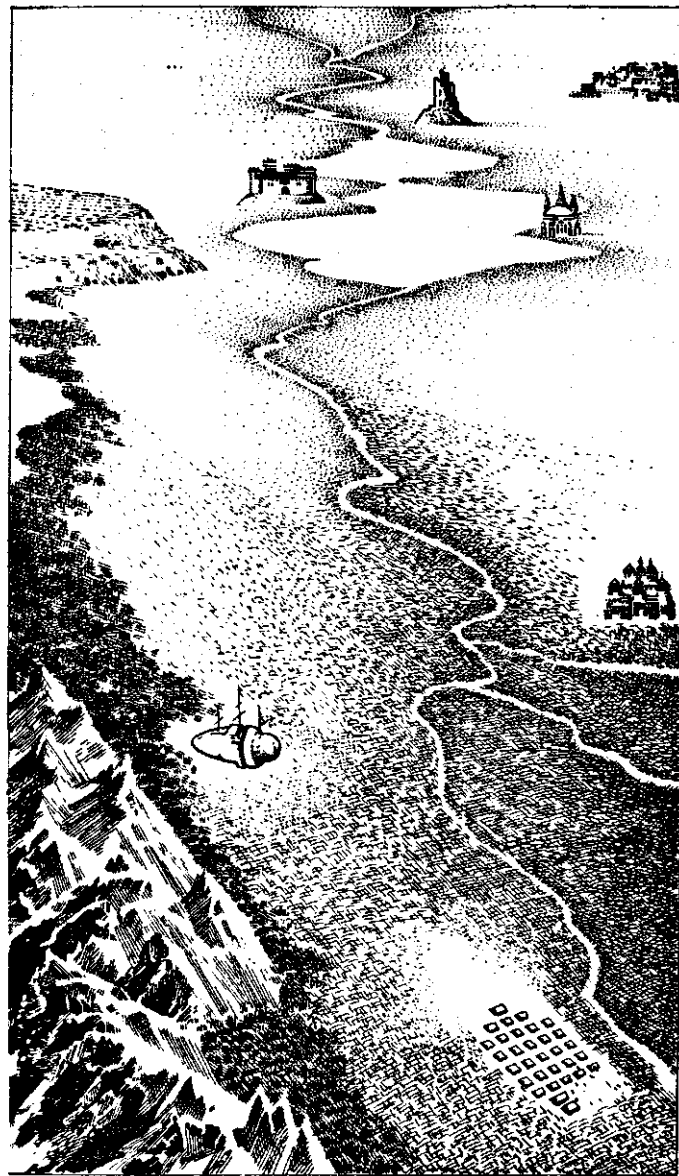
cracked. For an instant, Fire*Wolf thought he could retain control. Then the familiar sensation of impending doom swept over him. He felt the Palace itself shake beneath his feet, then there was blackness.

Go to 13.

133

The rigging creaked and groaned as the airship plied its predetermined course. Standing on the lonely bridge, his cloak wrapped close around him to break the biting wind, Fire*Wolf could see a vast panorama of countryside below him. To the south, the sprawling metropolis of Pelimandar. To the south east, distant, the dead ruins of Belgardium. Directly below, the fertile fields of Ham's farming heartland. As the airship rose higher, he fancied he could just make out, on the distant horizon, the russet edge of the Wilderness which had shaped him.

He found difficulty in judging the speed of his craft, having no previous experience of air travel, but changes in the terrain below suggested he was making considerable headway, far more, certainly, than if he had been mounted on a fleet horse; and without, of course, the need to rest. Soon he caught sight of the great mountain chain which separated and protected Harn from Kaandor. As the ship rose higher, increasing chill forced him into shelter below decks, but less than an hour elapsed before the craft began to descend. He stared over the side at the sweeping panorama of Kaandor, wondering, not for the first time about the feasibility of his plan.



the Land of Harn

Now he was faced with a crucial decision - perhaps the most crucial decision of his life. The power of King Voltar had taken him this far, but it was Fire*Wolf who must decide exactly where to land.

*Not an easy decision. Consult the map which indicates the major features Fire*Wolf can see from his vantage point in the airship high above. Each feature is marked with a section number and you may pick any one you wish. But consider carefully, for in some of those areas certain death awaits; and in only one will he discover Prince Ragnok, the current ruler of the Harkaan.*

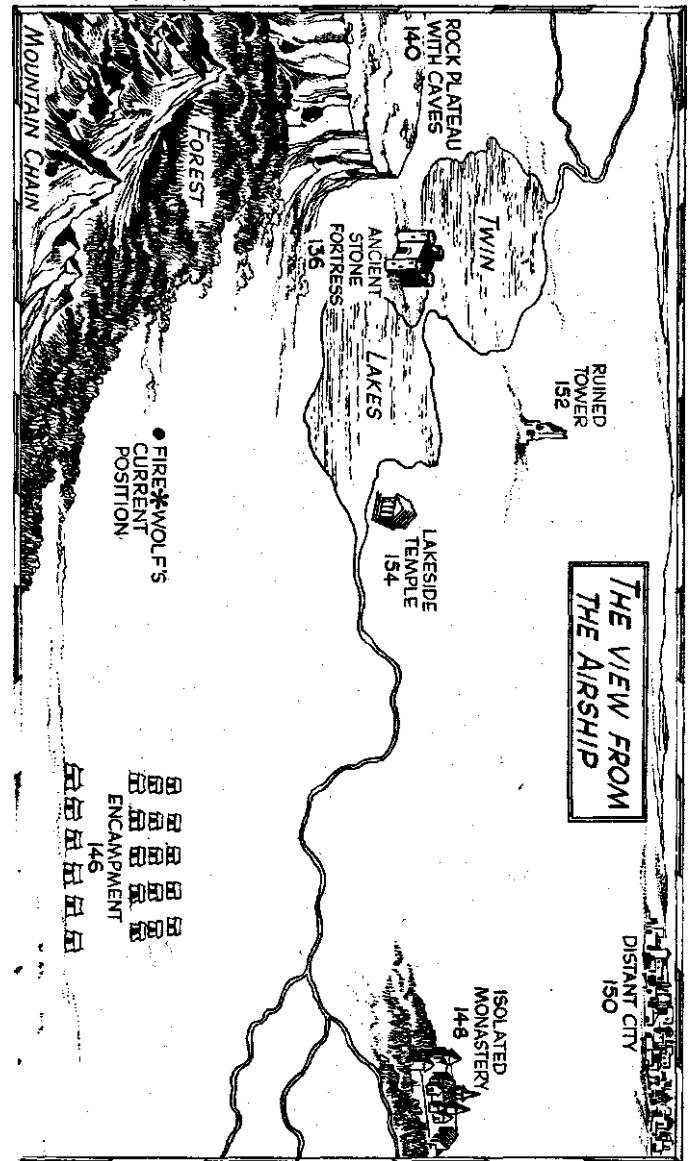
134

The bedchamber was furnished in the finest silks, the bed itself comprised of a soft mound of silken cushions.

Fire*Wolf was led gently towards it and persuaded to recline. At once, no fewer than four of the women removed their robes and joined him, naked, their hands reaching eagerly for the clasps of his own garments.

Flushing at the unexpected turn of events, Fire*Wolf swallowed then stammered, 'What -?'

The woman who had called to him at the ship moved over to his side, still thankfully fully clothed. 'It is our custom,' she whispered. 'We of Lileth are dedicated to the care of the finest specimens of our race. It is obvious to us that you striking characteristics are infinitely worth



perpetuating. You do not object, surely; most men would be honoured.'

'Well, not object exactly...' Fire*Wolf was watching the removal of his loincloth. 'It is simply that I seek ...' He pulled himself together with an effort. 'I seek Prince Ragnok.'

'And you shall find him, with our help, brave stranger.'

Yes indeed, but first it seems our hero will have to satisfy no fewer than four damsels to achieve the cooperation he requires. That is four further separate and distinct check rolls against his ATTRACTION. If he succeeds in charming all four, turn to 156. If he fails to attract one or more, then the women will refuse to tell him the Prince's whereabouts. If he fails all four, they will tear him apart in a fit of enraged frustration: go to 13.

135

In a day, Fire*Wolf had the worst news possible. 'You can't mean it!'

The Shaman Wizard shrugged philosophically. 'Olric wouldn't listen. Maybe you would have better luck if you tackled him yourself. I tried to arrange an audience, but he won't see you through official channels. But maybe there's some other way. Or maybe there's some other plan you can try.'

*What a disappointment! What a waste of precious time. Return Fire*Wolf to 73 and reconsider the options in the light of this experience*

136

Ancient or not, the fortress was in use. Fire*Wolf was assured of this even before he landed. A contingent of some thirty or forty men seemed to be stationed there, soldiers by the look of their accoutrements. But they were soldiers with a difference. Despite the appearance of the airship, not one looked up. All went about their duties in a manner mechanical even for those suffering from intensive military training.

On his first approach, Fire*Wolf was extremely cautious. Nonetheless, he knew his strange craft must have been seen. Yet it attracted no attention whatsoever. It was almost as if these men had not been trained to recognize danger from the skies and thus could take no account of it when it threatened.

Or was it all a ploy?

For safety, Fire*Wolf cast anchor some distance from the fortress itself and made his final approach, furtively, on foot. This time, instinct warned him, he would not be ignored.

And instinct proved entirely correct. As he skirted the perimeter, two guards suddenly swung round and loosed arrows in his direction. Fire*Wolf froze, convinced he had been seen. But something else, a little nearer, had attracted their attention. While Fire*Wolf held his breath, the guards followed their arrows into a small clump of bushes and emerged with a dead rabbit.

As they returned to their duties, Fire*Wolf rela-

xed only slowly. If these men reacted so swiftly to something as insignificant as a rabbit, what chance had he to pass them? At the same time, such highly trained guards must obviously be protecting something — or someone — of extreme importance.

His problem now was to pass them to reach the fortress itself.

*This is not just a question of hacking them to bits, for the sound of a fight would undoubtedly bring other guards. What is needed at this stage is a check roll against Fire*Wolf's SKILL (which should hopefully be quite high now considering the difficulties he has already survived). If he achieves it, go direct to 157. If he fails, he must fight the two guards (their stats are on page 187). Even if he wins, you will need to make a check roll against his LUCK to determine whether others come to their aid. Should this roll fail, two more will appear who must be dispatched in the same way, with a further check roll to determine if more come. Keep up this checking until either Fire*Wolf is killed (go to 13) or he achieves his check roll. If he gets through, go to 157.*

137

As Fire*Wolf stepped into the courtyard, the gate swung closed behind him. Yet there was still no one to be seen.

Nervously he moved towards the building and on entering, found himself in a deserted chapel. At

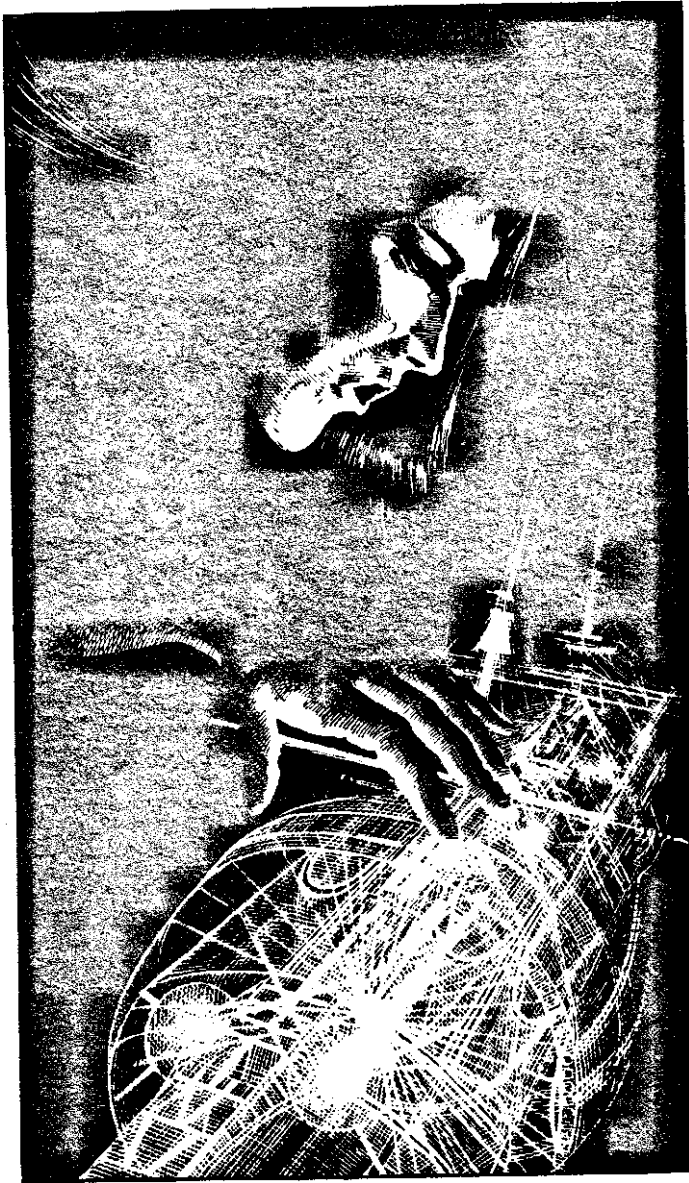
least, it seemed deserted until a shadow near the altar resolved itself into a brown-robed monk.

The monk approached him slowly, stopping about ten feet away. 'Welcome, Traveller,' he said in a pleasant, resonant voice. 'My brothers meditate at this hour, but I am empowered to see to your needs.'

'My needs?' echoed Fire*Wolf.

'Our Order is dedicated to healing the human body and the human spirit. If you are injured or lacking any vital thing, you have merely to spread yourself upon our altar, and all will be restored.'

*Said the spider to the fly. If Fire*Wolf trusts this hooded presence, he may stretch out on the altar by moving to 151. If not, he may leave (provided he does so quickly before the other Brothers put in an appearance) in which case the Monastery is barred to him in future, but you can pick a fresh destination from the map.*



Fire*Wolf the Sorcerer

SHIP OF THE AIR

138

The Time Lock cracked.

Would the King awaken? Certainly Fire*Wolf could see something was happening: the entire chamber was beginning to fill with a mellow golden light. The floor beneath his feet became translucent, then increasingly transparent so that he could just catch the outlines of a second chamber beneath. In it he saw an oddly convoluted shape. As the process continued, the shape resolved itself into a glittering spiderweb of rigging.

In momentary disbelief, Fire*Wolf realized he was looking down directly on a land-locked sailing ship, a vessel of almost heart-stopping beauty and so delicately structured that it seemed incredible it would survive even a passing squall at sea. He knelt to look closer, awed by a dawning realization. This craft had never been designed to ply the sea lanes. Traceries of raw POWER ran along the hull and rigging. There was magic here in greater abundance than he had ever seen before. Magic that could only be bent to one purpose: the ship was constructed to sail cloud layers in the upper air.

Fire*Wolf stared dumbfounded, so fascinated that he almost missed the first stirrings of the bearded figure on the golden bed. But then the King sat up.

For a long moment he stared at Fire*Wolf. Then he said simply, 'Thank you.'

Fire*Wolf rose quickly. 'King Voltar,' he began.

But the monarch waved him into silence. 'No need of explanations, Lord Xandine. I have not slept these centuries, whatever the appearances, merely succumbed to the enchantment of immobility. In the long years I have lain here, I fought off insanity by exercising my mind. In doing so, I developed the art the Shaman Wizards call Thought Transfer. Or developed it at least partially. I could not impress my thoughts on others, but I could read clearly those of any being on whom I concentrated and I have long been aware of the minds of anyone who entered this palace. Thus I know the perils of the Kingdom. And thus I know your own needs and desires.

'You have a plan, Fire*Wolf,' the King went on, 'and it is workable, provided only that you move swiftly. The Spawn invasion looms close now and there is no time to waste. The craft beneath is a ship of the air. It will carry you directly to your destination.'

'I know not how to navigate such a craft,' Fire*Wolf protested.

'Nor do you need to. The same sorceries which created it will surely guide it at my behest. You need only board and wait, preparing yourself for the task ahead of you.'

Fire*Wolf bowed. There was nothing for it but to agree.

'Nothing at all,' remarked the telepathic King.

*Thus Fire*Wolf enters on the last stage of his mission, carried by a magical airship back to the land which gave him birth, but which is now as alien to him as the surface of the ocean bed. With the Demonspawn poised to unleash their final invasion, he must act quickly. Only one thing can stop them now: the death of their new master, the present ruler of the House of Harkaan. Can our hero really achieve the task he has set himself? Turn to 133 where the answer will begin to unfold.*

139

The rotting wood cracked loudly, then collapsed. For an instant, Fire*Wolf teetered desperately, scrabbling for a handhold on the ivy-covered walls.

But in vain. His fall was into stygian darkness.

Go to 13.

140

The ship landed gently near the edge of the rocky plateau. As Fire*Wolf disembarked, he could see the sheer cliff-fall dropping away several hundred feet below, far more dizzying at close range than the gentle panorama from the flying airship.

Nothing grew on this barren rock and he wondered if his instinct had been mistaken. Why should he find the ruling noble of the Harkaan acre, on this isolated outcrop? Yet a small voice whispered that he might.

The only distinguishing feature of this rocky plateau was its caves: their entrances were everywhere. As he approached close to one, an acrid stench caught his nostrils, and while the smell was familiar, he could not quite remember why. Certainly if he had experienced such a smell before, it had been nothing like so strong as it was now.

He hesitated. Should he enter the caves?

Well, should he? If you think so, turn to 149. If not, he can always take off again while you consult the map and pick another section.

141

He had failed! Bitter gall arose in his throat as he realized he had failed. Only one chance remained — a risk so extreme that he had not considered it before. He must gamble all his hard-earned POWER on one last attempt to break the Lock.

*Since he must, he must. Roll two dice and multiply the result by 40 to decide the strength of the Time Lock. If Fire*Wolf has sufficient POWER to overcome it, then go to 138. If not the sorcerous discharge will destroy him: go to 13.*

142

'I have considered your plan carefully,' the Knight Regent said gravely, 'and while it has a certain merit, there are some points I must insist upon before I can agree.'

Fire*Wolf waited silently.

'First, you must carry out this deed alone. I shall risk no other lives but yours. Second, if you should fail and be captured, you will at once commit suicide rather than be questioned about the involvement of Harn. Do you agree?'

Fire*Wolf nodded.

'Good,' said Olric. There is, however, a further problem and one which may prove an insurmountable hurdle. That is the problem of time. Every oracle now suggests that the Spawn invasion is imminent indeed. I do not believe you have enough time to cross the mountain chain and reach Kaandor before the worst happens.'

'But that means . . . 'Fire*Wolf protested.

The Knight Regent raised a hand to silence him. 'By which I mean you do not have enough time if you were to travel by orthodox means. I have in mind the use of an airship.'

'An airship?' Fire*Wolf echoed. 'I did not know there was such a device in the Kingdom.' Unless, of course, one of the Spawn's flying greenships had been captured.

But Olric, apparently, did not have greenships in mind. 'There is one. It lies beneath the King's Palace. King Voltar's Palace. It was created in ancient times and has lain unused since then. No one knows how to use it or even if it can be used.'

But if no one can use it . . . '

'No one, that is, but the King himself. Historical

documents tell us that it was created to his own design.'

'The King sleeps,' said Fire*Wolf quietly.

'And the King may awaken,' Olric said. 'Our soothsayers speak of a Messiah who will shortly appear to save the realm. Only part of their predictions have been made public. The remaining part is that the Messiah will do so by awakening King Voltar.'

'I am no Messiah!' Fire*Wolf gasped.

That remains to be seen,' Olric said. Unexpectedly he grinned. 'At least you are the only candidate we have at the moment. Do you agree to my conditions?'

'Do I have any option?' Fire*Wolf asked.

'None,' said Olric. 'None at all. But since, as you say, you may not be the Messiah and the task you undertake is fraught with political implications, I must insist that any attempt you make to awaken King Voltar must be made by stealth. This will involve your entering the Palace secretly and using your own ingenuity to pass through the web of sorcerous protections which guards him. I would suggest you begin your task without delay.'

So, since there is no real choice to be made, we must follow our hero to the Palace Of the Sleeping King, there to meet whatever fate awaits him. Go to 79.

Fire*Wolf regretted his decision as he approached

the Palace. It was night and so dark that he could scarcely see more than a yard or two in front of him: ideal conditions for a furtive entrance. But he had forgotten one thing - the increased military presence at all State buildings since the threat of a Demonspawn invasion. There were guards everywhere.

He watched and waited, attempting to discover a pattern to the feverish activity. Eventually he thought he had found one and made his move, slipping across the perimeter at a time when, by his calculation, he would have half a minute or more before the next contingent of guards appeared.

His calculations were less than accurate.

*Fire*Wolf is seized by the guards, too many for him to make a fight of it even if he wanted to. Since he can give no acceptable explanation of his presence, only one fate becomes possible. Go to 69: our hero has been jailed.*

Fire*Wolf turned a corner and stopped in horror. Was he too late? Had the invasion already begun? Ahead of him, horrible and unmistakable, were three creatures of the Demonspawn!

But a moment's reflection convinced him of the truth. These were no true Spawn, but rather pale images of the ancient evil created by the sorceries which protected Voltar. But images or not, they were deadly dangerous.

How dangerous you will discover when you

*read the Pseudo-Spawn stats on page 187. Fire*Wolf may get a free ride here if he possesses the Orb of Invincibility, for in this case the images will simply fade away. If not, however, he must fight. Losing the battle will take him to 13. Winning takes him to 129.*

145

Fire*Wolf dropped over the wall to land cat-like on his feet. He paused for an instant to take in his surroundings. He was in an open courtyard, the nearest building perhaps a hundred yards away.

Between him and it were three startled Clementines.

*This is an exceptionally difficult situation for Fire*Wolf. You will find stats for the Clementines on page 187, but this will be by no means a straight fight. The monks, trained to act first and ask questions afterwards, will attempt to kill him as an intruder. If they succeed, go to 13.*

*Fire*Wolf, by contrast, cannot afford to kill the monks, since this would scarcely endear him to Olric. Thus he must render them helpless with a suitable spell, or attempt to render them unconscious by bringing their LIFE POINTS below 10 in the course of combat. The latter course is not without its problems since it is extremely easy to kill someone accidentally in a combat situation. If Fire*Wolf does kill even one of the monks, the others will immediately call for help and you may be assured our hero*

will quickly be put to death. If, however, he succeeds in this tricky encounter, turn to 131.

146

As Fire*Wolf's craft dropped lower over his projected destination, the regularity of the encampment impinged on his attention. At first he had thought it might be a nomad camp, but now he was not so sure.

As the airship swooped lower still, he abruptly recognized the site for what it was — a military camp.

Does he still want to land? If so, turn to 153. If not, check your map and pick another destination.

147

'Our Order,' explained the woman as they walked, 'is dedicated to the delights of the body. I hope that does not shock you, Stranger?'

'No,' said Fire*Wolf, 'not at all.' In point of fact, it rather intrigued him.

They entered the marble edifice, walking through a colonnade into a sumptuously set dining hall.

'First,' the woman said, 'a little wine. Then we may perhaps repair to another chamber.' She lowered her eyes modestly.

Fire*Wolf took the proffered goblet enthusiastically.

Forgetting, of course, that he had already failed

147-149

his ATTRACTION check roll. The wine, regrettably, is poisoned. Go to 13.

148

As he had guessed, it was a monastery. Close up now, it appeared deserted. Fire*Wolf anchored his craft a safe distance away and walked towards the brownstone building.

The gates, when he reached them, were open. Beyond lay a small cobbled courtyard and the Monastery itself.

A Wilderness instinct nibbled at his consciousness. Was this place too open, too inviting? Was it, in short, a trap?

*If it is, Fire*Wolf has the opportunity to retreat now. He may return to his ship while you pick a new destination from the map. But if he enters the Monastery, turn to 137.*

149

When his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he found the cave funnelled gently downwards.

Picking his way cautiously, Fire*Wolf moved along one wall, hand poised near the handle of the Doomsword. The acrid stench grew stronger.

The cave became a tunnel, twisting and turning as it descended into the very bedrock of the plateau. All the while the smell grew stronger, making his head swim.

Suddenly, belatedly, he realized where he had encountered such a smell before. In Belgardium! In

149-150

Belgardium, in the aftermath of the Spawn invasion. He was walking voluntarily into the lair of the Demonspawn themselves!

Utterly unequipped for such an encounter, Fire*Wolf turned to flee. But the truth had dawned moments too late. The sound behind him made him turn. Bearing down on him out of the darkness were five prime examples of the Demonspawn!

*There is every likelihood this encounter will put paid to Fire*Wolf. He may just possibly make his airship if he flees, but this will mean five separate check rolls against his SPEED. If he achieves all five successfully, then he will escape and you may pick a new destination from the map. If even one fails, he is into combat. You will find Spawn stats on page 187. If, miraculously, Fire*Wolf wins, return to your map and pick a safer destination. If he loses, go to 13.*

150

Even while he was still some miles from the city, Fire*Wolf was beginning to regret his decision. Now, as he drew closer, he knew he had made a predictable mistake.

The problem was, of course, the unique nature of his transportation. Had he approached on foot or by horse, he might have entered the city without attracting the slightest attention. As it was, he could see the guards on the city walls staring upwards in astonishment and increasingly large

crowds of citizens beginning to gather at the boundaries to view the miracle in the skies.

It would be madness to pursue his original course. Turn to your map and pick a new destination.

151

Trustingly, Fire*Wolf lay down upon the altar. Almost immediately he became aware of an increasing blue glow, a glow which sapped his will and consciousness until he fell into a deep, dark sleep.

From which he will awaken at full LIFE POINTS and full POWER. Perhaps a little trust is no bad thing. Return now to your map and pick a new destination.

152

The tower was even more tumbledown than it had appeared from the air. It seemed utterly disused. Fallen masonry was everywhere, overgrown by lichens, creepers and grasses.

Fire*Wolf pushed the rotted wooden entrance and stepped back quickly when it fell inwards with a crash. He peered inside. When his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he discovered an ancient staircase spiralling upwards.

Could there be anything of value in the upper reaches? Certainly it now seemed unlikely that he would find Prince Ragnok here. But some instinct had caused him to investigate and it was possible

if only barely, that he might discover something of interest.

*Yet those ancient steps look dangerous. If you feel he should risk them, turn to 139. If not, Fire*Wolf may take off again while you consult the map to find another destination.*

153

The warriors swarmed from their tents and huts like ants. Fire*Wolf tried desperately to raise the ship, but too late. They boarded like pirates and fell upon him with the fury of a mob.

What a bad decision. Go to 13.

154

Fire*Wolf realized his mistake the moment the ship set down. He had set his course too close, for white-robed figures were streaming out of the marble building, obviously attracted by this marvel from the skies, and far too many for him to fight.

Or was it a mistake? For as the figures drew nearer, Fire*Wolf saw they were not Kaandor warriors, but women. More than a score of them, dark-haired, dark-eyed and each one (if such a thing were possible) more lovely than the last.

They halted, a few yards distant from the ship's prow. One stepped forward. 'Welcome, Stranger. Will you leave your wondrous craft and join us?'

'Who are you?' Fire*Wolf called cautiously.

We are the Sisterhood of Lileth. It will be our pleasure to entertain you.'

The Sisterhood of Lileth? He had heard of no such Order. But then again he knew almost nothing of this Kingdom. They were obviously unarmed and appeared friendly enough: nor was there any reason for them to believe him an enemy. And perhaps they knew the whereabouts of Prince Ragnok.

Nonetheless, he kept his hand close to his Doomsword as he left the ship and accompanied the women to the temple.

Where, as it happens, the outcome of this encounter will depend almost entirely on our hero's ATTRACTION. Make the usual check roll. If successful, turn to 134. If not, go to 147.

155

Fire*Wolf fell.

The fall did not kill him, as well it might, but when he tried to move, he quickly discovered his right leg was useless and agonizingly painful, perhaps even broken.

He lay for a moment, gathering his wits and trying to formulate some sensible plan, before the sound of voices persuaded him that the noise of his fall had attracted the attention of the Monastery guards.

Gritting his teeth, Fire*Wolf began to crawl away, his injured leg sending waves of agony through his entire body. But he had covered a distance of no more than twenty yards before the monks discovered him.

A kindly fate awaits him, for the monks, not realizing his intent, will carry him within the Monastery for treatment of his injury. But he will not find Olric in the sanatorium and when he is eventually released, he must return to 73 to reconsider his options, or possibly even make a second attempt at the option which landed him in his present difficulties.

156

Smiling benignly, the woman whispered softly, 'Try 136.'

He may not believe her, of course, in which case he is always free to make another choice. But if he does, then he will leave this pleasant place and fly there directly: 136.

157

He had reached the fortress safely. Even before he entered, the royal pennant fluttering just above the entrance told him he had also reached his goal.

Now supremely confident of his skill, Fire*Wolf lay hidden underneath an abandoned cart until the opportunity arose for him to slip through the half-open doorway.

Inside, bent over a small table in the stone-flagged hallway, was his prey. The silken insignia left no doubt of that. The man turned in surprise and Fire*Wolf found himself looking directly into the dark eyes of his father's greatest enemy, the man who had formed an unholy alliance with ancient evil and who, even now, planned to unleash ter-

rible destruction on Fire*Wolf's adopted land.

But Prince Ragnok was not alone. Flanking him on either side were two heavily armed guards. They were not the robot-like human guards outside, but the lithe, green shapes of the most dreaded foes on earth: Demonspawn!

Four Spawn and the Prince himself. Almost suicide for one warrior to tackle. But to his credit, Fire*Wolf did not hesitate. With the Doomsword howling in his hand, he launched himself upon his foes.

*Stats, as always, on page 187. Our hero will need every ounce of luck and sorcery he has at his command to rid the world of these five villains. Prince Ragnok will not, however, take any part in the fight until at least two of his Spawn guards have been killed. Thereafter, of course, he will attempt to kill Fire*Wolf as vigorously as the Spawn. If Fire*Wolf dies, there is only 13. But if he wins, turn quickly to 158.*

FIRE*WOLF TRIUMPHANT

158

With the Prince dead, escape had been surprisingly easy. The guards beyond the keep had frozen into immobility, or wandered in tight circles as if, now that their leader was gone, they did not know what to do. Fire*Wolf suspected sorcery at work, as if Prince Ragnok had used his powers to enslave these soldiers and bend them to his will.

But whatever the reason, Fire*Wolf had cause to be thankful, for it changed what might have proven a suicide mission into a triumph.

As the magical airship carried him high above the mountain barrier back to his adopted homeland, he took time to reflect on the strangeness of his destiny. It seemed like only yesterday that he had been a carefree youth whose only real concern was the seduction of the more comely females in the subterranean stone village he had believed to be his home.

Now the Wilderness was far behind, as was his naive innocence. He knew who he really was now: a noble of an ancient bloodline, the Lord Xandine by right of birth, a reluctant sorcerer, but a sorcerer nonetheless. Above all a warrior, fine-honed by battle after battle.

He was returning not simply to Harn, but to Harn's ancient ruler, the near mythical King Voltar. What changes would be wrought in the land now that Voltar had at last awakened! What possibilities for adventure!

The immediate threat was over now, of that he was quite certain. Prince Ragnok was the current force behind the Spawn and without him, they would lapse back into their old demonic ways. Still a danger, to be sure, but no longer an immediate danger.

Some day, of course, the King might order a direct move against the Spawn themselves, as a prudent husbandman might consider the extermination of vermin who threatened his stores. When that day came, he might even call again on the warrior Fire*Wolf and the sorcerer Lord Xandine.

But not yet, not now. Now the warrior Fire*Wolf and the sorcerer Lord Xandine were simply going home.

SPELL TABLE

SPELL	EFFECT	POWER
ARMOUR	Creates a magical armour of light around Fire*Wolf for the duration of the section. This subtracts 10 points from any damage scored against him in combat.	25
CRYPT	Returns Fire*Wolf to 150 from where he may take as many of the tests as he wishes in order to restore or increase his POWER.	10
FIREBALL	Hurls a magical ball of flame from Fire*Wolf's palm which, if the spell succeeds, will cause 50 LIFE POINTS damage to an enemy.	15
INVISIBILITY	Renders Fire*Wolf invisible for the remainder of the section. He cannot attack an	

	enemy while invisible, but he can avoid combat and proceed to the following segment as if he had been the victor.	30
PARALYSIS	Causes the total paralysis of a single enemy for sufficient time to allow Fire*Wolf to escape to the next section.	30
POISON NEEDLE	Shoots a poisoned needle from Fire*Wolf's finger into any single enemy within combat range. This needle is invariably fatal to the enemy of whatever size if the spell works, providing the enemy is not naturally immune. Check immunity with a single die roll. A score above 3 shows the poison will not work.	25
RESURRECTION	The only known way to avoid the dreaded 13. When this spell succeeds, it will return Fire*Wolf to the start of the current section. Any enemy he has been fighting will retain the LIFE POINTS he had when Fire*Wolf	50

	died. Completely new stats will, however, have to be rolled for Fire*Wolf himself. This spell may ONLY be used when Fire*Wolf is killed. Allows Fire*Wolf to return to any section he has previously visited and to proceed with his adventure from there. Note that his LIFE POINTS or POWER are not restored.	20
RETRACE		
	Causes Time to return to the beginning of the current section. This spell is generally used in combat since it has the effect of restoring Fire*Wolf's LIFE POINTS to where they were at that point. Unfortunately his opponent's LIFE POINTS are similarly restored.	10
TIMEWARP		
	Causes a single opponent to feel such fear of Fire*Wolf that he (the enemy) fights at a disadvantage so that 5 points are automatically subtracted against Fire*Wolf.	15
XENOPHOBIA		

They wear plate mail <—12>)

HARKAAN
PRINCE

56 64 56 64 50 48 56 64 250 — 458
(As a House Harkaan sorcerer, the Prince may use
all spells.)

ARTIFACT INFORMATION

Cost of oracle: 500 gold.

Stone is magic: return to 52

Poer Battery may be charged using life points on a one for one basis. When charged, battery may then be used to power spells. This artifact is useful where user is at full life points. Additional life points (drawn by the doomsword, for example) which cannot be added to life point total, may be converted into power.

Amien's Rosewood Box: This contains a harmless gas which will nonetheless paralyse up to four alchillers at one time without harming user may be used only once.

Horn of Calling: Calls astral horn monster to the aid of user, but with small chance that the monster may turn against the user. See horn monster stats.

Orb of Invincibility: Gives total immunity from spawn attack for one section on a (once only) roll of 11 or 12 on double dice. Will not protect against anything other than spawn.

Wand of Terror: Will cause one opponent to flee on a roll of 10 or better on two dice, plus power expenditure of 5. Roll two dice initially to determine how often wand may be used before its magic runs out.

THE HISTORY OF THE DOOMSWORD

At a time when the world was young and only one sun rose to mark the dawn at whatever season of the year, there fell from the sky a great fiery stone which plunged into the sea near the coast of a land called Sumaritania. Because of the fierce heat, the great stone split on its impact with the waters and from it emerged a creature the likes of which no man had ever seen. It was a veritable leviathan, fierce, cunning, destructive and infinitely evil in its nature.

This creature from the fiery stone took residence in a fortress on the coast of Sumaritania and demanded tribute sacrifice of human lives, grain, honey and gold. The Sumaritanians, a proud race, at first tried to stand against the monster, but the fortress proved impregnable to their attacks and the loss of life occasioned by the Firestone War, as it came to be called, was unendurable. Thus some form of agreement was reached and the sacrifices were to be made on an annual basis at the time of the Winter Solstice.

It happened at this time that the wisest person in all Sumaritania was a warrior smith, a woman of heroic proportions who, in a brief encounter with her husband fifteen years previously, had pro-

duced a daughter named Lena Laughter, so called because of her sunny disposition. It was this young girl whom fate demanded to be the first sacrifice to the Firestone monster.

But Hadriana, the warrior smith, would not permit her child to be slaughtered in this way and hid her in a cave and vowed that she alone, if need be, would rid the land of the accursed monster from the skies. Thus she bent her skills and wisdom to a daring plan.

In those days, all smiths were sorcerers, since the working of the metal and the creation of fire were both magical arts. At the Autumnal Equinox, three months before the Solstice sacrifice was due, Hadriana travelled from Sumaritania to the Quaking Mountain in the land of Ragnarok, known to conceal the entrance to the Netherworld in which a race of demons lived in uneasy alliance with the human dead.

Hadriana slew the Guardian of the Entrance, a Worm named Klaanisbaad, and wearing the Wormskin as a protection, entered the region of the Netherworld. In this gloomy realm she tricked and trapped a demon Prince called Lucifuge Rofocal and fashioned his essence into a magical sword unlike any which had ever before been crafted by human hands.

This sword she carried back to Sumaritania and, concealing it within her robe, presented herself in her daughter's place for sacrifice at the Winter Solstice.

It transpired that the Firestone Monster, taken by Hadriana's statuesque good looks, was moved to dally with her before the final sacrifice. But as Hadriana removed her robe in preparation for this additional indignity, she revealed the demon-sword and leaped upon the creature with a warrior determination.

The conflict which ensued lasted seven days and seven nights and almost cost Hadriana her life. But in the end, it was the monster who was slain. Hadriana cut the creature into four pieces and buried one at each corner of the Kingdom.

But the story did not end there, for in the fury of the battle, Hadriana discovered that the sword she had created retained an evil sentience and purpose of its own and continually urged her to deeds of slaughter in order that it might drink the souls of her victims, as was the nature of the demon Prince Lucifuge Rofocal.

At first, Hadriana thought she might control the creature she had fashioned, but in time came to realise the weapon was too dangerous for mortal hands. Thus she attempted to destroy it and release its demon spirit back to the Netherworld. But in this task she failed, for the sword proved beyond her wisdom to destroy. So she attempted to hid it in the great Caverns of the Whisper Wraiths where no man might ever find it. But in this too she failed, since the sword had the property of returning to her side whenever she attempted to leave it.

Rules of Combat

Eventually, in desperation, Hadriana used her arts to bind the demon of the sword and constrain him to accept a bargain. In order to release the mystic bond between them, Hadriana undertook to weave a magic web from filaments of silk, electrum and moonmetal. This creation, which took her ten years to complete, was then cast into the ether as a snare for heroes in the years to come.

The snare was subtle, for a man or woman who became enmeshed in it would not realise they were trapped, but would simply experience a change of destiny which linked them, until death, with a demon sword.

Thus, Hadriana was freed from the demon artifact she had created. Through the aeons which followed that long forgotten time, the greatest warrior, the fiercest fighter, of any age has always found himself partnered by the Doomsword in a dreadful symbiosis which none have so far had the knowledge to undo.

The warrior Fire*Wolf was one of those whose convoluted Destiny led him to the Doomsword. The story of how he came to find the deadly artifact is told in FIRE*WOLF, Book One of the Sagas of the Demonspawn.

First Strike

Roll two dice for your character; two for the enemy. Add to the result the SPEED, COURAGE, LUCK of each. Highest moves first.

To begin Combat, each takes turn.

Successful Hit

Roll two dice. Score of 7 or more indicates hit. But for every 10 full points of SKILL, take one point off hit requirements. For every 72 LUCK points, take one point off hit requirements.

Damage

Subtract modified strike score from actual number rolled and multiply by 10. Modify by STRENGTH: for every 8 points STRENGTH, add one to DAMAGE. Modified also by weapon, check Table on page 17.

Avoiding Death

If LIFE POINTS 0 or below, roll two dice, multiply by 8. If final score is less than LUCK, then start fight again.

Endurance

Length of battle depends on STAMINA. Divide figure by 10 for number of rounds.

Gaining Skill

For every fight you survive, add one to SKILL

Quest Journal

FIRE*WOLF'S LIFE POINTS

Strength

Speed

Stamina

Courage

Luck

Charm

Attraction = **LP**

Starting:

Current:

Number of Successful Battles:

BATTLE SCORES

Enemy:

Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Result of Battle:

Damage done (modified
by skill and weapons
used):

Enemy's final LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:

Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Result of Battle:

Damage done (modified
by skill and weapons
used):

Enemy's final LIFE POINTS:

Enemy:

Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Result of Battle:

Damage done (modified
by skill and weapons
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by skill and weapons
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