

About the author

Since he was seventeen - which wasn't today or yesterday — J. H. Brennan has been interested in magic, spells and wizardry. He has written, among many other books, three volumes on magic and is working on more.

In 1983 he brought out two Fantasy Role-Play Games - *Man, Myth & Magic* and *Timeship*. In writing the *Grailquest* series (which are really Fantasy Role Games in book form for a single player) he has managed to combine his favourite interests.

He lives in a centuries-old thatched cottage in Ireland, surrounded by a garden full of nature sprites. Most of his homes have been haunted — one even turned up a ghost motor car. But none has been quite so bad as the Castle of Darkness.

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J. H. Brennan

GRAIL QUEST

BOOK ONE

The Castle of Darkness

*Illustrated by
John Higgins*



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MERLIN

Sit still - I want to cast a spell. And don't fidget! You know how fidgeting upsets me. No, you don't. But you will. Yes, indeed. It's easy to upset people my age. I'm much older than you, I'm also dead. I died hundreds of years before you were even born. But a little thing like that won't make a lot of difference. That's what being a Magician is all about.

About the spell. You can't see me, of course. You can't hear me. But you can read what I write. Yes, indeed. Are you nervous? You ought to be: it's a very powerful spell. I don't do this one very often: takes too long. Some spells you just mumble a word. Others you just wave a wand. But this one you have to write a whole spell book. The book you're holding, *just for one spell!* I'm nearly too old for this length of spell, but the King insists. Something has to be done about Ansalom.

You're going to have to help, you know. You can't just sit there reading the spell book. Not if you're going to be a big time Magician like me and spend your life being bossed around by the King. No, help is needed. I don't have a body in your Time, that's the trouble. So I need an assistant to fetch things for me. You. You're my assistant. Apprentice, really.

(Sit still. Don't fidget.)

You'll have to get a quill and some parchment. A goose quill. Peacock quills are pretentious. We'll leave that sort of nonsense to Wizards like Ansalom. A goose quill. And a little knife to sharpen it. And some powders and water to mix the ink. Or a pencil and paper would do, if you can't find a goose.

You'll also need two dice. Or one if you can't find two. One will do nicely, but two would be better if you can find them. Ordinary dice. Six sides, little spots. You must have some somewhere. Bring them back here and between us we'll cast the spell.

Back? Good. I'd better tell you about the spell, I suppose, now that you're my Apprentice. I'm going to cast it over *you*. Don't panic. It's the sort of spell that has to be cast over somebody. Otherwise nothing happens. Nothing at all. Complete waste of a good spell.

I'll tell you what the spell does. It takes you away from where you are now, away from your Time. Well, it takes most of you. The *inside* you. It leaves your body where it is, so if you parents look over they won't know you've gone. But you will be. Yes, indeed. The inside you won't be in your own Time at all. It'll be in mine. When the inside you gets to my Time, I'll just pop it into another body. Quite a nice one. A young person, much like yourself, except better looking. And stronger. I can't make you any smarter, but you'll just have to put up with that.

Once you're in that other body, you'll be able to move around in it and get it to do things, just like your own. You'll be able to see what things were like in my Time. I think I can even arrange it so you get to meet the King. King Arthur. Arthur Pendragon, son of Uther. Quite a nice man, if he wasn't so bossy. (Younger than me, but then everybody is.) You'll also get to meet knights, and have adventures. You may even get to meet *me* if I'm not too busy.

You can get back to your own body at any time, of course. You just go. It's very simple. And when you want to come back to my Time, you just continue reading this spell book where you left off. No trouble at all.

You'll enjoy living in my Time. The food's better for one thing. And there's a lot of action. Quests. Battles. Adventures. That sort of thing. Knights in armour clanking around all over the place. Horses — a lot of horses. Castles. Keeps. Fortresses. Towers. And peasants (a smelly lot). We even have a few dragons left. Not many, but in your Time they've died out altogether. And there's a lot of magic about in my Time: much more than in yours. The conditions here are better for working magic. You'll enjoy living in my Time for a time. If you don't get yourself killed.

That's the deal. That's the spell. But there are a couple of things you have to do before we're off. Both these things involve arithmetic.

When you arrive in my Time, you won't have any

LIFE. No LIFE means you can't do anything. Which isn't much of an adventure. So the thing to do is get a bit of LIFE together before you set off. I'll tell you what to do.

First, you take your dice and roll them *together*. Now, add the two scores. Now multiply your answer by 4. Write down your answer, because that's the number of LIFE POINTS you will have on your adventure when the spell is cast. You'll find you won't have less than 8 or more than 48. (I know that because I'm a Magician.)

If you aren't very happy with your score, then roll the dice again. See if that's any better. In fact, you can roll the dice three times altogether and pick the best score out of the three. If you've only got one die to begin with, that's no problem. Instead of rolling the two dice, roll one die *twice* and add the scores together, then multiply by 4. It's the same thing in the end.

I nearly forgot something. You have to learn to *Fight*. You won't last long in my Time if you don't know how to fight. Nobody does. Knights who can't fight get killed off every five minutes. You find bits of them all over the place. Can't have my Apprentice ending up like that.

The way you fight in my Time is a bit peculiar. You have to roll dice. Two dice together, or one die twice. Doesn't matter which. If you score more than 6 on your two rolls added together, it means you've hit your enemy. Landed him a whopper on the snout or wherever. How about

that? If you score 6 or less, it means you swung wildly and missed altogether. It happens. When I was a lad and fighting all the time, I often missed.

Supposing you do hit him — what then? Well, for every point you score *above 6*, you do him that much damage. If you roll 7 you do him 1 point of damage. If you roll 8 you do him 2 points of damage, and so on. But don't cheat. Cheating messes up the spell. Every point of damage you score against your enemy is subtracted from his LIFE POINTS. Unless he's wearing armour, in which case damage is scored against his armour until you've broken through it. After which all further damage is scored against his LIFE POINTS.

Now pay attention, this is important. *When your enemy has only 5 LIFE POINTS left, he will fall down unconscious. If he has NO LIFE POINTS left, you've killed him.* Deceased as a door nail.

All this is what happens if you are pounding away at your enemy with your fists. If you happen to be hacking away at him with a sword, or poking at him with a spear, or bonking him with a club, you will score *Extra Damage*. But don't worry about that just now. You'll learn how to use swords and things when you come into my Time. You'll also learn magic, but that's another story.

Fighting is easy, isn't it? In fact, so far as I can see, there's only one real problem with it. While you're thumping your enemy, he (or she - women were very dangerous in my Time) will almost

certainly be thumping you back. Turn and turn about. That's the way it goes.

Your opponent will fight exactly the way you do: by throwing dice. (Except you'll have to throw them for him, of course, since you're the one with the dice.) If he throws above 6 he's managed to hit you. And every point above 6 scores 1 damage against you - subtracted from your LIFE POINTS (or your armour, then your LIFE POINTS) until you have 5 left, when you fall unconscious, or none left, when you're dead.

All right, that's all you need to know about *Fighting* for the time being. But before I start to cast my spell, I'd better tell you about *Sleeping*. Sleep is the way to get your LIFE POINTS back. You can Sleep any time in my Time. (Except in the middle of a fight, of course.) And every time you Sleep successfully, you get back two dice rolls worth of LIFE POINTS.

There's a snag though. To go to Sleep you roll one die. If it comes up 1, 2, 3 or 4, you're headed for -the *Dreamtime*, which you'll find at the back of this spell book. And in the *Dreamtime* you're quite likely to lose even more LIFE POINTS. Maybe even get yourself killed. But that's the way the barm brack bounces. When you need a couple of dice rolls of LIFE POINTS you take your chances with the *Dreamtime* and just hope you throw a 5 or 6.

I nearly forgot something else. When you come to my Time, your name will be Pip. I can't help that.

It's the name of the body I picked for you. When the King was young, they called him "Wart". Don't ever dare tell him I told you.

Finally, you've got to learn about EXPERIENCE. You collect 1 point of EXPERIENCE every time you win a fight or solve a puzzle. Count them carefully, because every 20 EXPERIENCE POINTS give you 1 PERMANENT LIFE POINT. And you can add a PERMANENT LIFE POINT to your total LIFE POINTS even if it brings you higher than you were when you started out. What's more, you can take up to 10 PERMANENT LIFE POINTS with you into other adventures and add them to whatever LIFE POINTS you happen to roll up. And by the by, a really heroic deed can often earn you more than 1 EXPERIENCEPOINT.

This is nearly everything you need for your adventure. You can learn how to use *Bribery* and how to test for Friendly Reactions as you go along. These Rules — and all the others - are on the card at the back of the book, so you can cut it out and use it as a bookmark.

Now the Spell.

HINTS FOR THE GAME

1. Once you get into the Dark Castle, it's a good idea to draw a map. This lets you see where you've been and stops you getting lost. For your map, the top of the page will be North, the left side will be West, the right side will be East and the bottom will be South. As you move through the various Sections, draw in the corridors and rooms described. You don't have to go into detail (unless you want to), but do note the Section numbers on your map and the main things you find in the various places.

2. This is *your* adventure. As you wander around the Castle (drawing your map) you'll learn more and more about its layout. Don't be afraid to go back to an earlier Section if your map shows this is possible for you. You are free to wander about as much as you like just so long as you know where you're going and the way has not been blocked.

3. The adventure gets tougher as it goes along. This means you would be well advised to hold on to your big weapons (especially the Fireballs) until you are face to face with Wizard Ansalom. You don't *have* to, of course, but it's usually a good idea.

4. For the same reason, it's not a bad idea to save as many of your Healing Potions as possible. But Healing Potions are tricky. If you try to hold on to them too much you can find yourself killed off at far too early a stage. Generally, use a Healing Potion when you are getting worried about the low level of your LIFE POINTS, not when you've only lost 1 or 2. Remember, you always have the option of regaining LIFE POINTS through *Sleep*. This can be risky since there's always the possibility of encountering a Sleep Monster with dire results to your general health. But the times you sleep peacefully will get you back some LIFE POINTS without using your Healing Potions at all.

5. *This is a very special hint.* There may be times in the Dark Castle when you feel you have explored absolutely everywhere and there is still no sign of the Queen or even Wizard Ansalom. This is because Ansalom is a tricky old Wizard and his Castle is full of unexpected twists and turns. *It is entirely possible that you will miss an important or secret door or corridor somewhere.* So if you reach a point where you have explored absolutely everywhere, use your map to go back to earlier Sections and take a second look at possible directions you may have missed first time. This is important. You may as well know it is *very difficult* to find the Queen and Wizard Ansalom first time.

6. If you are running low on LIFE POINTS and

find yourself in a dangerous situation, always try for a Friendly Reaction, even though the chances of receiving one may be small. If you have managed to acquire some gold, *Bribery* is also possible in the sections marked * B.

7. Make a note on your Quest Journal of any objects you find or take with you on your journey but do not use. These may well come in very handy in any future *Grailquest* adventures.

THE REALM OF AVALON

It was a wonderful age to live in, despite the dangers. Pendragon's son, King Arthur by name, was on the throne of Avalon, ruling by the right of his great sword Excalibur, which he had drawn from the stone as a boy when strong men could not move it. Arthur brought peace of a sort to the Kingdom. Before his time, the local lords fought and squabbled among themselves like geese so that there was scarcely a minute's quiet from one year's end to the next. But Arthur changed all that; and with just one marvellous invention. Chivalry.

A strange thing, Chivalry. Or strange when Arthur introduced it. We've become accustomed to it now, so that it seems a law of nature, like gravity or the way the birds fly south in summer. But in those days it was a strange idea. Then, if you were strong and wanted something that belonged to somebody who was weak, you took it. And if you were a knight and saw a maiden being carried off by a dragon, you let it eat her. (Aye, and if you were that same maiden, the chances were you let it eat you, instead of sticking up for yourself as any self-respecting maiden should.)

But Arthur's strange idea of Chivalry changed all that. It introduced Fair Play and Common Courtesy and Decency and Justice and Good Behaviour and Self Sufficiency, and a lot of other Fine Things that were sadly lacking in Avalon, even in Pendragon's day. (It did not introduce cricket, as many silly people claim. But it did introduce jousting, which was nearly as good. And if anybody tells you jousting is a violent, brutal sport, simply because brave knights will try to knock each other off their horses, you just point out it is a great deal better than what they got up to before jousting was invented. That hardly bears thinking about.)

The centre of all this Chivalry was something else Arthur invented. The Table Round, or Round Table as people insist on calling it. There really was a Round Table, made of oak, mainly, with teak inlay, big enough for a dozen or so knights to sit round quite comfortably, even though knights are very bulky in their armour. But the Round Table was more than that, much more. The Round Table was a way of life.

And it was a way of life that appealed greatly to a certain class of person. When Arthur first set up the Round Table (even before the Master Carpenter finished setting the inlays) knights from all over Avalon were clamouring to join it. There was even one knight who travelled all the way from France — no mean feat in bad weather - to find out if there was a place for him. His name was Monsieur Sir Lancelot du Lac and as it turned



King Arthur's great sword, Excalibur

out there *was* a place for him and an important place at that. Although they did make him change his name a little so the English could pronounce it: Sir Lancelot of the Lake.

With so many knights clamouring to join, Arthur could afford to pick the best for his Round Table. So he did. There was never so great a collection of knights since the Romans were chased out. Galahad. Percival. Lancelot. Bedevere. Guinevere. The list goes on and on. Except that Guinevere wasn't exactly a knight: she was Arthur's Queen. But she often sat at the Round Table for the sake, of the excellent advice she gave and the keen brain in her head.

There was another who often sat at the Round Table, although he was not a knight either. He was what they call a Druid, which is a sort of priest and a sort of miracle-monger all rolled into one. His name was Merlin, which might tell you he was Welsh. The common people called him Merlin the Magician. The knights, who were mostly afraid of him, called him 'Sir'. Arthur, who knew better, called him 'Silly old fool'. But that was really a term of affection from the King. After all, it was Merlin who set the sword in the stone and helped make Arthur what he is today. That's the truth of the matter, although another Wizard (by the name of Ansalom) took to claiming *he* was the one responsible.

Nobody liked Ansalom much, although there were few enough prepared to call him a liar to his face, even among the brave knights. Ansalom was

a nasty piece of work; and short tempered. The sort of Wizard who would blight your crops as soon as look at you. And since nobody wants their crops blighted, people tended to leave Ansalom alone.

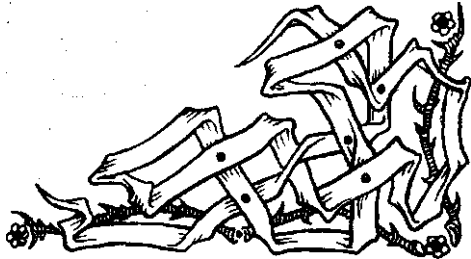
The Table Round was set at King Arthur's court which was at a place called Camelot. It was a remarkable sight, especially in summer with the pennants flying from the spires and the sunshine glinting off the polished armour of the men-at-arms. In winter not so nice perhaps, because the pennants drooped a little in the rain and the armour was prone to rust. But then Arthur very seldom stayed at Camelot in winter. He usually went off to Cornwall.

Not very far from Camelot, if you had a good horse to carry you, was a farm. Nothing grand, nothing large, nothing spectacular, although it was owned by a freeman, not just worked by a serf. The farm was three and a half miles due north of a tiny little market village called Glastonbury (which was *very* near Camelot), but the road twisted and turned so much that by the time you reached the farm you actually travelled nearer five miles than three and a half. Not that very many people ever did go to the farm. Why should they? If they wanted farm produce, they bought it in Glastonbury Market. So the farm was very isolated. And this particular farm lacked a great many home comforts and had next to no luxuries at all. In short, when you stopped to

think about it, this farm was about as far from the splendours of Camelot as you could possibly imagine.

On this farm lived a young person, adopted child of the freeman farmer, whose name was John, and John's wife, Miriam, or Mary as she was more often called. The young person's name was Pip.

Pip lived a quiet, uneventful life, serene, calm, peaceful, marked by the slow roll onwards of the seasons, interrupted only by the sleepy hum of summer insects or the sound of early morning birdsong...



'I'm going to kill you, Brat! I'm going to murder you! I'm going to slaughter you! I'm going to beat your head in and tuck it underneath your arm!'

That's Mean Jake talking, Pip. A boy three years older than you and a lot bigger. His father's also called Jake - Jake the Maggot. Five brothers: three younger, two older. Four sisters, all older. A bad family, the whole lot of them. They make their living thieving from Glastonbury Market, which is where you are now. It's early morning and nearly deserted: your adopted father, Freeman John, always comes to market very early to unload his vegetables. Unfortunately, he's gone off to the smith to buy a new bit for the pony. So you're all alone on the cart, with your back against a sack of carrots, and now Mean Jake has turned up out of nowhere. He seems to have it in for you.

'Come on, Brat! Get down off that cart - I'm going to break you into tiny little pieces!'

We might discuss the reasons for Mean Jake's behaviour - the deprived childhood, the lack of a suitable role model - but that won't do you much

good now, Pip. Look around you. There's not another soul in the market square. Not one. Too early. And Freeman John won't be back for half an hour.

It looks as if you're going to have to fight him. Either that or get killed and murdered and slaughtered and your head beaten in and tucked under your arm and the rest of you broken into little pieces. Not much of a choice there. Fight or run, and you can't run because Freeman John would never find you. So it's a fight. Got your dice?

Mean Jake has 20 LIFE POINTS, about average for a boy his age. Climb down slowly off the cart, Pip, but keep an eye on him - that one has a habit of rushing at you when you aren't looking. Wouldn't want that, because it gives him the first blow. Keep an eye on him and close in slowly. That way, you might get your punch in first.

Careful now. Throw one die once for yourself and one die once for Mean Jake. Whoever gets the highest score here has the first punch. Circle round him slowly. Keep your eye on him. Don't be in any hurry.

'Come on, Brat? I'm going to -'

He talks too much. That's good. Try to bop him on the nose. It's a bit harder to hit his nose - you need to roll an 8 instead of a 6. But if you *do* hit him there you score *double* damage. O.K. not much sense in stringing this out. Get the dice rolling and start the fight!



Mean Jake is ready for a fight

1

For all the bluster, this fight won't end up with a murder. It stops when the first fighter loses 10 or more LIFE POINTS.

If the first fighter to lose 10 or more LIFE POINTS is you, then turn to 1.

If the first player to lose 10 or more LIFE POINTS is Mean Jake, then turn to 2.

1

Oh dear, he's half killed you. Bruise on the cheek. Sore nose. Skinned knuckles. Clothes all torn and muddy where you were rolling on the ground together. And that eye of yours is going to turn into a beautiful shiner tomorrow.

Don't worry about those lost LIFE POINTS, Pip. You'll have them back in a few hours. Everybody does. (Unless they're dead, of course.) You get 1 LIFE POINT back for every hour that passes after a fight ends. So by this time tomorrow you should be good as new. Apart from the bruises. You never grow back more LIFE POINTS than you had to start with, of course. But that's all right.

'Let that be a lesson to you, Brat! Never tangle with Mean Jake!'

Isn't that just like him? Crowing over an opponent when they're down. Still, it's over now: he's swaggering away to tell everybody how he murdered you. Rotten, isn't it? If only you'd landed on his conk more often. Never mind: it could be different next time. You'll get even. Maybe.

2

Anyway, right now you have other things to do. Like thinking up a good reason why you're in such a mess. Freeman John will be back soon and he doesn't approve of fighting. What on earth will you tell him? Dear, dear, life is full of problems.

Better turn to 3, Pip, before anything worse happens.

2

That's shown him! He's running off snivelling. Maybe next time he'll think twice about picking on somebody smaller than himself. Good for you, Pip. That was well done. Well fought. We'll make a knight of you yet.

Don't worry about your missing LIFE POINTS. (Or his, come to that.) They grow back. You get one back each hour that passes after a fight is finished. You can't get more back than you had to start with, of course, but that's all right. By tomorrow, you should be good as new.

Meanwhile, you have a bit of a problem. The mess you're in. Amazing how difficult it is to get into a good fight without getting into a mess as well. You're going to have to think of some way of explaining that to Freeman John. He doesn't approve of fighting.

Hey, ho, life is full of little problems. Better turn to 3 now, Pip, and find out what else is in store for you in this adventure.

So it was for Pip and Freeman John and Freeman John's Goodwife Mary. Life went on its same old uneventful way. The tilling and the sowing and the reaping. The fine days and the foul. And talking of fowl, Goodwife Mary bought some chickens with the proceeds of a particularly good sale of swedes Freeman John made in Glastonbury Market. So now they had eggs to eat on the farm. It may not sound much, but it meant a lot to them. When you're struggling to make ends meet, an egg is a treat. (And very good for you, by the way.)

Pip got the job of feeding the chickens. Silly birds they were. There were six chickens in all and one morning there were seven eggs. Goodwife Mary claimed it was a miracle, although it's much more likely that a chicken simply decided to work overtime. Perhaps because she liked Pip. You get chickens like that sometimes.

While feeding the chickens, Pip used to daydream about leaving the farm and going off to find fame and fortune; especially fortune. There were always stories about adventures which ended in hoards of gold once you killed the dragon, or whatever it was that the adventure was all about. A hoard of gold would come in very handy on the farm, Pip thought. It would stop Goodwife Mary worrying so much. And Freeman John, come to that. The only one who didn't seem to worry all the time was Pip. Probably too busy feeding

chickens. (And fighting in the market square, eh? Shhh!)

Sometimes Pip daydreamed of joining the Round Table and riding off on a fine horse out of Camelot to find adventure and a hoard of gold: two hoards of gold even. But it was only a dream, of course. That sort of thing never happens in real life. Not that the Table Round couldn't have done with a little help about that time. Even from Pip. It isn't all ale and jousting being a knight. Or even a king, come to that. There are times when Affairs of State weigh heavily. Affairs of State can be anything from a bad harvest in the Realm to the threat of another invasion by those Romans. Or even an upsurge of dragons. Dragons are rare enough, but every so often (when it rains the first two weeks of August) they have a good breeding season and the following July the place seems to be infested with them. No jousting for the knights then: they're all too busy racing round like maniacs killing dragons. Or getting treatment for burns.

Still, dragons weren't the problem this time. August last year had been fine. No, the problem was Ansalom. The Wizard Ansalom. In a nutshell, Ansalom was getting far too big for his boots. Hardly a day went past that King Arthur didn't have at least one petition to do something about him.

'Please, sire, he's blighted my corn.'

'Please, sire, he's taken my pig.'

'Please, sire, he's dried up my moat.'

True, all true. Ansalom was a world-class, prime-time, A1 nuisance. Worse than the Romans, worse than dragons. The problem was so many of the knights were afraid of him. Knights are fighters, great people in the face of physical adversity, but magic makes them nervous. And everybody knew the Wizard Ansalom had a lot of magic. So when King Arthur suggested to Percival or Galahad or whoever that they should do something about the Wizard Ansalom, he started getting funny answers.

'Of course, sire, except I have this wrong to right in Tintagel.'

'Of course, sire, only I'm just this minute off on a quest for the Holy Grail.'

And so on. Eventually, in desperation, Arthur dispatched the brave King Pellinore to do something about the problem, but Pellinore got lost in the forest outside Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. (Poor sense of direction, Pellinore.) Merlin might have been able to do something about it, being a Wizard himself. But Merlin was missing at the moment, with a lot of ridiculous gossip about his having got himself a girlfriend. Nonsense at his age, of course, but he wasn't about, whatever the reason. So the Wizard Ansalom went his merry, wicked way unchecked.

While King Arthur was trying to cope with these troublesome Affairs of State, an odd thing

happened that went completely unnoticed in Camelot, although it was extremely noticeable on Freeman John's farm, that being where it happened. Pip was talking to a chicken at the time, on the theory that a little encouragement might increase egg production. And right in the middle of this little chat, Goodwife Mary staggered into the coop, her face as pale as newly milled flour...

'Pip,' says she, and stops. 'Oh, Pip!' And stops again, clinging to a nearby perch for support.

'Mother - what's the matter?' asks Pip anxiously. It was always 'Mother', even though Goodwife Mary was an adoptive mother. This being the Age of Chivalry, politeness was important. 'Are you ill?'

'Ill?' She looks around her vaguely, first at the coop, then at the chickens, which have gathered round in a curious circle, bobbing their heads and sussing out the situation with very bright, very beady eyes. 'Ill? No. No, I'm not ill. I don't think so. Oh, Pip, men have come.'

'Men, Mother?' asks Pip, who knows how to frame a stupid question when the need arises.

'Nobles, Pip. Great men. Knights. Knights of the Round Table. With their horses and their pages. They're in the yard now, talking to your father.' She reels a little, as if about to faint, but her secure grip on the perch does its job and she stays upright, eyes wide as saucers. 'They're asking after you, Pip!'

After you, Pip? What's going on here?

'After me, Mother?'

'After you, Pip!'

'Pip! Pip! Where are you, Pip?' That's the voice of Freeman John, calling you.

So you take Goodwife Mary's arm and lead her out of the chicken coop, forgetting to close the door because of all this nonsense about knights, so that the chickens pile out after you to find out what on earth is going on. But it's true enough: at least it seems to be. The farmyard is full of large men in armour, with swords and halberds and snorting great warhorses. They aren't knights - Goodwife Mary was wrong about that — they are men-at-arms, an escort, so to speak, but definitely from Camelot, for they wear the King's colours and fly the King's pennant. At least twelve of them, half filling the farmyard, and very fierce looking they are. Freeman John is talking to one of them, a burly fellow bursting from his chain mail, with the insignia of a Sergeant-at-Arms.

'Pip,' says Freeman John, who looks just as pale, just as shocked as Goodwife Mary, 'these men want you to go with them.'

'Boss wants a word with you,' explains the Sergeant-at-Arms brusquely.

'With me?'

'If your name's Pip. It is Pip, isn't it?'

You nod, dumbly.



3 A burly sergeant at arms, clad in chain mail, is looking for you

Then that's settled, then,' says the Sergeant-at-Arms. 'Bring up the spare horse, George!' And to you, when one of his men has brought the spare horse: 'You can ride an 'orse, can't you?'

You nod again, although this horse is twice the size of the farm pony. (And draped with a coat of arms you don't recognise: a very strange-looking coat of arms, almost sinister in fact. And it's a black horse too, black as night.)

'Orl right then, up you go,' says the Sergeant-at-Arms, pointing towards the stirrup. Then to John, as an aside, 'We'll have the child back in a day at most, Freeman: don't you worry. Take good care, we will, the lads and me. No harm will come to anybody while we're about.' Stout English yeoman type, the ruination of the country.

'Come on, Pip,' he says. 'Up you go!'

Do you go willingly? If so, turn to 4.

Do you protest, or run, or kick and scream and try to make a fight of it? If so, turn to 5.

4

Clinging precariously to the back of his huge black horse with its sinister insignia, you are led away from the farm of your adoptive parents, at first on the familiar road to Glastonbury Town, but shortly turning off on to less familiar tracks until, within an hour or so, you are thoroughly lost.



The men-at-arms seem sure enough of their direction, though; and even when they enter a dark forest they show no sign of nervousness. There is a fair amount of chatter amongst themselves (much of it involving the quality of food in Camelot canteen, which is odd since you would imagine the food at Camelot would be very fine: but perhaps it's only very fine for the real knights and nobles, not for men-at-arms).

The going is slow through the forest, so that the sun hangs low in the sky by the time you emerge abruptly into a vast clearing, in the centre of which is a log castle. No, not a log cabin — a log *castle*. Not very big as castles go, but big enough. Certainly a lot bigger than your home, or any of the houses you've seen in Glastonbury. With a log drawbridge spanning a deep, still moat. There are no men-at-arms on the battlements, only crows which raise a raucous alarm as your party approaches.

Since they are going to take you inside this strange castle anyway, Pip, whatever you do, better turn on now to **6** to find out what happens.

5

It's no good, Pip, there are just too many of them and they're too fast and too strong. They bundle you up on to that great sinister black horse and tell you that if you don't behave they'll tie you up in a sack and carry you that way. It's probably an exaggerated threat, but all the same you may as well go quietly and turn to **4**.

6

The hooves of the horses clatter loudly on the wooden drawbridge before you and your party pass beneath an open wooden portcullis into a stone-flagged yard.

This is the first time you have even been in a castle (let alone a *log* castle) but if you expected hordes of servants, you are bitterly disappointed. The only horde that emerges from a small curtained doorway in the north wall of the courtyard is a cross-eyed, shambling hunchback in a leather jerkin and tattered leggings. He carries a wicked-looking dagger stuck carelessly in the leather belt around his waist. He is nearly bald and limps on account of a club foot (the left one). His bottom lip hangs. To tell the truth, he looks an awful mess.

This creature drags his club foot in your direction, halting just in time to stop your horse shying away in fright, and stares up at you for a moment with great ugly, rheumy, squinty eyes (both brown, you can now see).

'Ahr,' he gurgles after a moment. This be Pip all right. You lot can go now, about your lawful business.'

'Right, Igor,' says the Sergeant-at-Arms briskly, obviously scared witless of this creature, but not wanting to show it. He wheels about and the entire armed party rides out of the courtyard across the drawbridge. And behind them, although there is no one about, the portcullis

slams down and the drawbridge raises up, leaving you alone with Igor.

'Down you come,' says Igor. 'Just leave the mare: she'll take care of herself.'

And since there isn't much else you can do, you climb down from the horse.

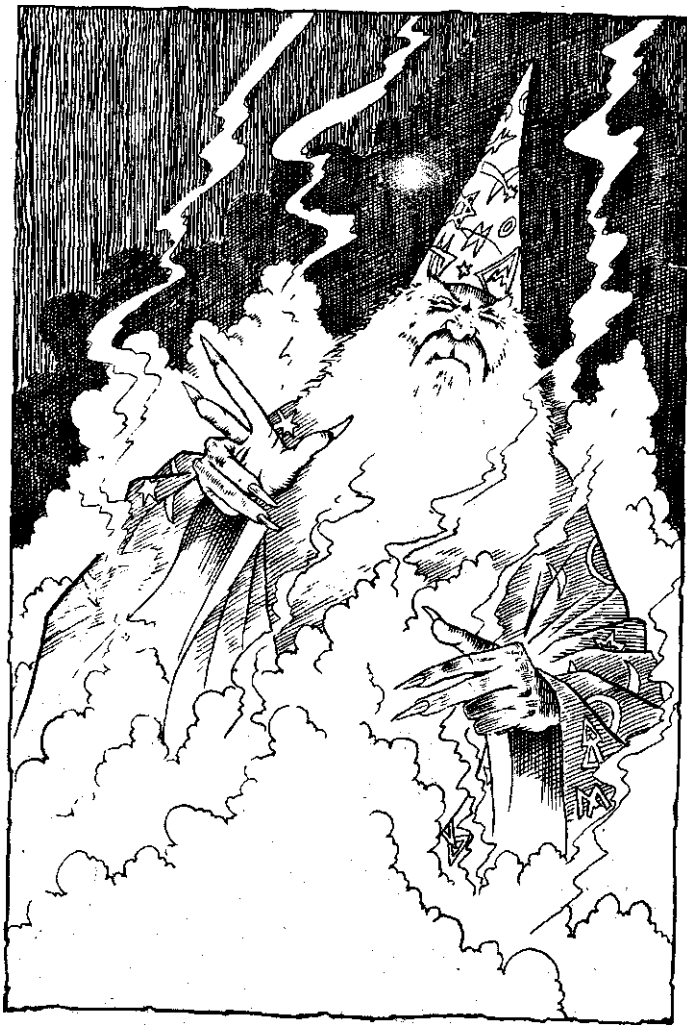
'This way, young Pip, this way. Ahrrr,' says Igor, shambling off the way he came, back in through that little doorway in the north wall. 'You just follow after me. Ahrr. The Master wants to see 'ee, ahrr.' And so forth, rolling like a boat in a swell on account of his club foot.

And since there isn't much else you can do here either, you follow him down a gloomy, torchlit corridor (but why don't the torches set the wooden walls afire?) through an arch, along a second corridor and into a small, but well-appointed room with a table and some chairs, and leather-bound books on shelves around the walls, and a globe of the world near the table and a map of the heavens on the table, and dividers and compasses and parchment and a goose quill pen and inks and powders and potions and heaven knows what.

Not that you're paying much attention to the room, because the strangest thing is happening to Igor. His hump is dropping off. And his club foot is straightening. And he's growing taller and thinner and sprouting long white hair on his head and a long grey beard on his face.



6 A cross-eyed shambling hunchback limps towards you



6 An old man in a pointed hat suddenly appears

And his clothes are changing: the leather jerkin and those ghastly leggings. And his eyes are unquinting and changing from brown to blue. It is without a doubt the most amazing, most miraculous, most magical transformation you have ever witnessed. In place of the shambling Igor, there stands in this well-appointed room a tall, straight, blue-eyed, grey-bearded, old man in a long white robe and pointed hat (both embroidered, incidentally, with moons and stars and suns and planets and other curious symbols).

'That's better,' says the old man: and his voice is dry, not at all like Igor's voice. 'Shape-shifting's always a nuisance, but they expect a man in my position to have servants, even if he can't afford them. So it's necessary. Yes. Yes, indeed.'

He stares at you with those piercing blue eyes. 'Well, I see you got here. Made it safely. Spell worked. Knew it would. Enjoying yourself, are you, young Pip? Fighting the village boys, all that sort of thing? Good. Good. But there's more important work at hand just now.' He waves you towards a chair with a short movement of one long, bony hand. 'Sit down. Sit still. Don't fidget.'

It was in this way that young Pip met one of the oddest individuals ever to walk the face of fair Avalon in the days of King Arthur and the Knights of the Table Round. Although it took Pip quite a time to realise the identity of the old man who could shape-shift into the form of the hunchback Igor (and probably into quite a few other forms if

the truth be known). In fact, poor Pip was so confused, the question had to be asked outright: 'Who are you, sir?' And the ancient shape-shifter with the piercing blue eyes said, 'Me? I'm Merlin, of course!'

Merlin. Now there you have it. That explains a lot. Merlin the Welshman. Merlin the Druid. Merlin the Magician, adviser to King Arthur and any of the knights who cared to listen. The old wise man of Camelot, who lived in a log castle in a clearing in the forest (and sometimes lived in a cave and sometimes in a tree trunk and sometimes heaven knew where because you could never find him when you wanted him so the King used to say).

You might wonder what a man in Merlin's position would want with a young farmhand like Pip. You might wonder what would persuade him to send a party of the King's own men-at-arms to fetch such an unimportant individual. But the fact of the matter was that Merlin was a bit daft. Dulally tap, as they say in Yorkshire; by which they mean someone lacking all his marbles, barmy, not all there, nutty, if not quite as a fruitcake, at least as a currant bun.

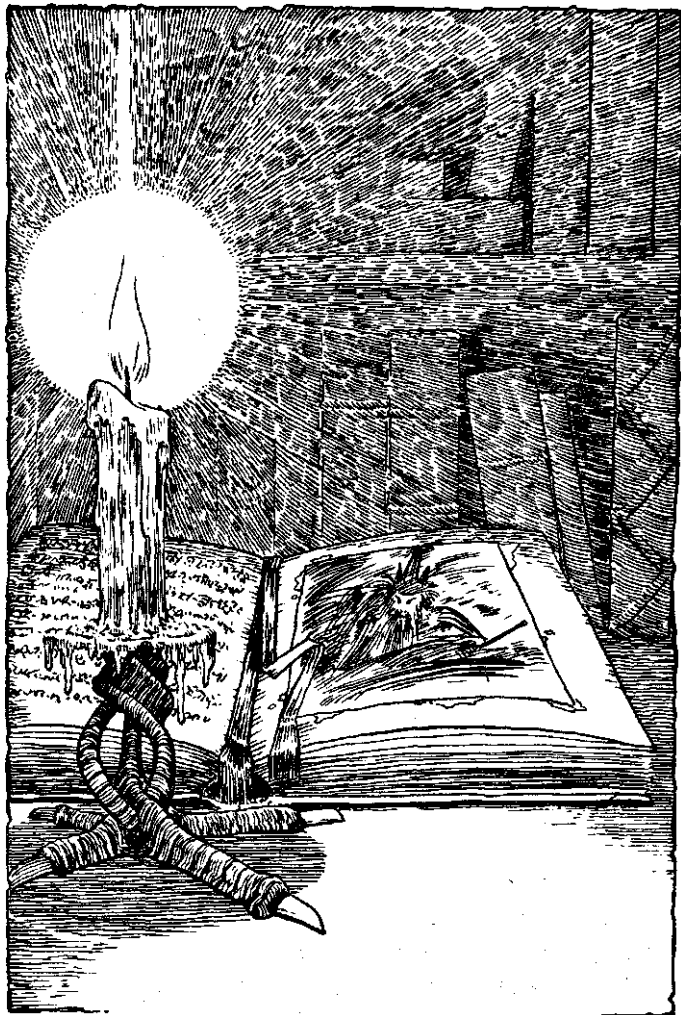
In this state, brought on by old age perhaps, or by chasing after young women - for the rumours about his girlfriend were all too true as history attests - Merlin had formed the strange delusion that Pip was not Pip at all, but a young person from the distant future, drawn by magic to inhabit

Pip's sturdy body. All nonsense, of course, but when a man like Merlin gets an idea fixed in his mind, the devil himself couldn't shift it. And with this idea roosting in his white-thatched skull, everything that Merlin did next made a great deal of sense. For what he did next was teach Pip the rudiments of magic.

'Now pay attention,' says Merlin. The King has a problem. At least he will have, even if he doesn't know it yet. Guinevere. The Queen. Delightful woman, but she's going to be kidnapped. It hasn't happened yet, but it will.'

He gestures to the parchment on the table, which is covered in calculations and blots. 'No doubt about it,' he says. 'I worked it out by astrology. Saturn trine Jupiter and a very nasty aspect in her Rising Sign. I don't have to tell you what that means. It means she's going to be kidnapped. Soon. Seized. Abducted. Snatched right out of Camelot from under our very noses. The Queen herself. Dreadful.'

He walks to a nearby bookshelf and takes down a leather-bound tome, which he opens at page 86. Inside, stuck down rather messily with glue, is a charcoal drawing of a black-haired, black-bearded, black-eyed and extremely villainous-looking man in black robes, holding a wand. 'And that,' says Merlin, 'is the rogue who'll do it. Ansalom. The one they call the Wizard Ansalom, although in my opinion he'd be hard put to tell a spell from a



6 Merlin shows you a picture of the Wizard Ansalom

mangle. Still, he knows a trick or two: have to admit that.'

'Well now,' says Merlin, putting away the book again, 'we have to do something about it. At least —' And here he turns his gimlet gaze on you, Pip. '- you have to do something about it: I'm too busy.'

'Me, sir?' you ask, perhaps a little terrified.

'Yes, you. Of course you. Why do you think I brought you here all the way from your own time? Just to talk to chickens? Oh, no, young Pip: there's a job to be done and you're here to do it. But at least it isn't difficult. All you have to do is get into the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle and rescue the Queen. Nothing to it for a healthy young person like yourself. As long as you avoid the traps. And the monsters. He breeds them, you know, for a hobby, then lets them wander all over his castle: the smell is dreadful, but you'll get used to it. Stupid things, monsters - most of them. They shouldn't give you any trouble. Worst that can happen is they'll eat you.'

He stops, as if he has just remembered something, then goes on, 'Oh yes, you might as well kill Ansalom while you're at it. Thorough-going nuisance, that man. Always blighting people's corn and stealing their pigs and drying up their moats, not to mention kidnapping Queens. So you just kill him. Otherwise he'll kill you, of course - he's that sort.'

He spreads his hands. 'So you see, it isn't much of

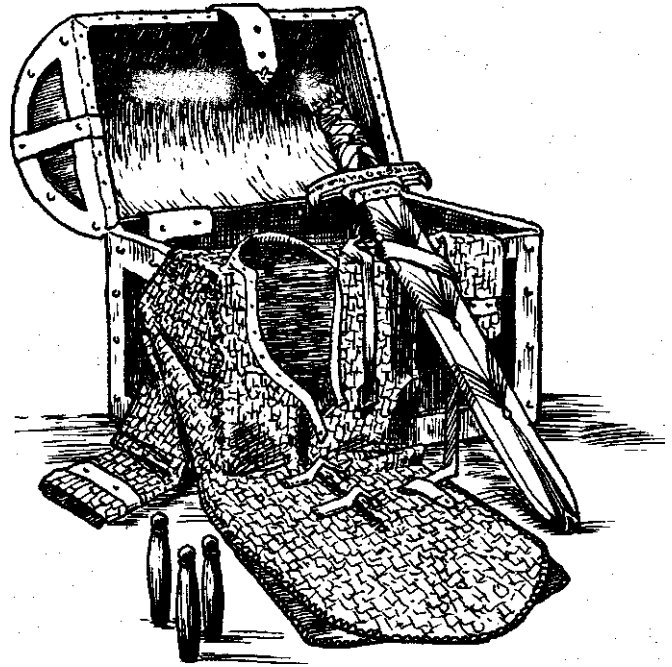
a job really. I'd do it myself if I wasn't so busy. So you just cut along now, Pip and ... Wait. I forgot something.'

So saying, Merlin dives beneath the table with surprising agility for such an old man and drags out a large oak chest, bound in iron bands. 'You'll need this,' he says, opening the chest and taking out a sword.

'This,' says Merlin, 'is the sword Excalibur Junior. A magical blade, something similar to the one I made for the King, except smaller. When you use this, you only need to roll a 4 or better to hit somebody. And when you do hit, you can add 5 to any damage caused. It talks too, although not very often. Calls itself "E.J."'

Merlin plunges back inside the chest. 'And you'll need this,' he says, bringing out a leather jerkin which, rather miraculously, fits you to perfection. 'Looks like leather. Feels like leather. Weighs no more than leather. But it isn't leather: it's dragonhide. Don't see many jackets like this about, young Pip. As good as a suit of armour, this one. Anyone hits you when you're wearing this and it subtracts 4 points from any damage they cause you. 4 whole points. That can make the difference between life and death.'

He closes the chest and puts it away, then walks quickly to a shelf and takes down a small casket, like a jewel box. From inside he takes three small blue glass bottles. 'Now, potions.' He hands you the bottles. 'Keep those carefully. They're Potions

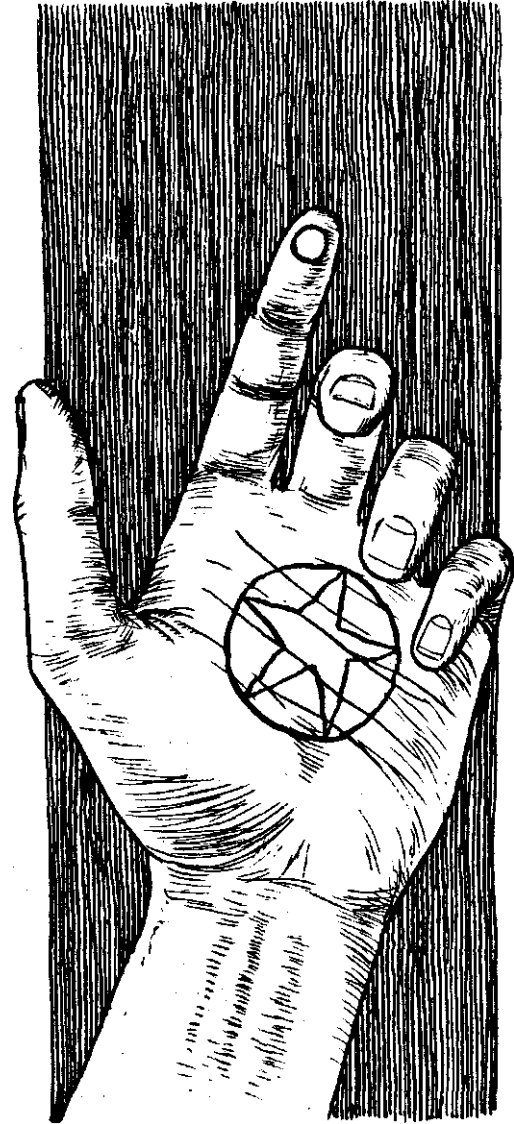


of Healing. A secret blend of castor oil and mugwort. Tastes foul, but it restores LIFE POINTS. Swallow one of these and roll two dice once (or one die twice) and the score shows you how many LIFE POINTS you've got back. I can only spare three bottles, but each contains six doses. Try to stretch them out.'

He sniffs. 'Well, now,' says Merlin, 'that's about it, isn't it?' He frowns. 'No it's not - you *are* stupid, Pip. You didn't remind me to teach you magic. Won't get far in Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle without a bit of magic, will you? Let me see your hands.'

Are you still there, Pip? Reeling a bit from all that, no doubt, but still there, still compos, as they say, *mentis*, which is an expression the Romans use to denote that you're still in full possession of your head. Doesn't he go on a bit, old Merlin. The Welsh are like that, of course: the only time they stop talking is when they're singing. Fortunately Merlin doesn't sing. Better show him your hands, Pip, otherwise he'll go on at you forever.

'Bit of dirt under your fingernails, I see,' Merlin says. 'Never mind, you can wash them later, before you meet the King. I did tell you you'd meet the King, didn't I? Well, you will. Just as soon as you rescue the Queen and bring her back from Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. You'll get to meet the King then. If you're still alive, that is. Might even get yourself knighted, you never know. Now, where was I? Yes. Your hands.'



6 He draws a strange symbol on your palm

He stares at your hands for a moment, then goes to the table and dips the goose quill in the ink. 'Hold still, now,' he says. 'Don't fidget.' And right there in the centre of each palm, he draws a circle with a star inside it. Draws it rather well too. Then, holding your hands tightly to steady them, he draws a second, very tiny circle on the tip of each of your two forefingers, right hand first, then the left.

'Now,' he says, 'I'm going to write something down and I want you to tell me if you can read it.' With which he tears a piece of parchment off the end of the sheet filled with calculations and writes on it with the quill, then hands it to you.

On the piece of parchment he has written the words:

FIREFINGER 1

If you speak the words aloud in answer to his question, turn to 7.

If you only nod in answer, go direct to 8.

7

No sooner have you spoken the words 'Firefinger I' than a lightning bolt leaps from the tip of the forefinger of your right hand, scorching Merlin's beard and setting light to one of the leather-bound books in the shelves. Surprising though this may be to you, Merlin seems well used to such emergencies, for he only hurls the contents of the ink pot on the book to put it out.

8

'You see,' says Merlin, 'this is an important bit of magic I've given you. A spell you might say. Every time you say "Firefinger 1" a bolt of lightning will jump from the tip of your right forefinger and hit anything you're pointing at in the same room. All you need do is point: it never misses. And it causes 10 points of damage to anything it hits. 10. Imagine that. More dangerous than a sword, that is. And if you say "Firefinger 2" the same thing will happen with your left forefinger.'

He regards you severely. 'Now remember two things. The first is that the spell only works five times for each finger. So you have only ten Lightning Bolts in all, so don't waste them on any nonsense like target practice or showing off. That's the first thing. The second thing -' And here his face grows even more grave if that is possible, '— is that you must never, *never*, say "Firefinger 1" or "Firefinger 2" while your hands are in your pockets, otherwise you will do yourself a dreadful injury.'

The lone, bony finger comes up" and points directly at your nose so that you begin to hope Merlin himself has no Lightning Bolts concealed in his fingers. 'But that is not all, young Pip. No indeed. Not by a long chalk. In the palms of your hands you now have concealed two huge, magical fireballs. Two only. One in each hand. These are your most powerful weapons. They do 75 points of damage each if they hit. 75! Yes. Yes, indeed. That's enough to put paid to old Ansalom, I'll be

bound.' He coughs, The problem is, they don't always hit what you aim at. Have to throw dice, exactly the way you do when you're fighting. If you can't manage at least a 6 with the two dice (or one die rolled twice) then you've missed. Missed completely. Wasted your Fireball; and you've only two altogether. So make sure to roll well. You launch your Fireball by shouting - good and loud, mark you - "Fireball Away!" Then you roll your dice to see if it's hit anything. That's the way to do it. So save your Fireballs if you can, Pip, and use them on Ansalom, look you, Dai bach,' says Merlin, lapsing into Welsh in his excitement.

At which very point in the conversation (or monologue, as it might be better described) there is a great commotion outside, like men pounding on the log walls and ringing bells and shouting to get somebody's attention. Which is likely exactly what they are doing, since the drawbridge is up and there is no way in.

Merlin smiles to himself. 'There,' says he, 'that will be the King's messengers with the news of the Queen's kidnapping. Right on time, according to the ancient pyramidal scrolls. But we're ready for them, eh Pip? At least *you* are. I'll just go and tell them you'll sort it all out.'

And off he goes, shape-shifting into Igor in the corridor, to tell the King's messengers that Pip, brave Pip, is all prepared to rescue Queen Guinevere from the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle.

THE DARK CASTLE OF THE WIZARD ANSALOM

What a scandal! What a fuss! What a fluttering in the dovecotes, to use a picturesque expression. It was panic stations throughout Camelot, throughout the whole of Avalon for that matter. The Queen kidnapped! Impossible! Such a thing had never happened before! But it had happened now.

And the way it happened was extremely creepy. No warning. No declaration of war. No attack on the castle. No peasant or noble revolt. In fact, it had been a fairly ordinary day, all things considered. There was a meeting of the Table Round in the morning, with nothing terribly exciting on the agenda. All the discussions were perfectly routine. Lancelot tabled a list of wrongs to be righted and the knights shared them out equitably. Bedevere complained about the drains (he had a thing about drains). Galahad gave a brief report on the dragon situation, which was actually well under control. Percival suggested somebody should go looking for King Pellinore, who was still lost in the forest, and everyone agreed to refer the matter to a sub-committee for further study. All absolutely routine, with not a hint of trouble.

After that, King Arthur held his usual Public Audience, during which he judged disputes and listened to complaints. ('Please, sire, the Wizard Ansalom stole my pig.') But even here, Ansalom was proving no more of a nuisance than usual.

Queen Guinevere, meanwhile, had not attended either the Table Round or the Public Audience, since a look at both agendas had convinced her the problems were so simple even men could handle them without help. So she went off to her study to write some important letters to a Scottish cousin about the possibility of increasing his country's haggis exports.

She was attended in the study by two ladies-in-waiting and three maids of honour, that being the usual custom at Camelot. She was also attended by a contingent of men-at-arms, an honour guard, who waited stiffly outside the door, their hands on their swords, looking fierce, that being the custom too. There was only one door into the study and consequently only one door out. It was a small room, with very few - if any - places to hide.

Nobody expected any more trouble than the occasional inkblot (and not even that, really, since the Queen was noted for her penwomanship), but all of a sudden the men-at-arms outside heard the ladies-in-waiting and the maids of honour inside suddenly begin to scream their heads off. Naturally the men drew their swords and rushed in, making a great fuss as men do in an emergency, to find the Queen had vanished.

They couldn't get a lot of sense out of the ladies or the maids, who all claimed Guinevere had simply disappeared while she sat behind her desk. One minute there, the next minute gone, with not even a puff of smoke to mark her departure. The Sergeant-at-Arms had a shrewd suspicion they hadn't been paying attention and called for a thorough search of the room, paying particular attention to secret panels and the like. But there proved to be no secret panels, and no Queen either. Reluctantly everyone reported back to Arthur, who was just finishing up his Public Audience when the news arrived.

Arthur, was, of course, terribly upset and lost his temper for a while, shouting all sorts of threats at his guards. But he calmed down very quickly and ordered a thorough search of the entire castle, particularly the grounds (fearing Guinevere might have fallen out of a window). When this produced no indication of the missing Queen, he began to suspect sorcery afoot; and having suspected sorcery, he naturally thought of that pig-stealing, moat-drying, crop-blighting nuisance, the Wizard Ansalom.

'Lancelot,' said he to his bravest knight, 'the time has come to do something about the Wizard Ansalom. Permanently.'

And Lancelot, who was really a bit too fond of the Queen for his own good, promptly agreed. 'I will ride, sire, this instant to the Dark Castle of the Wizard Ansalom and there I shall single-handedly fight my way through his guards and his monsters

and put the villain to death with my trusty sword!'

'Don't talk rubbish,' Arthur said, in no mood for that sort of chivalrous nonsense. 'You wouldn't get beyond the courtyard. What's needed here is somebody devious, somebody sneaky, somebody with the sort of convoluted animal cunning which will get him past Ansalom's tricks and traps.'

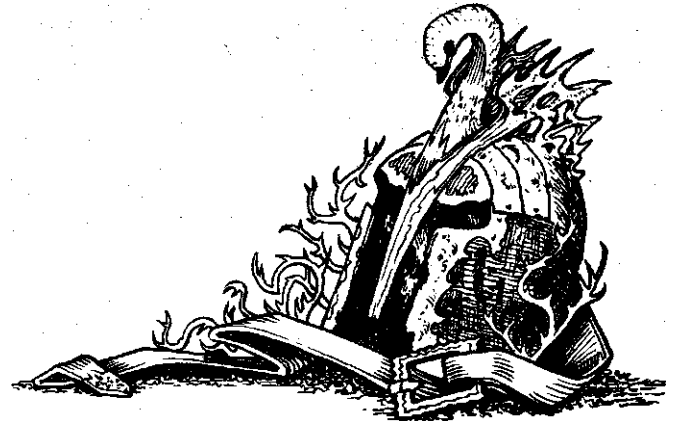
'Merlin!' Lancelot breathed.

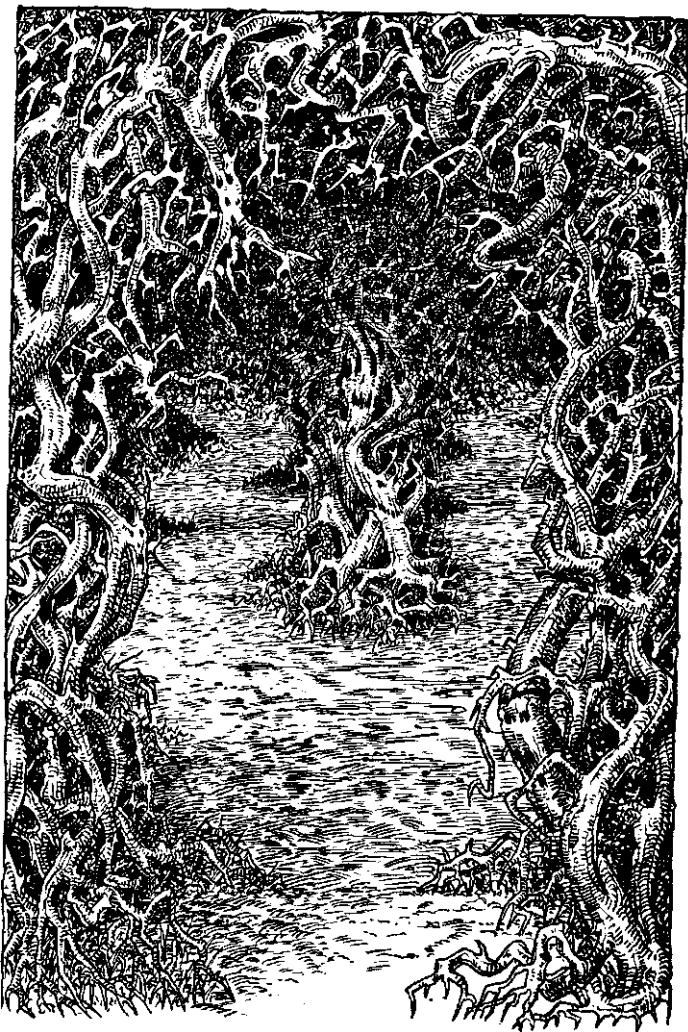
'Exactly,' Arthur said; and forthwith dispatched messengers to Merlin's famous log castle with the news of the Queen's disappearance.

The messengers returned, but not with Merlin. They returned with a very nervous and confused young person, equipped with a sword that looked suspiciously like a sawn-off version of Excalibur and mumbling some nonsense about Lightning Bolts and Fireballs.

It didn't sound much of an answer to the greatest crisis the realm had ever faced, but Arthur knew how stubborn Merlin could be, and for all the Druid was an old fool, Arthur still had a sneaking regard for his judgement. So he ordered the Quartermaster General to pack some sandwiches and fruit in a lunchbox and check out a standard issue backpack with ropes and climbing spikes and other odds and ends of use to commandos, then called a thirty-six strong guard to escort this young person to the forest on the outskirts of Wizard Ansalom's demesne.

The guard carried out their duties as ordered, escorting the young person into the forest and leaving rather promptly on account of the magical atmosphere that surrounded anything to do with Ansalom. It was only when they returned that everyone realised they had forgotten to ask the young person's name. The oversight caused much general annoyance. As Percival remarked, they would have nothing to put on the tombstone.





The two paths look equally unpleasant

THE ADVENTURE

Well, here you are, Pip, in the dark, dank forest that lies on the approach to the Dark Castle of the Wizard Ansalom. What an adventure, eh? What a jolly jape! What a lighthearted frolic! Well, perhaps not. Let's see what you've got inside your backpack: that might cheer you up.

Now, let's see ...

A coil of stout rope, fifteen metres long, which is useful. A dozen climbing spikes: could come in handy. Six good torches, their ends well dipped in pitch; a lantern and three - no, four - flasks of oil; and a tinderbox to help you light them; a lunchbox with bully-beef sandwiches and two apples; some sheets of parchment, quill and ink for mapping; and, look, a dagger for you to hide in your boot (that will give you + 2 damage if you manage to stab somebody with it); some salve for wounds (restores 3 LIFE POINTS immediately, with enough for five separate applications); some garlic to give your sandwiches a bit of bite; a mirror made from polished metal; a hammer, some nails and a saw. There's also a lodestone in a little pocket in the side. You can use that as a compass if you're stuck: just mark one end and

hang it from a piece of twine (there's some twine in there if you look). It will spin a bit but end up pointing north/south. Useful enough, that lot.

It's a nasty forest. Very gloomy; and the paths are all overgrown. Look at the way those trees are all twisted and gnarled, branches like old wizened hands reaching out at you. Notice you don't hear any birds singing. Not one. Never mind: you've a choice of paths. Both look equally unpleasant. And both look as though they might be going to the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. Isn't that annoying? OK, Pip, which is it to be: the right-hand path or the left-hand path?

If you pick the right-hand path, turn to **9**.

If you pick the left-hand path, turn to **20**.

9

You follow the right-hand path (which twists and turns a lot) with no more incident than the odd bramble bush tearing at your clothing, until about 400 metres further on where you reach a clearing. At the far side of the clearing, the path branches again, right and left. But before you pick one of these two new paths, you have a bit of a problem. There's a Wolf in the clearing. It's a big, savage-looking grey brute and it's sniffing the air as if it's caught the scent of your bully-beef sandwiches. Or you.

This is a time for quick thinking, Pip. You can run like mad back the way you came and hope the Wolf doesn't catch you. You can fight the Wolf,

then pick your new path if you kill it. You can try making friends with it by offering a bit of bully-beefsandwich.

If you run back, turn to **11**.

If you decide to fight the Wolf, turn to **21**.

If you want to try to make friends, turn to **31**.

10

This path is fairly open, fairly easy going for several hundred metres. Eventually it begins to swing left until up ahead you can see it joins another path. Unfortunately, between you and the intersection, there is a wild Boar. The bad-tempered beast has seen you and it's charging. No choice here, Pip. You fight it or get killed.

The Boar has 25 LIFE POINTS. It does + 4 damage if it gets its tusks in you. Roll dice to see which of you gets in the first blow.

If you kill the Boar, go on to the intersection. This joins your path to the path leading to **22**.

If the Boar kills you, go to **14**.

If the Boar knocks you out, you will wake up twenty minutes later with the Boar gone.

11

The Wolf is after you, running hell for leather! To find out whether it catches you, roll one die. Score 1, 2, or 3 and it's on you. Score 4, 5 or 6 and you make good your escape by running up the path that leads to **10**.



10 The Boar charges at you

What happens if the Wolf catches you? Sorry, Pip, it eats you. Better turn to **14** to find out what happens next.

12

Good cider. Don't take too much or you'll get drunk. Go to **32** when you've finished and decide what you want to do now.

13

You notice a series of holes in the tunnel above your head and by keeping close to the walls, manage to avoid the boiling oil which suddenly pours through them. You reach the portcullis in one piece and thus gain entry to **32**.

14

You're dead. Dead as a coffin nail. Finished. Done for. The late Pip. Draw a thick black border round this Section for future reference. You may be back here again before you're much older.

Most people get deaded sooner or later the first few times they try to get through this adventure. Don't get too depressed about it. What you have to do now is go back to the beginning of the forest, where the King's Guard left you, *and try again*. You'll rescue the Queen sooner or later. What's more, you can safely ignore the monsters and villains you have killed the first time round, since these will only be harmless ghosts and illusions when you go in again.

When you go back, you'll need to roll up your

LIFE POINTS again. No good trying to return to your adventure with no LIFE POINTS. So roll them up exactly as you did the first time. And here's a tip. Draw a map as you go along. Especially a map of the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. It will help you find your way around a lot better the second time. Make a note on the map of what you encountered. Second time around, a map is as good as an extra sword - even an extra Fireball.

Now back you go to the beginning of the forest, Pip. With luck you won't be seen round here again.



15

As you reach the centre of the courtyard, you fall down a secret trapdoor, well hidden and covered with compressed earth. Go to **36**.

16

The wine tastes funny. This is because it's poisoned. Roll two dice to see how it affects you.

Score 1 — 6 and writhe in agony before dropping stone dead. Go to **14**.

Score 7-12 and you get sick as a parrot, losing half your current LIFE POINTS. Stagger back to **32** and reconsider your options.

17

'Stand aside! Have at you! Gadzooks!' (and other threatening expressions) you roar as you draw Excalibur Junior and fling yourself on the Black Knight, who promptly falls down on his back.

Don't kill him, Pip - that isn't Chivalry. Just hold your sword to his throat and insist he removes his helmet. Which he does, revealing a round, florid" face, not at all as fearsome and threatening as it might be.

'You fool!' he gasps. 'I might have killed you! Don't you know who I am?'

'The Black Knight?' you ask curiously, although in truth you have your doubts about that now.

'Nonsense!' he roars. 'I'm King Pellinore. Off to teach the Wizard Ansalom a lesson, if I can only find my way through this blooming forest, what?' With which he picks himself up, dusts himself off and bids you farewell, mounting a sorry-looking horse tethered at the back of the ruin and

18-19

plunging into the forest to disappear quickly through the trees.

If you search carefully, you will find a half-hidden path out of the clearing. This takes you by a circuitous route to **22**.

18

The carts are in a pretty broken-down condition and more or less unusable. Two of the crates contain old sacks, one is full of rotten apples and the rest are empty. Three of the barrels contain cider, the rest wine.

If you drink any cider, turn to **12**.

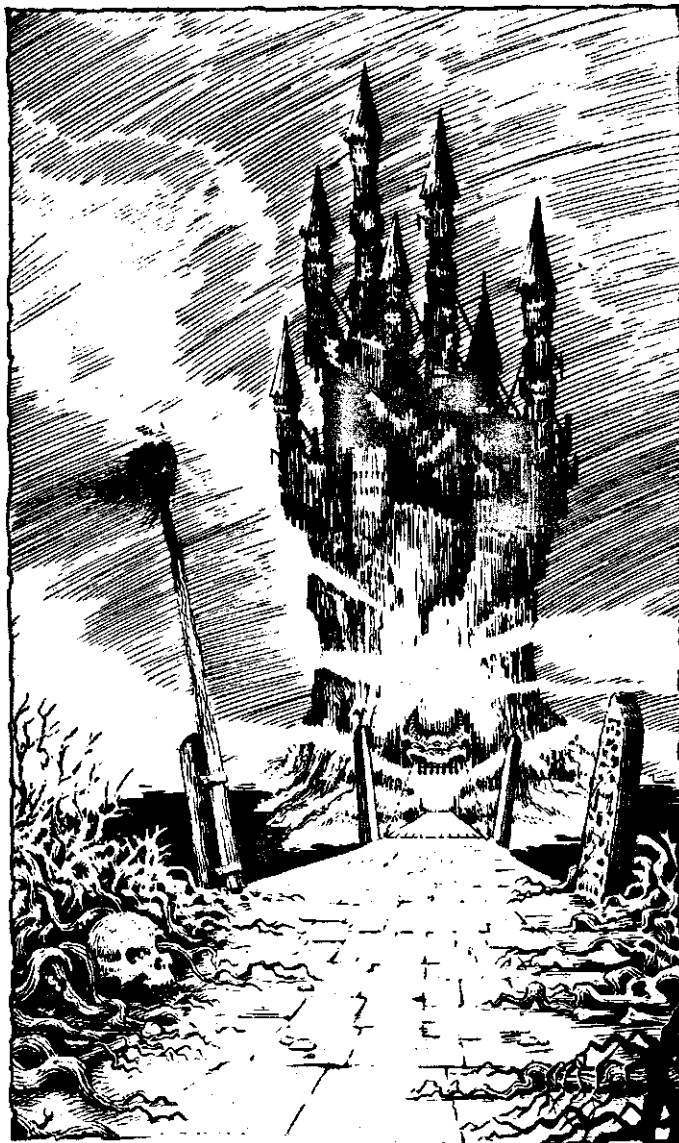
If you drink any wine, turn to **16**.

If you leave this load of old rubbish and go to the double doors in the north wall, turn to **33**.

If you move west to climb the steps to the battlements, turn to **29**.

19

This is it, Pip. This is where the trouble really starts. This is the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. Just look at it, looming up there out of the mists like some huge, sodden tombstone. Seven towers (count them) and not one under twenty metres in height. Great dank stone walls, dripping slime. And a still, dark moat that's probably full of the most loathsome creatures you could imagine. Did you ever see such an evil-looking place? Fair sets your teeth on edge to think of the lovely Queen Guinevere languishing in some deep dungeon inside.



19 The Castle of Darkness

The drawbridge is down, Pip, and the portcullis raised. Not a guard in sight. They say the Wizard Ansalom doesn't need them: nobody in their right mind would risk entering his Castle without an invitation. So he leaves the drawbridge down and the portcullis open. "Come into my parlour," said the spider...

There are monsters in there, Pip. And traps and tricks and all manner of evil magics, so they say. But the Queen is in there too, so there's nothing else for it but to put on a brave face, keep old EJ handy, and put the best foot forward.

Just a couple of points before you start, Pip. The Castle lies directly in front of you, to the north. From now on, all your directions will be given as north, south, east or west. (Which is handy for drawing a map: and you'll certainly need a map, especially if you're killed and have to go back again.)

Directly ahead of you (i.e. north) is a hundred metres wide area of barren, stony scrubland, then the moat, drawbridge and ghastrly Castle. Off you go, Pip, onwards to **23**. And good luck.

20

The path gets narrower and more and more overgrown. Eventually you find you are actually having - to push your way through the undergrowth. Then, suddenly and without warning, you are in a clearing; and in the middle of the clearing is the ruin of an old stone building,



20 In the clearing is a ruined stone building

a ruined abbey, perhaps, with ivy clinging to the walls.

Since there doesn't seem to be any immediate way out of the clearing, it may be no bad idea to explore the ruin. Even if it is haunted, which, of course, it isn't. Nobody believes in ghosts nowadays. Except it isn't nowadays, is it? It's back in the days of King Arthur. Oh, dear.

As you are a brave soul, you explore anyway, despite the ghosts. As you enter the ruin, you feel a sudden chill. It seems darker even than the gloomy forest. There are small scuffling sounds in the crumbling walls.

'Stop. Halt. Cease. Not one step further, what?'

A man's voice. And out of the gloom steps (or rather clanks) a massive figure in jet-black armour.

'Halt! I say,' he says, even though you have certainly halted. 'Who are you? What are you doing here? Speak up and answer before I slit your gizzard!'

Could this be the notorious Black Knight your adopted father, Freeman John, used to speak about in whispers by the fireside of an evening? If it is, he is known as the most evil, fearsome opponent in the realm (next to the Wizard Ansalom, of course).

If you feel like fighting him, turn to **17**.

If you don't (and who could blame you), speak to him politely and turn to **25**.

21

Brave Pip! You draw your faithful sword, Excalibur Junior, which, don't forget, gives you + 5 damage on the beast if you hit.

'Hello,' mumbles EJ (for Merlin did say it talked occasionally), 'fighting wolves, are we? That's pretty dangerous at your age, isn't it? Never mind - let's get on with it.'

And before you realise what is happening, Excalibur Junior is tugging at your hand, swinging it in a wide arc and in the process *giving you the first blow!* What a clever sword.

Now get the dice rolling. The Wolf is a fairly tough customer, with 20 LIFE POINTS. Each time he strikes you successfully, his fangs rip out damage shown on the roll + 3. Your dragonskin jerkin isn't much good here since he will attack your arms, legs and throat, which are not protected, so you'll suffer full damage. Good luck, Pip, and may the best fighter win!

If the Wolf kills you, turn to **14**.

If you kill the Wolf, or render it unconscious, you choose whether to:

1. Go back and take the path to **20**.
2. Go on and take the new right-hand path, which leads to **10**.
3. Go on and take the new left-hand path, which leads to **22**.

22

On this path you will eventually notice a junction

on your right which joins up with the path described in 10. If you have already been that way, you will presumably ignore it. If not, you are free to take that route if you please.

Assuming you continue on the main path, you will travel for nearly half a mile before reaching a leafy screen. Break through that and, can you believe it, you are in sight of...

THE WIZARD ANSALOM'S DARK CASTLE!

Turn quickly to **19**

23

Having crossed the drawbridge and entered the enclosed archway tunnel which leads to the open portcullis, you have a choice of making a dash for the portcullis before it closes, or creeping along carefully and slowly, examining everything as you go.

If you make a dash for it, turn to **30**.

If you creep along slowly and carefully, turn to **13**.

24

As you approach, the Skeleton moves!

No, you haven't imagined it: that Skeleton definitely moved! In fact it's springing up and shaking free of its manacles. This, looks like trouble. Big trouble. Still, there's always a chance even a Skeleton will be Friendly - how's that for optimism? Roll the dice to find out.

If it isn't friendly, draw your sword and go to **47**.
If it is friendly you may be in luck. Go to **52**.

25

'What's that?' asks the Black Knight. Tip, you say? Well, Pip, it's no place for a young person to be wandering. Get lost very easily. Don't tell me - I've been lost for weeks.'

At which he removes his helmet to reveal a florid, but otherwise friendly face. 'King Pellinore at your service,' he says. 'Well, not exactly at your service, since I've work to do. But nice to have met you just the same.'

Then he takes his leave of you, mounting a sag-backed old horse tethered at the back of the ruins and riding off to disappear into the depths of the forest, silly old fool.

If you search carefully, you will find a path out of the clearing which eventually takes you to **22**.

26

The smell tells you what these are the moment you open the door. Stables. Not very well cared for, by the look of them. Full of rotting straw and manure, but otherwise empty.

If you don't want to waste time here, go to **33** and reconsider your options.

If you want to risk making a thorough search, go to **41**.

27

Dumb move, Pip. These are Savage Chickens. The Wizard Ansalom breeds them as courtyard guards.

The Savage Chickens fling themselves on you (savagely) and though each peck only does 1 LIFE POINT of damage, there are so many of them that they could easily kill you. Roll two dice to find out what happens.

Score 1-6 and the Savage Chickens peck you to death. Go to **14**.

Score 7 — 10 and you escape with half your current LIFE POINTS. Go to **32** and reconsider your options.

Score 11 or 12 and you manage to fight off the Savage Chickens without injury. Go to **32** and reconsider your options (the Chickens won't attack again).

28

You approach the door and slide back the iron bolt. Next thing you know, the door bursts open and you are under attack by two savage Hounds. If you had your sword out and ready (tell the truth now) you can strike the first blow against one of the Hounds. If not, the first blow is struck against you.

Each Hound has 20 LIFE POINTS. Each needs to roll only a 5 or better to hit you and scores + 3 bite damage. If you have the first blow, the fight sequence goes:

1. You strike.
 2. First Hound strikes.
 3. Second Hound strikes.
 4. You get to strike again.
- And so on.

If you hadn't your sword ready, then the sequence is:

1. First Hound strikes.
 2. Second Hound strikes.
 3. You get to strike back.
 4. First Hound strikes again.
- And so on.

If the Hounds kill you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Hounds, go to **141**.

29

You climb the stone steps to the battlements and ...

Good grief! The battlements and towers are guarded by a horde of Archer Insects! These horrifying creatures are nearly two metres tall, each one looking for all the world like a giant Preying Mantis, each one armed with a bow and a quiver of twenty arrows. There are *hundreds* of them skulking up here! No chance to fight so many. Roll two dice to find out if you can make it safely back down the steps to the yard.

Score 1-4 and you're skewered with 750 arrows, killing you instantly. Go to **14**.

Score 5 - 8 and you are wounded by three arrows (total damage 10 LIFE POINTS) but make it back to the yard. Return to **32** and reconsider your options.

Score 9-12 and you reach the yard safely without being wounded. Return to **32** and reconsider your options.

30

Boiling oil has poured out of the series of murder holes which you didn't take time to notice above your head. You lose half your current LIFE POINTS, but make it through the portcullis to **32**.

31

Trying to make friends, huh? What a dumb thing to do. Still, it's your choice. Take out your bit of bully beef and walk (slowly) towards that ravening Wolf. Hold the beef out and say things like, 'Nice Wolf... that's a pretty Wolf... beautiful Wolf... good Wolf ...'

Now roll one die.

If you score 3 or more (good heavens!) the Wolf will take the beef, give your hand a bit of a lick, and let you go on your way unmolested. This means you can now either go back and take the path to **20**, go on and take the new right-hand path to **10**, or go on and take the new left-hand path which leads to **22**.

- If you score a 1 or a 2, the Wolf takes your throat out. Turn direct to **14**.

32

You have entered a vast, open courtyard, its unflagged floor composed of beaten earth. Fifty metres north are closed wooden double doors set in the far wall of the courtyard. Over by the eastern wall are two carts, six crates and about a dozen wooden barrels. Stone steps on the western wall lead upwards to the battlements and towers. There are about a hundred Chickens, scratching about in the courtyard.

If you run directly towards the double doors in the north wall, turn to **15**.

If you move east to examine the carts and barrels, turn to **18**.

If you move west to climb the steps to the battlements, turn to **29**.

If you stop to have a little chat with the Chickens, turn to **27**.

33

The double doors are closed, but not locked. You step through to find yourself in a second courtyard, stone flagged this time and without Chickens. On the eastern wall this time is a flight of stone steps up to the battlements and towers. About thirty metres in front of you is a whipping post with a manacled Skeleton hanging from it. The total area of the entire courtyard is about eighty square metres. Along the north wall of the courtyard is a row of four three-metre-high stone buildings, each with a closed wooden door. Near the west wall is a three-metre-square wooden

building, the door of which is closed and barred with a large iron bolt. By the east wall is another building of stone, six by three metres with its door slightly ajar.

If you decide to climb the steps and investigate the battlements, go to **29**, but return to the present Section (**33**) when you've finished. (Unless you're killed, of course, in which case go to **14**.)

If you decide to take a closer look at that Skeleton, go to **24**.

If you decide to investigate the row of buildings near the north wall, go to **26**.

If you decide to investigate the barred building to the west, go to **28**.

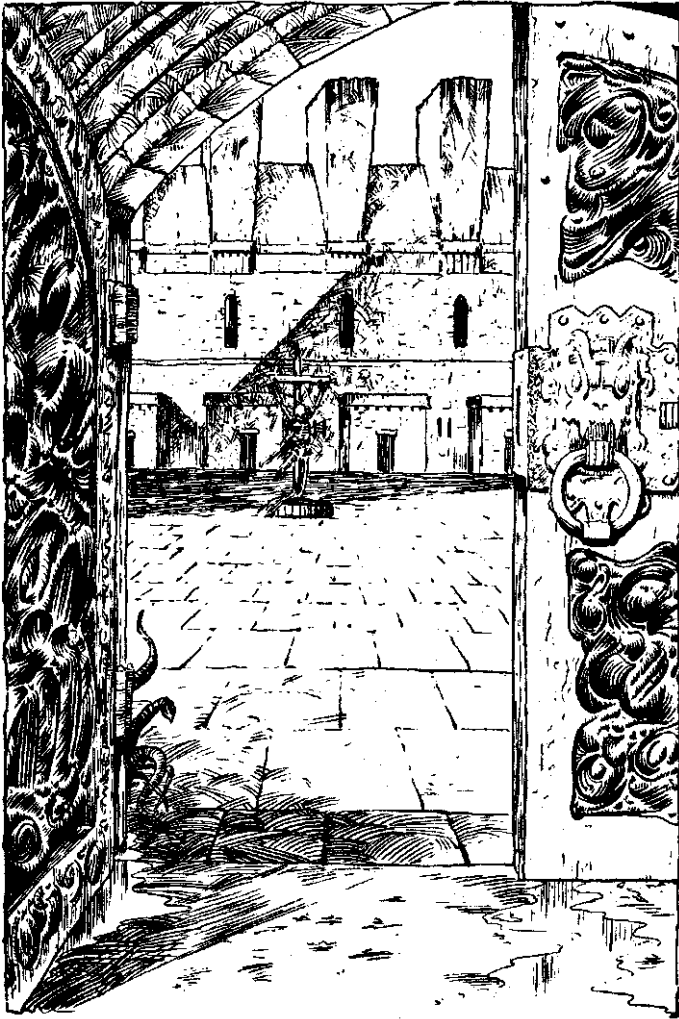
If you decide to investigate the half-open door of the building to the east, go to **50**.

34

You have lost 3 LIFE POINTS and gained a splitting headache, which means you have to throw 8 or better to hit in any fight that occurs during the next six Sections. Go back to **37**, rub your head and reconsider your options.

35 * B

It's not a Compost Heap - it's something big and nasty and alive! And it didn't like the way you poked it, Pip. This vegetable (but certainly not vegetarian) monster is rising up to a height of over two metres and attacking. What's more, since you were poking around searching for heaven knows



33 A manacled skeleton hangs from a whipping post

what, it has the first strike against you.

The creature has 35 LIFE POINTS and does an additional 4 points of damage every time it lands a blow, on account of its great strength. And since it's so big, it only needs throw a 5 or better to hit you. No fun at all. Get those dice rolling, Pip, and see what happens in this fight.

If the monster kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the monster, go to **39**.

36

You are in a gloomy, stone-flagged corridor, three metres wide, three metres high, with rough stone walls, dripping slightly with dampness and covered in mildew. (If you fell in through the trapdoor, deduct 5 LIFE POINTS: there are easier ways of getting here.)

Behind you is the iron-runged ladder to the trapdoor and courtyard above, and behind that is a solid stone wall. Before you, running north-east a distance of twenty metres, is the unlit corridor. Better get your torch lit, Pip, or your lantern. When you do so, you will see dimly that the corridor seems to open up into some sort of cave mouth at the far end.

If you plan to follow the corridor (and, honestly, what else can you do?) go to **53**.

37

The cave exit leads into a corridor running north



38-39

only six metres before turning sharply west and running west for twenty-five metres before ending in a stout wooden door. The corridor is empty and there are no traps, so what do you do when you reach the door, Pip?

If you knock politely and wait for an answer, go to **38**.

If you run at the door with your head in an attempt to break it down, go to **34**.

If you try turning the heavy iron handle, go to **45**.

38

Nothing happens. Better go back to **37** and reconsider your options.

39

As this shambling brute sinks down bleeding chlorophyl from every wound, something catches your eye on the floor, half hidden by the massive body. On closer inspection, you discover it is a leather purse. Open it (carefully) and inside you will find 10 - yes, 10 - solid Gold Pieces. Not exactly a Queen's ransom, but enough to buy a whole heap more chickens for your adopted mother, with cash left over for a lot of other necessities about the farm. (Alternatively, you could spend it all on sweets.)

Pop the gold in your backpack, Pip. You're entitled to keep any booty you find in this place. Just don't forget you can't take it with you if you're killed. Should you find yourself back at the

40-42

dreaded **14**, there will be no gold, or anything else you may have collected, in your backpack. And booty, once collected, won't be there second time around either. Still, you have it for now and with luck you may survive. Leave the cave by going directly to **37**.

40

The corridor slopes downwards quite sharply for most of its length, then widens abruptly into what seems to be a natural cave. Although far too irregular to map properly, the cave dimensions are roughly twelve metres north/south by fifteen metres east/west. There is a wide opening in the south-eastern wall, leading into a further cave. The floor of this first cave is littered with dried bones. Several of them look suspiciously like human bones.

If you want search this cave in the hope of finding something useful, go to **51**.

If you prefer not to waste time, go to **54**.

41

A thorough search of the stables will reveal a scrap of filthy parchment on which, there is a sketch map of the first courtyard showing a secret trapdoor between the portcullis and the doors to this courtyard. Open the trapdoor, lower yourself down and you can go direct to **36**.

42

Nice going, Pip. Hold your nose and search the

Zombies. One is wearing a silver ring with strange hieroglyphic writing inscribed around it. Put it on (you'll notice a slight tingling as you do so) and go to **49**.

43

It takes a little while to get your torch lit again. (Torches are never easy, especially in an emergency.) And when you do get it lit, you discover something very disturbing. You *are not alone in the pit!*

Crawling towards you across the rough stone floor, no more than two or three metres away, is a giant Spider. This great hairy monster is the size of a Great Dane. A big Great Dane. Swiftly you draw Excalibur Junior. Bravely you leap towards the monster.

'Hey, wait a minute!' screams Excalibur Junior. 'We can't fight a thing that size! I hate spiders.'

So there you are, faced by a giant Spider the size of a big Great Dane and probably poisonous if the truth be told, with a shivering cowardly-custard sword in your hand, a torch that looks as if it might go out any second, and no easy escape.

Isn't this exciting?

If you're mad enough to try to make friends with the Spider, go to **70**.

If you decide to force EJ to fight the Spider, go to **64**.

If you fancy your chances of climbing up out of the pit, go to **66**.

44 * * B

The door opens into a large, ten metre (north/south) by twenty-five metre (west/east) hallway, entirely lined, floor, walls and ceiling, in shimmering green-veined marble. A curtained doorway stands in the western end of the north wall. Between you and it, ranged in two rows of three, are six (yes, six)...

ZOMBIES!

This is not good news, Pip. There are very few pretty Zombies anywhere, but these six are ugly even for Zombies. And big. Furthermore, they are very badly dressed, in mouldering rags.

Zombies move slowly. (They are moving towards you now, Pip.) So you have lots of time to draw old EJ and take the first strike. In fact, you can get in two strikes before the Zombies get their mouldy old hands on you. The trouble is, being Undead, a Zombie can only be stopped by rolling a 9, 10, 11 or 12 on two dice. Nothing else works. Nothing else does damage.

For this fight (and if you don't fight you're dead, Pip) the sequence runs:

1. You strike one Zombie.
2. You strike a second Zombie.
3. Unless you got lucky and killed them, Zombie No. 1 strikes back.
4. Then Zombie No. 2 strikes back.
5. Then Zombie 3.
6. Then Zombie 4.
7. Then Zombie 5.

8. Then Zombie 6.
9. Then you strike again.
10. And you again.
11. Then the Zombie.

And so on.

The Zombies are not armed, so score only damage shown by the dice. However, if they kill you (Go to **14**) you will turn into a sort of half Zombie yourself, which slows you down. In this case, next time around, you will NEVER get the first strike in any fight.

If you manage to kill the Zombies, go to **42**.

45

Would you believe the door swings slowly open, that being what handles are for, obviously. You are looking into a six metre (east/west) by fifteen metre (north/south) chamber, the door set in the northernmost two metres of the east wall. This room is actually lighted - by torches set in iron brackets around the walls. There is, however, no sign of anyone in here. A flight of stone steps leads upwards to a small door high in the north wall. There is a second door (at ground level) set to the southern end of the west wall.

If you decide to climb the stone stairway to the high door, turn to **55**.

If you prefer to try the door in the west wall, go to **44**.

46

If you use your rope and spikes to climb out of this black pit, go to **45**.

If you decide to relight your torch and explore the pit, go to **43**.

47

Friendly, my foot! Who ever heard of a friendly animated Skeleton! That Skeleton is an evil old bag of bones and it's out to tear you limb from limb. Out with Excalibur Junior, Pip.

'What's this?' says EJ sleepily, having been suddenly awakened from a nap in the scabbard. 'Fighting skeletons now? Hey ho, why can't you make friends with somebody for a change?'

'Who ever heard of a friendly animated Skeleton!' you shriek in exasperation. 'Have a bit of sense, EJ!'

'Did you win the first dice roll?' EJ asks, more to the point. 'Can I hack at him first?'

Roll dice for the Skeleton and yourself. Highest score gets first strike. The Skeleton is in a funny position in that it hasn't *any* LIFE POINTS (what did you expect from a Skeleton?) so the only way you can kill it is to roil a straight 10 or 11 or 12 on two dice. Nothing else counts.

If you do manage to kill the Skeleton, go to **139**. If you don't and it kills you (which it may well do, even though it has no weapon and only scores damage indicated by the dice) go to **14**.

48

As you cross the cave floor, what you thought was a Compost Heap suddenly rises up with a great roar and hurls itself across the cave towards you. Fortunately you have time to draw Excalibur Junior, so there is an excellent chance you will get in the first blow. (Throw one die and if you score better than 1, then you have the first hit.)

The monster has 35 LIFE POINTS and does + 4 damage each successful blow it lands on account of its great strength. What's more, it only needs to roll a 5 or better to hit you. Get your dice moving to see what happens in this fight.

If the monster kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the monster, continue on out of the cave by going to **37**.

49

You draw back the curtain from the doorway leading out of the marble-lined room and find yourself looking along a torchlit corridor which runs directly north. Ten metres ahead, further corridors branch off east and west, while the main corridor continues north and ends in a door.

If you decide to move up this corridor searching carefully for pit traps, go to **75**.

50

'Who's there?' a quavering voice calls as you push the door gently.

51

You wait until your eyes become accustomed to the gloom inside, then make out the bent figure of a wizened old man seated on a wooden stool at a rickety pine table, eating what appears to be a loaf of stale bread and mouldy cheese. As you enter, he jumps up in alarm.

'Norn hit me, I'm only the poor old Watchman!' he whines. Take orl I 'ave, but norn hit me! Take my crust of bread. Take my bite of cheese. Only norn hit me!'

When you naturally reassure him that you have no intention of hitting him, the old maggot promptly tries to stab you sneakily with a dagger which he has concealed up his sleeve. Just shows you can trust nobody round here.

Roll dice to see if he manages to get you with the dagger. If so, it does + 2 damage, with another LIFE POINT automatically lost in the next Section on account of blood poisoning. Now it might be wise to use EJ to slice him into stock cubes. He has 25 LIFE POINTS and will fight back like a demon.

If you kill the old Watchman, return to **155**.

If he kills you, go to **14**.

51

Nope, nothing here. What did you expect among a load of old dried bones? Go to **54**.



50 The old Watchman begs you not to hurt him

'Have you come to rescue me?' asks the Skeleton. 'I've been chained up to that whipping post for ever such a long time!'

'Who are you?' you ask.

'Queen Guinevere,' says the Skeleton promptly, adding, 'I've lost a bit of weight since Ansalom brought me here.'

You don't believe it, of course. For one thing, Queen Guinevere is much shorter than this great big Skeleton. But you can't blame it for trying, so you say, 'If you tell me the truth, I shall let you go free. At least, I won't hack you into chicken feed with my trusty Excalibur Junior.'

'All right! I'll talk!' says the Skeleton. 'I was only a poor (if rather tall) serving lad called Silas in the employ of the wicked Wizard Ansalom. One day I spilled soup down his sporan, he being in Highland dress at the time, and as a punishment he chained me to this whipping post and left me to rot. But he also cast a spell over me to make sure I didn't die, so I could suffer longer. He's that sort, you know. A bad one through and through. That was only a few days ago and I doubt I'd be quite so skeletal now if the Hounds hadn't kept nipping out to bite bits off me.'

Which seems as good a story as any, so you let your hand drop away from your sword hilt.

'Thank you! Thank you!' screams the Skeleton hysterically. 'I'll never forget this: and to prove

my gratitude, I'll tell you how to get to the part of the castle where Ansalom has the Queen hidden.'

He does too. If you scrabble about in the *first* courtyard until you find the secret trapdoor between the portcullis and the doors into this one, you can go direct to **36**.

53

You've fallen down a pit trap! It was ten metres along the corridor, a flagstone that swivelled, dumping you into the black depths five metres below. There are poison spikes set in the bottom of the pit trap. Roll dice to see if you missed being skewered on the spikes.

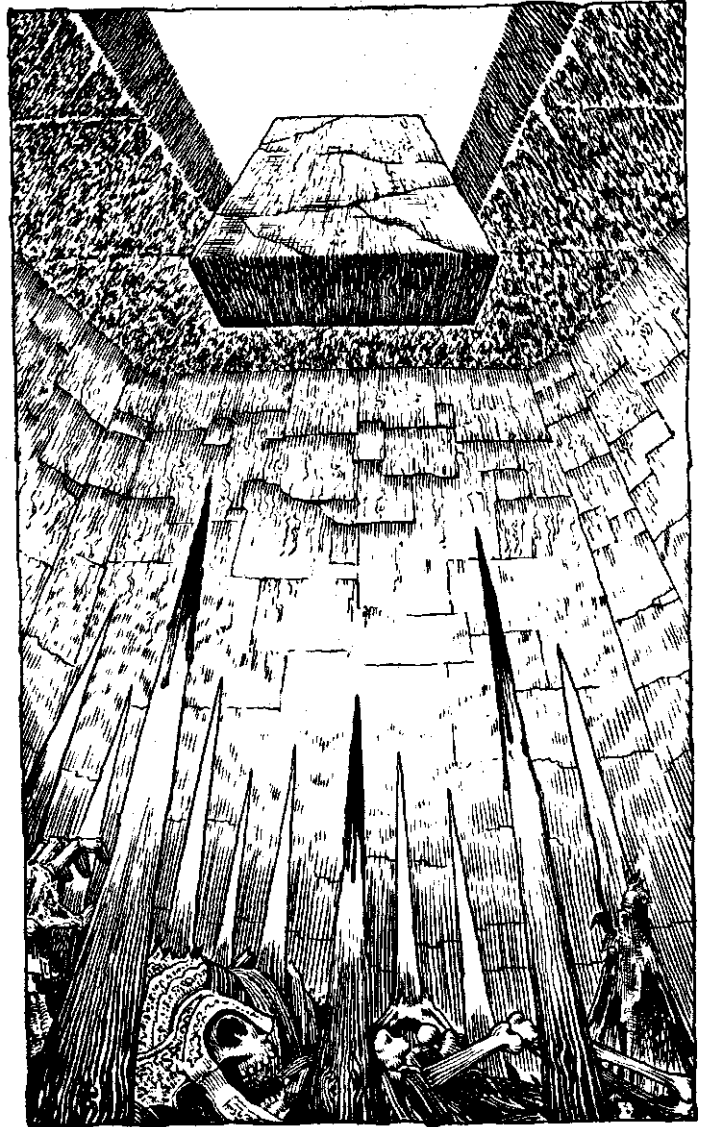
Score 1, 2 or 3 and you were skewered. The poison will kill you in five seconds. Wait five seconds, then go to **14**.

Score 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 and you missed the spikes, but fell badly. Deduct 20 LIFE POINTS. If this kills you, go to **14**.

Score 11 or 12 and you're shaken, but unhurt.

If you survived this nasty, use your rope and spikes to climb out and continue down the corridor to **40**.

If this is your second time around and you're working from a map, it's obvious you would manage to avoid the trap,- in which case go to **40** uninjured.



53 Poison spikes lurk beneath the pit trap

54

This second cave is rather larger than the first. Again accurate mapping is impossible, but approximate size is twenty metres north/south by fifteen metres east/west. There is an exit to the eastern side of the north wall. In the middle of the cave floor is what appears to be a Compost Heap.

If you want to search the Compost Heap for anything useful, go to **35**.

If you decide to press on through the exit, go to **48**.

55

You climb the stone stairway. At least you climb the first five steps. The remaining steps, like the door, are, unfortunately, an illusion created by the Wizard Ansalom. You discover this by the simple process of falling through them once you reach step six. You plunge downwards into sudden darkness and even your own torch goes out abruptly as you strike the bottom somewhere below the level of the floor of the room you have just left.

As you lie winded in the darkness, roll one die to find out how many LIFE POINTS you lost in the fall. (If this loss kills you, go to **14**.) Then go to **46**.

56

It's really stiff, that lever. The works may be a bit rusted. Maybe if you try really hard and use all your strength. . . . Roll dice to see if you are strong enough to shift the lever.

Score 6 or more and it moves. Go to **65**.

Score less than 6 and you can either give up (Go to **71**) or simply try again.

57

You step into the boat and at once it pulls away silently from the shore. Within minutes, you can no longer see land . . . only the still, dark waters of the lake gently reflecting the glow from the boat itself. From the scabbard by your side, EJ continues to mumble discontentedly.

Around you, the air grows chill. Where are you going? Was it a mistake to climb into the boat (as EJ seems to be claiming)? What mysterious force is guiding it? More to the point, where is it being guided to?

The journey seems to last forever. Then, distantly, across the water ahead, you make out a dim white glow. And it is towards this that the boat is heading. Soon the glow resolves itself into the shape of an island set in the centre of the lake, an island that seems to be illuminated by bright moonlight - although an underground moon is obviously impossible.

Soon the boat beaches on a sandy shore. As you step out, your attention is immediately attracted by the soaring columns of a Grecian temple set no more than a hundred metres away across the sand. The boat pulls away of its own accord, quickly disappearing into the darkness over, the lake. You are marooned with your reluctant sword.

58-60

What now, Pip?

If you wish to explore the island, go to **60**.

If you wish to explore the temple, go to **62**.

58

No luck so far, Pip. Maybe you should go back to **74** and try rolling those old dice again.

59

It's empty. At least, it looks empty. But what's that hissing noise? An invisible snake? No, it's gas! Hold your breath, Pip! Hold your breath!

Too late — you've breathed in the gas. At least it may be too late. Roll dice to make sure.

Score 10 or better and at least you've survived, although you lose half your current LIFE POINTS due to poison gas. Go to **154**.

Score less than 10 and you're flat on your back staring up at the ceiling and dead. Go to **14**.

60

As you leave the beach, the going underfoot becomes rocky, with only a few leafless shrubs to break the monotony. The moonlight plays strange tricks with the rock shapes, turning them into grotesque monsters until you come close enough to see they are nothing of the sort.

The island, you quickly discover, is very small and largely featureless except for the temple . . .

61-62

and for a cave entrance set into a cliff at the northern edge.

If you decide to explore the cave, go to **100**.

If you prefer to return to the temple, go to **62**.

61

You did it! By George, that was clever! Now you can get out simply by pulling gently downwards on the wand held by the statue. Go on: it won't hurt you. There, see? The room is revolving again, opening up the entrance so you can go back to the junction and decide what to do next.

Go north to **74**.

Go east to **76**.

62

As you approach the temple, your eye catches a flash of movement from within the colonnade. You stop at once and draw Excalibur Junior, ready for any eventuality.

But a soft, melodious voice says kindly, 'Put away the sword, Pip: you are in no danger from me.' And out of the shadows of the colonnade steps the most beautiful lady you have ever seen, tall, serene, stately, gowned in white gossamer. Could this be the Queen? You realise suddenly you have never met Guinevere, hence do not even know what she looks like. And this lady certainly seems regal enough to be a Queen.

'How flattering, Pip,' remarks the White Lady, as



62 The Lady beckons you into the temple

if she had read your thoughts. 'But I am not Guinevere. Indeed, I am not even mortal, as you understand the term. If you require a name for me, use that which Arthur sometimes uses - the Lady of the Lake. Although this dark place is not the lake where he first saw me.'

She beckons you to follow and returns to the interior of the temple. Inside, you find a simple chamber with mosaic inlay on the floor and a white block marble altar on which stands a jewelled chalice and a glistening gemstone on a velvet cushion.

'This temple does not exist in the world as you know it,' says the Lady of the Lake. 'In fact, this whole island does not exist in your world, and will disappear forever once you depart from here. I have come because I am the avowed enemy of all things evil and the Wizard Ansalom, whom you seek, is undoubtedly evil. In the past, I have aided King Arthur to fight against the forces of darkness"; and now, if you wish it, I shall aid you.'

You nod, vigorously. You need all the help you can get.

The Lady smiles. 'Very well, Pip: first drink of this chalice.' And she hands you the jewelled chalice from the altar.

If you are prepared to drink, go to **103**.

If you feel it wiser not to, go to **108**.

Mind those steps - they're very slippery. Your torchlight reflects from the damp sheen that's over everything down here. In fact, the walls are actually dripping; running little rivulets of water. The whole place smells damp.

You reach the bottom of the steps and find yourself in another corridor, but much wider than any you've been in so far. Also, shorter. After only about fifteen metres (and a wet fifteen metres it is) you emerge into a vast, underground cavern, almost totally filled by a huge, still, dark lake.

The cavern swallows up the light from your torch, so that all is gloomy and pitch dark outside a narrow circle of torchlight, except for the occasional reflected glint of natural crystals in the stone of the walls.

All is still. All is silent. You can hear your heart beat. (Maybe because it is beating rather loudly.) Then, just as you are wondering what on earth to do next, you hear a sound, a whisper.

'Pip____'

Somebody . . . something . . . is whispering your name.

'Pip....'

You look around you, your heart racing even faster. There is no indication of where the sound originates. Sound echoes in this cavern. Impossible to say where it is coming from.

'Pip....'

The word is hollow, fearful, like some lost soul wailing in the wilderness.

'Pip.... Let's get out of here!'

It's EJ! It's that stupid talking sword, mumbling into its scabbard.

'Shut up, EJ,' you tell it firmly. 'We're not going anywhere.'

'But I don't like it down here,' EJ protests. 'It's dark - there might be spiders.'

'There aren't any spiders,' you reassure EJ, although in truth you don't really know what might be down here. All the same, you aren't about to turn tail and run just because you have a neurotic sword.

'Well, don't blame me if we get in trouble,' EJ sulks.

And as if the words were prophecy, a small blue dot of light appears far out across the lake. But moving closer.

You stand mesmerised, watching, while EJ shivers in the scabbard. In a moment, the light has grown sufficiently for you to see the outline of a boat, moving silently without sail or oars, across the still, dark surface of the lake. Gently, without a sound, the boat draws up to the lake's edge where you stand. Once again, Pip, it's your choice.



63 A boat is moving silently towards you

If you want to risk your life (and give EJ a bad case of rust) in this leaky - but glowing - old tub, go to **57**.

If you have any sense at all, return to **75** and choose some other direction.

64

Nothing for it but a fight, whatever EJ thinks. The Spider has 33 LIFE POINTS, strikes on a roll of 4 or better and scores + 3 damage. Worse still, it really is poisonous, so every third time it hits you, you need to see if the poison gets you. Roll two dice again. Unless you score 6 or better, you're dead from Spider venom.

If the Spider kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Spider, go to **80**.

65

Oh dear, the roof has fallen in. You're buried under several thousand tons of rubble, Pip. You know what that means, of course. You're right. You've just lost half your LIFE POINTS and got a splitting headache. Stagger about until you reach **45**.

66

You make a mad, panic-stricken leap upwards, scrabbling desperately at the wall, Excalibur Junior clenched between your teeth. Roll two dice to see if you make it.

Score 1-6 and you fall back into the Spider's lap (yeuch!). Go to **64**, with the Spider getting first strike.

Score 7-12 and you make it out of the pit. Go to **45**.

67

You are attacked savagely about the ankle. Ankle? Yes - ankle! And if it's funny, it's also very painful, not to say damaging. (Deduct 4 LIFE POINTS immediately for ankle damage: if this kills you, go to **14**.)

Let's recap your situation. You can't see a thing, being surrounded by magical darkness. Your torch won't work (and though you haven't tried it, you can be pretty sure your oil lamp won't either). You are being savagely attacked at a rather low level. What are your options?

Well, you can obviously try to fight back. The only problem is that you can't see. So you're going to have to swing wildly. And your chances of actually hitting anything aren't much good. So if you do decide to fight, you will have to roll 10 or better on your two dice to score a hit. (So any damage you might do, if you do connect, is that much smaller.) Or you can try to make friends, which doesn't sound too hopeful, since whatever it is seems to be chewing away at your ankle even at this very minute. Or you can try to do something about the darkness.

The problem there is - what? It's magical darkness. Torches don't work. Lamps don't work. Only some form of magic will work. A Fireball - if you have any left? Or a Firefinger Lightning Bolt -

if you have any left? But should you waste them here or save them for what could be worse nasties to come? Life is full of hard decisions, Pip, when you get yourself into one of these magical adventures.

If you decide to fight, go to **90**.

If you decide to try to make friends, go to **92**.

If you decide to use a Fireball or a Lightning Bolt Firefinger to get a bit of light in here, go to **97**.

68

'Halt, desist and cease,' says the Spider in a melodious female voice that echoes through your head, spiders being in the main female - at least the ones you see. 'Put away that silly little sword: I have no wish to harm you.'

'You can talk!' say you in amazement.

'Not exactly,' says the Spider. 'I am actually using telepathy, which sounds to you as if I am talking. But enough of technicalities. Do I take it you are here to do some mischief to the Wizard Ansalom?'

You nod, hesitantly.

'Good,' says the Spider. 'I can't stand that man. He reminds me of a bluebottle: not one single saving grace.' She rubs four of her eight legs together excitedly. 'Well, you won't do him much mischief stuck here. Shall I spin you a rope to climb out?'

If you take up the friendly Spider's offer, go to **45**.

69-71

If you decide to explore the pit further, the Spider will leave you to it, climb out herself and disappear. You go to **73**.

69

You've found a secret door, Pip. Well done.

Go to **91**.

70

OK lunatic, roll!

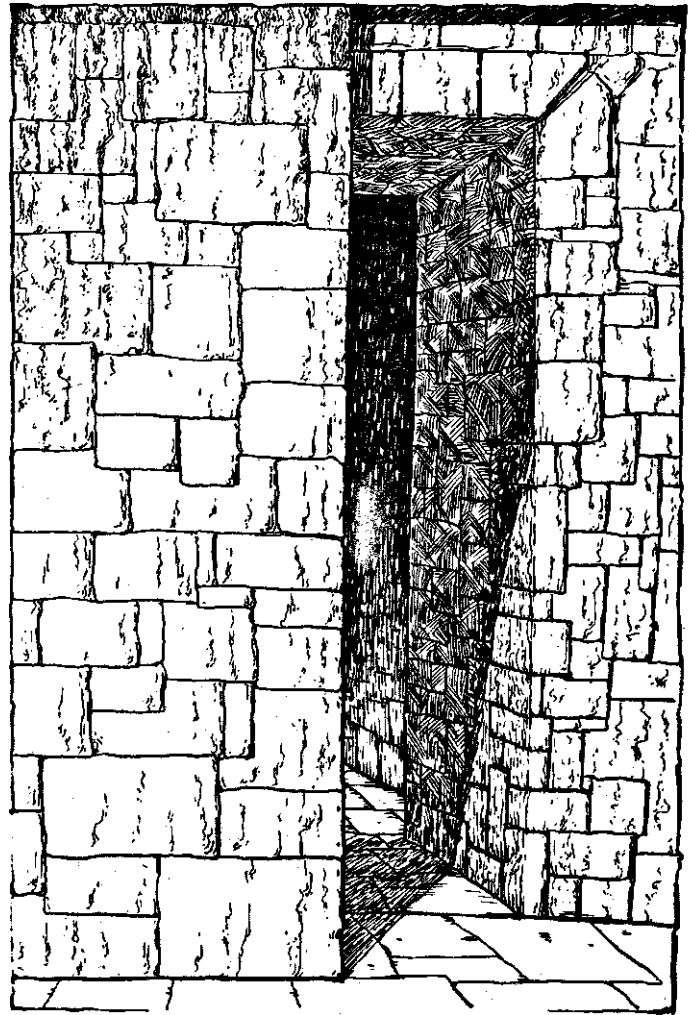
If you get a Friendly Reaction, go to **68**.

If not, go to **64**.

71

The corridor runs due west for no more than ten metres before you reach the entrance to a large, circular chamber. Set in the centre of the chamber, on a polished granite pedestal, is a statue of a tall, black-bearded man with sharp features and (so far as one can tell from a lump of stone) dark, piercing eyes. He is dressed in dark flowing robes and wears the same sort of pointed hat Merlin wore. In one hand he carries a sack from which protrudes the head of a pig. In the other hand he holds a long Magician's wand.

A smart adventurer like you, Pip, might guess this to be a statue of the Wizard Ansalom, and you would be right. But better be careful that you aren't *dead* right, for the moment you step into this chamber, it revolves, sealing off the doorway



71 The doorway is sealed off

and revealing no other entrances or exits. In short, Pip, you are well and truly trapped! You scabble a bit at the wall behind you where the door used to be, but there is no sign of any control mechanism. So you begin to examine the rest of the chamber.

Probably the first thing you would notice is the small wooden chest on the floor behind the statue. This is less than a metre long and half that in height, but it is very well made, bound in brass with a brass-hinged, upward-lifting lid. You will also notice, set into the floor about three metres away from the chest, a metal lever.

And if you can keep your busy little hands off these two for a moment, there is also an inscription cut into the base of the statue. The inscription reads:

*Take heed, Young Woman or Young Man,
This friendly word from Ansalom.
To get out of this room again,
You'll need to exercise your brain.
So take care to remember that
'Twas curiosity killed the cat!*

Which just goes to show that however good Ansalom might be as a Wizard, he isn't much of a poet. In fact, as you continue to read the inscription, you find it degenerates into pure gibberish:

*Up sfpqfo epps
Hp ejsfdu up tjyuz pof.*

Well now, Pip, here you are in this stupid circular

room all set to starve to death. (Have a bully-beef sandwich to help you think.) What now?

You can try to decode those two lines of gibberish, if you like.

You can try opening the little chest, in which case go to **59**.

Or you can try pulling that lever, in which case go to **56**.

Wonder what he meant by 'curiosity killed the cat'?

72

Nervously, you edge your way forward in total darkness, one hand against the rough texture of the stone wall for guidance, the other firmly gripping the hilt of faithful Excalibur Junior. The breathing is louder now, closer.

'Who's there?' you call.

The breathing stops.

Better go to **67** before the tension gives you a nervous breakdown.

73

Will you never learn? You've found a Snake now! A little thing, but deadly poisonous. (You can tell by the skull and crossbones markings on its back.) No chance to make friends here - it's trying to bite you already.

The Snake has only 12 LIFE POINTS so it's not too difficult to kill. But it only needs to hit you

once (by rolling 6 or better) to kill you. Roll to see who gets first strike. And best of luck.

If the Snake kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Snake, go to **79**.

74

Some twenty-five metres beyond the junction where you made your choice, the corridor ends abruptly in what appears to be a solid stone wall. Since it seems a bit daft to have a corridor leading nowhere, your suspicions are instantly aroused, as well they might be. Thus you begin to search very carefully, feeling along the wall for cracks. Roll two dice to see if you find anything.

Score 1, 2 or 3 and go to **58**.

Score 4 or above and go to **78**.

75

No pit traps, Pip, but better safe than sorry, eh?

Now, you've got a choice here. You can keep going north. Or try the eastern corridor. Or try the western corridor. You listen carefully, but there is no sound anywhere. The whole place is silent as the tomb. If there are any more monsters, they're waiting for you to make your choice. So what's it to be Pip?

Go north and turn to **74**.

Go west and turn to **71**.

Go east and turn to **76**.



73 The snake is deadly poisonous

76

This corridor runs due east for twelve metres and ends in a door. Or what used to be a door. This one is badly splintered and is hanging from one hinge as if something terribly big burst through it some time ago. The problem is, did something terribly big burst *out* or burst *in*! There is no light beyond the hanging door, but if you listen very, very carefully, you should just be able to pick up the sound of breathing from the darkness.

Going in, Pip? Then go to 77.

Or you could always go back to the corridor at 75.

77

Don't like the sound of that breathing, Pip. Still, it's your skin....

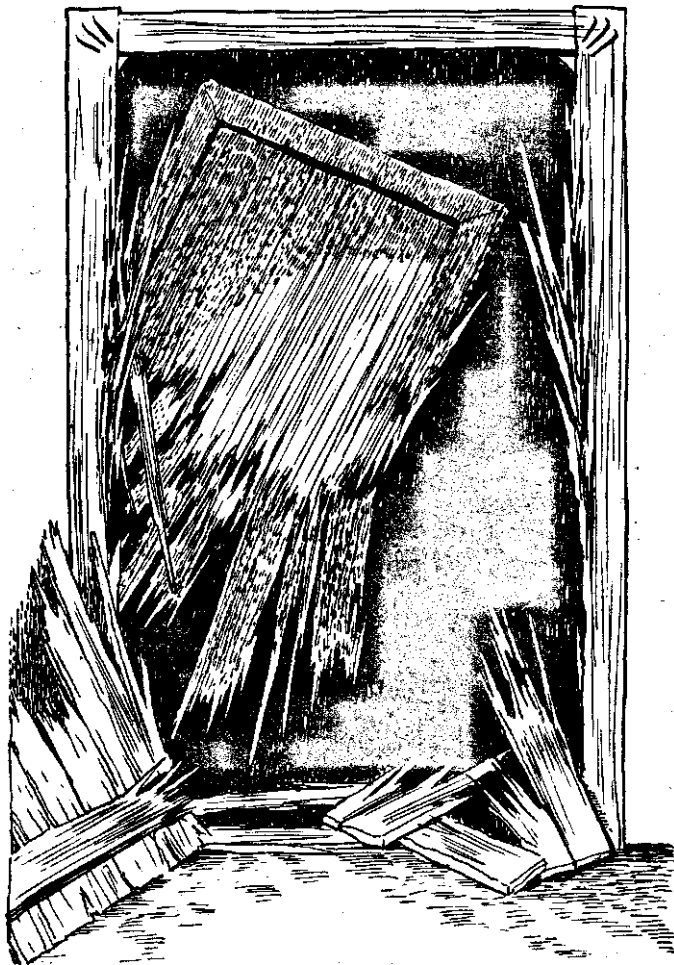
You poke your lighted torch into the room, but nothing happens. The torch doesn't light it up! There's magic afoot here, Pip. Still want to go in?

If so, go to 72.

If not, you can still retrace your steps to 74.

78

Nice bit of close observation there, Pip: you've found a secret door! As you press against it, a whole section of the stone wall slowly pivots with a loud, echoing, grinding noise, revealing a flight of damp stone steps descending into total blackness.



76 Something huge has burst through the door

If your nerves will stand it, follow the steps by going to **63**.

79

Going to search again?

If so, go to **69**.

If you've had more than enough of this pit, climb out and go to **45**.

80

What a mess! Legs all over the place. Still, you killed the Spider, Pip, which is better than the Spider killing you.

If you want to search this pit again, go to **73**.

If you decide to climb back out, go to **45**.

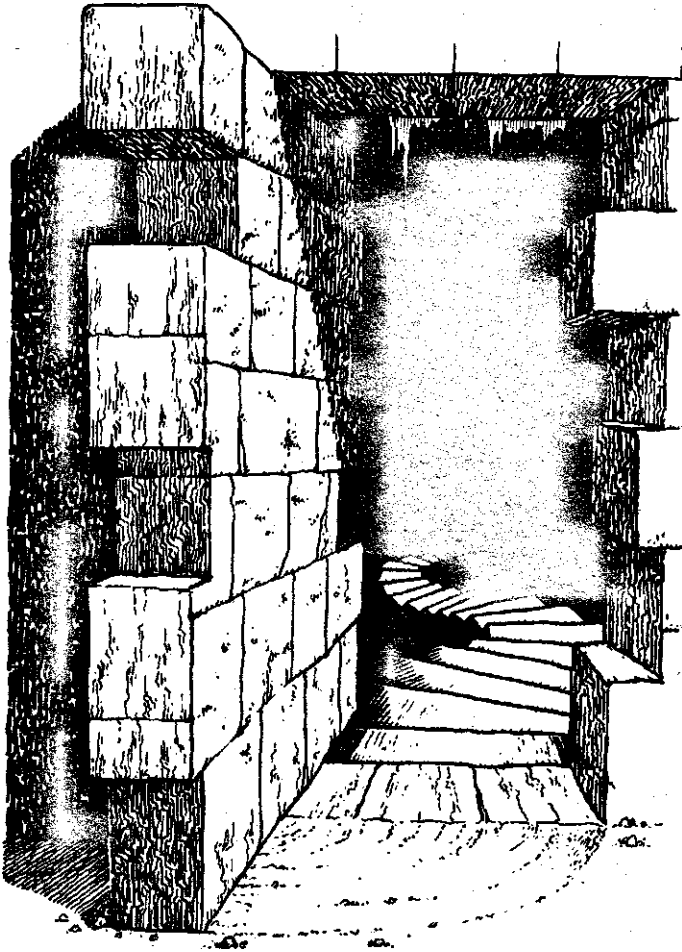
81

'More than ten lines!' squeals the Fiend delightedly. 'What sterling work! What poetic effort! What creative herculean labour! This too must be rewarded!'

And from the pocket of his trousers, he hands you a small wooden duck, rather garishly painted yellow, red and brown. It seems to have had wheels once, but these have been broken off.

'This,' says the Fiend, 'is my most precious possession; and now it is yours. It's a magic duck.'

'Magic?' you echo, getting a word in edgeways for the first time in ages. 'What does it do?'



78 Stone steps descend into total blackness

'I don't know,' admits the Fiend. 'And you mustn't know yet either. But should you ever find yourself in great danger from any form of evil magic, you may shout:

Magic duck,
Come to my aid:
I'm not afraid!

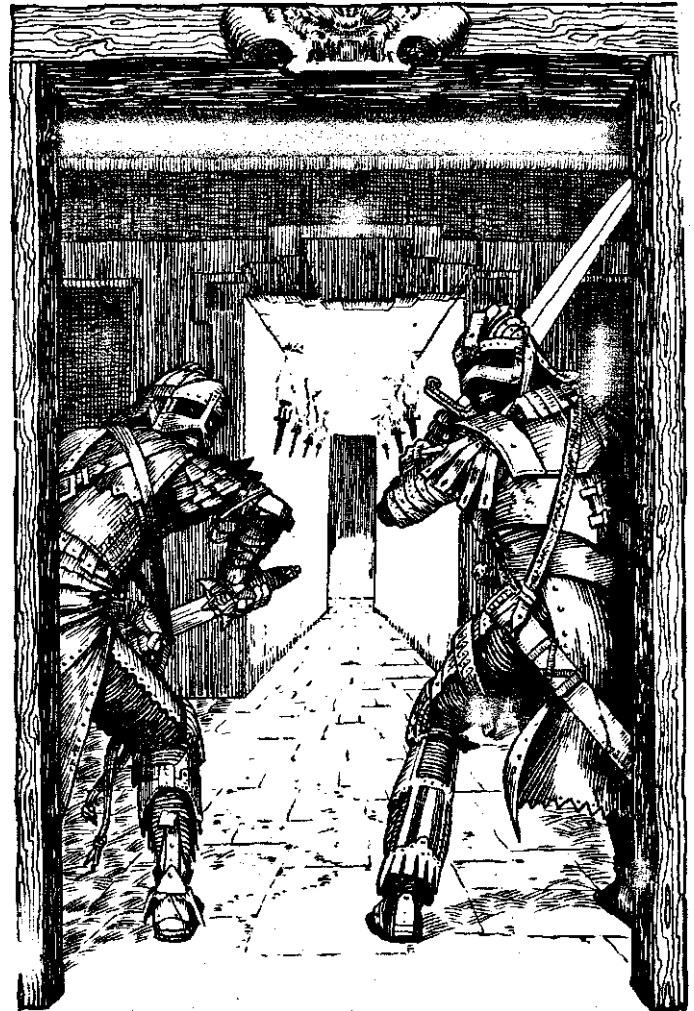
'And turn at once to **119** where you will find out about the duck's magic. But don't turn to **119** until you really need to use the duck, because that dispels the magic and you can only use it once.' The Fiend yawns. 'Now, my dear young friend, although it has been a great pleasure meeting with you, I grow tired. If you will excuse me, I shall return to my coffin and rest to await my next visitor.' With which he sweeps back his black opera coat, favours you with a dazzling smile, leaps into his coffin and pulls down the lid. Nor will any number of knocks persuade him to open it, up again.

Since there doesn't seem much else you can do here, turn to **62** and find out what's in the temple.

82

CRASH!

The door splinters inwards with the most appalling noise and you have lost a **LIFE POINT** from your poor old foot. You have also alerted two Guards on the other side - big men with swords



82 You have alerted two Guards

83-85

and leather armour - so they both get the first strike against you.

Go to **86**.

83

The scroll contains a Teleportation Spell!

Not many of those around, Pip. It's the sort of spell that might come in handy in dire emergencies. Once you use it, you are instantly teleported right back to the dreaded **14**, except that you are alive and well this time, with all your booty and treasure intact. So all you need do is retrace your steps carefully and avoid the particular danger that threatened you.

You can only use this spell once, but should it be unused at the end of your journey you can take it on future quests. Pack the scroll away carefully. Since there are no exits to this chamber, return to **75** and reconsider your options.

84

BOOM!

Go to **14**.

85

Busy, busy - it's the kitchens. Cooks and skivvies racing about all over the place making a great bustle but not doing very much. Fortunately they're all so busy being busy, nobody notices you've opened the door. No sense in making

86-87

trouble. Retreat quietly and return to **107** to reconsider your options.

86 ** B (Each)

You're into a fight, Pip, whether you like it or not. Each Guard has 15 LIFE POINTS. Their swords do + 2 damage and their leather armour subtracts 2 from any damage scored against them.

Remember from 82 who gets first strike. When rolling dice to decide the outcome of this fight, take the two Guards together when you're working out the sequence. Now go to it!

If the Guards kill you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Guards, go to **107**.

87

'Very kind,' the Fiend murmurs modestly, obviously extremely pleased, even though he looks a little puzzled by the names you mentioned. 'Very kind indeed.' He begins to pace dramatically up and down the floor of his crypt, in the manner of a Shakespearian actor, declaiming the following worthless doggerel:

Oh what a joy it is for me

To be

Truly

Appreciated by someone who has obviously more intelligence than a flea!

He smiles. 'A little extempore ode to mark the occasion. But now to business, since it is seldom I

meet anyone with the critical faculties to appreciate my genius. Since you have been kind enough to listen to my little verses, I shall return the compliment.' With which he produces a sheet of blank parchment from the breast pocket of his tail coat and a most peculiar feather from the inside pocket. (On close inspection, the latter turns out to be a fountain quill.)

'Take these,' he says, 'and forthwith compose an ode, ballad, limerick, haiku, or some such similar verse for our mutual edification and delight. Make it as long as possible, but be certain that every second line rhymes with the one before, in this manner:

I'm going now
To milk a cow.
And when I go
I'll have you know
We'll soon have milk
As smooth as silk.

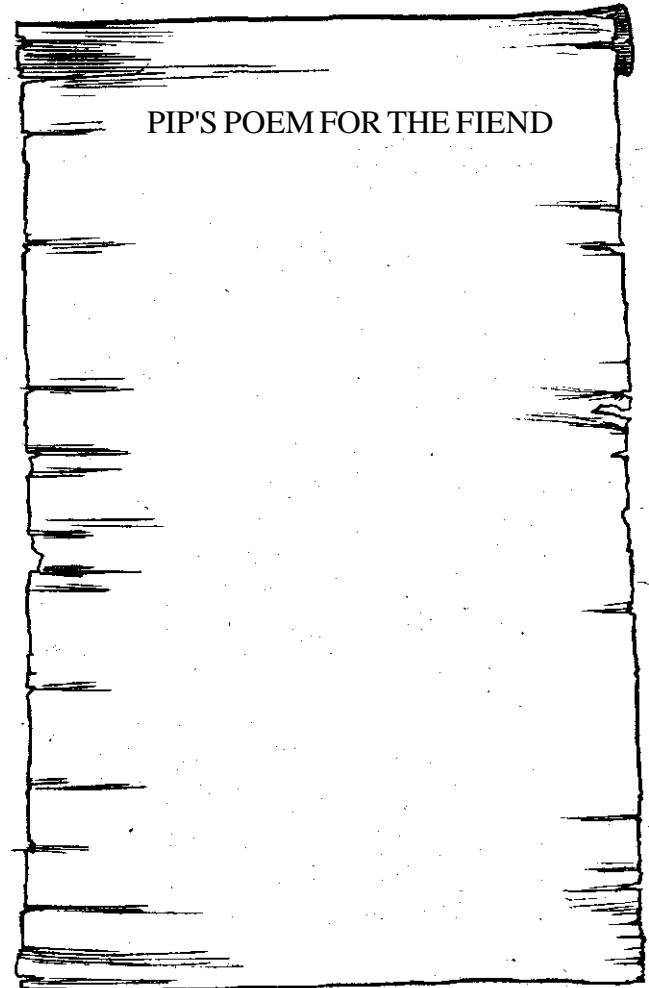
'And so on, for just as long as you can make it.'

This Fiend is obviously a nutcase, Pip, but rather likeable. Better humour him and compose a poem as he says. Who knows what might come out of a little courtesy in the Age of Chivalry.

Use the blank page which follows to write down your poem, then turn to **112**.

The scroll contains a Healing Spell!

Now that's a really lucky find. Next time you're



running a bit low on LIFE POINTS, all you need do is read the scroll and you will be instantly restored to full strength again. (The spell will only work once, though, so make sure not to use it until you really need it.)

There are no exits from this room, so you'd better return to **75** and reconsider your options.

89 ** B (Each)

Yipes! It's a Guard Room! Jam-packed with about a hundred hairy great Guards. They're sitting around playing dice, drinking ale and sharpening their swords. What a nasty-looking lot. You'd never have a prayer of surviving a fight with this bunch, Pip. Better check to find out if they noticed you opening their door.

Roll two dice.

Score 7 or more and go to **145**.

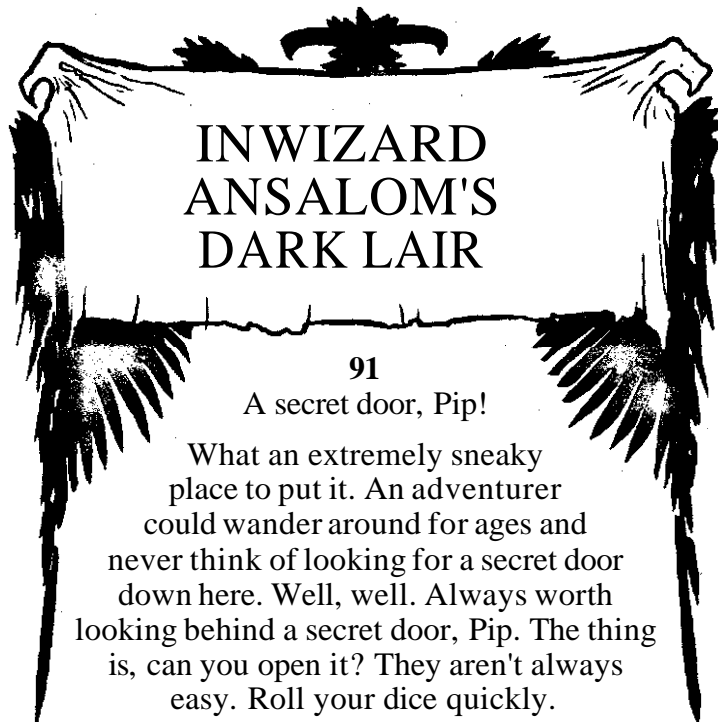
Score below 7 and go to **140**.

90 *** B

OK Pip, it was your choice. Your unseen opponent has 40 LIFE POINTS (sorry about that). (S)he (it?) can see in the dark: at least (s)he (it?) is able to hit you on a roll of 6 or better and to do + 5 damage.

If you get yourself killed in this one, which seems highly likely, go to **14**.

If by some miracle you manage to win the fight and kill your opponent, go to **110**.



IN WIZARD ANSALOM'S DARK LAIR

91

A secret door, Pip!

What an extremely sneaky place to put it. An adventurer could wander around for ages and never think of looking for a secret door down here. Well, well. Always worth looking behind a secret door, Pip. The thing is, can you open it? They aren't always easy. Roll your dice quickly.

Score 6 or below and go to **94**.

Score above 6 and go to **118**.

92

You're certainly an optimist. Roll two dice.

Score 1-9 and go to **115**.

Score 10, 11 or 12 and go to **120**.

93

The scroll contains a Hypnotism Spell!

If you decide to use this spell against an opponent, you must throw two dice to find out if it works. Any score of 5 and above and it does. Any score below 5 and it has no effect at all. If the spell works, your opponent will fall into a trance and you can safely ignore him/her/it. You can only use the spell once, but if unused in this adventure it can be taken on any future quests.

Since there are no exits from this room, go to **75** and reconsider your options.

94

Won't open, Pip. Jammed solid. Still, you're a sturdy sort of adventurer: try kicking it in and go to **82**.

95

With EJ drawn, you launch yourself down the corridor like a tornado.

'Have at you, Guards of the wicked Wizard Ansalom!' you cry.

Brave words, Pip, but do they do you any good? You can claim first strike because of your surprise attack: after that it's out with the old dice to see how the fight goes.

The Guards each have 15 LIFE POINTS. Their swords will do +2 damage and their armour deducts 2 from any damage scored against them.

If the Guards kill you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Guards, you now have the option of:

1. Entering the room they were guarding - go to **138**.
2. Returning up the corridor and continuing east - go to **130**.
3. Returning up the corridor and continuing north - go to **149**.
4. Returning to any available earlier Section.

96

The corridor runs east for about twenty-five metres before you find yourself at a sort of corridor crossroads. A glance to the south shows you two Guards standing by a southern door. (Fortunately they didn't see you, but they undoubtedly will if you try to cross the corridor or go north.)

To the north, the corridor runs fifteen metres before ending in a solid wooden door. To the east, the corridor continues for a further ten metres ending in steps downwards; but to go this way, you must cross the north/south corridor.

By the looks of this, you can only tackle the' Guards, unless you want to return to an earlier Section. Go to **95**.

97

It worked, by Jove! (As the Romans used to say.) The darkness has gone, your torch - which was,

still lit, remember, even if it wasn't doing much - now shows you a smallish, ten-metre-square, stone-lined chamber. Gnawing furiously at your ankle is a Leprechaun.

If you want to fight the Leprechaun, go to **90**.
 If you want to try to make friends now, go to **92**.
 If you want to make friends by *promising to buy the Leprechaun a drink* go to **120**.

98

The scroll contains an Antidote Spell!

If you are silly enough to take poison before the end of this adventure (or on any new adventure, come to that) and have the spell with you, you can use it to cure yourself, even if the dice show the poison killed you. You can only use the spell once.

Since there are no exits from this room, go to **75** and reconsider your options.

99 *** B

Trouble, Pip! While you were searching for that secret door, a Guard crept up on you. In the circumstances, he has the first strike.

The Guard has 20 LIFE POINTS, wears -2 leather armour and carries a + 2 sword. What's much worse, he is a particularly skilled swordsman, so only needs to roll a 3 or better to hit you!

If the Guard kills you, go to **14**.
 If you manage to kill the Guard go to **150**.

100

There is definitely something peculiar about this cave. Maybe it's the shape of the cave mouth: from certain angles, it looks like the outline of a hollow, grinning skull. Probably doesn't mean anything, of course. Although you do move rather warily as you go inside; and even old EJ has stopped mumbling.

Once inside, the cave mouth narrows dramatically, becoming little more than a fissure cleft in the rock face. You actually have to turn sideways to squeeze through, praying this *isn't* the time you're going to meet something nasty.

But nothing attacks you and soon you are safely through the cleft into what your torchlight shows to be a smallish, bone-dry cavern. The cavern is empty except for a signpost.

A *signpost*? Well, it's definitely a signpost. And when you think of it, that's probably no more odd than a lot of other things you've discovered in the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle.

The signpost points north, south, east and west. The arms pointing north, south and west all carry the same message:

NOWHERE

The arm pointing east reads:

TO THE CRYPT OF THE FIEND
(Ancient Monument)

Less than three metres away from the signpost, set into the east wall of the cavern, is a well-made wooden door bearing a highly polished brass plaque on which are engraved the words:

THE CRYPT OF THE FIEND
(Please Knock)

There are no doors or other exits from this cavern.

If you have not already explored the temple and now think this might be an excellent time to do so, go to **62**.

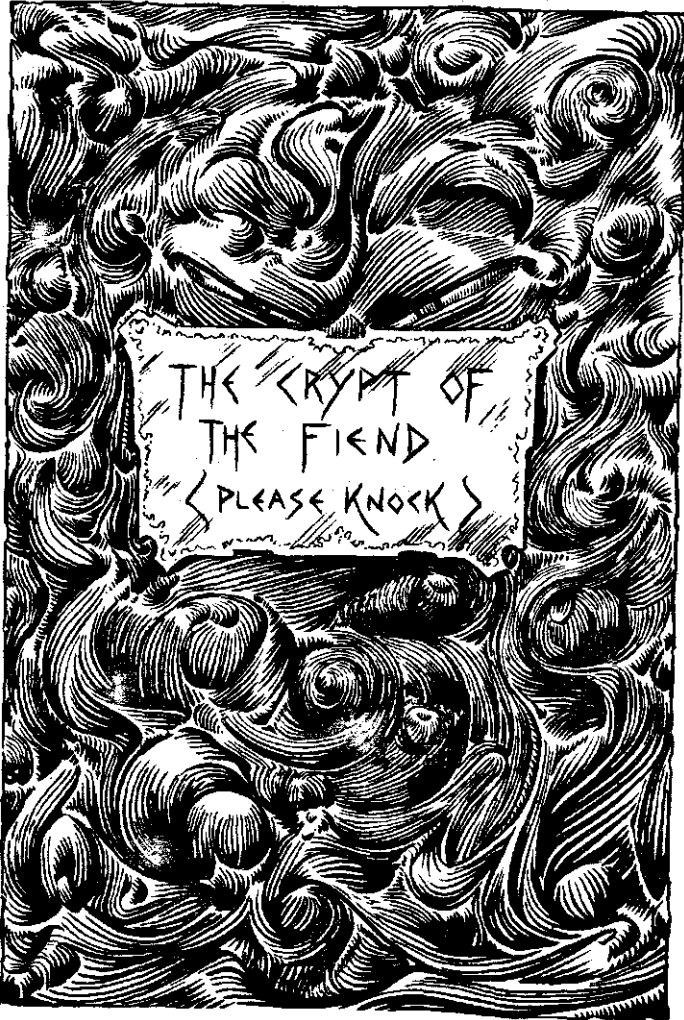
If you want to risk entering the Crypt of the Fiend, go to **101**.

101

The door is unlocked and opens creakily at your touch. You find yourself standing on a glistening floor of jet-black marble in a twelve-metre-square chamber, all walls of which are draped solemnly in black velvet.

In the exact centre of the chamber is a dais and on the dais a large ebony coffin. Your torch flickers alarmingly in here, although the air is still, casting dancing shadows. It is cold, silent, and very, very still. Your footsteps echo as you walk, reluctantly, towards the coffin.

There is a large silver plaque bolted to the dais, on which has been cut the following inscription in very tiny letters:



Hail brave warrior and adventurer bold
 You have reached the Crypt of the Fiend
 Established in days of old.
 And a very poetic Fiend he is
 (Much better than the Wiz
 -ard Ansalom)
 So he's been told.
 So if the poetic Fiend you wish to arouse
 Sleeping as he is in his coffin-like house
 You must first find the answer hid
 To the puzzle on the coffin lid.
 Then praise his poetry to the skies
 Even if this means telling a few lies
 And the Fiend will help you on your way.
 Otherwise you won't live a single day.

When you finally recover from this truly awful piece of poetry, you step on to the dais and examine the plaque on the lid of the coffin. This reads (in fairly average-size lettering):

To open coffin and meet with the world-famous Poetic Fiend, simply follow the instructions. Please do so carefully, otherwise the coffin will explode, destroying the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle, the Realm of Avalon, the entire world, the universe and, quite possibly, you.

Instructions

If the word 'if' is the second word in this sentence, knock twice. Otherwise knock three times, unless birds can fly, in which case knock only once, except for those of you who know Merlin who should knock four times unless the word 'if' was the third word in the first sentence of these instructions in which case you should only knock once.

You have five seconds to start knocking before the coffin explodes.

If you knocked once, go to **84**.

If you knocked twice, go to **104**.
 If you knocked three times, to to **109**.
 If you knocked four times, go to **102**.

102

You step back hurriedly as the lid of the coffin slowly starts to open. A white gloved hand emerges to grip the side, then, slowly, terrifyingly, the Fiend himself begins to rise up from the velvet and satin-lined interior.

The Fiend is tall, slim, chalky white and dressed (rather oddly for King Arthur's day) in a long black opera cloak over white tie and tails evening suit. His eyes are very large and very dark. Two of his top teeth protrude over his lower lip, like fangs. Slowly he turns those great dark eyes towards you ...

Don't wait a moment, Pip. Turn to **111**.

103

The chalice contains a clear, cool, blue-green liquid which tastes of honey and blackcurrants. As you drink, a feeling of great Well-being flows through your body.

If you are currently under your full total of LIFE POINTS you will instantly be restored to complete strength.

Furthermore, the liquid provides you with a temporary LIFE POINT buffer of 25 LIFE POINTS. What this means is that you have an *additional* store of 25 LIFE POINTS over

and above your full total. Any damage scored against you will now be taken from the additional 25 *first* before being deducted from your actual LIFE POINTS. The buffer is, however, temporary, so once you have used it up, it's gone for good.

The Lady of the Lake smiles at you. 'Feel better now, Pip?'

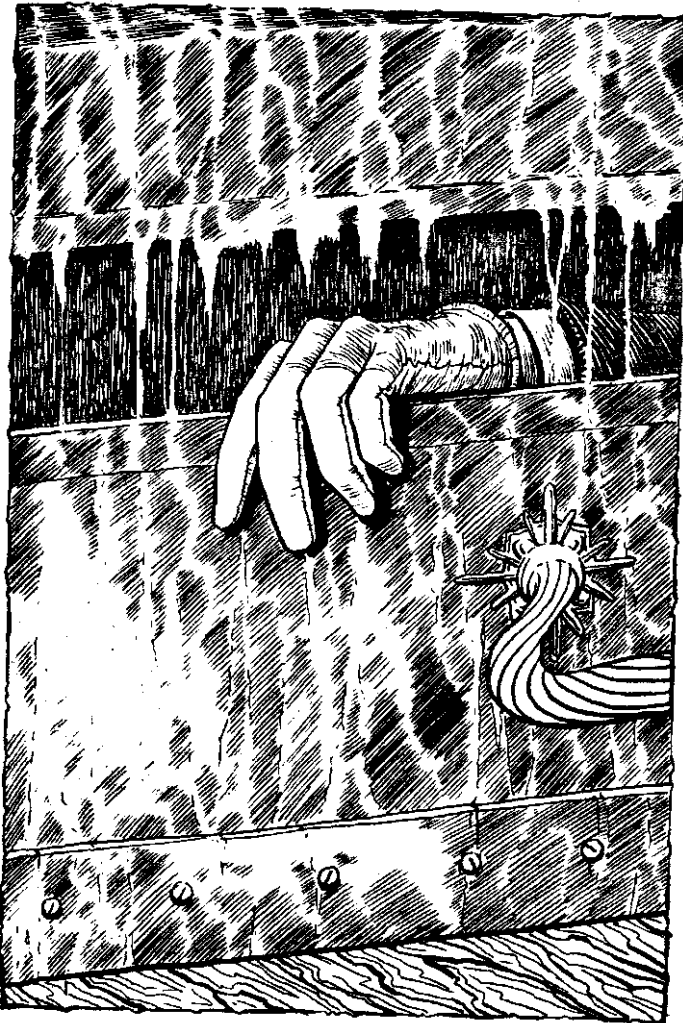
You nod and smile back.

'Well,' says the Lady, 'I have one more small gift for you . . .'

And she takes the glittering gemstone from the altar and places it in the palm of your outstretched hand.

This,' says the Lady, 'is called a Luckstone. A magical gem, which only works for those of brave, honest, good, loyal and true heart. While you possess this Luckstone - and it is yours to keep so long as you don't get yourself killed - you may add, or subtract, 3 points to or from any dice roll you may make. This means that when you are fighting, you can add 3 points to your roll in order to gain a successful blow; or add 3 points to the damage caused if your blow is already successful. In fact, in any circumstance which requires a dice roll from now on, you may add or subtract 3 to or from your total in order to achieve the result you wish.

'Furthermore,' says the Lady, taking a deep breath, 'if you manage to survive the present adventure so that your Luckstone is intact at the



102 A gloved hand emerges from the coffin

104-105

time you leave the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle, you may keep this Luckstone and bring it with you on subsequent adventures.'

A gem indeed, Pip! Thank you, Lady,' you breathe gratefully and place the Luckstone carefully away in your pack. As you do so, the Lady and the temple begin to fade gently away, leaving you standing back in 75. Frantically, you open your backpack. The Luckstone is still there! Fantastic!

Now turn to **75** but *** NOTE *** you will NOT ever again be able to find the secret door to the north, whatever it may say in your spell book, either this time round, or at any other time should you be killed and return this way. Remember that, Pip. Trying to go through to the Lady of the Lake again will break the spell.

104

BOOM!

105

The corridor runs west for thirty metres and ends in a door. At fifteen metres there is a second door in the north wall.

If you decide to try the door in the north wall, go to **89**.

If you decide to go on quietly and try the door at the end of the corridor, go to **85**.

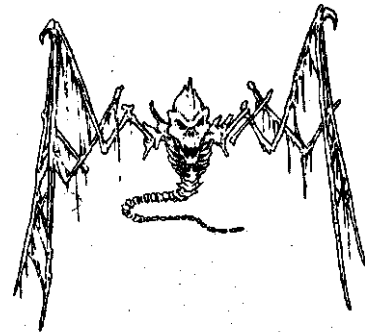
106

The scroll contains a Death Spell!

This one is useful, Pip, but tricky. If you're in a tight corner and use the spell, it will instantly kill a single opponent; however powerful or well protected.

The trouble is, there is a small chance the spell will rebound and kill *you*. If at some stage you decide to use the spell, you must make a dice roll. If the result is a double 6, a double 1 or a double 3, then the spell kills you (and you go to 14). Anything else and the spell kills your opponent. You can only use the spell once, but you can take it on any future quests if it hasn't been used by the end of this journey.

Since there are no exits from this room, go to **75** and reconsider your options.

**107**

Now that you have time to look around you, you find you are in a small anti-room with a single, well-lit corridor running off northwards. The whole feel of this place is very different to the

108-110

parts of the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle that you have already visited: it feels lived in. If you listen carefully, you can even hear distant sounds. Better move quietly, Pip, and keep a careful look-out.

You creep along the corridor for fifteen metres until you arrive at a T-junction with a second corridor running east/west. A quick glance both ways tells you this corridor is empty for the moment, although you have a feeling someone might happen along at any second.

If you decide to move west along the new corridor, go to **105**.

If you decide to move east, go to **96**.

If you decide to risk searching for another secret door (and you never know your luck) go to **99**.

108

The temple and the Lady vanish abruptly.

Go to **75** and *** NOTE *** however hard you try, and whatever it may say in this spell book, you will *never* again be able to find the secret door to the north.

109

BOOM!

Go to **14**.

110

How awful. Your torch suddenly illuminates the

111

entire room, as if the magical darkness was instantly dispelled. And you are looking at the body of a Leprechaun whom you have just killed. Poor little Leprechaun. Still, he was biting you on the ankle, and he *did* do you a fair bit of damage in the fight.

There are no exits from this chamber.

Go to **75** and reconsider your options.

111

'Hello, Duckie,' says the Fiend. 'What a pleasure to find an intelligent visitor for a change. Most of them blow themselves up, you know. Very painful. Now, what is it you want of me?'

Since you don't really know what you want of him, you simply stare dumbly as he climbs out of his coffin, stretching to get the stiffness out of his joints.

'Don't you know what you want?' asks the Fiend, kindly enough. 'It's always the way, even with the clever ones. Do you like my poetry, by the way? I wrote the verse on the plaque.'

Do you praise his poetry, comparing him to Milton, Keats, Shakespeare and Pam Ayres (none of whom he will have heard of, since they were not yet born in King Arthur's day)? If so, go to **87**.

Do you tell the truth? If so, go to **117**.

112

'What a delight! What a masterwork!' exclaims the Fiend when you hand him the completed poem. 'For this, you shall be richly rewarded '

And for every line of your poem, he hands you a Gold Piece! You're doing rather well for Gold Pieces now, Pip. How many is that altogether? Don't forget to keep a careful tally.

'Now,' says the Fiend, 'since my arithmetic is rather weak, you must tell me if there are more than ten lines in your poem.'

If there are, in fact, more than ten lines in your poem, go to **81**.

If there are only ten lines or less, go to **116**.

113

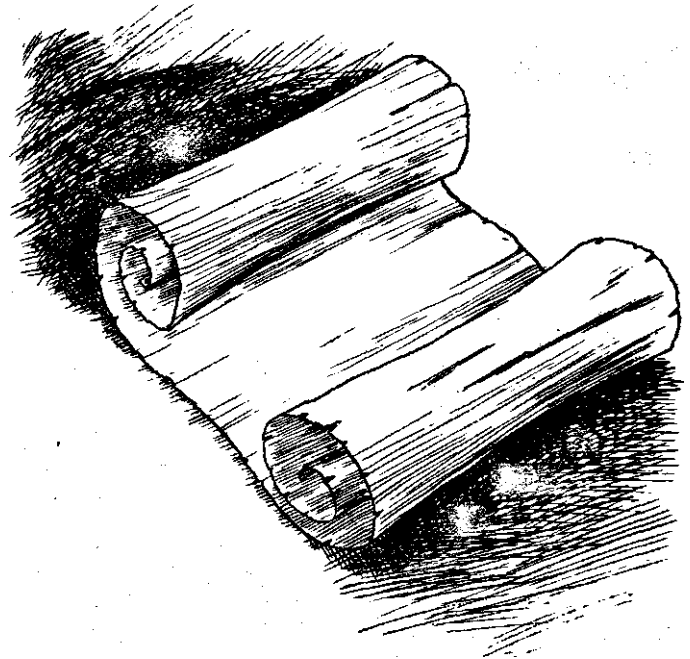
The scroll is absolutely blank. What a swiz! Still, you've got your gold.

There are no exits from this room. Better return to **75** and reconsider your options.

114

What's this? More gold? It is, you know - fifty Gold Pieces and a double-headed copper coin. What a bit of luck!

But there's more! Tucked away in the bottom of the purse is a parchment scroll. There's something very familiar about this type of scroll. It looks very similar to the scrolls lying about in Merlin's log castle: the ones he uses to write



113 The scroll is absolutely blank.

115-116

spells on. Get your dice "rolling quickly, Pip, to find out what is written on the scroll.

Score 1 or 2 and go to **113**.

Score 3 or 4 and go to **88**.

Score 5 or, 6 and go to **83**.

Score 7 or 8 and go to **106**.

Score 9 or 10 and go to **93**.

Score 11 or 12 and go to **98**.

Go to **14**.

115

Not your best shot, Pip. The room is still dark and you are still being attacked.

If you decide to fight now, go to **90**.

If you think it's worth another try at making friends, deduct 4 from your current LIFE POINTS and go to **92**.

116

'Short works are often the best,' sighs the Fiend, although something in his tone makes you suspect he may have been just a little disappointed. He stretches and yawns. 'Now, my young friend, while it has been a great pleasure talking with a fellow poet, I must rest now. Spend your gold wisely on some foolishness.'

With which he sweeps back his opera cloak, favours you with a dazzling smile and leaps back into his coffin, drawing down the lid. Nor will any amount of knocking persuade him to open it again.

117-119

Since there doesn't seem much else you can do here, go to **62** and explore the temple.

117

The Fiend fangs you. Go to **14**.

118

You've got a knack with doors, Pip. It opened ever so quietly. Which is just as well since there are two Guards on the other side, nasty big men with leather armour and swords.

Since you opened the door quietly, you have the advantage of surprise which gives you the first blow against each of them. Go to **86**.

119

This is the secret of the magic duck.

Once - and once only - in any adventure, you may call upon the magic duck for aid. When you do so, as you have obviously done now, the duck will instantly *switch off* any magic that happens to be going on in your vicinity. Thus, invisible creatures become visible. Fireballs fizzle out harmlessly, any magical (but only magical) damage done to you during the Section is immediately repaired. In short, so far as magic is concerned, the magic duck enables you to proceed, unharmed, to the next Section of your choice.

And a little good news. Although you can only use the magic duck once in an adventure, you may

(provided you aren't killed and lose it) take it with you as part of your equipment in your *next* adventure.

HEY, PIP! NO SIGN OF THE WIZARD
ANSALOM AND NOWHERE ELSE TO GO?

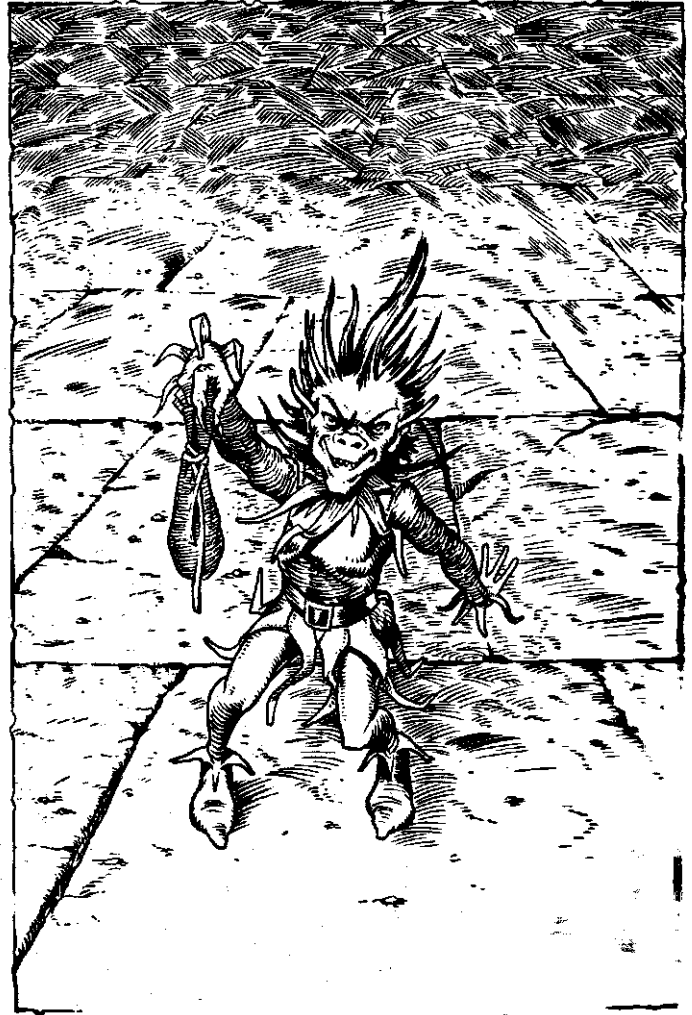
BETTER RETRACE YOUR STEPS
THROUGH THE EARLIER SECTIONS TO
SEE IF YOU HAVE MISSED SOMETHING.

HE MUST BE IN HERE *SOMEWHERE!*

120

The darkness vanishes and your -torch abruptly lights up a smallish chamber. Lying on the floor, carefully extracting his teeth from your ankle, is a Leprechaun!

'Sure and begorrah,' says the Leprechaun with a thick Irish brogue (you wouldn't expect him to come from Israel, would you?). 'Isn't it sorry I am to be after biting your poor ankle, but wasn't I thinking you might be a monster or that wicked Wizard Ansalom and didn't I launch meself without thinking. But I could tell from the taste you had good decent blood in ye, so let me make amends for the damage.'



120 The Leprechaun hands you a pars.

121-122

With which he hands you a small leather purse and, in the manner of Leprechauns, vanishes.

Go to **114** to discover what is in the purse.

121

You run, as if the devil himself were after you. (And though he isn't, an Invisible Demon is certainly the next best thing.)

THWAP! That's the noise you made running into the edge of the circle, Pip. It seems that while you can step in easily enough, getting out is a bit more difficult. Hurriedly you feel your way around the invisible wall. No way out of the circle and the Demon is getting closer.

Return to **144** and make a fight of it.

122 **** B

You're halfway across the room, tiptoeing, when a soft voice whispers in your ear: 'He doesn't need guards, Pip - he's got me ...'

You freeze, then turn. You are staring into the cold eyes and smiling fangs of a fully-fledged, dyed-in-the-wool, real-life

VAMPIRE!

Do you still have that garlic, by any chance?

If you still have your garlic (no cheating now: if you ate it, it's gone) then go to **132**.

If you don't, go to **147**.



122 The Vampire is hungry for blood

123

Nope, nothing of interest here. No way out either.
Return to **96** before deciding where to go next.

124

Slowly, gingerly, you steal down the steps. The Guard remains asleep. Carefully, slowly, you reach out to get his keys. Roll dice to see if you make it.

Score 2-6 and go to **142**.

Score 7-12 and go to **126**.

125

It's a dungeon all right; and a torture chamber. Just look at the shackles on the walls. And the Iron Maiden - that big coffin-shaped cabinet with iron spikes inside the door. And the rack for stretching people. And the branding irons in the charcoal brazier.

The Wizard Ansalom could do somebody a lot of damage in here. Fortunately there is no one to do damage to. No wonder the Guard was asleep - no tough job guarding an empty dungeon.

There is no other exit from this room.

Better go back to **96** and reconsider your options.

126

Sneakily done: you've got the keys and the Guard is still snoring soundly. Use them to open the dungeon door quietly, and go to **125**.



125 The deadly Iron Maiden

127 **** B (Hounds Only)

As you approach, a strange thing happens - the northern door swings open of its own accord!

You are looking into a vast, granite-lined throne room, colonnaded with black, granite pillars. Between each pillar stands a thick, two-metre-high, jet-black lighted candle, which gives off a heavy, sickly-sweet smell of incense. Beyond the columns hang heavy maroon velvet drapes.

At the end of the colonnade is a granite dais, stepped to a huge, rough-hewn granite throne. By the foot of the throne are two of the largest, fiercest, jet-black Hounds you have ever seen — Hounds that stare at you malevolently with fiery eyes. And on the throne sits a tall, dark-haired, dark-bearded figure dressed in heavy, flowing black robes. Menace hangs over him like a thundercloud.

'Welcome, little person,' booms the figure on the throne. 'It seems you wish to see me.'

It's him, Pip! It's *him!!* *You are face to face with the Wizard Ansalom Himself!!!*

What a fight this is going to be. (You *are* going to fight him, aren't you, Pip? Not much point in the whole adventure if you don't, eh?)

First the good news. The Wizard Ansalom will make no move to harm you until you have successfully defeated his Black Hounds. Now the bad news. Each Hound has 25 LIFE POINTS and bites with + 4 damage. Get the dice rolling, Pip.



128-130

If the Hounds kill you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Hounds, take a deep breath, use any Healing Potions or Salves you may have and go to **137**.

128

Roll dice to see if the search produced anything worthwhile.

Score 2- 6 and go to **123**.

Score 7- 9 and go to **148**.

Score 10- 12 and go to **133**.

129

Well done, Pip. That was some fight and some opponent!

As the Demon dies, it becomes visible once more, all scaley and slimey and horns and tail and fangs, exactly as you imagined it would be. Big too. But dead now: very dead. And with the Demon dead, it's now quite easy to step from the circle.

Go to **128** and decide if it's worth searching now.

130

You follow the corridor quietly eastwards, noting that this one is rather more dimly lit than the others. The wall torches have been replaced by only a very few lamps. And when you reach the steps downwards, you can see there are fewer still below.



129 The dead Demon becomes visible

At the bottom of the steps is a stout door, the top half of which comprises bars through which emerges a dull red glow. The door has a huge lock. It also has a Guard. Fortunately a very tired Guard, since he is asleep at his post.

Looks like you've discovered the dungeons, Pip, or possibly some horrible torture chamber. Is Ansalom keeping the Queen locked away here? Who can tell?

If you decide to try your luck at stealing the Guard's keys and opening the dungeon, go to **124**.

Otherwise return to any available Section you haven't already explored.

131

With the Skeleton no more than a pile of bones now, you have an opportunity to examine the whipping post it was tied to. It's a pretty ordinary whipping post except for one thing: it seems to be a bit loose. In fact, if you tug it sideways, it might even come right up.

You can always leave the silly thing alone, of course; in which case you should simply return to **33** and reconsider your options.

But if you decide to try to uproot the post, go to **139**.

132

'Aarrrrghhhh!'

The scream of the Vampire as he sees the garlic in

your hand. He clutches his throat and writhes. 'Aaarrghhh!'

His knees buckle slowly. His eyes cross. His face goes pale (well, paler). His entire body begins to convulse. His fangs fall out. He drops in a heap on the floor. He begins to shrivel, growing smaller and smaller until all that's left is a tiny heap of dust, some mouldering clothes and a jewelled ring (worth 500> Gold Pieces of anybody's money). Lucky you had that garlic. Pip.

If you want to try the door on the east wall, go to **136**.

If you want to try the door on the north wall, go to **127**.

133

You've found a crystal ball!

As you look in the crystal, images begin to form. They show you a beautiful Lady, finely dressed, but with her clothing muddied and torn, chained in a deep, dark dungeon. The Queen! It must be the Queen! But where? Alas the crystal does not tell you.

Nothing else for it but to press on.

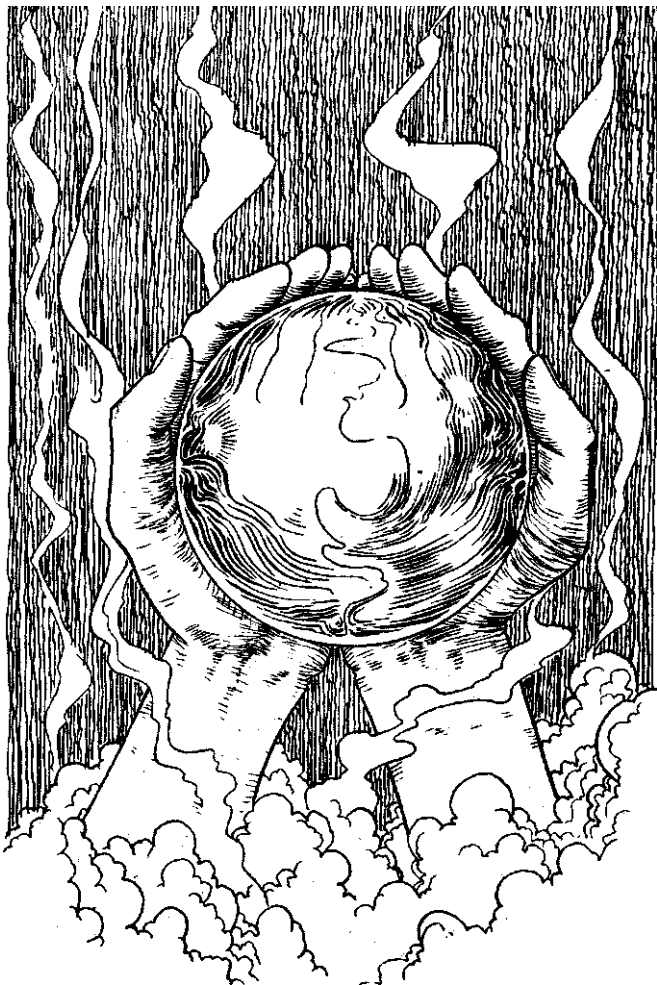
Since there are no exits from this room, return to **96** before deciding where to go next.

134

Perseverance is a very worthwhile characteristic in an adventurer. Roll dice.

Score 4 or more and go to **143**.

Score less than 4 and you find nothing. Go to **107** and reconsider your options.



133 Images form in the crystal ball

135

As you stand triumphant in the mayhem of the shattered Throne Room, a small sound behind the throne attracts your attention. You investigate. Nothing there. But that was definitely a noise. You examine the wall. No need for an experienced adventurer and Wizard slayer like yourself to roll dice this time: you find a secret door! As the granite slab slides back, you know for certain the steps downwards can only lead to one place - the prison where the wicked Wizard (now defunct) was holding brave Queen Guinevere.

You've done it, Pip. You've succeeded in your mission. You're a first-class, five-star adventurer. Now turn to page **167**.

136

You are looking into a large chamber set out with rows of bunk beds, each one of which has a small wooden locker placed by the side. Obviously a dormitory, Pip. And empty.

Better try the northern door by going to **127**.

137

'My Hounds!' screams the Wizard Ansalom. 'You've killed my Hounds!' And he leaps to his feet, hands outstretched, muttering a savage spell.

Are you ready for this, Pip? The Wizard Ansalom has 150 LIFE POINTS. You want that again?' 150 LIFE POINTS. What's more, he is equipped with 10 Firefinger Lightning Bolts exactly like the ones Merlin gave you. (With one important difference: Ansalom's Lightning Bolts do not hit their target automatically. You must roll dice each time he uses one. Unless he scores 5 or better, the bolt misses you.)

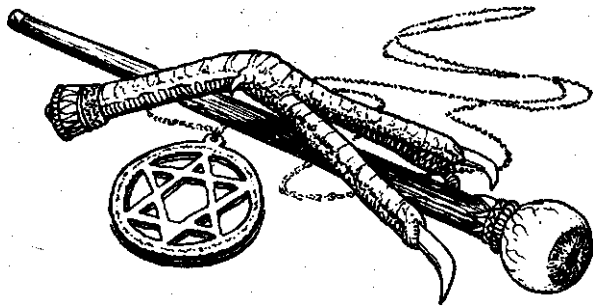
Let the magical battle commence, Pip. And may the best Wizard win!

If the Wizard Ansalom kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Wizard Ansalom, lick your wounds and go to **135**.

138

In some ways this is the strangest room you've been in yet. It's empty of people, but not of clutter. In fact it's so jam-packed you can hardly tell what size it is.



There's a furnace and benches, racks, shelves, cabinets, sacks, drums, barrels . . . the list could go on forever. Hanging from the ceiling are stuffed lizards, dried herbs, shrunken heads, a few glistening skulls and one full skeleton. There are banners on the wall embroidered with mystic sigils. There is a circle drawn on the floor on one of the few open spaces; and the circle is inscribed with more mystic signs.

One glance would tell you all you need to know. This is obviously the Wizard Ansalom's magical workroom.

Want to search? Go to **128**.

Interested to see what happens if you step into the magic circle? Go to **144**.

Decide to get out of here as quickly as possible?

Return to any available earlier Section since there are no exits from this room.

139

The post doesn't uproot. But it does **move** sideways with a funny noise like the grinding of gears beneath your feet! A trapdoor has opened up under you! You're falling, Pip. You're falling!

Go to **36**.

140

This isn't looking too good, Pip. They've seen you all right. And they're moving fast! They're up and on you like an avalanche! There's nothing you can

do. You draw old EJ and fight like a demon, but there are just too many of them ...

Guess what? You're right.

Go to **14**.

141

Those Hounds were put there for a purpose, Pip. Hounds are Hounds and if the Wizard Ansalom wasn't using them for hunting, he must have been using them to guard something. But what?

Cunning adventurer that you are, you take a careful look around... And find a casket! It's only a small casket and it smells a bit of Hounds, but you open it anyway. And inside, resting on one of those little blue velvet cushions jewellers use, is a diamond ring.

What an interesting find! Even to your inexperienced eye, it's worth at least 170 Gold Pieces. What's more, it may even be magic: you never can tell with rings found in a Wizard's castle. You'll need to rub the ring and throw two dice to find out if the ring is really magic.

Score 2- 6 and go to **146**.

Score 7-9 and go to **153**.

Score 10 - 12 and go to **156**.

142 * * * B

He's awake!

The Guard has 20 LIFE POINTS and is armed with a sword which does + 2 damage. He's a bit dozy and so needs to roll 7 or better to hit you. His armour isn't the best either- it only subtracts 1 from damage scored against him.

If the Guard kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Guard, you may use the keys to proceed into the dungeon: go to **125**.

143

You just got lucky, Pip - you've found the Wizard Ansalom's Treasure Room. And what a find! Just look at it. Gold, silver and gems galore. A king's ransom here. Old Ansalom must have been thieving for years to amass this lot. There's even a pen in one corner full of honking pigs.

If you take time to count, you will find:

20,000 Gold Pieces.

18,000 Silver Pieces.

25 emeralds, each worth 500 Gold Pieces.

61 rubies, each worth 200 Gold Pieces.

77 diamonds, each worth 1,000 Gold Pieces.

18 pigs, each worth about 3 Silver Pieces.

What a find! And it's yours if you can kill the Wizard Ansalom. Nobody will begrudge it to you, since you earned it fair and square. (Except the pigs, of course, which will have to go back to their rightful owners.) You can take all the gems now and about 500 of the Gold Pieces - no more, gold

is heavy - or you can come back later for the lot after you've put paid to Ansalom.

Either way, return to **107** before deciding where to go next.

144

You're not going to believe this, Pip, but you've just triggered the second biggest nasty in the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. There is an Invisible Demon in the circle!

This thing (which would look really scaly and slimy and fanged and horned and tailed and vicious if you could see it) has 40 LIFE POINTS. It always gets the first strike; being invisible. It tears bits out of you at + 5 damage and its skin is so tough you automatically deduct 4 from any damage scored against it. What's more, it's very hard to hit, being invisible, so you need to roll at least an 8 or better to make contact.

No point in trying to make friends. It's fight or run!

If you decide to run, go to **121**.

If you decide to fight, stay right here and fight!

If the Demon kills you, go to **14**.

If you somehow miraculously manage to kill the Demon, go to **129**.

145

Phew! They didn't notice.

Go to **107** and reconsider your options.

146

Rubbing the ring doesn't produce any sign of magic, but what it does do is reveal a tiny inscription on the inside of the band. You squint closely at it, holding the ring up to the light, and finally make out these words:

MPQEM 4 VKOGU VQ TCKUG VJG HKGPF'.

Bit of a mystery that. If you can decode it, it may come in handy sometime. But for now return to **33** and decide where to go next.

147 ***B**

Greedy pig - fancy munching all that garlic. Now you're going to have to fight him.

The Vampire has 35 LIFE POINTS (or in his case, DEATH POINTS). He carries no weapons, but that hardly matters since his fangs are poison. If he manages to hit you twice in a row, you're dead and that's all there is to it.

Roll to see who has the first strike. And don't worry about becoming a Vampire yourself if he kills you — that's only an old wives' tale. Probably

If the Vampire kills you, go to **14**.

If you kill the Vampire, you have a choice:

Eastern door go to **136**.

Northern door go to **127**.

148

Mmm, something interesting here. Looks like a wand of some sort... You lift the wand and wave

it. Nothing happens. All the same, it *looks* like a wand ... You point it. Nothing happens.

'Silly thing!' you mutter. And at once the wand emits a luminous green globule, which sticks to the wall, pulsating slightly. A little trial and error soon teaches you to use the globule wand. You point and say, 'Silly thing' and a globule fires. Whether or not the globule hits the thing you're aiming at depends on whether you achieve your normal strike throw. If it does hit, the globule will do no damage, but it will hold your opponent perfectly still while you get four strikes at him without his being able to strike back.

Now roll *one* die to find out how many globules are left in the wand.

Since there's no exit from the lab, return to **96** before deciding where to go next.

149

The northern corridor ends in a door, which is slightly ajar. Carefully, quietly, you push it open.

A Guard Room! It's obviously a Guard Room since there is all sorts of military equipment - swords, shields, daggers, spears - stacked along the walls; not to mention tables, chairs, plates, goblets, even dice, which you would normally associate with large numbers of Guards. The only thing is - it's empty. Something suspicious here, Pip.

There are two exit doors to the room: one in the east wall, the other in the north wall.

If you decide to enter the room, go to **122**.
If not, return to any available Section you haven't explored.

150

Another baddie bites the dust! You're doing rather well at the moment, Pip.

If you want to continue searching for a secret door, goto **134**.

If not, return to **107** and reconsider your options.

151

There's definitely something there. Use old EJ to prise it open - he'll protest, but just ignore him. There now - it wasn't an empty chest at all. There's a hidden compartment with 200 Gold Pieces inside! What's more, as you snaffle the gold, you find a rather mouldy clove of garlic and notice some writing on the real bottom of the chest. It's a bit faded, but you may be able to make sense of it.

What I have left
Within this chest
Is more precious than gold.
Treasure it
Keep it
You will find its best use
When you pass through a Guard Room
On a northern corridor.

More precious than gold? There was gold all right, but nothing more precious than gold. You search again to make sure there aren't any hidden gems, but nothing more turns up. Still, you can always take the mouldy garlic if you want, although it's difficult to see what good it will do you - it's well beyond eating now.

Go back to the circular room in **71** and take it from there.

152

There's definitely something there. Use old EJ to prise it open - he'll protest, but just ignore him.

There now - it wasn't an empty chest at all. There's a hidden compartment with 200 Gold Pieces inside!

Go back to the circular room in **71** and take it from there.

153

It's magic all right! If you wear it on your right hand, you get one extra Firefinger Lightning Bolt! If you wear it on your left hand, it will restore a total of 25 LIFE POINTS. The trouble is, you can only use it once. You don't have to decide right now which hand to wear it on, but once you do put it on, your choice is made.

Now better return to **33** and decide where you will go next.

154

After you've finished staggering about from the effects of being gassed, it occurs to you to test the chest for a false bottom. You can do this by rolling two dice.

Score 2-6 and go to **151**.

Score 7-12 and go to **152**.

155

Well, there's one consolation: the old fool was carrying 70 Gold Pieces, presumably stolen from adventurers he managed to kill with that dagger. You hold on to them now: they may come in handy for *Bribery* at some stage if you can get hold of a few more.

Now go to **33** and decide where you want to go next.

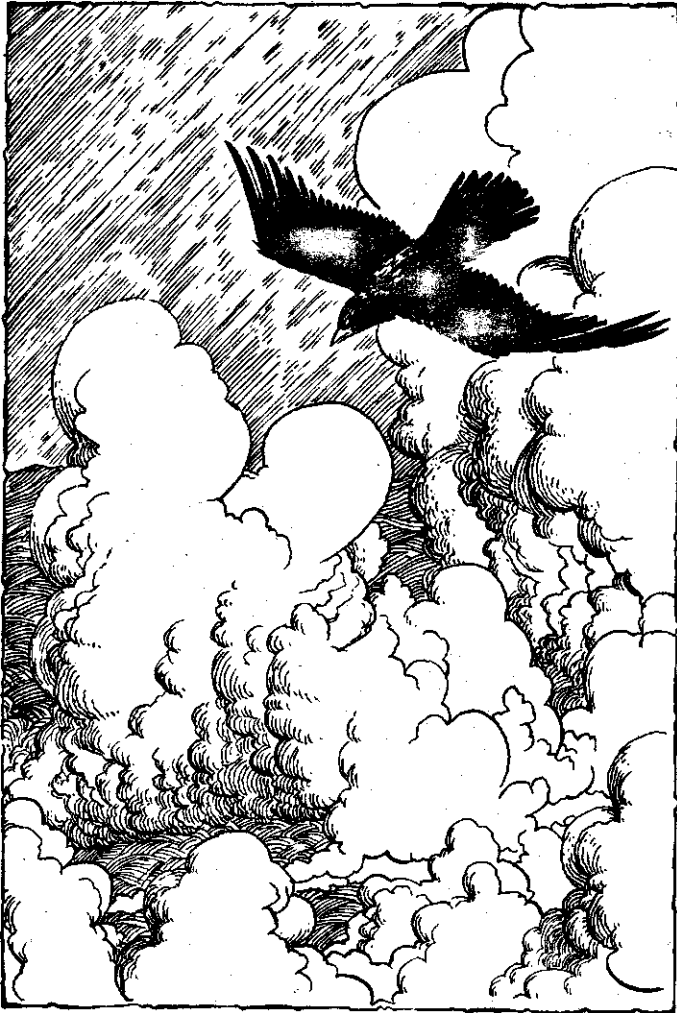
156

Doesn't seem to be magic. Doesn't seem to be anything except an ordinary valuable ring. But maybe there's something else in the casket. Have a look under the velvet cushion, Pip. Well, well, well - a scrap of parchment. Read it quickly!

To reach the Wizard and your goal, remember always that you must befriend a spider.

That's it. Not very helpful, is it? Still, good advice always comes in useful sooner or later and you do have a feeling that this is somehow good advice.

But for the moment, go back to **33** and decide where you will go next.



The raven flew high over Camelot

PIP TRIUMPHANT

A raven, wheeling high above the cornfields to the south of Glastonbury Tor, started at the sudden eruption of banners from the towers of Camelot. The King's insignia was there; and the battle standard of the Table Round; and the colours of every major earl, duke and knight. The national flags of Wessex and Sussex and Essex were there and even a Roman standard (no longer taking any real pride of place since Arthur sent the Romans packing). But most important of all, the Queen's own golden pennant was there, flying higher even than the King's insignia. That would have been very strange in any other circumstances, but even the meanest, rudest peasant knew what it meant now ... and rejoiced.

The raven, which, in the manner of its kind, had been on a search for grains, turned at the sight and flew strongly north to circle over Camelot itself.

What a sight below! There had never been such a bustle, such excitement. In the castle itself, there was a full turn-out of the Guard, armour polished to mirror brightness and every man standing rigid as a statue at his post. Around them, servants scurried to and fro like ants, a constant stream

into and out of the main banquet hall in obvious preparation for a feast: and a great feast at that, to judge from the foodstuffs and wines that were being carried in.

There was, too, considerable activity at the lists, as if the fields were being prepared for a joust, or even a full tournament. The stands were being decorated with streamers and bunting, the great horses were being led from the stables and gently exercised before receiving their padded accoutrements and trappings. Squires were busily polishing lances and maces and swords as if the very future of the realm depended on their brightness.

From somewhere deep within the castle, muffled and distorted by the thickness of the walls, strange sounds rose up like animals in pain, clear indication that the minstrels were tuning up their instruments in preparation for some form of grand musical entertainment. Lutes, flutes, harps and bandores competed with the bells and drums of the percussion section in a cacophony that did not sound as if it would ever achieve harmony.

And while all this was going on in Camelot itself, there was even greater activity on the approach road to the castle. A vast crowd lined the edges for nearly half a mile, kept off the road itself only by the constant attention of harassed stewards running hither and thither to push back a craning farmer, a curious goodwife, or shoo away the herds of urchins who danced through the legs of their elders on to the forbidden path.

At the main gates, the drawbridge had been lowered, the portcullis raised. Two lines of trumpeters, dressed in their gayest raiment, were at attention, their instruments half raised and gleaming golden in the sunshine, by the approach.

On the drawbridge itself, resplendent in full armour, the great sword Excalibur at his side, seated upon a magnificent dappled charger, was the broad, brown-bearded figure of the King. Ranged behind him, row upon row, in full dress armour, visors raised, plumes dancing in the breeze, was the full complement of Knights of the Order of the Table Round, tense, joyous, expectation written on every face.

Suddenly, distantly, the crowd began to cheer, a sound that swelled and grew and did not stop, but rolled closer and still closer like a great sea wave. The King moved forward and, forgetting royal dignity, half stood in his stirrups, the better to see.

A convoy of Cardinals, robed in the Roman purple, emerged from the castle to take their places by the King's side; and behind them the brown-robed, bare-footed monks from the Abbey.

The cheering grew louder, closer. As if in response to some hidden signal, the trumpeters raised their instruments to their lips. And waited. The cheer became a roar, a wild exuberance, a joyous call to the deep blue skies of heaven. The fanfare began, brassily unnerving even the great war horses by its volume. King Arthur's patience broke and he urged his mount forward.

At that instant, around the last bend of the approach road, there came Queen Guinevere herself, a trifle bedraggled, to be sure, but proud and upright, seated on the back of a nervous, prancing pony. And leading that pony was a small, slight figure dressed in a jerkin of dragonhide and carrying a broadsword which, but for its size, might have been a mirror image of the King's own.

'Guinevere!' the crowd roared. 'Guinevere!' And then, as if at some secret, hidden signal: 'Pip! Pip! Pip!'

As if startled by the sudden tumult, the raven wheeled away abruptly and flew south again to land eventually on a rocky outcrop near a cave mouth in a cliff beside the shoreline. There it waited, preening itself occasionally and keeping a wary eye out for hawks.

Soon, along the shingle path towards the cave mouth, there approached an extremely beautiful young woman with long hair, black as jet, and the walk of an aristocrat. The raven watched her beadily, bobbing its head and hopping, but making no attempt to fly away.

She stopped. 'Are you there, my darling?' she called out to no one in particular. Then, guided by some instinct, she turned towards the raven. 'Is that you?'

The raven strutted, stretched, then metamorphosed. 'It's me, m'dear,' said Merlin, now



The woman speaks to the raven

standing in the raven's place. 'Me. Yes. Yes, indeed.' And he embraced the young woman, kissing her with far more fire than was decent for a man of his advancing years.

'Well,' said the young woman when she had finally extricated herself. 'Have you been to Camelot?'

'Yes,' said Merlin. 'Yes, indeed. I watched the Queen's return before I flew here to see you. Quite an occasion. Banners, fanfares, cheering crowds — much as you'd expect. Not every day the Queen is rescued. No. No, indeed. I think they're planning a tournament. I suppose I'll have to get back for that.'

'So your protege performed well?' the dark-haired woman asked.

'Pip?' asked Merlin. 'Yes, Pip performed *very* well. Yes. Yes, indeed.'

What a day, Pip! What a truly magnificent, glorious day! And what an adventure! Notice how everyone treats you differently now, since you rescued the Queen? You're somebody now, Pip. *Somebody important.*

The cart rumbles slowly down the rutted roadway that leads to the farm of Freeman John and Goodwife Mary. A new cart too, hardly touched by the dust and mud of the journey; a cart given you by King Arthur himself, along with the sturdy pony that's pulling it.

There was the offer of a great deal more from the King - gold, honours, even a place at the Table Round itself, despite your age. But all you asked for was that cart and a horse to pull it. They thought you were a little crazy when you said that was all you wanted. They didn't understand your natural modesty, Pip. Nor the fact you needed a cart to carry all the booty you nicked from the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. What are your adopted parents going to say when you appear with this lot, eh?

20,000 Gold Pieces.

18,000 Silver Pieces.

Emeralds worth 12,500 Gold Pieces.

Rubies worth 12,200 Gold Pieces.

Diamonds worth 77,000 Gold Pieces. (Less any Bribes, of course.)

Not to mention several other odds and ends **you** managed to pick up along the way. Enough there to buy a whole new farm. Ten whole new farms! Won't they be surprised? You'll be there in an hour and won't they be amazed?

The sun hangs low in the sky as your pony trundles onwards. What a day! What a glorious day!

'Pip...'

That voice sounds familiar.

'Pip ... Excuse me, Pip ...'

Good grief, it's Mean Jake! You remember - the

boy who was always picking fights with you in the market. It seems like another age now. All the same, you drop your hand casually to the hilt of old Excalibur Junior. You're battle-hardened now, so no sense in taking chances.

But Mean Jake, standing by the roadside, has his cap off and is screwing it up in his hands nervously. You rein in the pony, watching him warily.

'Excuse me, Pip ...' he says, 'I know you're very busy and all, but...' Screw, screw at the cap. '... I heard what you done — about rescuing the Queen and getting rid of the Wizard Ansalom and all — and I just wanted to say I'm sorry for all the ... well, all the trouble I gave you and I was wondering... well, if we might be... well, friends, you know ...'

And he looks so miserable and hangdog (and you're feeling so good,-Pip) that you smile and say magnanimously, 'Of course, Mean Jake! Hop up on the cart and you can come home with me for tea. There may even be fresh scones!'

'Thank you, Pip. Thank you!' And Mean Jake climbs up excitedly on the cart and sits proudly beside you as you shake the reins to tell the pony to move along.

You sit silent, lost in your own thoughts of the great adventure while Mean Jake prattles on, trying to ingratiate himself with you, until you are suddenly jerked back to reality when the pony

halts abruptly. A tree branch has fallen across the road, blocking it completely.

'Look at that,' says Mean Jake. 'We'll never move it.'

'Yes, we will,' you say confidently. After the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle a little thing like a tree branch isn't going to hold up Pip. With just the slightest swagger, you climb down from the cart and, taking a deep breath, you drag that old tree branch off into the undergrowth with a single, massive effort.

There you are!' you say, as you emerge, brushing your hands together briskly. 'Nothing to ... it...'

But you are talking to yourself. Mean Jake has gone. *And so has your pony, cart and treasure!* The road is empty. Not a soul about, except a bedraggled-looking blackbird of some description, watching you from a tree branch.

'I'll kill him!' you roar, half drawing Excalibur Junior in your anger.

Tut, tut,' says the blackbird. 'Such temper.' It flutters down from the branch and struts towards you fearlessly before metamorphosing into the familiar form of Merlin, who stares at you as if he could read your very thoughts. Which apparently he can, for he says, 'Yes it's me, Pip. Yes, indeed. And that wasn't a blackbird - it was a raven. I never change into blackbirds. Never. They always seem obsessed by people's noses. Ravens are different. Noble birds, ravens - more in keeping

with a Magician of my stature. Easier to talk when you're a raven too. Blackbirds haven't the vocal chords for it.'

He seats himself on a nearby tree stump. 'Well, now,' he says, regarding you closely. 'Lost your treasure, have you? And the horse and cart the King gave you! Very careless. Very careless indeed. Especially to a thieving young haggis like Mean Jake. Should have known better after all you've been through.'

You hang your head a little shamefacedly. Because after all, you *were* showing off just a little when you climbed down from the cart.

'Yes,' says Merlin, as if still reading your thoughts. 'You were. Showing off. Yes. Yes, indeed. Not very proper behaviour for a Magician's Apprentice. Never find me showing off. But then I don't need to: everybody knows what a wise, handsome, noble and powerful person I am.'

He crosses one spindly leg over the other and falls off the tree stump. He picks himself up, mumbling crossly and plucking twigs from the folds of his robe. 'Sit down,' he says, indicating a second stump. 'And sit still. Don't fidget. I have something to tell you.'

So you sit (still) and wait (without fidgeting).

'I have good news and bad news for you, Pip,' Merlin tells you.

'Your adventure is over. Done. Finished. Successfully concluded. That's the bad news. You have to return to your own time now. (Which may be bad news or may not.) Don't worry about Pip - Pip's body, that is. I'll take care of it. It can walk back to the farm and nobody will know the difference. And don't make faces. I took care of Pip's body for years before you borrowed it, and I can take good care of it again.

Now the good news. The good news is that I am well pleased with what you did, Pip. I was just saying as much to my girl — to a young lady of my acquaintance not more than a few hours ago. Ansalom was a pest. The realm is well rid of him. And all credit to you for doing the job. Yes. Yes, indeed. It isn't often you find somebody with your talent, you know Pip. Somebody who can come into another time the way you did. That takes imagination. And you have it.

So I'll be calling on you again to take over Pip's body. Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. Avalon needs souls with your talent and your courage, so I'll be asking you to come back and take part in *new* adventures. Maybe even more dangerous than the Wizard Ansalom's Dark Castle. But you won't mind that, will you?

And you will come back, won't you?'

DREAMTIME



DREAMTIME

This Section is used **ONLY** when you decide to Sleep during an adventure. If the dice direct you here, follow these Rules:

1. You enter the Dreamtime with your LIFE POINTS at the exact level they were when you decided to Sleep.
2. You enter the Dreamtime without armour or protection of any sort.
3. You enter the Dreamtime without magic or weapons of any sort; save those which may be given you in a specific encounter.
4. You may take nothing back from the Dreamtime.
5. Any LIFE POINTS lost in the Dreamtime are deducted from your actual LIFE POINTS. If you are killed in the Dreamtime, you are really killed and must go directly to the dreaded **14**.

NOW ENTER Dreamtime BY THROWING TWO DICE AND GOING DIRECTLY TO THE DREAMTIME SECTION INDICATED BY YOUR SCORE.

If you survive, return to the Section where you decided to Sleep.

Dreamtime Sections

2. You are facing a small, cigar-shaped flying creature which dives at you incessantly. Although it does not touch you, each pass causes a ripple to pass over your brain with the automatic loss of 5 LIFE POINTS. The creature is a Brain Teaser. It has 15 LIFE POINTS and strikes first. Fight quickly!
3. You are being chased through a graveyard by a Vampire. If the ghastly creature catches you, you die! Already your legs are turning to jelly. Will you escape? Roll the Vampire's STRENGTH using two dice. Then roll your own STRENGTH, again using two dice. Compare STRENGTHS. If the Vampire has scored more than 5 points higher than you, he will catch you . . .
4. You are in the empty Banquet Hall of a strange and rather beautiful castle. On the table before you are two chalices, one of crystal, the other of bronze. One contains wine, the other poison, but you have no way of telling which is which and you must drink from one of the chalices. Test your LUCK now by rolling two dice. A score above 6

indicates that you are lucky enough to choose the correct chalice. A score of 6 or below indicates that you have drunk the poison, in which case roll two more dice and subtract the total from your present LIFE POINTS.

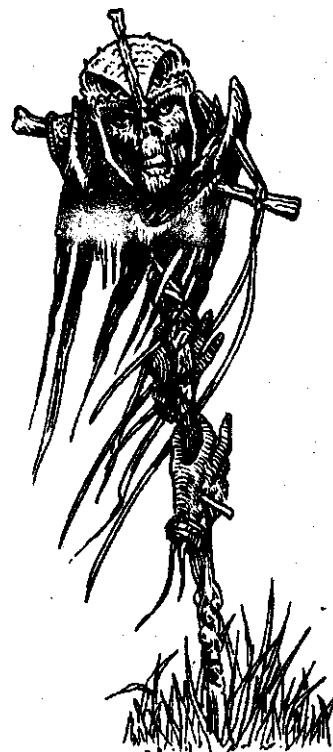
5. You are trying to escape from the turret of a high tower and have climbed out through a narrow window in the hope of scaling down the outside wall. Although there are good footholds, the surface is very slippery. Roll two dice to discover if you fall: score under 6 and down you go! If you find that you do fall, roll two more dice to find out if you fall on solid ground or in the moat. Score under 6 and you fall on solid ground for the loss of 10 LIFE POINTS. Score 6 or above and you fall in the moat with *no* loss of LIFE POINTS, but you must roll two more dice to see if you can swim. Score under 6 and you can't swim: you drown and die.
6. You are walking in a beautiful walled garden enjoying the summer sunshine when you are attacked by a swarm of bees. Each bee sting costs you 1 LIFE POINT. Roll one die to discover how many bees actually manage to sting you.
7. One of Merlin's spells has gone badly wrong and turned you into a stick of celery. You are now growing quietly in a vegetable patch. It is not such a bad life since you have cabbages and cauliflowers to talk to, but Merlin's goat

has broken through the fence and is munching his way towards you. Roll one die to discover if he likes celery. Score below 6 and he will nibble away 5 LIFE POINTS before passing on to eat all Merlin's carrots.

8. You are jousting with the Black Knight, a fearsome villain with 25 LIFE POINTS. You are wearing armour which deducts 5 from any damage scored against you. His armour is better and deducts 6 from damage scored against him. The lance used by the Black Knight adds 10 to any damage he scores in the joust. Your lance, however, has been blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and adds 12 to any damage you score. King Arthur rolls two dice to decide who will strike the first blow. If he scores 2-6, then the Black Knight goes first. If he scores 7-12 then you will go first.
9. You are in a gloomy corridor facing a large, hairy Sleep Monster. You have no weapons or armour, but nearby are two caskets. You have time to open only one of them before the Sleep Monster attacks. Roll one die. Score 1 - 3 and you find a magical dagger which dispatches the Sleep Monster instantly. Score 4-6 and the casket you open is full of sleep gas. This means you must Sleep again and make new rolls to find out if you are headed for the Dreamtime.

10. You are hunting boar in the forest and are armed with a bow and seven arrows. Each arrow scores a straight 10 points of damage if it hits, and you require to throw better than 6 on two dice in order to hit. You enter a clearing and discover a huge Ogre about to eat a comely maiden. You have time to fire all seven arrows before the ogre can possibly reach you. The Ogre has 40 LIFE POINTS and is so strong he scores +15 damage with the huge club he carries. You have seven chances to kill him before he reaches you and (because he is slow) one additional chance to finish him off with your bare hands before he thumps you with his club.
11. Following a disagreement with King Arthur about whether or not the world is flat, you have been cast without food or water into a deep, dark dungeon. How long you remain there depends on the results of your next die roll. For each point scored up to a maximum of 6 you remain one day - and lose 1 LIFE POINT - before the King relents.
12. You are on a high mountain top engaged in a magical battle with an evil Sorcerer who has occupied the top of a neighbouring mountain. In this battle you hurl gigantic waves of magical blue fire at one another. So long as both of you hurls a wave, the magic neutralises and no damage is done. But sooner or later one of you is going to run out of waves. Roll one die to find out how many

waves the enemy Sorcerer has left and one die to find out how many you have left. The one with the most waves reduces the opponent's LIFE POINTS to half their current total and wins the battle.



Quest Journal

PIP'S LIFE POINTS

Starting:

Current:

EXPERIENCE POINTS (20 = 1 PERMANENT LIFE POINT):

EQUIPMENT CARRIED

Gold Pieces
To be kept for future adventures:

BATTLE SCORES

Enemy: Enemy: Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS: Enemy LIFE POINTS: Enemy LIFE POINTS:

Result: Result: Result:
Enemy: Enemy: Enemy:
Enemy LIFE POINTS: Enemy LIFE POINTS: Enemy LIFE POINTS:

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<p>Enemy: Enemy LIFE POINTS:</p> <p>Result:</p>	<p>Enemy: Enemy LIFE POINTS:</p> <p>Result:</p>	<p>Enemy: Enemy LIFE POINTS:</p> <p>Result:</p>
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Rules of Combat

To Find Your Starting LIFE POINTS

1. Roll two dice and add the scores together.
2. Multiply the result by 4.

To Strike an Enemy [★]

Roll a 6 or higher on two dice.

To Damage an Enemy

1. Check how many points you rolled above the number needed to strike.
2. Subtract this from your enemy's LIFE POINTS.

To Knock Out an Enemy

Reduce his LIFE POINTS to 5.

To Kill an Enemy

Reduce his LIFE POINTS to zero (0).

Your enemies use the same method to attack you, as you roll dice for them.

To Restore Lost LIFE POINTS

1. *Healing Potions*: You have three bottles each containing six doses. Each dose restores LIFE POINTS equal to rolling two dice.
2. *Salves*: You have five applications. Each restores 3 LIFE POINTS.
3. *Sleep*: You can sleep any time except when fighting. Roll *one* die. If you score 1-4, turn to *Dreamtime*. If you score 5 or 6, LIFE POINTS are restored equal to rolling two dice. -

N.B. LIFE POINTS cannot be restored to above your Starting total - except through Experience.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

1. 1 EXPERIENCE POINT is gained for each fight or puzzle won or solved.
2. 20 EXPERIENCE POINTS = 1 PERMANENT LIFE POINT. 10 of these can be taken into future adventures.

Armour & Weapons

1. Using weapons increases the damage you score.
2. Using armour subtracts from damage scored against you.
3. You have three *permanent* pieces of equipment:
★*J*: Needs a roll of only 4 on two dice to hit and does +5 damage; *Dagger*: Does +2 damage; *Dragonskin jacket*: Deducts 4 from damage done to you.

Attack Magic

1. *Firefinger Lightning Bolts*: You have ten. They need no dice roll and never miss. Score 10 damage.
2. *Fireballs*: You have two. Roll at least a 6 on two dice or they are wasted. Score 75 damage.

To Avoid Fights

- a) Test whether your enemy will have a Friendly Reaction.
- b) Try *Bribery*.

a) *To Test for a Friendly Reaction*

Roll one die *once* for your enemy and one die *three* times for yourself. If you score *less* than your enemy, he is Friendly. Proceed as if you had won a fight.

b) *Bribery*

1. *Bribery* is only possible in Sections marked *B. The number of asterisks indicates the amount of Gold Pieces (or object of equal or higher value) your enemy will accept. *B = 100 GPs; **B = 500 GPs; ***B = 1,000 GPs; ****B = 10,000 GPs.
2. To offer a bribe, roll two dice. If you score 1-7, your bribe is refused. If you score 8-12, proceed as if you have won a fight.
3. Whether or not you are successful, subtract the bribe amount from your gold store.

Repeat Journeys

On repeat attempts at the adventure, any enemies previously killed remain dead. Any treasure collected is lost unless you are told otherwise.