

\$2.95

Volume 1 in the KINGDOM OF SORCERY Trilogy



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 7 GAMEBOOK

SCEPTRE OF POWER



By Morris Simon

394-74555-8

CHARACTER STATS CARD

SCEPTRE OF POWER



NAME: Carr Delling

CHAR. CLASS: Magic-user

SKILL POINTS:

Intelligence: 13 + _____ = _____

Dexterity: 11 + _____ = _____

Charisma: 11 + _____ = _____

HIT POINTS: 8 + _____ = _____

SPELLS:

CANTRIPS

Exterminate	Hairy
Tweak	Unlock
Cough	

WEAK SPELLS

Friends	Comprehend
Unseen Servant	Languages
Spider Climb	Burning Hands
Feather Fall	

STRONG SPELLS

Armor	Read Magic
Light	Sleep
Detect Magic	Find Familiar

FACED WITH A LIFE-AND-DEATH DECISION!

You stand high atop the tower of Castle Arcane, some three stories high. The city below is pitch-black except for a few distant lanterns. Your magical tutor and arch-rival, Arno, proceeds to explain your lesson in magic.

“The Feather Fall spell requires one of these,” he says, handing you a snow-white wing feather from a dove. “Whenever you’re ready, release the feather as you leap and say the spellword, ‘Drifter.’ Watch how I do it.”

Without hesitation, your tutor climbs up on the battlement and leaps outward into the night air. In the darkness, you hear him mutter the spellword. Gently Arno’s body begins to waft downward, the feather drifting beside him.

“Join me!” Arno dares when he lands lightly on the ground below. “Let’s see if you’re as smart as you claim to be!”

You fear there may be something your arch-rival has failed to tell you, yet you know that if you refuse to jump, he’ll declare you a coward and you’ll be in disgrace with your classmates.

What will you do?

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **234**. If it is less, turn to **182**.

Whatever decision you make,
you’re sure to find thrills galore
as you search for the legendary

SCEPTRE OF POWER

G. Barr



An **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**
Adventure Gamebook #7

Volume I in the **KINGDOM OF SORCERY** Trilogy

SCEPTRE of POWER

By **Morris Simon**

Cover Art by **Keith Parkinson**
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TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

**To Kelly and anyone else
who still believes in magic
after all these years**

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Distributed in the United Kingdom by TSR UK, Ltd. Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors.

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First printing: March, 1986
Printed in the United States of America
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 85-52203
ISBN: 0-88038-285-6

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!

Welcome, you who are about to attempt to discover the secrets of the fabulous **SCEPTRE OF POWER**, to an exciting, totally new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

Based on the popular **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** Game, Adventure Gamebooks require only two standard six-sided dice, an ample supply of luck—and, most of all, your skill in making decisions as you play the game. If dice are unavailable, a simple alternative, requiring only pencil and paper, may be used instead.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure Gamebooks read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you have read through the simple rules that follow, you should seldom find it necessary to refer back to them. Your options are repeated clearly in the text at each choice point. Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute—with **YOU** as the hero!

YOUR CHARACTER

SCEPTRE OF POWER is the first adventure in the **KINGDOM OF SORCERY** series, consisting of three separate volumes, each a complete adventure in itself. Throughout the trilogy, you play the role of Carr Delling, the orphaned son of Landor, the renowned Tikandian archmagus. In each book in the trilogy, you may increase your magical powers as you seek the lost secrets and treasures of your father, who was killed under mysterious circumstances not long after your birth.

Your quest for Landor's magical legacy begins on rugged Seagate Island, where your uncle Beldon now heads the famous College of Arcane Sciences, the academy of magic founded by your father long before you were born. Depending on the choices you make, your search for Landor's murderer and his missing spellbooks may lead you to perilous adventures in the wilderness of the Tikandian continent or down shadowy streets of frontier cities infested with all manner of sinister enemies.





PLAYING THE GAME

ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

YOUR Carr Delling will be different from someone else's because YOU help to create him.

Carefully tear out the removable **Character Stats Card** at the beginning of this book. This card is your record of Carr's character makeup. It also doubles as a bookmark.

Since you will probably be playing this adventure many times, we suggest that you write on the card lightly and in pencil only, so that your character stats can be erased easily. If you have access to a photocopier, you may wish to make photocopies of the Character Stats Card before you fill it in. Permission is hereby granted to make photocopies of the Character Stats Card *only*. Another alternative is to reproduce the card on a 3"x 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to complete the individual identity of Carr Delling by establishing his strengths and weaknesses. Your character's **name** (Carr Delling) and **character class** (Magic-user) have already been entered for you. Before you fill out the rest of the card, it is necessary for you to understand the game's scoring system.

SCORING

Playing the game requires you to keep track of three things—**hit points**, **skill points**, and your spellbook, listing the spells at your command. Keep these records on the **Character Stats Card** located at the front of the book. An explanation of each of these follows.

HIT POINTS

As Carr Delling, you have a specific life strength, represented by **hit points**. Once your character's hit points are gone, he ceases to exist, and the adventure has ended, whether the text has come to an end or not.

Carr may lose hit points when he fails, through the roll of the dice, to subdue an enemy with a magic spell or outwit the enemy, because the opponent has a chance to attack him in return. As a result, you must deduct a stated number of hit points, given in the text, from Carr's hit point total.

A character may also lose hit points through sneak attacks or through carelessness when he has no chance to fight back. In such instances, you will be asked to roll a die to determine damage or you will be told how many hit points to subtract. Record such damage on the Character Stats Card. Although you do not realize it at the beginning of this adventure, your character class is that of a magic-user, a class you already show some inherent knack for, although you don't really understand why. Magic-users are not particularly known for great physical strength.

Carr Delling begins this adventure with a total of 8 hit points, plus two random chances to improve this score. Roll one six-sided die twice and add the higher

number of the two scores to 8 for your total hit points. Record this number in the blank space labeled "hit points."

Guard Carr's hit points carefully, but don't be overly cautious about losing them when the goal seems worthwhile. At rare points throughout the story, you may have the opportunity to recover some of your hit points. However, it's important to remember that *you can never recover more hit points than you had at the start of your adventure.*



SKILL POINTS

Now you are ready to determine the **skills** of your character.

Skill points allow you to increase Carr's chances of success by adding the score for a specific skill to the dice roll. In this book, you are provided with a certain number of skill points in each of your three skills—**intelligence**, **dexterity**, and **charisma**—with 5 additional skill points to divide among the three skills as you see fit. The only restrictions are that, as a magic-user whose arcane powers demand great mental abilities, your **intelligence** skill score total—that is, *after* dividing up the additional 5 skill points—must be higher than the other two skills, and you must place at least 1 additional skill point in each of the three skill categories. An explanation of each of your skills follows.

Intelligence

A magic-user's **intelligence** is his most important skill. It enables him to think through all aspects of a situation quickly and clearly, frequently while under great pressure. It also determines his ability to both learn and use the magic spells he will have a chance to acquire throughout this adventure.

When you use your intelligence skill in this book, roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is equal to, or larger than, the number required (given in the text), then you are successful.



Dexterity

Carr's **dexterity** skill score increases his chances of success in feats involving such things as nimbleness, agility, speed, dodging, and the like. It also occasionally is helpful in handling certain tricky spell components while learning or casting a spell. In addition, while Carr is a magic-user and therefore has no fighting skill score, his dexterity skill occasionally helps him in combat to dodge his attacker or leap to the attack.

To use your dexterity skill score, roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is equal to, or greater than, the number given in the text, you have succeeded.

Charisma

Your **charisma** skill score can be considered a measurement of your leadership abilities and your ability to convince others. It helps make others believe in you and be willing to follow you. When you favor a certain course of action over other possible courses, it helps convince others that your course is the best one.

To use your charisma skill, roll two dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you are successful.

Unlike other **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** Adventure Gamebooks, the **SCEPTRE OF POWER** series offers your character the unique ability to either grow or shrink in his abilities, depending on how well he does. You may wish to compare how well you do by adding together your final scores in intelligence, dexterity, and charisma each time you finish an adventure.



SPELLBOOK

In this book, you will be given an opportunity to learn a variety of spells, some easy, some more difficult. In later sequences, you may have a chance to use the spells in your spellbook to your advantage. You may *not* use *any* spell unless you have first learned how to cast that particular spell. Your intelligence skill is your primary aid in learning spells. Keep track of the spells you have learned by placing a check mark next to them in the spellbook located on the Character Stats Card at the front of the book.

It is important to note that any spell you have learned may be used only *once* during the course of your adventure. Thus, whenever you use a spell you have learned, you must erase it from your spellbook.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play the adventure when dice are unavailable, there is a simple substitute method that requires only pencil and paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Then draw one of the slips, note the number, and place it back in the container. Mix up the numbers and draw a second time. Each draw represents one roll of a die. If only one die is called for, draw only one number.

YOUR Carr Delling is now complete, and you are ready to begin your unforgettable, and dangerous, journey into the world of magic! Turn to page 13—and good luck!

The warped wheels of the cart jar your mother's unconscious body, even though she lies swathed in a thick pile of blankets and furs. You clench the handrails tightly, struggling to keep your balance as you slip and slide down the steep, ice-covered mountain trail in front of the heavy oaken cart. All your concentration is on keeping it from lurching over the edge of the rugged cliff and into the sea below.

You can see the first peasant huts of Delmer, your mother's clan village, only a few hundred yards away when three grim-faced figures step into the narrow trail in front of you. One of them carries a sharp scythe as if it were a weapon. You stiffen your well-muscled legs, trying to brake the heavy cart on the steep trail. Your worn leather shepherd's boots skid on the packed snow, sending the handcart sliding painfully into your back.

"Get out of my way!" you cry to the villagers barring your path. "My mother has had a fever for five days! She'll die unless the healer prays for her!"

The closest man, whom you suddenly recognize as Ulrik, your mother's first cousin, shakes his head.

"Marla Delling will not enter Delmer, dead or alive!" he answers, drawing a worn but sharp cutlass. "That was decided when she chose to wed the demon who sired you!"

Ulrik's frown is stern, but you see past it to a fearful look in his eyes. His hand shakes on the hilt of the rusty old cutlass. His two companions seem reluctant to step closer.

You could try to force your way past the nervous men (turn to 12), but perhaps it would be better to take advantage of their fears about your father's sorcery to bluff your way into the village (40).

As Wendel prepares for your mother's funeral ritual, you turn to the old cleric and plead, "Tell me the truth, Wendel. You're the only one who knew my parents. I . . ." You hesitate to say aloud what you've never said to anyone, but you plunge ahead. "As I grew up, I've occasionally discovered that I could do a few little special things that other people can't do. Just for fun. Like moving a cup without touching

it, or making somebody itch just by thinking of it.”

“Those are minor magic spells called *cantrips*,” interrupts Wendel as he looks at you strangely.

“Well, my mother always got mad when I did those cantrips. Do you think I’ve inherited something *evil* from my father, the way Ulrik thinks?”

Wendel’s faded blue eyes flood with tears. He alone among his clansmen has never spoken harshly or cursed you because of your father.

“Landor’s magic was stronger than anything the poor simpletons in this village could even begin to imagine,” he says. “What they cannot comprehend, they fear and believe to be the work of demons. I never felt threatened by your father, or felt evil in him, Carr, though I knew that he was more powerful than the combined strength of all our ancestral spirits.”

“Is that why you helped my mother and me when we returned to Seagate Island?”

“I helped you when Archcleric Oram of Saven ordered your mother’s capture,” Wendel explains. “I couldn’t let a daughter of Delmer and her son die at the hands of that senile fool!”

“Did the Archcleric kill my father?” you demand.

“Some think so,” Wendel admits, “but those days are shrouded in mystery and evil. I have even heard that the dead walked at the time of Landor’s murder.”

“What does that mean?” you ask, confused.

“It means that Landor’s murder upset the forces of life and death themselves,” the cleric answers. “It is rumored that your father’s spellbooks contained such powerful spells that even the Tikandian gods feared him. That is why Archcleric Oram sought you so desperately!”

“ME? Why me?”

“Because of Landor’s secret legacy,” replies Wendel.

“What nonsense! My father left us penniless! If he had bequeathed any legacy at all, my mother might still be alive. The years of hiding and starving killed her!”

Wendel gives you a tired smile. “Find your father’s spellbooks, Carr, and you will have your legacy! Your inheritance isn’t money, it’s Landor’s magic.”

"I know nothing at all about magic. My mother forbade me to speak of it!" you remind Wendel. "Besides, I wouldn't know where to look for my father's secret spellbooks."

"No, but your uncle Beldon might. He was one of your father's students of magic many years ago. Perhaps Beldon could answer some of your questions."

Beldon! You'd almost forgotten your mother's younger brother. You last saw him in Saven, just before you and your mother left the Tikandian mainland for Seagate Island with the Archcleric's agents right behind you.

"Do you know where Beldon lives?" you ask.

Wendel hesitates for a moment, seeming even a little fearful, but then replies, "It is rumored that your uncle lives in a villa on the other side of the island, near the wharves of Freeton, but that's all I know."

You're almost sure that Wendel is hiding something. However, you drop the subject and thank him again for handling your mother's death ritual. Then you step from the old man's small house into the bleak cold morning air. Turn to 15.

3

The first several times you try the Burning Hands incantation, nothing happens. You check the description of the proper hand positions and see that yours are correct.

It must be the spellword, you conclude. If I knew how High Elvish was pronounced hundreds of years ago, I'd probably be able to do it without any trouble. That must be why it's easier to learn magic from teachers than from books alone.

You repeat the procedure over and over, varying your pronunciation of elvish syllables slightly each time. On your fifteenth try, your entire body suddenly flares with an intense aura. You seem to be floating upward and outward in all directions simultaneously!

You try to move, only to realize that you are no longer in control of your body! In the instant before your essence dissipates forever, you have a horrible glimpse of the smoking, charred thing that had been Carr Delling—before you dabbled in magic you didn't understand. ✕

“Does Find Familiar always let a magic-user summon his or her magical assistant?” you ask Beldon. Your uncle is teaching this class himself, because it’s the most powerful and costly incantation listed in the catalog for the term. All advanced novices are attempting it, including Arno.

The Grand Master nods. “Unless a more powerful force has control of your particular familiar, the spell will work. It can only be cast once a year. The cost is great—more than one hundred gold pieces just for the ingredients. Also, if you’re clumsy or tired, it can have totally unpredictable results. For these reasons, none of you will be actually casting Find Familiar until you leave College Arcane.”

Murmurs of disappointment rumble through the room. “Then how will we know if we’ve learned the spell?” someone asks.

“You’ll do everything you normally would, but without repeating the movements. The actual incantation lasts all night. Your trial sessions will require only a few hours.”

You and the other novices spend the rest of the morning gathering the many things needed for the spell. Beldon orders all of you to fetch a huge brass brazier from the kitchen, nearly fifty pounds of charcoal, several sacks of special herbs, and even some rare Tikandian incense.

“Now, who can tell us how to begin?” asks the Grand Master. “It was covered in your manuals.”

Only you and Arno raise your hands. The senior novice smiles at your eager confidence and lowers his arm to let you go first.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **212**. If it is less, turn to **237**.



Thayne's "camp" is more a rustic village than a hunting settlement. It clings precariously to the slopes of Seagate Island's central plateau, in one of the most secluded, inaccessible regions you've ever seen.

"You'll need to meet my grand-aunt, Estla," says your new tutor busily, leading you toward a thatched hut. "She's the eldest female of my clan, more than two hundred years old. We joke that she speaks so easily with our ancestors because she knew most of them personally when they were alive. She will decide if you may live among us."

With trepidation, you go to meet the venerable elf.

Elven races seldom show human signs of aging. Estla's smooth brown skin is completely clear of blemishes and wrinkles. If she were a human, you'd estimate her age to be no more than thirty years rather than two centuries! Only when Thayne brings you closer do you realize that she's blind.

"So you're Landor's pup!" she snorts in heavily accented Common. "Come to Estla. Let her see your spirit."

You glance at Thayne, who mumbles an explanation. "She wants to 'read' your character. Estla has the gift of detecting lies and evil motives."

You wonder if the elven elder will discern the distrust you feel towards Thayne and your secret intentions to look for your father's magical legacy among the Seagate elves. If you decide to let Estla "read your character," turn to **135**; if not, turn to **155**.

A small man with curly red hair on both his head and his face is standing with his back to the mud wall at the cul-de-sac's deadend. He's holding a leather wineflask in one hand and a knobby wooden staff in the other. The stranger's clothes are made entirely of the same soft buckskin, dyed in autumn shades of russet and gold. A brown cloak with its hood thrown back hangs gracefully from his shoulders.

"Go on, take the wine," insists the stranger, ignoring your hand on the cutlass. You see that the small man's only weapons are the staff and a wide dagger on his belt.

If your thirst is stronger than your caution, take the wine and turn to **79**. If not, keep your hand on the cutlass and refuse the wine (**56**).

7

Hoping the scroll with the blue ribbon will summon your father's familiar, you pull the ribbon loose and rip open the wax seal. The glyphs on the parchment are written in some kind of magical script, but they dance and shift into meaningful words in Common. Your father must have designed the scroll so that you could read it without magical help.

You see immediately that this is not the spell used to summon Rufyl, but one designed to protect you from hostile magic. You read through it, anyway, deciding that you'll need such protection when you confront Beldon.

To guard against all spoken spells, I, Landor, of College Arcane, do annoint this parchment with iron and silver in the manner prescribed by Bhukodian sorcerers to protect my son, Carr, from all evil powers and entities for as long as this magical dweomer does glow.

The instant you read the final word, an intense purple light envelops the parchment, causing you to turn your face. The magical aura shoots instantly from the scroll into your arms and covers your body. Then the intensity fades to a slight magenta haze. You look down at the parchment. The scroll is now empty!

Now you know that the last parchment must be the one that you must use to summon Landor's familiar, Rufyl.

Turn to **240**.

8

As you huddle, frozen, in the darkness, some of the monsters inch backward toward the far end of the alley. A handful of the mongrelmen remain, either too bold or too dumb to be afraid of the mystical creature which has landed among them.

You shield your eyes from the glare, feeling a mild vibration throughout your body as the bright aura envelops your huddled form. The intensity lessens just as quickly as it flared, and the tingling vibration vanishes. You lower your hands from your face just as a cloaked humanoid shape materializes from the center of the aura.

"Leave or die!" thunders a powerful voice as the cloaked figure moves in a circle, pointing a long, bony finger at the remaining mongrelmen. All but one of the mongrelmen backs rapidly away from the faceless apparition. The last monster screams with an unnatural roar and lunges toward the dark figure with one huge lobsterish claw open to crush the newcomer's tall but slender frame.

The cloaked figure's long arm swings toward the attacking mongrelman, with only a pale hand visible from the dark sleeve. The hand twists itself into a clawing paw that makes two jerking movements.

Twin balls of fire streak from the extended palm, like small comets slicing through the darkness of the alley. Both deadly missiles strike the mongrelman's chitinous chest, instantly cutting off its shriek of pain. The monster falls to the damp stones, a smoking crater where its heart had been only moments ago!

The alley is suddenly filled with the bestial grunts and cries of the fallen monster's companions. They pour in hideous profusion from every darkened doorway and run toward you. You glance at the mysterious cloaked figure, only to discover that he has disappeared! You must deal with the onrushing monsters by yourself. But should you attack them (65) or try to bluff them and buy time (163)?

9

The scroll Arno gave you is written in Archaic Common and only confuses you. You wonder if the senior novice's jealousy prompted him to give you an outdated version to waste your time. By midnight, you toss the parchment into a corner and try to clear your mind to attempt some other spell.

Return to 103. Do not add Unseen Servant to your spellbook.

10

Your Feather Fall spell works, just as it did in your lesson! The instant the spellword leaves your mouth, your body seems to stop its terrible plunge, leaving you to hang in the night air beside the black tower. Then you feel yourself wafting downward until your feet settle gently on the hard rock porch.

Glancing up at Dalris, you see that she's waiting to see if you've lost your nerve by the nearly fatal slip. You raise your hand, signaling that you're on your way.

Erase Feather Fall from your spellbook and deduct 2 points from your dexterity because you're shaky after your fall. Then roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **190**. If it is less, turn to **208**.

11

"I haven't learned that spell yet," you reply to the unseen creature in the inky darkness ahead of you.

"Then follow this light!" the cracking voice commands.

In the distance, perhaps a hundred yards away, a brilliant white light suddenly flares. It reminds you of a lighthouse beacon as it spreads its rays through the gloom to guide you toward it. As your eyes become accustomed to the semidarkness, you identify many regular rows of rectangular objects situated between you and the crypt thing's light.

"I wonder what those are," you think.

"*Bhukodian sarcophagi!*" Rufyl's reply enters your brain almost as quickly as you asked yourself the question.

"Where are you, Rufyl? I can't see you!"

"Right beside you. We pseudodragons prefer to stay invisible most of the time. You'll soon find that to be a desirable trait in a sorcerer's familiar, Master."

"Is this a cemetery, then?" you ask.

"It's the ancient burial grounds of the most powerful of the Bhukodian wizards. That's why your father built his school over this place. The only way to enter or leave it is by magical teleportation."

Your mental conversation with the pseudodragon ceases

as you come closer to the source of enchanted light in the ancient crypt. It seems to emanate from the center of a seated figure just in front of you! Turn to **157**.

12

Ulrik's eyes twitch nervously. You know that the villagers in Delmer fear your parents' magical powers so much that they would probably be reluctant to let you even touch them. You turn the wheels of the cart into the side of the mountain so that it can't run away. Then, in one continuous move so that they won't guess what's coming, you rush the bulky man, hoping he'll jump back against his two friends, allowing you to hurry past them.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **20**. If it is less, turn to **31**.

13

"The senior novice seems perturbed," you mutter to the swarthy man on your left. He stops eating and leans closer. He speaks in a serious, rasping whisper.

"Arno knows more magic than other novice at the college. He has labored long hours to learn his occult secrets. You'd do well to keep your mouth shut and work as hard as you can."

Without another word, he shoves his dish toward the center of the table and leaves. The other novices glance nervously at each other, then push their own plates away and leave you to eat in silence.

Subtract 1 point from your charisma score; turn to **75**.

14

The druid priest from Tikandia is a tall man with a full, silver-streaked dark beard and hair. The tiara that holds his long hair in place holds a curious blue stone that glows with an inner light. An identical stone gleams from his druid neck ring, called a *torc*.

"So you're Landor's son!" Perth exclaims, his clear eyes shining with emotion. "Yes, I can see your father in your cheekbones and nose. I never had the pleasure of meeting

your mother, but I'll wager that's where you got the Seagate eyes."

You feel awkward under this scrutiny, more because of Perth's daughter than because of the words themselves. Dalris is seated next to her father at Estla's table. Clad in buckskins, much like Thayne's, her only ornament is a curious neck ring made of gold. Its open ends are capped with identical red stones. Her dark hair is gathered into a single long braid, which reaches almost to her waist.

"How did you come to know my father?" you ask Perth.

"Landor spent many years among my people, researching the ancient spells of our ancestors, the Bhukodian wizards. You see, Carr, the secret of your father's great success was that he derived his magic from the sorcerers of Bhukod. No greater occult power exists in all of Tikandia."

"Then he *did* discover the lost empire of Bhukod!"

"Bhukod was never lost," Dalris interjects with cold authority in her voice. "My people still live on the same mounds our ancestors built. We are the empire of Bhukod!"

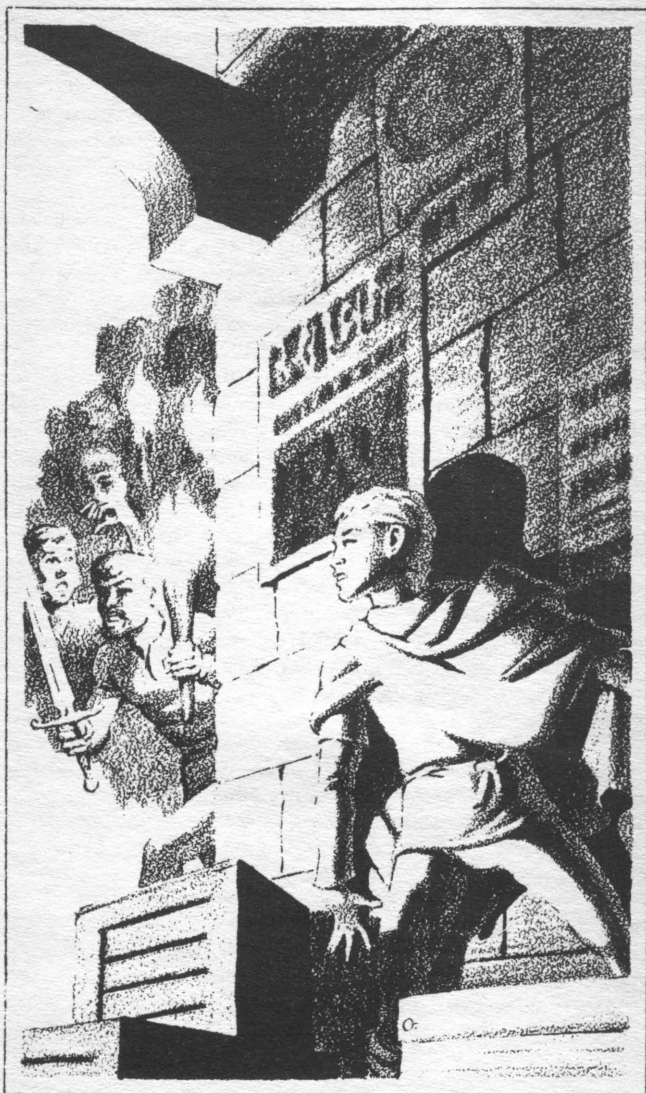
For the first time, you see a glint of emotion flash across the Kandian woman's smooth, tanned face. It's the look of a true aristocrat, marked by pride in one's ancestry.

"But Landor did find the Sceptre of Bhukod," Estla interrupts. "And that is why Perth and Dalris are here. You can't begin to imagine the power of that wand, Carr. Dalris can tell you more about it. She has spent her life studying the magical artifacts of her Bhukodian ancestors and is here to use her bardic skills to recover the sceptre."

You turn from Estla's dark eyes to face Dalris. As she begins to talk about the enchanted wand your father discovered, her coolness begins to vanish. Her cheeks flush with excitement, and her eyes dance with lights from ancient and distant places. Turn to **50**.

15

You've just reached the outskirts of Delmer when you hear angry shouts from the waterfront. Booming out over the tumult is the voice of Ulrik, who seems to have regained all his blustery challenge. You duck into an alley from which you can see what happens.



"Listen, and listen well, men of Delmer!" Marla's cousin is shouting. "That witch from the mountain and her brat are at the shaman's house, right here in Delmer! Do we want 'em in our village?"

"NO!"

The resounding reply from the fearful fishermen and peasants causes you to crouch a little lower in the shadows, your hand resting on the icy hilt of Ulrik's worn, rusty cutlass.

"TO THE HOUSE OF THE PRIEST!"

"BURN 'EM AND SCATTER THEIR ASHES AT SEA!"

You peer cautiously toward Wendel's house where the mob of villagers led by Ulrik has gathered.

"GO HOME!" Wendel yells from his window. "Marla is dead. I am preparing for her funeral!"

"Give us the witch, Wendel!"

"And her demon-sired child!"

You squeeze your shivering, rag-clad body against a building. You doubt if Wendel will be able to contain the mob's angry mood. You might take advantage of the villagers' attention being on Wendel to leave Delmer unseen and set out for Freeton to find Beldon (27). But perhaps you should stay in case the old cleric needs your help (54).

16

COLLEGE OF ARCANE SCIENCES

Spring, 822 C.E.

Catalog of Spells

The following spells are available to all students during the spring term. Interested novices must arrange for instruction and testing with senior novice Arno.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Armor (41)</i> | 4. <i>Read Magic (45)</i> |
| 2. <i>Light (136)</i> | 5. <i>Sleep (151)</i> |
| 3. <i>Detect Magic (223)</i> | 6. <i>Find Familiar (4)</i> |

Students may attempt a spell only once each term, except by special permission.

Failure will result in appropriate penalties.

You reread the list of spells again, referring to the manual to see which one appeals most to you for tomorrow's lesson. It's nearly midnight, and your mind is a jumble of new information and mystical facts.

If you want to get away from your studies for a while before selecting a spell, turn to **26**.

If you simply want to choose a spell so you can rest and forget about your lessons, roll one die. The result is the number of the spell you may attempt by turning to the indicated section. If that spell is one you've already attempted or mastered, roll again.

When you have earned the right to mark a total of three spells in your spellbook, turn to **26**.

17

For a brief moment, you see a glassy haze in Ulrik's frightened eyes. There's also a softening of the frown on his face, and you know that your inner strength is going to make the bluff work.

But then the thin companion shouts, "Don't listen to him, Ulrik! He's trying to bewitch you with his father's powers!" The fierce words seem to have no effect on your cousin, hypnotized as he is by his own fear.

Just then, a horrible gasping noise interrupts your concentration. It's your mother! She is trying to raise her head, her eyes wide with desperation and panic. You scramble into the small cart beside her just in time to catch her head as she collapses back against the hard planks.

"Mother!" you moan, tears blinding your eyes.

"Push 'em over the cliff!" Ulrik shouts, his fear forgotten as soon as you turn away from him. "Don't let him finish his spell! He's a sorcerer, like his father!"

You try to stand in the flimsy wagon, but the husky men have already lifted the cart and are heaving it over the edge of the cliff. You bounce against the body of your mother and try to hang onto the side boards. Hundreds of feet below you, the angry winter surf crashes mercilessly against the jagged rocks of Seagate's roots.

In a final desperate move, you try to dive forward, but it's too late. The cart tips over the precipice, spilling you and

your mother toward the cold ocean below. The great shock of striking the icy water releases you from the anguish you feel about your mother and the thousands of unanswered questions you have about your father's death. ✘

18

You point your finger at another tiny figure and try to imitate the sound Arno used. Almost as soon as it leaves your mouth, you realize that something has gone wrong!

The little creature at whom you directed the Exterminate cantrip is armed with a shortsword and shield. In the blink of an eye, the goblin's belt buckle is even with his two companions' heads. The creature is growing!

The goblin grows so rapidly that its body bursts out of the cage before you have time to do anything. You throw your arms in front of your face, trying to ward off the downward thrust of the sword. In the instant before the heavy blade hacks through your arm, you glimpse Arno in the corner.

Arno exterminates the other two goblins and is poised to attack your assailant, but your hope fades as his malevolent grin tells you his help will not come. . . . ✘

19

Suddenly you feel a sharp pinch on your right buttock.

"Ouch!" you yell, too startled to control yourself. You leap forward, twisting yourself around to catch the offender, but no one is there! The embarrassing truth colors your face scarlet as the sound of raucous laughter rings out. Subtract 1 point from your charisma.

The thin, dark-skinned pupil in the light blue robe cast a Tweak cantrip on you merely to humiliate you. Your first impulse is to retaliate with one of those tricks you figured out as a child (128), but it's such a juvenile way to handle the situation that you might simply want to join the novices and ignore it (147).



In a desperate charge, you spring toward your burly cousin. Ulrik is so startled by your lunge that he grunts in surprise and, panic-stricken, steps backward onto the slick ice of the road. His heavy boots shoot out from under his squat frame. Off-balance, he crashes against his companions. The bulky, red-faced one falls to the ground while the thin peasant drops his scythe and shields his face in fear.

"He felled two grown men without laying a hand on them!" screams the thin man. "He must be a sorcerer, just like his sire!"

"They slipped on the ice!" you cry, pointing at the slick trail. "I didn't use magic!"

But the man's panic keeps him from hearing your protest. In fact, he sees your finger pointing toward Ulrik and his fallen companion and his eyes widen in fear. He grabs your kinsman by the collar of his woolen jacket.

"Get up, Ulrik! He's trying to magick you!"

The panic is contagious. Ulrik and the other man try to scramble to their feet, but the thrashing of their legs and arms makes it impossible to stand on the slippery surface. The clumsy trio of superstitious peasants slide and twist away from you, with curses flying. Ulrik's old cutlass goes sliding across the ice.

Angrily, you grab up the cutlass and turn away from the crude peasants to grasp the handrail of the cart. Your mother moans as her fever-ravaged body rolls against the dirty wooden sides of the wagon. You start the heavy vehicle rolling forward, straight toward the scrambling men. You see a look of horror cross Ulrik's face, and just as you reach them, he pulls his two accomplices out of the road.

"Let 'em pass," growls your cousin, defiance in his voice now that the danger is past. "If either one of those witches tries anything, we'll toss 'em into the sea!"

You pay no attention to the threat. The slope of the mountain trail into the fishing village is so steep that you have to concentrate all your efforts to keep from slipping on the ice. Finally you get the welcome feel of rough oyster shells beneath your feet and know that you've entered the village streets of Delmer. Turn to 58.

The two-foot-high russet-colored beast blinks his tiny eyes like a chameleon, studying you carefully. You're still backing slowly for the door, unsure of what to do.

"You needn't fear me. You're my master now. And by the way, I'm not a red dragon."

The words, or rather thoughts, merely appear in your head without even seeming to go through your ears. You realize that you never saw the little beast's mouth move.

"Pseudodragons communicate telepathically," he thinks to you, demonstrating that he can receive your thoughts.

You slip into the conversation easily, thinking everything you want to ask the little creature. You find telepathic communication much swifter than speech. Within minutes, you've learned some disturbing things about your uncle, more disturbing than you might have imagined.

Beldon, according to Rufyl, began his attempt to steal your father's magical secrets while he was still a novice at the college. The half-elf Thayne, whom you met in Freeton, tried to warn Landor about Beldon. Your uncle used forbidden demonic magic to become stronger than either Landor or Thayne, then drove them both from the academy.

Landor and Rufyl, however, were able to slip back into the college and hide the Sceptre of Bhukod, the only weapon capable of destroying Beldon. Then they sealed Landor's quarters so that Beldon couldn't use the powerful dweomer of the sceptre to find it. Your father had to sacrifice his existence on the material plane for access to enough power to hide the enchanted wand.

"Where is the sceptre now?" you demand mentally. *"We must find it before Beldon does. Now that my father's chambers have been opened, he may be able to track its dweomer."*

"In a subterranean vault beneath this very tower," thinks Rufyl.

"How do I get there? Is there some secret passage?"

"Only the thing that guards the sceptre can transport you in or out," Rufyl replies mysteriously.

"What thing?" you cry out loud, forgetting yourself.

"The crypt thing," your new familiar answers, as if that explained everything. *"Your father searched long and hard to find it to guard the sceptre. It will teleport only me, at first, but then I can instruct it to fetch you as well. Shall I go to the crypt thing and order it to bring you to the Sceptre of Bhukod?"*

It takes you several seconds to digest everything the pseudodragon is thinking. By the time you make up your mind, Rufyl has already read your thoughts.

"Remain here. I won't be long," he assures you.

The miniature dragon's red body begins to fade to pink, then to a pinkish white, then to translucent, and finally to nothing at all. You stare at the walls, wondering how long it will take Rufyl to negotiate something with the mysterious crypt thing. Turn to **236**.

22

The first day of instruction about the Friends spell is nothing more than a series of demonstrations. Arno uses Prindel, the only other blue-robed novice at the academy, as his stooge. The senior novice draws some occult designs on his assistant's face with the powdered contents of three jars: chalk, lampblack, and vermilion. Then he whispers a word, one that sounds something like "Gorgeous."

Roll three dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **133**. If it is less, turn to **171**.

23

"Isn't there a safer way to test my spellwords than jumping off a mountain?" you ask.

Thayne smiles slightly and raises his eyebrows. "I'll answer by saying that you can cast Feather Fall on anything or anybody falling or being propelled through the air. You figure out the rest."

You study the mountainside and suddenly see how to test the spell safely. "Give me that feather and repeat those three words, please," you tell the elf with a burst of confidence in your voice.

Thayne hands you the feather and speaks the elven

phrase slowly and distinctly. Your ear focuses on the musical syllables and records the tones permanently in your brain. Then you toss a heavy stone into the air above your head and fling the feather after it. The rock is just beginning its descent when you whisper the last spellword.

You're delighted to see the heavy stone pause in midair and then start to waft on the breeze just like the down!

"There's a bit of Landor in you, after all," snorts Thayne. "You've got a quick ear as well as a quick mind, and that's a good combination for a magic-user."

You beam with pride as the rock finally settles lightly on the ground by your foot. "What now?" you ask.

"Now you choose between Comprehend Languages (175) and Burning Hands (215) for tomorrow's lesson. Take the rest of today off to rest and copy Feather Fall into your spellbook."



24

You reroll your father's letter and thrust it inside your robe. Your first impulse is to confront Beldon with your father's incriminating last words, but you know that the Grand Master of College Arcane is too powerful for you to fight. Besides, your first objective is to locate the mysterious Sceptre of Bhukod and escape from the academy with it. Landor's charge to you has become more important than anything else in the world!

You study the two remaining scrolls and try to divine which of them might be used to summon Rufyl, whoever or whatever your father's familiar might be. Turn to 7 to open the one with the blue ribbon, or to 240 for the one with the black ribbon.

In the morning you find the crisp mountain air cold enough to keep your nose buried in the fur covers of your cot. Thayne's voice at your door finally stirs you.

"We need to get started if you intend to learn some magic today," he says gruffly.

"I want you to teach me the spell called Friends," you tell the elven wizard.

"That one requires more practice than some of the other novice spells. Come to the hut at the edge of camp, by the rim of the canyon, after your breakfast."

"Friends can be a dangerous spell," Thayne begins when you join him. "If it works, your subject will find you an irresistible companion. If you fail, just the reverse will happen—your subject will feel irritated by your presence."

"How do I cast it?" you ask impatiently.

"First, you need three ingredients—chalk, lampblack, and vermilion powder; in a pinch, you can substitute flour and soot for the first two, but vermilion is essential."

Thayne then proceeds to demonstrate how to use the three substances to make small symbols on your forehead and cheeks before casting the spell. Then he whispers the elven spellword that will activate the magical dweomer.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **43**. If it is less, turn to **73**.

The carefully maintained grounds of the academy are beautiful, even in the early spring before the grass and flowers have begun to grow. You walk for about half an hour, trying to clear your mind of the confusing things you've learned. Then you sit quietly in the shadows of a hedge and stare at the moonless sky, remembering similar nights in the mountains of Seagate. Just when you're beginning to feel relaxed, a sound from the street makes your pulse quicken.

You lean forward, peering through the hedge at a small figure on the other side of the ivy-covered fence surrounding the college. The shadowy form is holding something

long, straight, and pointed, much like a javelin. All of a sudden, the figure breaks into a trot toward the fence and lowers the pointed stick to the ground just in front of the high barrier.

Suddenly you realize the intruder is pole-vaulting over the fence! You move into the shadows and wait to see what the trespasser intends to do.

The vaulter lands noiselessly, then starts to slip silently toward the tower—and directly toward you! If you shout an alarm or challenge the thief, he would only escape. You have only a few moments to decide whether to try to stop the intruder with magic (55), to tackle him physically (174), or to follow him (232).

27

You stifle the impulse to challenge the ignorant vigilantes and watch as Wendel appears suddenly at his door, dressed in a curious shining gown. The crowd grows silent when the cleric raises his outstretched arms.

Staring above their heads, he chants in a low monotone, “Forgive your foolish children, ghosts of Delmer! They have forgotten that Marla is now one of you. Her spirit is now your spirit, and cannot be evil!”

Low murmurs spread through the mob. Some of them take a few steps backward and begin to look a bit shamefaced. You grin, realizing that Wendel’s ability to control the crowd is greater than you thought. Your mother will now be enshrined among her ancestors.

You creep silently back into the alley and walk quickly toward the outskirts of town. Turn to 44.

28

Your fingers fumble frantically in your novice’s robe for the tiny feather. They finally clutch it, and you fling the bit of down into the night and utter your spellword just as your body falls clear of the tower wall. You can only hope that your hushed spellword came at the right moment.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 179. If it’s less, turn to 10.

Recalling your first confrontation with Arno, you're determined to learn the Tweak cantrip. He merely grins when he sees you in the dining room and makes a pinching gesture to remind you. You frown and sit down.

By midmorning, you and your classmates have learned the right spellword and are just beginning to practice tweaking each other.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 20 or more, you learn the cantrip easily. Add 1 point to your charisma score, check Tweak in your spellbook, and return to **226**.

If the total is 19 or less, you are the object of everyone else's Tweak cantrip and never manage to learn it yourself. Deduct 1 point from your charisma score and return to **226** without checking the cantrip in your book.

"I've dreamed of nothing but those spellbooks for the past two weeks," you tell your companions. "Now it seems that the sceptre is more important than they are!"

"If anyone else could handle the wand, we wouldn't ask you," says Perth. "You're our last hope, Carr."

"Then I'll have to do it alone!" you exclaim.

"No. We will have to do it together!" says Dalris. "You wouldn't be able to recognize the wand if you saw it. That's why I'm here—to identify the Sceptre of Power."

"And I'm here to get you past Beldon's corps of spies in Freeton," adds Thayne. "You'll be entirely on your own once you get inside the college, but I can at least get you to the front gate." Turn to **34**.

Uttering a savage cry, you hurl your body at the burly man. Ulrik's fist catches you just below your flailing arms, squarely on the chest. The breath rushes from your lungs with a searing pain as you bounce backward against the cart and slip to the frozen ground.

You lie sprawled on the snowy trail beside the wagon, barely aware of anything but your need to breathe. You see

Ulrik and one of his companions put their backs against the oaken cart and begin to tilt it over the steep cliff to spill your dying mother into the icy sea!

Suddenly her body begins to glow with an unnatural light. Marla stands in the cart and reaches her hands toward the two men. Your mother's eyes blaze with an inhuman fire as she whispers a coarse spellword.

Shrieking with fear, the men drop their weapons and collapse onto the icy road. Their screams rouse your stunned senses. You rise shakily in time to see the two men crawling on hands and knees after their fleeing companion. When they reach the edge of the ice, they leap to their feet and run screaming toward the village, victims of your mother's fear spell.

"Mother!" you exclaim, rushing to the wagon.

But before you can reach her, the strange light fades, and she sinks down in a heap to the filthy bed of the cart. You see immediately that her breathing is irregular and faint. You stroke her hot forehead, and try to make her comfortable in the furs that protect her from the rough boards of the cart.

"Don't die!" you whisper desperately. "We're almost to Wendel, the shaman. He'll know what to do."

Marla's lips part in a half smile as she opens her glazed eyes and stares at you for the first time in days.

"No, Carr," she murmurs. "My illness is greater than the power of our ancestral spirits to heal. You must leave Delmer and go to my brother's house at Freeton. My spell was weak and Ulrik will soon overcome the fear and return to avenge his dishonor. I shall be gone, but he will try to punish you in my place. Leave me! I command it! Go . . ."

The fierceness of Marla's expression relaxes suddenly and her head rolls to one side. A great sob forms in the pit of your stomach, rising in your chest until it shakes your shoulders. For a moment, you cling to Marla's lifeless form, letting your grief possess you for a moment. Then, remembering the rituals that must take place, you ease her body back down into the cart.

A flash of metal catches your attention, and you see Ulrik's old cutlass where he dropped it on the icy path.

Catching it up, you lay it across the handrail of the cart and turn toward the sleeping village to tell Wendel, the clan shaman, that another spirit has joined the ancestors. Turn to **58**.

32

The three scrolls in your hand radiate an energy you can actually feel, as if their contents were trying to spring into your brain. Beldon may be warning you for good reason, but the disappearance of the crystal cube was no accident. These parchments seem to have been meant for you and you alone.

You block out your uncle's muffled shouts from your thoughts while you try to divine which of the three scrolls you should open first—the one with the red ribbon (**206**), the blue ribbon (**89**), or the black ribbon (**192**).

33

You hesitate, trying to remember every detail of the spell. "What was that word you used?" you ask Thayne, wanting to be absolutely sure of the sounds.

He frowns at you impatiently but repeats it. The elven consonants are softer and more musical than the sounds of human speech, but you finally master it.

Then you take the bit of leather from the elf and rub it on your forearm, taking care to use exactly the pattern you remember Thayne using while muttering the strange word. The tender skin inside your wrist seems to become numb, and you're almost sure the spell has worked.

"Cut me, here!" you tell Thayne, baring your wrist to the tip of his dagger. "Go on! Try it!"

Thayne looks at your arm, then studies your face. With a flashing strike you hardly see, the elf's blade licks your arm. You feel the tip glance off the thin skin of your wrist as if it were meeting tough rawhide! The spell works!

"Very impressive—and on the first try, too!" your tutor congratulates you. "Store that one away in your head for the time being and tell me whether you want the ability to Detect Magic or Read Magic."

Check Armor in your spellbook and turn to **51**.



34

“You’ll need a disguise,” Thayne says. The elf rummages through a battered sea chest in his hut. “Aha! I knew it was here somewhere. I haven’t worn this ugly uniform since I was a novice under your father, Carr.”

He hands you a jet-black, cowed robe made of some lightweight material that feels like silk but stronger. He helps you put it on, which is more complicated than you thought. There are concealed pockets and loops in every fold of the garment’s inner surface, though it seems perfectly plain from the outside.

“Now at least you look like a wizard. Let’s start down the mountain,” Thayne urges.

You stop at Estla’s hut for Dalris, who hasn’t bothered to find a disguise. “This is all the disguise I need,” she says confidently, tapping a small rod-shaped parcel in her hand.

“What’s that?” you ask the Kandian woman.

“The only weapon a bard requires—although I have another one,” she replies mysteriously. “But we’re wasting time. Take us to Freeton, Thayne.”

The trek down the mountain takes only a fraction of the time it took to climb up. You reach the outskirts of Freeton shortly after midnight under a moonless but starry sky. Thayne slips through the wall and leads you through the silent streets and alleys toward the waterfront.

When you reach the docks, he turns right onto a small trail leading along a seawall. Within minutes, you see a tall dark tower looming against the star-studded sky. The trail skirts a low, vine-covered fence guarding the College of Arcane Sciences from the rest of the world.

“Keep away from that fence!” Thayne warns. “It’s

deadly! That vine is a yellow musk creeper, and it'd love to have you for a new zombie guardian!"

"I could vault over it," Dalris whispers eagerly. Her voice sounds strangely different. Instead of her usual cool crispness, she seems exhilarated by the promise of adventure.

"There's no need for that," says Thayne. "Here's the gate. It's wizard-locked, but it was done by a lesser instructor. His magic won't present a challenge to my Knock spell."

You see the barred gate, but you notice that Thayne remains several dozen feet away from it. "What's the matter? Aren't you going inside?"

"I can't," he replies. "Beldon has equipped the gate with a Magic Mouth spell to announce the arrival of certain guests, and I'm at the top of the unwanted list. The spell's dweomer won't recognize either of you."

From where he's standing, the elf mutters a few quick words, and the heavy padlock on the gate glows slightly, then quivers and falls to the ground. You have to rush through the gate behind Dalris to keep up with her.

The academy is designed with two identical wings stretching out from the central black tower. There's no door at the front, except for the main door at the tower's base. It looks as if you'll either have to use the front door (146) or scale the stone wall of the tower to the battlement above you, either by using a Spider Climb spell (turn to 230 if you have one) or by utilizing your mountaineering skills (168).

35

Before the pirate with the sabre can move, you rush him, hacking at his face and chest with a fury that doesn't have to be forced because you *know* you're in danger! Your moves may be clumsier than those of a professional swordsman, but they do let you strike the first blow.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 61. If it is less, turn to 224.

36

Beldon is testing my confidence, you think quickly. If I sit with the novices, he'll think I'm helpless.

Convinced that your birthright as Landor's son qualifies you for more than the status of a complete novice, you strike out confidently toward the table with two blue-robed students. All conversation stops, and every eye is upon you as you approach them.

"May I join you?" you ask the two surprised diners in cultured accents that seem completely out of character with your ragged clothes. One of the pair, a florid, pudgy youth around twenty years old, opens his eyes wide in astonished amusement. The other, a small wiry man with dark olive skin and thick, jet-black hair, squints his eyes and frowns.

"No, you may not join us," the wiry man replies with a sneer. "You may not even sit at our table. Beggars eat in the kitchen. How did you get in here, anyway?"

You're tempted to tell the unfriendly advanced student who you really are (57), but you wonder if you shouldn't keep it a secret for now (78).

37

While the fishmonger harangues the other merchant, your fingers close on the nearest morsel.

"Get your dirty hands away from that food!"

A flash of silvery metal is your only warning as the fishwife slashes at you with her razor-edged filleting knife.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 47. If it is 18 or less, turn to 82.

38

You've noticed that Arno and the older novices often use some kind of magic to open doors and carry things for them. You suspect that they're using the spell called Unseen Servant and tell Arno that you want him to teach it to you. A glint of hatred flashes in Arno's dark eyes, but he allows you to enter his room.

"You've studied the manual?" he asks coolly. You nod, having read as much as you could find about the spell.

"Then the only thing to learn is the procedure," he says.

Arno removes a curious twig of polished wood from his blue robe, along with some black string. He wraps the

string around the wood several times and dangles it before his face. You can barely hear his spellword, but you sense that some third presence has just entered the room.

"Give me the third scroll from the right on the top shelf, the one with the green ribbon," Arno mumbles. You glance at the open cupboard near the window. Its shelves are piled high with scrolls, books, and bottles. As commanded, the invisible servant's unseen hand lifts the designated parchment and delivers it into Arno's hand.

"This scroll should contain enough additional information for you to learn the spell, especially if you'll remember what you just saw," he says. "Now leave so that I can teach my regular class."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more turn to **107**. If it is less, turn to **9**.

39

You're so tired and weak from hunger that you decide you must eat something and rest before you search for Beldon. You stumble down the last few yards of the trail and squeeze through the first narrow gap in the wall.

Inside the town, you pause long enough to tie the thin blanket of woven goat hair around your neck so that it becomes a crude cape. Then you stride into the streets of Freeton, your hand resting defiantly on Ulrik's cutlass.

You suddenly catch the scent of food—lots of food!—which makes your stomach rumble. You follow the odors and the sounds of many voices down a narrow alley between two rows of shabby houses. Then you step into a wide avenue filled with a crowd of townsfolk. It's the market!

"Here, here, fish and biscuits here!"

"I said *two* coppers, not one!"

"Sweetbreads! Sweetbreads!"

The cries of vendors and haggling customers fill your ears, while the smells of exotic foods draw you closer. You push your way toward one of the stalls, managing to squeeze your body close to the counter.

Just below your nose are platters of smoked fish and stacks of thick, steaming biscuits. It seems that it would be

so easy to reach out and steal a handful of the delicious food and then disappear into the crowd (76). You do have the gold to pay for it, however, *if* you want to use it (108).

40

Ulrik and his two henchmen are crude, superstitious peasants. You doubt if you could reason them into letting you by, and force would be even less likely to help—it would be three against one. The only thing they seem to fear is the magical powers of your parents. Your mother forbade you to learn magic because of the unhappiness it brought her, but they don't know that.

“Get out of my way, Ulrik, or I'll call upon my father's spirit to destroy you!” you bluff. You raise your hands menacingly to point toward the trio of clansmen.

Roll two dice and add the total to your charisma skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to 49. If it is less than 17, turn to 17.

41

Arno assigns you to one of the smaller sections of novices studying the Armor spell. Your teacher an older adept, his “red” robe, actually a subtle blend of pink and yellow, indicating his high status and power. He starts lecturing in a rambling monotone, starting with the most basic materials and warnings about the dangers of magic.

You've studied the spell nearly all night and know the procedure by heart. Finally you can take no more of the venerable teacher's meandering platitudes. “Isn't it true that the Armor incantation won't work if the caster is wearing physical armor of any kind?” you blurt, hoping to force the lecture to move a bit more quickly.

The old adept glances at you, his eyes sparkling. “You're Landor's son, are you not? Yes, yes, I see you are. He was just as impatient as you, I recall. I suppose you think you know everything there is to know about this incantation from your books?” The other novices snicker, enjoying the adept's challenge to your brashness.

“Perhaps not everything,” you reply confidently, “but certainly enough to cast it!”

An audible shudder of surprise prefaces a flurry of taunts. "Test him, Master!" "Let's watch him bleed!"

The wizened teacher hands you a small square of supple leather, needed to work the spell. According to the manual, it's supposed to have been blessed by a cleric. You concentrate on the passages you've just reviewed in your manual, rubbing the holy leather patch between your two hands while muttering the phrase "Tough as leather."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **118**. If it is less, turn to **74**.

42

At the instructor's signal, everyone imitates Arno, popping the spider and the tar into his mouth and murmuring his own version of the elvish spellword. You stifle a gag as your teeth close on the gritty spell components and swallow. Then you turn toward the wall behind you.

You notice that the palms of your hands have begun to exude a substance that is so sticky that you can pull your own weight from the floor by using your palms alone. You begin to climb, but then you realize that you've made a serious mistake. You forgot to remove your shoes!

You try to correct the problem, but your hands just stick to the sandals. The other novices, hanging in various positions from the wall, laugh loudly at your predicament. As their laughter grows, so does your embarrassment, until you finally climb the stairs in disgrace with the sandals still stuck to your hands.

Deduct 2 charisma points and return to **103** without marking Spider Climb in your spellbook.

43

"There!" exclaims Thayne. "It's finished. Do you think you can do it now?"

You ask him to repeat the elven spellwords several times. After he does, you study the white, black, and vermilion symbols drawn on Thayne's forehead and cheeks.

"I'm ready for the colors," you tell your tutor.

You take the tiny vials of powders and copy the marks on

your own face. When you've finished, you whisper the words, trying your best to imitate Thayne's accents.

For an uncertain moment or two, Thayne merely stares at the symbols on your face. Finally he firmly turns his head and looks away.

"Well, that was easy enough," he says.

"What do you mean? Did it work?"

"Work? Of course it worked!" grumbles Thayne. "That's why I looked the other way—I don't care to be spellbound. Now pick another one. Do you want to learn Spider Climb or Feather Fall? One lets you walk on walls and ceilings and the other keeps you from breaking your neck."

Check Friends in your spellbook, then choose between Spider Climb (191) or Feather Fall (209).

44

After nearly a week of trekking the highland trails through the melting snow and ice, you reach the other side of Seagate Island and the outskirts of its oldest town.

You pause on a high ledge to study the sprawling city of Freeton below. It is coming to life with early morning activity. The crumbling stone wall surrounding the port town is covered with thick layers of moss and ivy and has been breached in many places by age and vandals seeking shortcuts to the island's interior.

You scan the coastline, noting the ships anchored in the harbor and the line of wharves used for three centuries to move both legal and illegal goods and travelers into Saven, the fortified port on the Tikandian mainland across the strait called Pirates' Alley.

"If Beldon lives near the wharves as Wendel said," you mutter, "it could take forever to find him."

Your stomach is empty and growling. The stale bread and moldy cheese you had hastily retrieved from the hut are gone, and the ragged blanket you carry did little to protect you at night from the early spring cold.

You fumble in a ragged pocket for the small goat-hide pouch you collected from your mother's secret hiding place under the hearthstone of the hut. Through the worn leather bearing an ancient inscription, you feel the

rounded outlines of four gold coins, the last bit of Landor's wealth Marla smuggled out of Saven after his death.

The gold would permit you to buy food at the morning bazaar (39), but maybe you should try to find Beldon (94).

45

According to your manual, the Read Magic spell is exactly what you need if you ever find your father's spellbooks. With it, you'd be able to read any magical documents, no matter what languages their inscribers used. Beldon nods when you tell him your choice.

"That's sound enough reasoning," the wizard agrees, "but Read Magic requires more concentration and study than most novice spells. You'll need to be able to recognize the major types of glyphs or other symbols wizards use to inscribe their secret formulas before you begin."

"I'm good at languages," you say, brimming with confidence, "and I'm ready to study anything you assign."

"I'm not the teacher for Read Magic, Carr," replies Beldon. "Our Scroll Master, Haslum, is the instructor for that course."

Once more your uncle takes you up the circular stairs to the landing outside Landor's wizard-locked former quarters. This time, however, he opens the door on the right side of the landing. You enter an airy, well-lit chamber that follows the curve of the tower's outer wall. Benches, shelves, and cupboards line the curved inner wall, all of which are stacked with an amazing variety of books, maps, and scrolls.

Scroll Master Haslum is a scholar and the oldest of the red-robed adepts. He peers at you over thin spectacles and studies your face. "You'll need to borrow this," he says, handing you a curious object that looks somewhat like a magnifying glass. It's a clear crystal prism mounted in an ebony holder. "Be careful, though. It's rare and costly. If you're good at this spell, though, I'll reward you with one of your own."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to 185. If it is less, turn to 86.



46

The darker man on your left reminds you too much of Arno, and you suspect he might be less friendly than the bespectacled one. You lean closer to your right and murmur, "I didn't know Arno was a teacher. I guess I'm stuck with him for a while."

Your companion glances nervously at you over the rims of his silver spectacles. "J-J-Just for c-c-cantrips," he stammers. "Y-Y-You'll be with us f-f-for s-s-spells."

"As you heard, my name is Carr. What's yours?" you ask the fair-haired novice.

"N-N-N-N-Nolan," he answers with some difficulty. "This is m-m-my s-s-second week at the academy."

"Are the adepts strict? Is it difficult to learn magic?"

The stutterer pauses, his chin trembling. "N-N-Not strict—m-m-mean!"

"'Mean?' How are they mean? Do they make fun of your stammer?"

Nolan darts his eyes toward the door where Beldon left with his cadre, then lowers his voice to a whisper. "M-My s-s-stammer is a p-p-punishment f-f-for—"

"Shut up, Nolan! You talk too much!" the dark man on your left interrupts. "Don't offend Arno again or he'll cast something worse your way!" He glares at you, then leaves the table without speaking to you. The other novices, including Nolan, appear to be frightened by his warning. They shove their plates aside, leaving you to finish eating alone and to digest not only the delicious food but also the hint that things are not always fair at College Arcane. Turn to 75.

A quick movement of your arm saves it from the fishmonger's sharp blade. You dart into the crowd, clutching the handful of savory fish and biscuits which almost cost you a finger or two.

"THIEF! STOP THAT THIEF!" the woman yells, but such events are too common in frontier market towns for the shoppers to risk getting involved. And you know that the screaming woman dare not leave her stall because other thieves would empty it in no time.

Slow down! you instruct yourself. *Running brands you as a thief. Mingle with the crowd and work your way to the side of the street.*

You slow to an inconspicuous walk and edge toward the nearest building. As soon as you spot an opening, you dodge into its shadows to escape the mob in the bazaar. You find yourself in a small yard used by merchants to store empty baskets, crates, and barrels. The high back wall links the two buildings all the way to the roofs.

You hide behind some barrels, on top of some large baskets, and cram the salty fish into your mouth.

"Wouldn't that taste better with some sweet wine?" a voice asks. You look around, startled, for no one has entered the cul-de-sac! Turn to 6.

My life is more important than the idle gossip of others, you think as you shake your head.

"I've changed my mind, Arno. I don't trust you enough to jump off the tower for you. Sorry I woke you. Why don't you get some more sleep before breakfast?"

"You're a coward!" he exclaims, just as you knew he would. "How could the son of Landor be so afraid of learning a simple spell?"

You ignore his taunt and head for your room to choose another spell. Behind you, the sound of surly laughter assures you that Arno has lost no time in spreading the news of your cowardice among the other novices.

Deduct 4 points from your charisma and return to 103. Obviously you can't mark Feather Fall in your spellbook.

Ulrik's eyes are glassy. He's staring at you as if he's seeing a demon hovering on your shoulder. You feel a rush of excitement at the control you are exerting over your doltish cousin. For theatrical effect, you point at his face and whisper a nonsense syllable.

"Hey!" shouts the slender villager to his spellbound leader. "Close your ears to that witches' brat! He's casting some kind of spell on you!"

You push the man's frightened words from your mind, forcing yourself to concentrate all your attention on Ulrik. Somewhere beyond the fringe of your mind, you hear faint moans, but you fight the impulse to go to your mother.

Focus on Ulrik . . . only on Ulrik! you tell yourself desperately.

Then, speaking in a low voice that you hope sounds threatening, you say, "You must let us pass, Ulrik, or I shall unleash the fury of Landor's ghost upon you!"

His eyes glazed over with fear, the terrified man nods.

"Move aside!" Ulrik demands. "Would you have the blood of our sister on our hands?"

"What are you saying?" yells the smaller man. "Can't you see he's bewitched you?" The alarmed villager tries to grab Ulrik's arm, but your cousin knocks his hand away and steps out of the road. His two confused companions glance at you, then, seeing a large part of their force gone, hastily follow Ulrik to the side of the trail.

You waste no time in grabbing the handrails to pull the cart into the small peasant village where your mother was born. Turn to 58.

50

"The Sceptre of Power is one of many wands fashioned by Bhukodian sorcerers to protect themselves from rival wizards. Its great fame is due to the fact that only one such sceptre has ever been found, and Landor is the one who found it," Dalris explains.

"Its power is based on protective magic?" you ask.

"Not solely," Dalris replies with a toss of her braid. "The sceptre also has the power to drain magical energies from

spells, objects, living beings—anything possessing a dweomer or enchantment. It stores the energy and releases it at the will of its wielder.”

You begin to see that the implications of Dalris’s story are overwhelming. It means that the sceptre can capture the force of any magical spell or item and turn it back upon the source!

“Then anyone who uses the sceptre will become as powerful as whoever—or whatever—attacks the user?”

“Almost,” she agrees. “But Landor used the same spells that created the sceptre to reshape the energy of the wand so that it would also drain the dweomer of the user—unless the user was Landor himself.”

“And that is where you enter the tale!” Perth blurts. “If anyone can wield the sceptre when we get it, it would have to be Landor’s child. One half of your body and spirit came from your father, Carr, and that inheritance might protect you from the power of the wand. Of course, if your life energy differs too much from Landor’s, the wand may drain all of it as well as your magic-user’s dweomer.”

Turn to **67** if you’re willing to risk having your life energy drained. If you’d rather test your similarities to your father before agreeing to use the sceptre, turn to **92**.

51

“Can you tell me more about those spells so I can make the right choice?” you ask Thayne.

“They do just what their names imply,” he says, shrugging his shoulders. “One lets you find magical objects, spellbooks, and scrolls, while the other allows you to read any inscriptions you may find.”

“But I need both of them!” you protest. “I first have to find my father’s magical legacy, and then I’d have to read his books and records.”

Thayne nods grimly. “There isn’t enough time to learn both of them right now. These are difficult spells, requiring considerable study. You may have another chance to learn the one you reject now. But right now it seems to me that the real choice is between searching for magical items or using them after you’ve found them. Think it over tonight

and let me know your decision tomorrow.”

As you try to sleep that night, you realize that the elf's logic is good. If you think you can find your father's magical treasure without a spell to help you, then Read Magic (134) should be your choice. Otherwise, you might need Detect Magic (83) to even find it at all.

52

The powerful spell that transported you through the thick door, even after fifteen years, gives you new respect for the power of your father's magic. *I wouldn't know a magical treasure from an empty vase in all of this dust-covered clutter. I'd better let Beldon in to help, you think.*

You grab the handle of the door and twist it with all your strength. The rusty mechanism creaks and groans, but it still works. The door swings open on its squeaking hinges, revealing your uncle's anxious face.

“At last!” he exclaims, pushing past you into the chamber. “You have no idea what this means, nephew! You've rediscovered the lost magical secrets of Bhukod, the famed kingdom of elven sorcerers! Watch!”

Beldon whispers a word you don't understand, and instantly the dust in Landor's chamber begins to swirl into tiny whirlwinds like miniature tornadoes. They scurry across the room until every mote of dust has been removed from the furniture and furnishings.

“There!” Beldon exclaims, rushing toward a huge desk by the curved window. On the desktop, you see a clear cube, a colorless crystal of some kind, with three scrolls suspended inside it. Your uncle grabs the strange object and raises it in one hand high above his head.

“Don't break it! That belonged to my father!” you exclaim, lunging for the cube before Beldon can smash it to the floor. The crystal's explosion comes just as your hands close on it, obliterating everything—and everybody—in your father's former quarters. ✕

53

Thayne works with you patiently for more than four hours without stopping. He teaches you how to blend a

pinch of soot with a few grains of salt between your thumb and index finger and to smudge the corner of anything you're trying to translate. The elf then has you repeat the incantation over. Finally, he nods at the Gnomish scroll.

"Try it. I think you're ready," he says.

Concentrating mightily, you go through the procedures once more, this time using the actual parchment instead of worthless scroll fragments. At the precise moment you complete the incantation, a tiny drop of sweat falls from your forehead into the salt and soot on the scroll.

Suddenly the brittle parchment crumbles into dust in your hands! You stare in disbelief at the pile of fuzzy yellow residue on the table in front of you.

"What happened to my tonic recipe?" Thayne demands. "What did you do?"

Stammering, you tell him about the drop of sweat. "But I didn't think it would matter . . . much . . ."

The elf's mouth twists downward in a deep scowl. "The great Landor's only heir! Magic is a precise science, Delling—and that was my best energy tonic!"

Turn to 106.

54

Your rage grows as you realize that the mob of ignorant villagers will storm Wendel's door and desecrate your mother's body unless you act quickly. Bounding into the open street, Ulrik's cutlass in your hand, you scream at the crowd, hoping to take advantage of their superstitions.

"Fools! It's me you should fear, not my mother!"

The mob falls silent, as if stunned by an explosion. They turn toward you with fear and hatred on their faces.

"It's the boy! The demon's child!"

"Get him!"

"Kill the sorcerer's brat!"

The angry crowd starts toward you, brandishing crude weapons. Beginning to panic, you glance around for the best escape route, only to see that the street is filling with other villagers. Your only chance is the alley! You quickly dart back into the narrow, snowbound corridor, sliding across the crusted snow as fast as you can.

“After him! Head him off!”

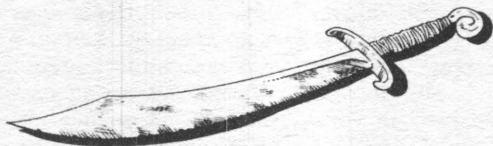
You glance frantically over your shoulder just in time to see some men fill the alley entrance and begin to follow you. Panic drives you over the ice-crusting snow faster, but you're less than twenty feet away from the other end of the alley when several bulky shapes fill your escape route. The glint of sunlight on metal makes your heart pound.

As you stop, you realize that indeed your strategy worked—you drew the mob away from Wendel and your mother's body. But now you're trapped in this narrow tunnel, without a chance of escape! ✘

55

This is a perfect opportunity to test my new magical skills! you think as the thief's shadowy figure approaches your hiding place. You search your memory, trying to recall a spell or cantrip from your spellbook that you might use to stop the intruder.

If you have any of the following incantations marked in your spellbook, you may try to use it now: Exterminate (72), Burning Hands (113), or Sleep (142). If you haven't learned any of these yet, or if you decide not to use a spell after all, you can only attack the thief physically (174) or follow him (232).



56

The stories you've heard about Freeton have branded the frontier port as a city of thieves and cutthroats. You're too weakened by the terrible events of the past week to risk poisoning by a stranger in a dark alley.

“No thanks,” you tell the man. “Wine disagrees with me. I'll wait until I find some fresh water.”

The red-haired stranger shrugs and tucks the wineskin away in his leather shirt. “As you like, but you don't know what you're missing until you've tasted this nectar.”

When the man moves his head, you spot the tanned tips of his pointed ears protruding through his coppery hair. You've seen few elves, and none of them have had beards, yet this one's face is as hairy as a human's. Turn to 102.

57

"I entered through the front door, the one guarded by my father's statue!" you reply loudly to the blue-robed student.

Your announcement sends a ripple of whispers through the large hall. You hear the hushed phrase "It's Landor's son" from tables on all sides. The student you've just confronted blushes crimson and looks at you with an expression of pure hatred mixed with uncertainty.

Add 1 point to your charisma, then turn to 156.

58

Wendel, the clan healer and priest of the ancestor cult, lives near the wharf in a two-story mud building with a thatched roof. You remember seeing the house when you and your mother first arrived on Seagate Island two years ago. Wendel, the only friend your mother could find in the village of her birth, had arranged for the two of you to live in the abandoned shepherd's hut on the cliffs.

"Wendel!" you shout, pounding on the old cleric's door. "It's Carr Delling! My mother . . . needs you!"

Long seconds pass before you hear someone moving inside the darkened building. The door cracks open, and Wendel's face, befuddled with sleep, peeps at you. A thin wisp of gray hair protrudes comically from the top of the aged cleric's bald pate.

"What do you want?" he demands. Wendel's squinting eyes are bleary but wide with alarm.

"It's my mother," you cry, pointing at the cart. "She's—"

The good cleric ignores your words and thrusts past you into the snowy street, clad only in robe and slippers. By the time you join him, he has already lifted your mother's upper body from the cart.

"Help me get her inside," he commands softly.

You grab her legs and walk slowly so that Wendel can back into his door without stumbling.

“In here,” he mutters, nodding toward a curtained alcove off the main room.

As the curtain parts around Wendel’s shoulders, you see that you’re entering a simple chapel. There’s a shrine against the back wall, with two candles burning in the middle of an altar covered with small piles of various dried leaves and flowers. Earthen jars and tiny wooden boxes are scattered among the medicinal plants—probably the oils and salves of Wendel’s healing trade.

“Gently, now,” he warns, lowering your mother’s back onto a soft lion’s pelt in front of the altar. You place her legs gently on the worn fur while Wendel arranges her head on the padded skull of the once-savage beast.

The cleric studies your mother for a few moments and then whispers sadly, “There is nothing I can do.”

A heavy despair settles over you as you watch Wendel shut your mother’s eyes and look toward the altar in a silent prayer. Tears stream down your cheeks and deep sobs rock your body even before the kind cleric’s gentle hands clasp your shaking shoulders. Turn to 2.



59

You grab the white feather and climb to the rocky ledge just as Thayne had done. Below you, the elf squints into the sun, smiling. You step to the edge of the rock and shout a reasonable version of the elven spellwords at the moment you throw the fluffy down into the air. Then you take a deep breath and leap after the feather.

You realize instantly that something’s wrong! Your stomach lifts into your throat a fraction of a second before the

ground slams into your back. Roll one die and subtract the result from your hit point total.

“You need to work on those words.” Thayne’s bemused voice penetrates your stunned senses as you struggle to retain consciousness. “Want to try again?”

You rub your head and peer blurrily up at the ledge. Turn to 23.

60

The dark, narrow, ruined street begins to make you uneasy. *Those ruined buildings are perfect for a thief’s ambush, you think. But this street must lead somewhere!* With your eyes on the shadowy doorways, you continue along the twisting path of broken cobblestones until it suddenly opens into an intersection with a wide street filled with people. A seemingly endless row of vendors’ stalls begins right in front of you. It’s the morning bazaar!

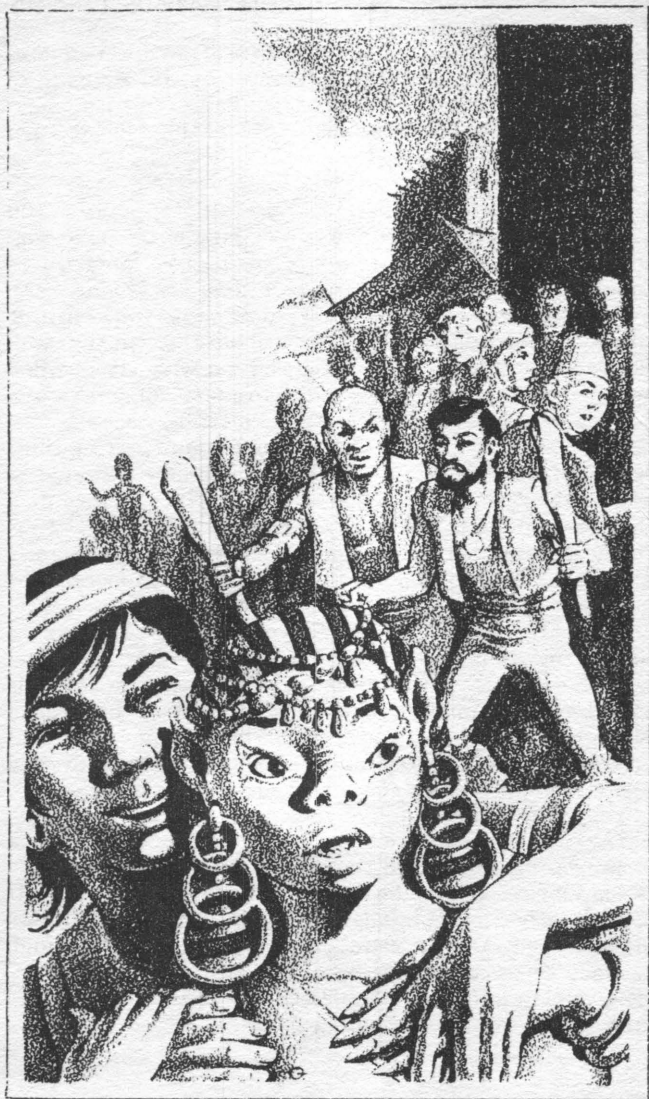
Your ears ring with the cries of merchants touting their wares in scores of languages. Wondering how to find your way to the docks in all of this confusion, you step up onto a door stoop to look across the crowd.

You spot two men dressed in mariners’ clothing scanning the mob in front of the stalls. They seem to be looking for someone, and their expressions make you glad it isn’t you.

Suddenly the seaman nearest you raises a burly arm to signal his companion with a gesture in your direction. They begin to move through the crowd like a brace of lions stalking an animal in a herd. They seem to be headed straight for you! Then you spot, not more than twenty feet from you, a man dressed in a sailor’s cap, his arm around the waist of a woman. His attention is all on her.

They’re stalking him, not you!

The woman looks around nervously and sees the two men approaching. You think that she’ll warn her companion, since they seem to be lovers, but only a quick smile parts her brightly painted lips as she turns back to him. The man must have heard the commotion caused when the rough seamen thrust people aside because he looks up suddenly. The woman quickly pulls his body against hers, twisting him away from the oncoming men. She writhes in mock



passion against him while watching the men approaching behind his back.

You're the only person in the market who can warn the sailor that he's about to be attacked. If you want to help him, turn to **220**. If you'd rather not interfere with whatever is happening, turn to **66**.

61

Ulrik's cutlass may be rusty and worn, but its edge is still keen. The broad blade catches the pirate's throat just below the greasy curls of his beard. For one frozen moment, the seaman's eyes widen in disbelief.

The breathless moment shatters as blood gushes from the severed jugular vein, and the victim of your lucky blow collapses 'at your feet. You fight off the shock of having killed a man and turn just in time to see the other pirate's club descend on the sailor's head.

The one pirate still standing, his victorious smile fading, turns to you and bellows, "You killed me mate!" He raises his club in the air and charges toward you.

"Run, idiot! You won't have that kind of luck twice in a row!" someone yells from the crowd. Taking the stranger's advice, you run and turn to **211**.

62

"I'll go on through the ruins. My uncle is supposed to have a house somewhere in the oldest section of Freeton and it must be over there," you tell the pirates, nodding toward the dingy slums.

"Do what ye want, but guard yer back in that part of town. I know battle veterans who stay clear o' them ruins!"

They leave you standing in the street as they nudge their reluctant navigator toward the waterfront. Hitching up Ulrik's cutlass, you step into the narrow alley.

Once inside, you see that it's filthier than you imagined. The stench of decaying flesh, vermin, and excrement nearly suffocates you. After hearing so many warnings about thieves and killers in the waterfront slums, you feel more comfortable with your hand on the worn hilt of the cutlass. Turn to **197**.

The conflict between these people and your uncle Beldon is obviously a threat to your quest for your father's spellbooks. You're determined to let nothing keep you from tapping Landor's knowledge of the most powerful magic on the Tikandian continent.

"First I must acquire the spellbooks," you tell your companions. "Then I will try for the sceptre."

"I'm sorry, Carr, but I can't let you do that," says Perth. "It would put Beldon on his guard and make it practically impossible for us to slip inside the college. Even though we couldn't use the Sceptre of Power, we could prevent anyone else from wielding its powers unjustly."

The druid priest's expression is emotionless, somehow adding to the sinister conflict confronting you.

"How will you stop me, priest?" you demand.

"If I must, the spell known as Feeblemind would do it," he replies calmly. "You would lose most of your intelligence, not to mention all of your new spells. If I return safely from our mission to your uncle's college with the Sceptre of Bhukod, I'll be able to remove the spell's effects."

Suddenly you leap to your feet and bound for the door of Estla's hut. Behind you, you hear a whispered phrase, and instantly you feel a peculiar emptiness in your mind. You wander aimlessly from the hut with the mind of a moronic child. ✕

The sound of Beldon's voice outside the door adds to your growing hatred. From your father's last words, you can only suspect that your uncle either killed Landor or had someone else do it. Your only weapon against Beldon now is deception. You have neither sword nor spell, nothing to fight the man whom you believe killed your father.

Your only chance to avenge his death and honor his last will is to find the Sceptre of Bhukod and return it to Tikandia. The key to finding the wand of power lies in one of the two remaining scrolls, whichever can be used to summon Rufyl, and you want to do that without interference from your father's murderer.

You reroll the disturbing parchment and thrust it safely inside your robe, with the other two unopened scrolls. Then you go to the wizard-locked door and twist the handle.

Beldon's face is flushed with excitement as you emerge empty-handed from the study. "Well?" he demands, trying to peer past you into the room. "What did you find?"

"Nothing," you tell him, trying to keep your face blank and emotionless. "Nothing at all."

Roll two dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **170**. If it is less, turn to **132**.

65

Deserted by the stranger's sudden magical departure, you realize that you must do something quickly or you'll be swamped by the enraged mongrelmen. *If I rush them, I might have a chance to make it into one of those open doorways, you think desperately. It's not much of a chance, but it's the only one I've got!*

Yelling as loudly as you can, you charge toward the mongrelmen, swinging the heavy cutlass furiously.

Almost immediately, you realize that your strategy seems to be working! The first two monsters freeze in their tracks, causing the next rank of mongrelmen to crash into their backs. Then, as you stumble forward, trying to get past them, you realize that they're no longer interested in you. Instead, their misshapen heads are turned upward, gazing at a dark figure hovering above them.

It's the stranger who attacked the monsters with the fireballs. Now he's floating above you, and he's casting some kind of spell on the mongrelmen. Thin wisps of a silken substance shoot from his hands toward the dim-witted monsters—and toward you as well!

The threadlike material divides and thickens as it settles over you and the mongrelmen, stretching from one side of the narrow alley to the other. The fibers weave themselves together as if they're alive, into a familiar but horrifying pattern—that of an immense spider web!

You hack at the first strand, but your cutlass sticks fast to the magical substance. You twist around, only to become

hopelessly trapped in the web. Your terror is only beginning, however, as the mongrelmen clutch at you with their pincers. . . . ✕

66

You've never used a sword before, and the two thugs look like tough, experienced fighters. You decide to wait and see what they do before you get involved.

Just as they reach the couple, the woman jerks away from her amorous companion. He looks around in confusion and sees his danger. He curses and tries to pull a dagger from his belt, but before he can raise the weapon, one of the assailants hits him from behind with a short club. The blow sends him to the ground, unconscious, the dagger falling with a clatter to the cobblestones beside him.

A crowd gathers quickly, forming a wide circle around the four people. A single word—"Pirates!"—spreads in hushed murmurs through the bazaar. The two men tie their victim's hands behind his back. When they're finished, the woman taps one of them on the shoulder.

Her face and hair are dark, and her narrow eyes gleam above a sunken nose with flaring nostrils. You immediately recognize the half-orc features common to many streetwalkers in frontier towns.

"Y'see? Just as I told ye!" she cried. "He be here fer ye to take! Now me wants me pay!"

The thug who hit the man from behind tosses a silver coin to the woman. She grabs it in the air and glares at the pirate.

"Ye promised two gold pieces fer the pilot!" she shouts. "Give me what's due, ye scum!"

"You never got gold for a man in your life, you miserable tramp!" the man answers roughly. "Take the silver ducat and be glad you got that much!"

The orcish eyes squint in rage, but she dodges away through the circle of amused spectators, cursing the pirates in a loud voice. The heavier thug takes a step after her, but the other pirate grabs his arm.

"Leave her be!" he orders. "We wasted too much time in this port o'fools! The bosun's goons'll be after us if we don't

give him his pilot before the tide!"

It's clear that the pirates and their captive will be heading for the docks and you can follow them. Turn to 93.

67

"We don't have any alternative," you tell your companions at Estla's table. "I must risk the power of the wand if I hope to recover it. Just say when and where."

"We need your help before your uncle Beldon's research unlocks the power of the sceptre," Dalris says.

"Beldon? What does he have to do this?"

"Your father hid the sceptre in a crypt beneath the academy. The only way to reach it is through Landor's private quarters, which have been wizard-locked since his murder fifteen years ago.

"Your uncle Beldon has been trying to gain entrance to Landor's rooms ever since then," Dalris adds, "but so far he has been unable to break the enchanted seal your father used. We think Landor's secret spellbooks are there, as well as his personal records. My father has learned that Beldon is close to solving the problem of the wizard's lock. If so—"

"—he'll have access to both the spellbooks and the sceptre!" you finish. "Why are we dallying here? We must stop him! Thayne's spells could handle Beldon."

There's an awkward moment of silence. Finally Thayne speaks. "It isn't that simple, Carr," says your tutor. "The academy is well guarded, and my face is too familiar to ever get by the entrance. I'm afraid that only a skilled thief or someone Beldon doesn't suspect can gain access to College Arcane. Beldon won't know that you've learned a little magic, and you may be able to take him by surprise."

"Then I could recover both the spellbooks and the sceptre!" you exclaim.

"I doubt that," Dalris interjects. "If the Sceptre of Bhukod comes into contact with the spellbooks, their dweomers will probably be drained. If my research is accurate, you'll have to choose between recovering either the spellbooks or the wand, but not both."

The impact of the woman's words stuns you. If you choose to help the Kandians recover the Sceptre of Bhukod, you

may forfeit your father's entire set of spellbooks forever (30). The only way for you to acquire your magical inheritance seems to be to refuse to help the Kandians (63).

68

It only takes you thirty or forty minutes to weave your way through the mob of shoppers at the bazaar and spot the tower the elf described. It's a battlement of blackish gray stone, perhaps part of an ancient seawall protecting Freeton from both tides and pirates. The tower is situated between two newer structures of whitewashed baked clay which extend into the ruins of old Freeton on both sides. A rusted, ivy-covered iron fence surrounds the tower and its additions, seeming less functional than decorative, with lush yellow and purple flowers dotting the dark green ivy.

There is no gate where Market Street ends at the fence. The buildings on either side are the abandoned ruins of what was once an important part of town.

I see what the elf meant, you think as you study the scene before you. The fence disappears into the ruins on both sides of the academy. The logical thing to do is follow the fence around to a gate (126), although Thayne warned me to stay away from it (97). You shrug and mentally add, Of course, there's a third choice—I can climb the fence (144)!

69

"I'd rather go the way I'm sure of, back to the bazaar," you tell 'Red' as the pirates push the captive pilot ahead of them toward their ship.

"Suit yourself," he replies over his shoulder.

You rub your bruised shoulder and turn into the lane that leads straight to the marketplace. It takes you only a few minutes to retrace your steps.

Once again, the odors of exotic foods assault your nostrils, but this time they're irresistible. You push your way to a fishmonger's counter, stacked high with hot biscuits and smoked fish, rare delicacies to someone who has lived mainly on goat meat and cheese for the past two years.

The fat fishwife behind the counter is yelling insults at a shapely younger woman at the next stall, accusing her of

stealing both customers and her husband. The crowd is so delighted with the entertainment that you squeeze unnoticed up to the edge of the counter.

You reach for your purse to pay for your breakfast (108), but pause when you realize that you might just as easily steal the food and save your coins (76).

70

Mystical transcriptions are seldom written in Common. Even the names on the doors at College Arcane are etched in an exotic language. The Comprehend Languages spell seems ideal for any magic-user, particularly one who intends to study ancient Bhukodian incantations.

When you announce your choice to Arno the next morning, he shakes his head. "You'd be wasting your time, bumpkin. That spell is for wizards with brains in their heads instead of hay. You'll never master it."

"Just sign me up for it, Arno," you tell him evenly. "I've studied it, and now I need some practice."

"There's no need for that," says Arno. "The library is right up those stairs. Follow me."

Arno crosses the large hall and starts climbing the spiral staircase. You follow him through the ceiling to a small landing with two doors, both marked with the usual strange inscriptions. The senior novice opens the one on the right. "This is the library," he says.

You see a well-lit chamber that follows the curve of the tower's outer wall. Arno seats you at one of the round tables and spreads an ancient parchment in front of you. The glyphs are totally foreign to your eyes, though you recognize a sketch of the Tikandian coast near Saven's harbor.

"This old map is written in a forgotten dialect of Gnomish," says Arno. "It will serve as a good test for you."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **188**. If it is less, turn to **203**.

71

You spend the remainder of the morning scouring the rocky mountainside for tiny spiders. Each time you cap-

ture one beneath a rock, you remember that you'll be eating it and the thought makes your stomach queasy.

The sun is high in the sky when Thayne signals that you have enough of the arachnids to experiment with the spell.

"I advise you to skip lunch," says the elf with a grin. "It's going to be a long afternoon."

Thayne starts the lesson by uttering the elven spellwords very slowly. You repeat them until he nods.

"That sounds right, but I can't be sure. If the tones aren't exact, the spell won't work at all. The only way to know is to try it."

Your mouth is dry as you walk to the face of the same rock Thayne climbed. You dab a drop of tar on your finger and stick it into the spider compartment of the vial until one of them is snared in the gooey substance.

"Hurry, before you kill it! It must be alive!" exclaims your tutor.

You wince, then quickly gather what spit you can in your mouth and suck in the spider and bitumen. Swallowing with a shudder, you start to mumble the spellwords, but Thayne stops you.

"Too late! You're supposed to utter the incantation before you eat the components! Try it again."

The elf was right. The afternoon is very long. Your pronunciation of the phrase gets worse each time. By sunset, you've eaten your last spider and you're sick.

"Well, that's it for Spider Climb. You'll have to forget that spell," Thayne says. "In the morning you can try to learn either Comprehend Languages (175) or Burning Hands (215)."

Dejected, you hear the elf emphasize the word "try."

72

You know that the Exterminate cantrip is relatively weak, perhaps too weak for such a large target, but it seems to be the only trick in your spellbook that might work at all. Leaping from your hiding spot, you point your finger at the shadowy intruder and make the required buzzing sound. Your heart sinks as you realize that your

cantrip has had no effect at all, but you succeed in surprising the thief.

The startled burglar whirls around to face you, and you see that it's a woman! She's dressed entirely in unusual-looking, soft leather garments, and her waist-length hair is braided in a fighter's queue. You're so astonished by her appearance that you forget to dodge the dagger she hurls through the air, straight toward your chest. . . . ✚



73

As soon as Thayne utters the spellword, you're overcome with pleasant fascination for the curious little symbols in vermilion, white, and black on the elf's bearded face—as well as for the face itself.

“Now you try it,” he orders, embarrassed.

You try to concentrate and remember the words he used, but the elven syllables can't break through the irresistible fascination you feel for the elf.

“Fool!” exclaims Thayne. “I was just showing you the spell. I wasn't casting it on you!”

You smile at the elf's gruffness. The Friends spell makes everything he says sound congenial, even the insults.

“Well, that's it for today,” he snorts. “Your head will be so confused all day that I couldn't possibly teach you anything. Go for a walk! Stay out of my way! But whenever you can start thinking again, try to decide whether you want to learn Spider Climb or Feather Fall!”

“What are those spells?” you ask, knowing you have a fawning grin on your face.

“Just what they sound like,” grunts Thayne. “One lets you climb walls and cling to ceilings, while the other protects you when the first one fails.”

Subtract 1 point from your intelligence skill score because of the effects of the Friends spell. Then choose either Spider Climb (191) or Feather Fall (209).

74

“Hold out your palm!” the red-robed teacher commands.

You do as he says, confident that the Armor spell will protect you from the blade he holds in his hand. The adept slashes quickly at your hand with the dagger. Its point is so sharp that you scarcely feel it slicing through your skin.

“Owww!” you moan as the pain reaches your brain.

The other novices chuckle at your failure—more than they might have if you had been anyone but Landor’s son, you think. The instructor handles the situation just as he would have with any other student.

“You’ve failed the spell test, novice Delling. Return to your quarters and erase the Armor spell from your spellbook. You may not attempt it again this term.”

Deduct 2 hit points from your total and 1 point from your charisma score. Then return to 16 to make another choice.

75

While you’re drinking the last swallow of the chilled table wine, Arno suddenly appears at your elbow.

“If you can tear yourself away from the table, novice, I’ll take you to your room,” he says stiffly. The advanced student leads you to a wide double door on the left wall and opens it for you. The doors swing closed behind you, stifling the outbreak of buzzing gossip among the other novices.

“This is the students’ wing,” Arno tells you. “The adepts live on the opposite side of the tower. You may occupy that wing after you have won the red robe.”

Your tutor takes you into a long hallway with identical doors spaced every ten feet or so. Each of the doors is labeled with runic characters resembling some you’ve seen in one of the books your mother had in Saven. You can’t read them, but you suspect that they’re the names of the novices assigned to each room. Arno stops in front of one just like the others, except for a blackened streak where something had been written previousl

"The former occupant of this room is no longer at the academy," Arno says with a sneer. "In fact, he may no longer be in our material plane of existence."

"I don't understand," you say as Arno opens the door.

"Of course you don't," he says scornfully. "That was his problem, too. He dabbled in more powerful magic than he was capable of comprehending or controlling. He stole a scroll from one of the adepts, a parchment with a Dimension Door inscription far beyond his knowledge to use. We found only one sandal and the abandoned scroll cover."

You nod dumbly, unable to grasp the immensity of the forces that Arno is describing. Inside the chamber, the senior novice lights a small bedside lamp.

"You'll find robes in drawers by the bed. They'll be considerably more comfortable than those filthy rags you're wearing. Your uncle wishes to see you first thing after breakfast. Whenever he's through with you, we'll begin your lessons," says your tutor in a flat voice.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Arno adds at the door. "Leave everything you brought with you outside the room. Novices are forbidden to possess anything at all from outside the academy—as if you'd want to keep any of that trash!"

After Arno leaves, you change into clean undergarments, jet-black like the hooded robes. The clothes are unlike any you've ever worn, with numerous hidden pockets and sewn loops of cloth, even on the underpants.

Before you get into the narrow bed, you look at the pile of your meager belongings on the floor. No one at the academy has seen your father's money pouch with the four gold pieces. You start to hide the money pouch (95), but then wonder if you should leave it outside with the rest of your gear (124) to show that you intend to follow the rules.

76

The succulent smoked fish is too tempting to ignore after your steady diet of goat cheese and stale bread.

You've never stolen anything before, although most of the children you grew up with in the back streets of Saven were adroit thieves. You try to remember how their hands moved when they shoplifted or picked a pocket.

The fishwife behind the stall is arguing loudly with a competitor, a young girl, much to the amusement of the passing crowd. While all eyes are on the women, you move your fingers along the counter toward the smoked fish.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **98**. If it is less than 17, turn to **37**.

77

Thayne works with you for nearly three straight hours, forcing your hands in the right configuration and drilling you on the elvish spellphrase you must use.

He doesn't allow you to merge the hand position with the phrase, but each time you speak the words you feel an unusual heat in the tips of your fingers. Finally the elf gestures to the firepit.

"It's time to give it a try," he says casually.

Concentrating hard, you press your thumbs together and fan your fingers so that they are extended evenly toward the smoldering campfire. Then you repeat the spell phrase.

To your astonished delight, small jets of fire stream from your fingertips and join to become a thin sheet of flame. The magical fire shoots into the pit, igniting all the unburned wood in it.

"There, you see?" Thayne calls. "You're getting to be a pretty fair magic-user, Delling! Some practice on that spell and you'll really be able to make an impression!" Check Burning Hands in your spellbook and turn to **106**.



You decide to ignore the blue-robed student's insult in order to avoid any unnecessary conflicts as a new student at the college. "Through the front door," you reply quietly, "like you." You turn away and head for the table with the black-garbed novices, but a whispered word makes you glance back over your shoulder.

The student who insulted you is making a curious gesture with his thumb and forefinger and muttering something beneath his breath. You realize swiftly that he is casting some kind of spell or cantrip!

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **207**. If it is less, turn to **19**.

Too thirsty for caution, you take the leather bag and squirt the cool liquid into your mouth. You've just swallowed a double dose of magical restorative tonic. Roll one die and add the total to your hit points, up to their original number, then continue below.

All weakness and mental exhaustion you've felt since your mother's death suddenly vanish. You feel stronger than ever before. Returning the wineskin to the stranger with sincere thanks, you study him a little more closely. For the first time, you notice the slightly pointed ears jutting through the thick red curls and the wide green eyes of the shy forest race. Turn to **102**.

The pirate's experience with other veteran fighters has left him unprepared to deal with completely untrained swordsmen like yourself. Instead of meeting his charge as he expects, you duck reflexively. The scimitar whistles over your head, fanning the small hairs on your neck.

The heavy body of the thug twists with the force of its own momentum. Before the pirate can stop himself, his heel catches in a hole caused by a missing cobblestone. The exuberant mob roars with laughter as the red-faced buccaneer tumbles ungracefully to the ground.



Just then, a grunt from behind causes you to whirl around in time to see the seaman you're trying to help fall beneath the other pirate's club. The second thug looks toward you and steps across his fallen opponent.

"Run, you fool!" comes a voice from the crowd. "You can't handle *one* of them, much less both at the same time!"

You take the stranger's advice and run; turn to **211**.

81

Until you're more sure of yourself and of Beldon, you decide to follow Thayne's advice and not say anything about meeting the half-elf. You also decide to say nothing about the missing spellbooks or the Sceptre of Bhukod, just in case the elf was right about your uncle.

"My reasons for coming here to study magic are really simple," you tell the Grand Master. "My mother forbade me to even mention my father's profession, much less to pursue it myself. Ever since I was old enough to understand what magic is, I've wanted to be a wizard."

“And now that my dear sister is dead, you’re free now to learn it! Excellent reasoning! I’ve always thought it was criminal of Marla to stifle your inborn talents for the occult sciences, Carr. I’m glad to see such a waste put to an end.”

“Does that mean I can study magic with the advanced students?”

“It means much more than that, as you’ll see soon. I have something to show you, nephew—something that has frustrated me for many years. Come.”

You follow Beldon up a spiral staircase until you emerge onto a circular landing no more than fifteen feet across. The staircase seems to continue up to the battlement itself, you guess from the gray light of dawn at the edges of the trapdoor above you. The landing has only two doors, one on either side of the stairs.

Your uncle steps to one door and waits for you to join him. It’s a thick, brass-bound portal, just like the others in the tower, with another runic inscription on it. Beldon points to the angular characters you recognize but can’t read.

“This is written in a language you must learn to read, Carr—the High Elvish script used by Bhukodian sorcerers for centuries,” he explains.

“What does it say?” you ask.

Beldon traces the runes methodically with his forefinger. “It says, ‘ONLY FOR THE ONE WHO WOULD FOLLOW IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF LANDOR,’ ” he answers. “That was your sire’s private chamber until he disappeared fifteen years ago. Your father trapped the door with magic more powerful than anyone since has been able to understand. All who have tried to enter have died. I think perhaps that the inscription is meant for you and for you alone, as the sole heir of Landor.”

Beldon’s words fill you with a confusing combination of excitement and fear. What if your father, or whatever is left of him after fifteen years, is still in that room? You take a faltering step toward the door, but Beldon stops you.

“You must confront this powerful magic only when you’re strong and have learned enough to handle whatever you may find behind that door,” he warns you. “I’ve shown it to you so that you’ll know where your father’s secrets lie

waiting for you to claim them—whenever you feel you are ready to try.”

Your uncle’s pale lips are pursed in an amused expression. He almost seems to be enjoying your conflict as you’re torn between attempting to open the trapped door now (160) or waiting until you know enough magic to protect yourself from your own father’s powerful sorcery (143).

82

You try to dodge the fishwife’s vicious swipe with the razor-edged filleting blade, but your hand, filled with fish and biscuits, doesn’t move fast enough. The blade bites into your arm. Deduct 2 points from your hit point total.

The sudden pain momentarily paralyzes you with shock as you stare at the bleeding wound.

“Run, fool! She’ll cut your throat for a biscuit!”

The warning slices through your shocked senses. You clutch your bloody wrist, squeezing it to stop the bleeding, and bull your way through the crowd.

“THIEF!” screams the fishmonger behind you. “GET THE THIEF!”

You half expect someone to grab you, but the bazaar customers seem to be more amused than aroused by the fishwife’s screams. The fishwife herself won’t chase you, you know, because other thieves would empty her stall in seconds if she left it.

Pressing yourself into the shadows of a building, you skirt it to reach the darkened mouth of a small yard. It’s only a niche in the wall, no more than ten or fifteen feet deep, where merchants stack empty baskets and barrels. The back wall of the cul-de-sac is solid and rises to a thatched roof high above your head.

Sitting on some discarded baskets deep in the shadows, you wait a few moments to make sure no one has followed you. Then you tear some strips of cloth from your shirt and bind the cut on your arm.

Finally you settle back in the shadows and stuff huge chunks of the costly stolen food in your mouth to appease your famished stomach. The smoked fish is delicious but salty, and the dry biscuit adds to your thirst.

“Wash that down with some of this wine.”

The voice comes from behind you, yet no one has entered the alley! Turn to 6.

83

In the morning, you're up at the crack of dawn and walk across the camp to Thayne's hut.

“I want to learn the Detect Magic spell,” you tell the sleepy elf. “Finding my father's spellbooks and the Sceptre of Bhukod should be my first priority, and the ability to detect magic should help me do that. Once I find them, I can learn how to read magical inscriptions.”

Thayne growls some kind of half-hearted agreement and begins the rigorous lesson over breakfast.

Between bites of sausage and biscuit, Thayne says, “Any magical object possesses an enchantment called a dweomer, which is usually invisible unless the magic contained within the object is activated.”

The elf stops eating and draws a dagger from his belt. “Examine this and tell me what you see,” he orders.

You take the dagger and stare at the polished metal. “I don't see anything unusual,” you report.

Thayne nods and whispers a short phrase in his own language. Almost instantly, the blade flares with a curious bluish glow, dazzling your eyes.

“That blade has been enchanted, or had a dweomer placed on it,” your tutor says. “I made the dweomer visible by speaking the spellword.”

“Of the Detect Magic spell?” you ask, fascinated.

“Exactly,” Thayne replies. “You must concentrate to learn this skill. It seems simple because it requires only a single spellword, but it's difficult to perfect.”

“What is the word?” you demand, wondering why it should be so difficult to memorize a single spell word.

“You just heard mine,” he replies. “I have no idea what yours will be, but take the dagger and begin meditating on the blade. You must develop an experimental technique to identify your personal spellword.” The aura is already beginning to fade as Thayne leaves you alone beside the campfire. You wonder if you'll ever get it to show again.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **122**. If it is less, turn to **139**.

84

“Landor spent many years among my tribe, researching the ancient spells of our ancestors, the Bhukodian wizards,” Dalris explains. “You see, Carr, the secret of your father’s great success was that he derived his magic from the sorcerers of Bhukod. No greater occult power exists in all of Tikandia. The glory that was Bhukod was never lost. Our people still live on the same mounds our ancestors built. We are the Bhukodian empire!”

For the first time, you see a glint of emotion flash across the Kandian woman’s smooth, tanned face. It’s the look of a true aristocrat, of someone with pride in her ancestry. As she begins to talk about the enchanted wand your father discovered, her cheeks flush with excitement and her eyes dance with lights from ancient and distant places.

“The Sceptre of Power is just one of many wands fashioned by Bhukodian sorcerers to protect themselves from rival wizards. Its great fame is due to the fact that only one such sceptre has ever been found—and Landor found it.”

“Its power is based on protective magic?” you ask.

“Not solely,” Dalris replies with a toss of her braid. “The sceptre has the power to drain magical energies from spells, objects, living beings—anything possessing a dweomer, or enchantment. It stores the energy in its original form and releases it at the will of its wielder.”

The implications of Dalris’s story are overwhelming. If you’re right, it means that the Sceptre of Power can capture the force of any magical spell or item and turn it back upon the source!

“Then anyone using the sceptre will become as powerful as whoever—or whatever—attacks the user?”

“Almost,” she agrees. “Landor used the same spells that created the sceptre to trap it. He reshaped the energy of the wand so that it would also drain the dweomer of the user—unless the user was Landor himself.

“And that is where you enter the tale!” she continues. “If

anyone at all can wield the Sceptre of Power, it would have to be Landor's son. One half of your body and spirit came from your father, Carr, and that inheritance might protect you from the power of the wand. Of course, if your life-energy differs too much from Landor's, the wand may drain all of it as well as your magic-user's dweomer."

"Does anyone know where the sceptre is now?"

"Your father hid the sceptre in a crypt beneath his academy. The only way to reach it is through Landor's private quarters, which have been wizard-locked since his murder fifteen years ago. Your uncle Beldon has been trying to gain entrance to Landor's rooms since then, but he has been unable to break the enchanted seal your father used. We think Landor's secret spellbooks are there, as well as his personal records. My father heard that Beldon has nearly conquered the problem of the wizard's lock. If so—"

"—he'll have access to both the spellbooks and the sceptre!" you finish for her. "Then I must recover both the spellbooks and the sceptre!" you exclaim.

"That's exactly what we had in mind," says Dalris. "Shall we begin? Do you know how to get to your father's old quarters (181), or must we search for them (213)?"

85

A wave of panic sweeps over you as the cadaverous hand reaches toward you. You slam yourself painfully against the bricks of the building behind you and swing the cutlass clumsily at the sorcerer's arm.

"Shield!" murmurs the man, thrusting his palm into your face. The sudden spellword emerging from the depths of the darkened hood startles you, but not as much as the invisible barrier you strike with your blade.

The cutlass slams against the magical shield with such force that the weapon is knocked from your grasp. Deduct 1 hit point of damage for your minor wrist sprain.

You stoop to retrieve the cutlass, but your intended victim stops you with a muttered taunt.

"Are you a complete idiot, nephew? Leave your toy where it lies. At College Arcane we use magic, not swords. Blades are forbidden to novices and adepts alike."

Though you were a child the last time you heard Beldon's voice, you recognize it even before the wizard tosses back the cowl from his pale face and blond hair. Turn to **199**.

86

Scroll Master Haslum clears a patch on the top of a bench and stacks several dozen leatherbound tomes on it.

"Sit down," he orders, already opening one of the ancient volumes. "Study this glyph and learn to recognize it. It's a secret symbol used by the famed wizard Tenser nearly a century ago to represent the High Elvish character *K*, as you can see in this volume. . . ."

Haslum's hands riffle through the pages of two books at one time, pointing out the peculiarities of Archaic Common, Wizard's Scrawl, ancient High Elvish, and other glyphs typically used to inscribe magical formulas.

You try to follow what he's saying, but your mind simply isn't working fast enough to keep up with his lesson. After four hours of tedious, frustrating efforts, you push away from the bench and shake your head.

"I made a mistake, Scroll Master Haslum," you say with a frown of embarrassment. "I can't handle the Read Magic spell, at least not right now. If I had more sleep, I could probably absorb what you're saying, but I'm just too tired and confused today."

Haslum studies your strained face, then nods gravely. "You need more basic courses before you tackle one this demanding. Go back to your room and get some rest. Tomorrow you can ask Beldon to assign you to a different class." Return to **16**. Do not add Read Magic to your spellbook.

87

You wait for the pirate with the sabre to attack, hoping that you'll find it easier to fight defensively than to attack. The thug grins when he sees your clumsy stance and rushes toward you, swinging his mighty blade.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **80**. If it is less than 17, turn to **233**.

With Thayne's patient guidance, you learn to take a bit of salt and soot, rub them together between your thumb and forefinger, and then put a tiny smudge on the corner of the Gnomish parchment. Then Thayne teaches you each syllable of the incantation slowly and methodically.

Finally, your teacher lets you put them all together and attempt to cast the spell on the tonic recipe. The spell works the first time you cast it! You're suddenly able to read every bit of the unusual document, as if you've been reading the strange Gnomish words all of your life!

"You have an outstanding flair for magic!" the elf exclaims. "I wish Landor were here to see you do that!" You flush with pride. Check Comprehend Languages in your spellbook and turn to **106**.

Perhaps I can divine what these scrolls really are by merely reading the first few lines, you think.

Tossing the other two scrolls onto the bed, you carefully undo the blue ribbon and break the wax seal with your thumbnail. Then you gently unroll the stiff parchment just far enough to read the first line: "To guard yourself against all spoken spells . . ."

A scroll to protect me from sorcery! you realize.

You may choose to either continue reading the parchment (**111**) or retie it for later examination (**161**).

"I want to learn the Unseen Servant spell," you announce to Thayne the following morning. He has brought you to a hut at the edge of the settlement.

Your teacher looks annoyingly superior and nods. "That's a common choice among novices. I should tell you, however, that the 'unseen servant' isn't a creature but a magical force which does only simple tasks for the caster."

"What kind of tasks?"

"Oh, opening doors, carrying things, light work of all kinds. You'll need a short length of string and a splinter of wood, like these."

The elf extends his hand toward you, displaying an ordinary piece of black string and a small twig. Wrapping the string around it, he dangles the twig in front of him and mutters a strange elven phrase.

Without a sound or a shadow, the door of the hut swings open, allowing you both to step out into the cool morning air. The door shuts gently behind you.

“Now let’s see how much of that you remember,” Thayne says with a smug grin. “What was the word I used, and what did I do with the twig and string?”

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **148**. If it is less, turn to **162**.

91

It’s three o’clock in the morning before you finally decide to attempt the spell called Feather Fall. You’re excited at the thought of being able to drift on the wind from great heights, and you have trouble sleeping. In less than an hour, you’re pounding on Arno’s door at the end of the hallway nearest the dining room.

“What is it?” the senior novice calls gruffly after several seconds, irritated at being awakened from a sound sleep.

“It’s me, Carr Delling,” you answer. “I want you to teach me the spellword for Feather Fall!”

You hear some angry muttering, then a prolonged silence. You expect Arno to be furious, but instead there’s a smile on his face when he opens the door. You don’t trust Arno when he smiles.

The advanced student is already dressed when he joins you in the hall. “You’re an eager beginner, I’ll have to say that,” he says. “Feather Fall is a risky spell, Delling. The only way to know if you’ve really learned it is to jump from a height and see if you can cast it on yourself. Let’s go up the battlement to test it.”

Now you understand why he’s smiling. Arno’s hoping that you’ll get the spell wrong and break your neck! You know if you decide to back out of the lesson (48), people will say that Landor’s son is a coward. The only way to prevent that is to risk the dangerous spell (214).

"I'm willing to help you," you say deliberately, "but only if you test me for similarities to my father before I have to actually handle the sceptre."

"I think we just did!" Dalris says coldly, fury in her eyes. "There can't be much of the great Landor in you! He was never the timid type!"

"Quiet, Dalris!" her father commands. "Carr's concern is justified. If the differences between him and his father are great, the sceptre will sap his life-force."

The druid priest faces you and smiles sadly. "There's really no way to be absolutely sure of your safety, my son. I wish there were, but there's not. You must disregard my daughter's outspokenness. She knows nothing of the real world."

"I know a coward when I—"

"Silence, daughter! Carr has decided for himself what he must do—and we must go elsewhere to find help. Please excuse us, Estla."

The blind matriarch stands facing you. Her sightless eyes are fluttering and her jaw is clenched. "No, Perth, I will not allow you to leave. We still have matters to discuss—after Thayne escorts his former novice from our settlement."

You start to protest, but Thayne's grim expression assures you that your presence is as unwelcome to him as the others. You leave Estla's hut to collect your few belongings for the trek back to Freeton. The spellbook is still with your personal effects, but you are astounded to discover it is completely empty! You glance up at Thayne's sneering face.

"The spell is called Erase," the half-elf says simply. ✕

You worm your way to the side of the street so that you can keep track of the three men walking to the waterfront. Near the end of the avenue of the bazaar, they turn to the left into a sunlit alley between two rows of deserted buildings. Just as you turn in, you see the two pirates yank their captive around a corner farther down the alley. Afraid of

losing them, you hurry to the corner . . . only to have a rough hand grab your shoulders and throw you against a brick wall.

“Talk, boy! Why are you following us?” The heavier pirate presses you roughly against the hard wall.

“He’s a thief, that’s plain to see!” says the other pirate, who is guarding the captive by pressing a knife to his throat.

“Is that it, boy?” demands your captor. “Are you trying to rob us?”

“No!” you exclaim in a choked whisper. “I’m a stranger in Freeton and was looking for the docks. When I saw your seamen’s clothes, I decided to follow you just so I could find the waterfront!”

To see if they accept your story, roll two dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **164**. If it is less, turn to **180**.

94

You squeeze the leather pouch and return it to your pocket. The four gold coins are your only resources and you must hang on to them as long as possible.

“Beldon must live nearby,” you tell your rumbling stomach. “Just hope he has a full pantry and a fireplace.”

Following the cracked stone wall, you find a road that appears to lead toward the sea. But as the scent of salt water becomes strong, you find yourself entering the deserted ruins of the oldest section of this ancient seaport. The dark, narrow streets curve inward, twisting and turning until you’ve lost your sense of direction. Turn to **60**.



Uncle Beldon didn't mention such a rule, you think to yourself. It may be a trick so that Arno and his friends can help themselves to whatever they want of my gear.

You decide to put everything else outside the door, just to be safe, and keep the purse. You search the room until you find some loose plaster behind the bed. You pry a large chunk from the wall and hide the leather pouch in the shallow niche. Then you replace the plaster and hold it in place with scrapings of soap from your washbasin.

Turn to **137**.

The long hours of studying have an effect upon you. When you awake, you see that the sun is already high. You've missed breakfast and you're late for Arno's cantrip class. When you finally reach the dining hall, the senior novice has already begun to cover the Hairy cantrip.

"How thoughtful of Landor's son to join us so bright and early in the morning for such a simple trick!" Arno interrupts his presentation. He seldom misses an opportunity to show his contempt for you with acid remarks like this one.

"Now, class, as I was saying, Hairy is more powerful than it seems—and more difficult. It can grow hair—or remove it—from practically any being or object that has something resembling hair. Let's see if you can apply what you've learned today. We'll begin with Delling."

You realize that it's even later than you thought. The class has already witnessed the demonstration. You can only try to guess at the hand motions and sounds.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, you chance upon the right combination of gesture and sound to grow a beard on your face several inches in length. If you are successful, add 1 point to your charisma score, check the Hairy cantrip in your spellbook, and return to **226**.

If the total is less than 23, you've failed to guess the cantrip, but it has removed some of the hair on your own face and head! Deduct 2 points from your charisma score and return to **226** without marking the cantrip in your book.

You sense something ominous about the bars of the meandering ivy-covered fence with its exotic purple and yellow flowers. It's only waist-high, yet it somehow seems as forbidding as a moat. *Perhaps the elf was right about the danger*, you think. Your scalp prickles as you recall his cryptic words—"Because of what guards it"!

The ruins to your left look more open than those on the right. You choose one of many alleys leading between the deserted buildings of Freeton's oldest section. Remembering Thayne's advice, you keep glancing at the black battlement towering above the crumbling walls to orient your progress around the academy of magic.

One hand clamped over your nostrils to stifle the sickening odor of the dank alley and the other on your sword, you hurry through the ruins. After a few hundred yards, you realize that the alley has veered away to your right and you're no longer headed toward the tower.

"Hold on, Delling! Stay calm!" you tell yourself. "Slow down and watch for landmarks."

You pause, listening. At first, the alley is so quiet that you hear trickles of moisture seeping out of the ancient stones. Then you begin to notice soft shuffling sounds from inside the black abandoned buildings. You stare through the gloom as some dark, deformed shapes detach themselves from even darker doorways. They start toward you.

The thought of being trapped in these blind alleys by malign creatures makes your heart pound, and you have an urge to run back to the fence (116). But you know that you still have to reach Beldon's academy. Perhaps you're almost there if you keep going this direction (104).

You wait until the fishwife's quarrel with her competitor is so loud that it has captivated the crowd. While every eye is on the women, your fingers snare two pieces of smoked red fish and a warm biscuit.

No one seems to have seen you. You stash the stolen food beneath the folds of your makeshift cloak and inch your way to the edge of the throng. Everybody is too amused

with the fishmongers' fight to pay any attention to a rag-tag urchin like you.

At the far edge of the bazaar, you work your way along a row of buildings until you reach a shadowy yard between two large buildings. You find yourself in a short cul-de-sac or yard where discarded baskets and barrels are stacked next to a service entrance. You nestle yourself snugly amid the baskets and take out the stolen delicacies.

Your empty stomach rumbles impatiently while you bite off great mouthfuls of the salty fish and huge biscuit. Finally, your hunger assuaged, you find yourself wishing for some water to wash the delicious food down. Almost as if you had spoken aloud, a voice, echoing in the cramped yard, answers the wish.

"Have some mountain wine with that stolen fish!"

You scramble to your feet, your hand on Ulrik's cutlass, and crouch in a clumsy fighter's stance. The entrance to the alley is empty!

"I'm here, behind you," the voice says calmly.

Turn to 6.

99

Beldon is testing my confidence, you think. The students in the red robes must be in the highest level at the college. If I sit with them, it will show him and the others that I intend to outdo them.

Holding your head high, you stride toward a single table, where several red-garbed figures are seated. They look older than most of the other students in the hall, so you're certain your assumption of their higher rank is correct.

"May I join you?" you ask in a clear, cultured voice. You hear some snickers from the novice tables, followed by a tense silence. One of those clad in red, a thin man with dark bags beneath his bloodshot eyes, points toward the other tables.

"This table is reserved for adepts and masters at the college. Less proficient students sit over there." His voice is quiet but chilling. You feel the presence of great energy within the haggard-looking man, forces he seems to be controlling by sheer willpower. Whatever gives him this

energy, you don't wish to release it over a mere chair.

Deduct 1 point from your charisma for making a fool of yourself. Then turn around and face the humiliating chuckles of the other students and try to decide to sit at the tables reserved for novices (238) or the ones for the remaining group of advanced students (36).

100

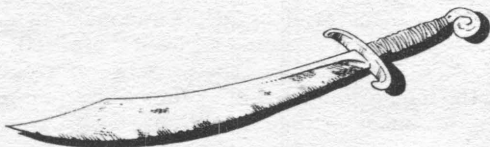
The hand positions for the Burning Hands spell are easy to master, but the spellword is an ancient High Elvish word whose pronunciation worries you. You suspect that the line between success and failure in magic is drawn by such things as the length of a vowel. Before you attempt the spell, you check the manual Beldon gave you to see if you can find any kind of pronunciation key.

As you hoped, the language guide is in one of the appendices. It lists not only words in High Elvish but in other languages used in sorcery as well. The spellwords are indexed by spell, and the one for Burning Hands is clear.

You prepare yourself by concentrating intently. Then you aim your hands at the clay wall by the high window. Finally you mutter "Feh-brohg-nite," which is how the manual suggests the phrase *pfoebrauknayt* is pronounced.

At the instant the last syllable of the spellword leaves your lips, jets of flame shoot from each of your fingers, merging together into a fan of fire. You experiment with the effects of the spell, twisting your hands this way and that until you can control the width and intensity of the flames and direct it wherever you like.

After several minutes, the jets of flame die, leaving you staring at the blackened wall of your room with a new sense of power. Then you grab the manual and look for another spell. Add Burning Hands to your spellbook and return to 103.





101

"I like the sound of the Armor spell," you tell Thayne the next morning, "especially since I have no real armor of my own."

"As you wish," replies the elf. He takes from a pocket in his cloak a tiny bit of tanned buckskin. "This leather has been blessed by a cleric of my clan," he says, handing it to you. "It's a vital ingredient of the Armor spell, along with the words and gestures I shall show you outside."

In the morning sunlight, the bearded elf draws a dagger from his belt and holds its hilt toward you.

"Go on," he urges. "Take it."

You do as he says and stand with the weapon pointed at Thayne. "Now hold it still while I prick my finger."

You concentrate on not recoiling while the elf barely brushes the needle-like point of the dagger with his forefinger. The blade is so sharp that you hardly feel any pressure at all, but a thin line of blood suddenly appears on Thayne's finger.

"Now watch what I do very carefully," he instructs. Thayne rubs his hand with the fragment of blessed leather, moving his fingers in the same repetitive pattern while muttering a single elven word over and over again.

Then he extends the same finger to the dagger's point. To your great surprise, he presses it so hard that it's nearly forced from your grasp, yet his finger remains unscratched!

"Now you try it," says Thayne.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **33**. If it is less, turn to **125**.

“You’re an elf!” you blurt.

“And you’re an oaf!” retorts the stranger. “Don’t you know it’s impolite to speak of one’s ancestors in Freeton? Practically everyone here is hiding from the past. For most of them, Freeton is only a place to wait until it’s safe to leave. You’re fortunate that your nosy tongue flapped at me rather than someone with more to hide. I hide nothing. I am Thayne, at your service.”

You ignore his small bow and say in challenging tones, “How did you get in here? I’m sure this alley was empty when I sat down!”

“A minor illusion, my friend, but not nearly as deceptive as a professional thief’s movements in such shadows as these. You really must be more careful with that treasure of yours.”

“Treasure? Where did you see my gold?” You press your hand to the leather pouch inside your shirt.

“You’ve been flashing around the fact that you have it,” says the elf. “But relax. I’m not interested in your gold. But you’d better take care of that pouch!”

“Pouch? Why?” you ask blankly.

“Imbecile! It’s that moneybag that’s important! How did a waif like you come by Archmage Landor’s money pouch?”

The strange elf’s recognition of your father’s old pouch completely unsettles you. It’s difficult to decide whether to tell him who you are (115) or to lie about the bag (140).



*College of Arcane Sciences
Spring, 822 C.E.
Catalog of Spells*

The following spells are available to beginning students during the spring term. Interested novices must arrange for instruction and testing with senior novice Arno.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Friends (22)</i> | 4. <i>Feather Fall (91)</i> |
| 2. <i>Unseen Servant (38)</i> | 5. <i>Comprehend Languages (70)</i> |
| 3. <i>Spider Climb (198)</i> | 6. <i>Burning Hands (176)</i> |

Students may attempt a spell only once each term, except by special permission.

Failure will result in appropriate penalties.

You reread the list of spells one more time, referring to the manual to see which one appeals most to you for tomorrow's lesson. It's nearly midnight and your mind is a jumble of new information and mystical facts.

If you want to get away from your studies for a while before selecting a spell, turn to **26**.

If you want simply to choose a spell so you can rest and forget about your lessons, roll one die. The result is the number of the spell you have chosen to attempt. Turn to the indicated section. If that spell is one you've already attempted or mastered, roll again.

When you have a total of three spells marked in your spellbook, turn to **26**.

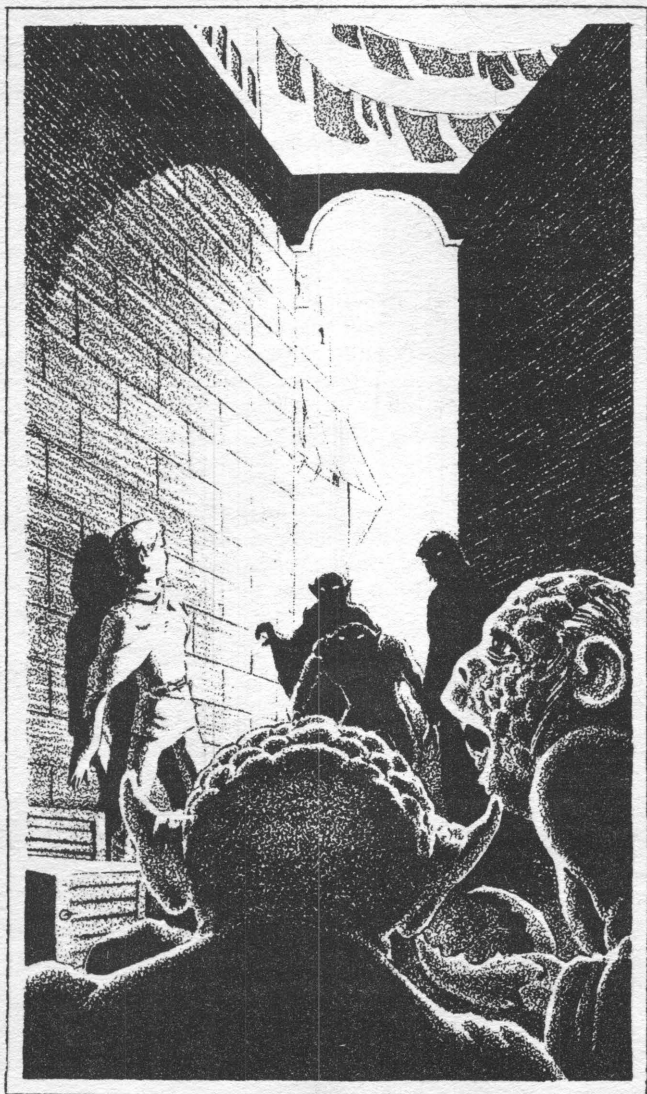
104

I've got to go on!

The dark shapes amble toward you, hard feet clattering on the damp stones. Over your pounding heart you hear that they are mumbling excitedly in a language that sounds like a mixture of human and animal cries. As they step through the faint light between shadows, you catch a glimpse of the nightmarish, upright figures. They have cloven feet and pincers for hands. Their hideous scaly and furry faces send chills of horror through you.

The creatures coming toward you are mongrelmen—horrible blends of demihuman and animal who live as parasites and derelicts on the edges of old Tikandian towns.

You turn away from the awful creatures, only to see more



of their hideous forms emerging from other deserted buildings behind you. The mongrelmen have you surrounded on all sides, and there is no way to escape!

Suddenly a soft humming sound fills the air above your head. As you look up, a large insectoid shape drops to the cobblestones at your feet. It resembles a flying mantis as big as a hawk. The creature's buzzing wings slow and stop just as a luminescent green aura flares around it.

The aura intensifies until its core fills the alley with a spectral glow. For a terrifying moment, the misshapen heads and bodies of the demihuman monsters are frozen in the eerie light. Then they start to whimper and growl in tones more bestial than human. Turn to 8.

105

Beldon's muffled voice at the wizard-locked door is the last thing on your mind. Your eyes scan the dust-covered jumble of books, parchments, and hundreds of unidentifiable objects scattered around the large room.

Landor's desk is set against a curved wall below a set of large windows that would be flooding the room with daylight if they weren't so filthy. You go immediately to the desk to look for clues to anything your father was working on before he died.

The first item to catch your eye is a small cubical object, perhaps a foot square on all sides. You begin to clean the dust from the cube. After several quick swipes, you can see that the cube is a clear crystal with something inside it.

You hurriedly remove the rest of the dust from the curious object. Suspended in the center of the transparent cube are three small parchment scrolls, each tied with a different-colored ribbon—red, black, and blue. You pick up the cube, hoping to find some way to remove the scrolls.

Suddenly you notice that the smooth walls of the strange container are beginning to feel warm in your hands. Then the warmth becomes a distinct tingling, and finally the cube vanishes! You're left holding the three perfectly preserved scrolls, each ribbon sealed with a bright patch of scarlet wax. Your blood rushes to your head as you examine the seals and see an ornate *L*—your father's monogram!

“Don’t touch anything!” Beldon yells through the door. “You’re in grave danger, Carr!”

Your uncle’s warning makes you wonder if you should wait for Beldon’s help (229) or open the parchments (32).

106

You’re resting after the day’s lesson when a boy from Estla’s hut arrives and converses excitedly with Thayne in elvish. You can’t follow the conversation, but you hear melodic versions of the words *Freeton*, *Landor*, and *Beldon*—clues that the message may concern you. Thayne gives the child a reply and sends him away. Then your tutor gestures for you to come closer.

“Estla has visitors from Tikandia,” he announces. “The old Kandian druid, Perth, and his daughter, Dalris. They knew your father years ago, and have some important information about him and the Sceptre of Bhukod. From the sound of it, I suspect it’s time to end your lessons.”

The elf’s words make you shiver with excitement. News of your father! At last, you feel as if you’re starting your quest. Only one thing bothers you: your own skills.

“Am I really ready to use strong magic?” you ask.

“Let me see your spellbook,” orders your teacher. You give it to him and wait while he reviews your careful inscriptions of the spells he has taught you.

If you have not attained any spells, turn to 129. If you have, continue the adventure at 150.

107

The archaic script on Arno’s parchment is difficult to read, but you find it gets easier with practice. You use a kitchen knife to slice a large splinter from a broom handle and unravel a black thread from the hem of your robe. Then you whittle the stick until it’s almost identical to the one Arno used and attach the string in the same manner.

It’s midnight before you finally mutter the High Elven spellword prescribed in the scroll, but your patience and hard work are rewarded immediately. “Fix the broom,” you command the invisible presence you sense in the room.

One unseen hand picks up the rough broomstick while

another begins whittling its jagged end with the knife. The shavings fly from the stick, and the job is finished in several minutes. Your broom handle is as smooth as new. At your command, the invisible servant uses it to sweep the wood shavings into a corner.

Satisfied that your new spell works, you copy it laboriously into your spellbook. Then you glance at the catalog of spells, wondering which one to try next. Add Unseen Servant to your spellbook, then return to 103.

108

Your mouth watering, you stare at the smoked fish and biscuits only inches from your face.

“Go away, boy! I know what you’re thinking!”

The gruff voice jerks your eyes away from the counter and up into the sweaty face of a fat woman brandishing a large knife in the air above your head.

“You heard what I said! Touch one of those biscuits and I’ll give your fingers to my husband for bait!”

“I want to *buy* your fish, not steal it!” you reply in a miffed voice.

You open the leather pouch and dump the four gold coins into your grimy hand. A startled murmur ripples through the throng. The woman behind the counter stares at the money with greedy eyes.

“Help yourself to anything you want, young master,” she says, all false amiability. “You can’t blame a hard-working fishwife for looking after her husband’s catch, can you? Just eat your fill and I’ll let you know when you run out of money.”

You hesitate for a moment but then hand her a gold piece. The woman studies the coin carefully, weighing it in her hand. Then she turns away and lifts her skirts to reach a small purse attached to her petticoat. She slowly counts ten small silver coins into your hand.

“There, son! Eat your fill!” she urges, smiling with exaggerated solicitude.

“I believe you’ve made a mistake,” you say softly. Something in your voice is so compelling that even the crowd suddenly grows silent. The fishwife stares into your eyes,

then nods without a word, and reaches into her purse again. This time, she gives you nine more silver coins and some copper ones.

Collecting several pieces of fish and a handful of biscuits, you push your way back through the stunned crowd. Behind you, you hear them start to mumble again, this time about the strange beggar boy who somehow charmed the crusty fishwife into an honest sale. Add 1 point to your charisma skill score.

You find a short cul-de-sac, stacked with empty baskets and barrels, between two buildings. Preferring the quiet yard to the noisy bazaar, you sit on an empty basket and begin to eat the savory food. The salty fish is delicious, but it dries your mouth and throat. Just as you begin to realize how thirsty you are, a voice answers your unspoken wish.

"Wouldn't that salty fish taste better with some cool wine?" someone asks from behind you. You look around, startled.

Turn to 6.

109

The elf's dislike of Beldon worries you. No one has ever spoken ill of your uncle to you, and you find it difficult to imagine him as an evil sorcerer. But you know that he left Delmer as a youth, and anything might have happened after that. You're also convinced that Thayne knows more than he's told you about your father's death, the missing spellbooks, and perhaps the powerful Sceptre of Bhukod.

If I agree to go with him, I might have an opportunity to learn something about my father's legacy, you think.

You nod quickly at the elf. "I'll go with you," you say, "but only if you'll teach me enough magic to study my father's spellbooks—if I ever find them, that is!"

The elf gives a broad smile and claps you on the shoulder. "Excellent! We need to start to reach my camp by nightfall. It's nearly in the center of Seagate Island, you know."

As dusk settles in, you become worried at the distance you've traveled from civilization on the mountain trail. But just then Thayne pauses and announces grandly, "We're home." Turn to 5.

Best to ignore him, you think. That way he'll know that I hold no fear for his pranks.

You glance over your shoulder and smile coldly at the wiry man in blue. His dark eyebrows wrinkle in a puzzled expression as he realizes that his cantrip had no effect on you. As a frown forms on his shocked face, you turn away and head for the novices' table. Add 1 point to your charisma score, then turn to **156**.

I may as well learn how to use this protection spell right now, you decide. It might protect me from any traps my father may have left here.

You unroll the rest of the parchment, only to find that the characters are quivering and wobbling on its surface. They seem to be written in some kind of magical script, but you realize they are dancing and shifting into meaningful words written in Common so that you can read them. Your father must have designed the scroll so that you could read it without magical assistance.

To guard against all spoken spells, I, Landor of College Arcane, do annoint this parchment with iron and silver in the manner prescribed by Bhukodian sorcerers to protect my son, Carr, from all evil powers and entities for as long as this magical dweomer does glow.

Though you were reading the scroll silently, its power is activated as soon as your eyes fall upon the final word. An intense purple light envelops the parchment, and you turn your eyes away. The magical aura shoots instantly from the scroll into your arms and covers your body, then settles to a subdued, protective magenta haze. You look down at the parchment. The scroll is now empty!

Nothing terrible seems to have resulted from reading the first scroll, so you decide to try another one. You wonder whether it would be better to open the one with the red ribbon (**120**) or the black one (**240**).

112

You recoil visibly, but you resist the impulse to strike the sorcerer's arm with your cutlass. The skeletal hand pauses in midair and pushes back the cowl. Your uncle Beldon's thin, pale face looms in the shadows above you, his eyes glowing with the same greenish aura you saw around the insectlike creature earlier. Turn to **199**.

113

The strongest offensive spell you can think of is Burning Hands. You step from behind the hedge just as the thief passes you and extend your hands in the proper fanlike position with your thumbs together.

"Pfoebrauknayt!" you pronounce carefully.

The difficult spellword rings in the cold night air just as the burglar spins around to meet your attack with dagger in hand. The fan-shaped sheet of flames blasts from your fingertips, straight toward the intruder's chest. It's a woman! The magical fire illuminates her astonished face and her slender, leather-clad form.

"Aaaaaii!" screams the girl as the magical fire streams into her chest. Your hands part reflexively, canceling the painful spell, but it's too late. Your target is lying on her back with a blackened, smoking patch on the front of her jerkin. You run to her side and lift her head.

Suddenly the woman springs to action, grabbing your free wrist and slashing your throat with her dagger!

"Die, fool! Die in memory of the great Landor!" she mutters, now standing over you with a cruel sneer on her wildly beautiful face. You try to mumble something about your father, but the words are only a gurgle of air and blood from your severed larynx. . . . ✠

114

The elf spends all morning teaching you the precise way to hold your hands, with the thumbs together and the fingers fanned apart. Then he repeats every word of the elvish phrase used to activate the fire. When Thayne is satisfied that you're ready to try the dangerous spell, he gestures toward the firepit.

You position yourself and your fingers just as he has taught you. Then you murmur the spell phrase, but nothing happens. You feel a little heat at the tips of your fingers, but that's all!

Frowning, you raise your hands closer to your face so that you can be sure you're placing each finger just right. You start to whisper the elvish phrase.

"DON'T DO THAT, STUPID!" Thayne yells.

The warning is too late. The twin streams of fire from both hands catch you squarely in the forehead, singeing your eyebrows and lashes and blistering the skin.

"I'm going to do you a favor, Delling," says the elf gruffly, "and forget I tried to teach you that one! You'd kill yourself in a week if I let you write that spell in your book."

Roll one die and deduct the result from your charisma because of the scar. Then reduce your hit points by 1 and turn to **106**.

115

"The pouch was my father's," you admit.

The stranger's bearded face flushes with excitement. He leans closer, studying your features with his slanted green eyes until you get uneasy.

"You really are Landor's son!" he whispers hoarsely.

"Landor was indeed my sire," you admit. "But who are you? What do you know about him?" You hope that the stranger can tell you more about your father.

"I am called Thayne. I knew the Archmagus of Saven very well indeed." He seems to be muttering to himself, but then he looks directly at you. "Your father was the most powerful master of arcane arts in all Tikandia."

"Do you know anything about his death?" you blurt. "I've come to Freeton to ask my uncle Beldon about my father's murder and about his missing spellbooks."

"The Archmagus died a victim of either great evil or even greater ignorance," says the elf cryptically. "No one has ever found his secrets, not even vile Beldon."

"What do you mean, 'vile'?" you demand.

"What do you know about your uncle?" the elf asks sharply.

“Nothing.”

“Landor was a fair man, who tempered his great knowledge with wisdom,” Thayne says thoughtfully. “But your uncle seeks only to use the dark arts for his own sinister purposes. If he were to find your father’s secret books, he would corrupt them in ways Landor would never have permitted.”

“But Beldon was my father’s friend!” you protest.

Thayne shakes his head. “They weren’t friends. Your uncle and I studied magic together in your father’s academy here in Freeton. I worked with Beldon until I recognized the true extent of his evil intentions. We argued, and I left the academy to practice my magical arts among my own people.”

You’re confused by this new view of your uncle, and you press the elf for more information. “I thought Beldon worked *with* my father.”

Thayne nods grimly. “So he did—until Landor discovered the Sceptre of Bhukod and incurred the wrath of Archcleric Oram. Beldon’s greed and ambition soon drove him away from Landor. It was only a few months after your father brought the sceptre from Tikandia that he vanished from sight.”

Excited about finally learning something about your father’s death, you ask, “What is this ‘Sceptre of Bhukod’?” Bhukod, you know, is a kingdom of sorcery described in Tikandian legend, but you know very little about the relevant myths.

“A magical weapon of incredible power,” he replies. “The Archcleric Oram feared its power so greatly that he sent his misguided fighters to assassinate your father and procure the sceptre. Some say that Landor died in chains in Oram’s dungeon below the cathedral at Saven.”

You feel your heart grow cold at the thought, but then you remember your mission.

“But what about his spellbooks?” you ask. “They are my legacy, the only inheritance my father left me. Where are they now?”

Thayne points at the purse protruding from your ragged shirt. “Be satisfied with that treasure, Carr Delling. It is

much safer than Landor's spells."

"Be satisfied with a bequest of four gold pieces?"

"What? Is it possible that you don't know about the pouch? Give it to me! Let me show you what you have!"

You may either trust Thayne and give him the purse (152) or decide to keep it inside your shirt (123).

116

"I shouldn't have trusted that elf!" you mutter, backing away from the strange, shadowy figures in the distance. When you reach the alley where you entered the ruins, you break into a fast trot, glancing over your shoulders until you burst onto the cobblestones of the main avenue. The sight of the grim black tower of Beldon's academy seems almost comforting, as does the low fence surrounding it.

"Now, let's try again—and use logic this time!" you mutter. "Should I follow the fence until I get to a gate (126) or just hop over it (144)?"

117

"Didn't you tell me that Sleep was a powerful spell?"

"If I didn't say that, I should have," the elf says. "Sleep is one of the most useful spells to possess. With it, you can put a number of subjects into a deep coma very quickly, and you can then do whatever you like."

"That sounds useful," you agree. "Please, teach it to me."

"I'll try. It requires more concentration than anything you've learned so far, though, and you may be too tired to handle it."

"I'll worry about that. Just show me what to do."

From an inner pocket, Thayne retrieves a small glass vial of what looks like pure white sand. "Rose petals or a live cricket would work just as well," he says as he hands you the tube of sand.

"Now, take a tiny pinch of that fine sand and fling it at my face, saying 'Shhhhh' while thinking of nothing but perfect stillness."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to 235. If it is less, turn to 183.



118

Every eye in the room is watching as you hold out your hand for the instructor's dagger test. The red-robed adept jabs the dagger quickly across your open palm. The needle-like point of the dagger actually forces your skin inward, but never punctures it. Your hand and the rest of your body are as tough as cured leather, yet they feel just as light and supple as ever.

"Remarkable!" says your instructor. "I've never seen a novice do so well without practice! You have a natural talent for spells, Delling. Take the rest of the afternoon off and copy this scroll into your spellbook."

Increase your charisma score by 1 point and mark Armor in your spellbook. Then return to 16.

119

"Hello in there!" you call, deciding to ask for help in finding your way. "I'm lost. Can you show me how to get back to the bazaar?"

The shuffling sound ceases abruptly. Then a voice booms out of the darkness, echoing in the empty ruin.

"Step into the doorway so I can see your hands!"

You hesitate, realizing that such a position would make you vulnerable to any kind of attack. Finally you decide to trust the unseen speaker.

"There!" you exclaim, holding your hands in front of you with open palms. "Now will you help me?"

A curious figure suddenly appears in the darkened opening. It's a small man, clad in soft tanned hides, a cloak draped loosely from his shoulders to hang behind a shortsword and a large hunting knife. The newcomer's head and face is covered with tight coils of coppery hair and beard. Only the slightly protruding tips of his pointed ears betray his descent from the secretive woodland race.

"Follow me," he whispers quickly. Without another word, he dodges past you into an alley, and you follow right behind him. The passage twists in a maze of turns until it suddenly opens onto a bustling avenue—the Freeton bazaar!

"In here!" blurts your guide, pulling you abruptly into a tiny deadend alley just off the main street.

As you catch your breath, you study your rescuer.

Turn to 102.

120

You hastily strip the red ribbon and sealing wax from one of the other scrolls and pull it open. As soon as you see the first line, you realize that this isn't a spell at all. It's a letter to you from your father! Your eyes swell with tears as you read Landor's last will and testament to his only heir:

To Carr, my only son and heir:

I know your mother must be dead when you read this because she would never have permitted you to enter her brother's house while she was alive. Your eyes alone will be reading what follows, child of my beloved Marla. The hands or gazes of all others will activate one of the spells that have entrapped these parchments.

Read on, my son, to learn of my last days, surrounded by enemies and imprisoned in my own house.

Assassins and other sinister evils have invaded the academy I built. My end is near, perhaps just hours away. A convergence of great powers is upon me, and I must hasten to guard the secrets that they seek. These are the fruits of my life's labors, the very essence of ancient Bhukodian sorcery. You will not yet know of such things, but you must sacrifice all that you have, including your life, to prevent your mother's brother from discovering the hiding place of that most powerful relic of ancient Tikandia, the Sceptre of Bhukod. With that wand of power, Beldon's evil will spread unchecked to every corner of the Tikandian continent.

I have trusted no human with its hiding place. Only my loyal familiar, Rufyl, can guide you. He may be summoned either by spell or by scroll. One of the parchments in the force cube will summon him to you.

Beldon will seek to use you to discover my secrets. Then he will seek to destroy you, my sole offspring, because of the Kandian blood in our veins. The other scroll will protect you against your uncle's evil greed for wealth and power.

For you, my child, I leave my spellbooks and records. They are not on Seagate Island, but in the hands of Perth, the archdruid to the Kandian people. He will exchange them for the one thing our people must always guard for the sake of the world—the Sceptre of Bhukod.

Guard our secrets with your life, as I did with mine.

Your Loving Father,
Landor

Fury mounts within you as you reroll the parchment and place it in a pocket of your robe. Then you reach for the last scroll, the one that must contain the summoning spell to call Rufyl, your father's familiar, who will become your instrument of vengeance against Beldon. Turn to **240**.

121

From the description in the cantrip catalog, Unlock sounds like the most useful trick of all. Arno's dark eyes sparkle when you tell him your wish to learn it.

"An excellent choice!" he exclaims. "I'll bet it took you all night to decide." Arno proceeds to demonstrate the cantrip on the door to the kitchen latrine, a tiny, stinking cubicle just off the dining hall.

"Now let's see if you can do it," he says, pushing you into the dimly lit toilet. The filthy walls are covered with graffiti, and the odors from its pit are overwhelming. Suddenly you hear the sound of a key turning in the lock!

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, you learn the cantrip so

quickly it surprises Arno. Add 1 point to your charisma score, check Unlock in your spellbook, and return to 226.

If the total is less than 21, you're still locked in the latrine at lunchtime, when everyone is trying to use it. Deduct 1 point from your charisma and return to 226 without marking the cantrip in your spellbook.

122

You decide that your best strategy to discover your personal spellword must be a systematic one. *I'll assume that it's a word in my own language, you think. From there, it's just a matter of finding the right combination of vowels and consonants.*

Ignoring Thayne's motionless presence in the corner, you begin muttering strings of pure vowels and combinations of vowels until you try every one possible in Common. But they fail to affect the fading aura.

You repeat your experiment, pairing each consonant in Common with each vowel. The magical aura around Thayne's dagger is almost gone before you reach the combination *di-*, with a short *I* sound. Almost immediately, the aura flares minutely. It isn't permanent, and it wasn't very much of a change, but it *did* flicker!

Then you concentrate on all the words you know which might be used to command a dweomer to show itself: *exhibit . . . reveal . . . detect . . . display . . .*

"That's it! My spellword!"

You hold out the dagger and command, "Display!"

The light showing the dweomer on the dagger flares and remains bright!

"Congratulations! Landor would be pleased!" Thayne's approval fills you with pride. "You did that so well I know you'll have no difficulty with your next spell. Put Detect Magic into your spellbook and take the rest of the day to choose between Find Familiar (225) and Sleep (117) as your next spell. Both are quite powerful, I warn you."

123

Thayne's colorful but strange appearance has strengthened your suspicions of everyone in this town. Freeton's

reputation as the "Port of Thieves" must have been earned somehow!

"No, I'll keep my purse," you tell the elf, stuffing the bag more snugly inside your shirt, next to your skin.

Thayne's expression becomes stony. "You know, if you do not trust me, perhaps I should not trust you. Perhaps your uncle has already influenced you."

"I don't know why you're so interested in Beldon's 'influence' on me, but it's none of your business," you tell the elf. "There are more reasons for my not trusting a strange, bearded elf who demands my purse than there are for not trusting my own uncle!"

Thayne smiles grimly. "Just as I feared—you're one of Beldon's chosen ones! Where's your spellbook, junior wizard? Come on! Let's see a few cantrips!"

"I have no idea what you mean!" you tell the elf. You know only that cantrips are minor spells like the ones you managed to find for yourself.

"So Beldon didn't send you to spy on me, hey? You wouldn't be looking for your father's spellbooks filled with the forgotten sorceries of Bhukod, now would you?"

Turn to 159.

124

This is a place of wizards, including a few with some awesome powers, you think. It shouldn't be too difficult for even Arno to divine both the presence and the location of a mere pouch of gold. If I leave it in the hall with everything else, it'll show Uncle Beldon that I intend to follow the rules of the college like everyone else.

You then place all of your personal belongings in the darkened hallway, with the pouch on top of the pile. Now that you've demonstrated your loyalty, you blow out the candle and crawl under the covers on the narrow bed.

Turn to 137.

125

Certain you remember the elven spellword and anxious to show Thayne how quickly you can learn magic, you say, "Give me that piece of leather."

Thayne cocks his eyebrows and starts to say something but stops himself. Instead, he just hands you the patch of blessed leather.

You mutter the spellword three times, just as the elf had done, while you rub the leather on the tender skin at your wrist.

“Now watch!”

With a burst of confidence, you jab the point of Thayne’s dagger into the soft flesh of your inner arm. Even before the needle-pointed blade sinks into your skin, sending a small shock of pain through you, you realize that the spell is not working. In your haste to pull the dagger out of your arm, you twist the razor-edged blade. Dark blood spurts from the severed artery.

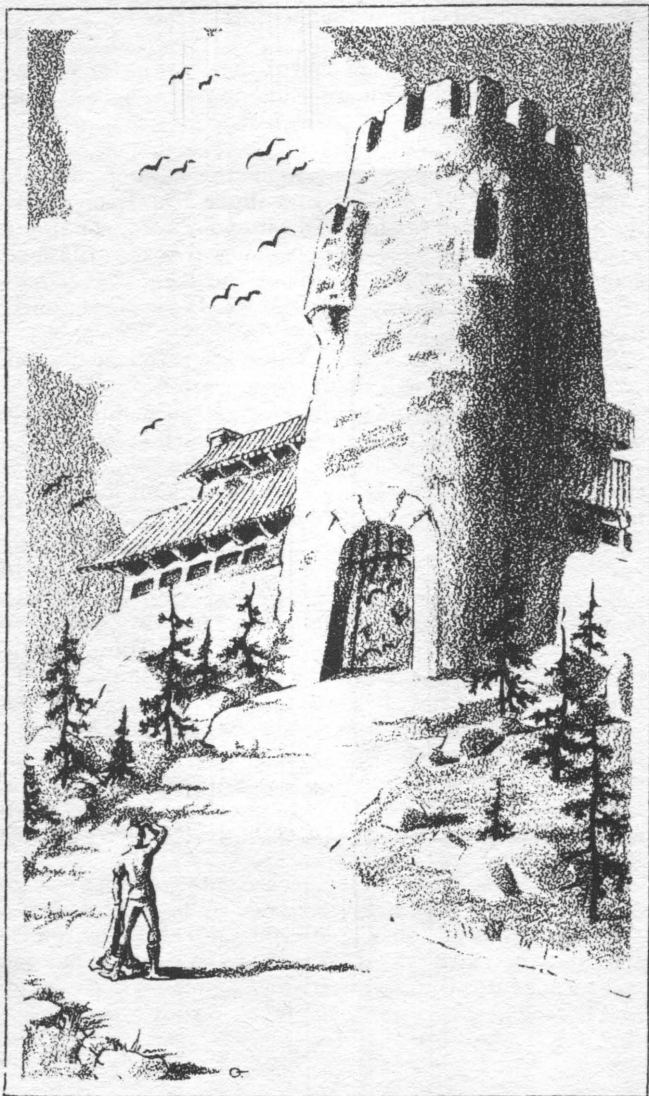
“Idiot!” snorts Thayne. “That wasn’t the spellword. You’re not as smart as I thought you were!”

He clutches the wound, trying to stem the gushing blood, but you feel yourself growing weaker each second. Then your knees collapse, and your vision begins to blur. One of the last thoughts you have is of the hidden dangers of faulty magic in the hands of a fool. ✠

126

Deciding that logic is better than uncertainty, you begin to follow the vine-covered fence all the way around to where the front of the academy faces the sea. The elf’s cryptic warning about something guarding the fence makes you suspicious of the ivylike plant with dark green leaves and velvet blooms of yellow and purple. Keeping your distance from the fence, you look past it to the curiously empty, immaculate lawns and gardens. The only signs of life are two thin wisps of smoke climbing into the crisp early-spring air from matching chimneys on the two wings of the academy.

When you reach the single ornate gate, you discover an ancient sign. It is so badly corroded by breeze-borne salt that you can hardly read it. As you stare at it, you realize that you also can’t read it because it’s in a script that you don’t know! But the part that’s in Common you *can* read, and the faded characters bring tears to your eyes.



COLLEGE OF ARCANE SCIENCES
FOUNDED IN 784 C.E.
BY LANDOR, ARCHMAGUS OF SAVEN

You feel more excited than ever with your quest for Landor's legacy of occult knowledge. Awestruck, you pass through the open gate and enter the academy of magic founded by your own father more than forty years ago.

Turn to **138**.

127

You decide that a systematic approach is the best strategy to discover your personal spellword. *I'll assume that it's a word in my own language*, you think. *From there, it's merely a matter of finding the right combination of vowels and consonants.*

You start by muttering strings of pure vowels and combinations of vowels until you have tried every possible one in Common. The three scrolls do not even flicker.

You repeat your experiment, pairing each consonant in Common with each vowel. The scrolls show no effects until you reach the combination *di*, with a short *i* sound. Almost immediately, an aura flares from among the trio of scrolls, but it was too brief to determine which one was its source.

Next you concentrate on all the words you know that might be used to make a dweomer visible: *Exhibit . . . reveal . . . detect . . . display . . . That's it!* you realize suddenly. *My spellword is display!*

"Display!" you command in a hushed voice.

The middle scroll's magical aura flares brightly!

"Congratulations! Landor would be proud of you!" Beldon says as you unroll the two safe parchments. "Take the rest of the day to copy Detect Magic into your spellbook, Carr. You did that so well that I'm sure you'll have no difficulty at all with whatever spell you choose."

Mark Detect Magic in your spellbook. Then add 1 point to your charisma score and return to **16**.

128

The wiry student seems to be trying to bully you with his status. He clearly regards you as his intellectual inferior.

You hadn't anticipated such a confrontation at your father's academy so soon, but you decide to act quickly to show the man that you won't be intimidated so easily.

Clutching your throat with your hand, you make a sudden gagging sound. It's only a magical trick you discovered as a child, but it can be very effective.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **189**. If it is less, turn to **219**.

129

"These spells are incorrect and incomplete," says your elven tutor. You can see him visibly restrain his disgust, and you feel quite young and inadequate. "If you tried to use them, you'd destroy yourself with your own magic. You're just not ready to face whatever stands between you and your father's legacy."

The elf orders you to remain at the camp until he returns. Dejected, you sit still and stare into the distance until it's nearly dark, when Thayne joins you beside the campfire. His expression is one of total desperation.

"It's over, Carr. I've just met with the druid priest and his daughter. Beldon may already possess the Sceptre of Bhukod. If so, he's now the most powerful wizard in Tikandia, perhaps more powerful than your father in his prime."

"What about my father's spellbooks?" you cry.

"It's only a matter of time, two or three days at the most, until the sceptre's great power will lead Beldon to Landor's books and records. Perth's daughter, Dalris, is a Kandian bard. She is skilled in recognizing magical items, especially those of her people's Bhukodian past. I'm taking her to Freeton tonight so that she can smuggle herself into Beldon's academy and try to find the sceptre."

"When do we leave?"

"You don't leave!" replies Thayne. "Without magic, you have no defenses against the power of the sceptre. It would sap your life force and destroy you with its great power. Then Landor's secrets would be lost forever. Think of that, if not of yourself!"

Thayne's stern expression melts when he sees the disap-

pointment in your face. "Bide your time, young Delling. Some day you may be strong enough to wield the Sceptre of Power. Then you will adventure again." ✠

130

"Light sounds like a useful spell," you tell Thayne.

"Indeed it is," agrees the elf. "I'll come by your hut after supper. It's difficult to learn by daylight."

Thayne assigns a small elven boy to show you to the hut you'll be using for the next week. You relax while the boy fetches your supper, a thick venison stew with dumplings.

You've just finished eating when Thayne pokes his bearded head in the doorway. "Are you ready?" he asks.

"Any time!" you reply with a surge of excitement.

Thayne enters and closes the door behind him. He then extinguishes one of the two clay lamps in the hut.

"Now watch my hands and listen to every syllable I say," he orders. "The Light spell is one of the few that requires no material components at all. The incantation and the hand movements are everything."

Thayne holds his hand at waist height, then raises it slowly, spreading his fingers wide by the time it reaches the level of his face. At the same time, he whispers an elven word—something like *Ishtyop*—three times.

Suddenly the darkened hut fills with what seems like the light of a bright torch. Above Thayne's head, a ball of yellow light spreads its glow through the darkness.

"Now, let me hear you pronounce the spellword."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to 141. If it is less, turn to 177.

131

The small, dark lane looks more like a trap than a safe way to escape the angry pirates. You decide quickly to take your chances in the straight alley and rely on your speed to outrun the heavier and slower men.

"Stop that thief!" yells one of them behind you. "He's got my purse!"

What! What a lie!

Just then, you hear the sounds of running feet. Suddenly the alley exit ahead of you fills with four heavily armed men. They're all wearing red cloaks over breastplates.

Guardsmen! They'll help! you think.

"Help!" you yell, sprinting even faster.

You're only a few dozen yards away when you realize that both the pirates behind you and the men ahead have stopped running. The guardsmen aren't doing anything to help you! You slow to a walk feeling very uneasy.

Behind you, the man called Red shouts, "Get him! He stole my moneybag!"

The armored squad, their scarlet cloaks billowing in the morning seabreeze, fan out across your path, swords drawn, waiting for you to make the first move.

"This isn't his pouch!" you cry. "It's mine. And they've just kidnapped that sailor they're dragging between them! They're the ones you ought to arrest!"

"Arrest our own shipmates? Did you hear that, lads?" the biggest guard guffaws. "The beggar-thief wants us to put Red and Tom in irons for catching that ship-jumping pilot and to let him have Red's purse in the bargain!"

The armored swordsmen's laughter echoes in the empty street, forcing a hot blush into your cheeks and ears. "Who are you?" you demand.

"We're seamen, from Red and Tom's ship out there!" answers one of them. "The bosun sent us to see what was taking them so long to get the pilot, so's we can sail with the tide—and now we can sail with a new cabin boy!"

As the circle of seafighters closes in on you, you realize that it may be many years before you'll be able to find Beldon and seek your father's legacy. You may be at sea for a long, long time! ✕

132

Beldon's eyes widen. You know an instant before he grabs you that your bluff has failed. He grips the thin fabric of your novice's robe and rips it open with a powerful pull. The parchments spill onto the floor at your feet.

"So you found nothing!" he exclaims. "I'll deal with you later, nephew!"

Beldon stoops to collect the scrolls, but as he does, you push him off balance.

"You killed my father! Admit it!"

"Of course it was I who killed the great Landor," Beldon replies with a sneer. "How else would I have become Grand Master of the most powerful academy of magic in Tikan-dia? And as soon as I have the Sceptre of Bhukod in my hands, I shall be the most powerful magus in the world!"

Your uncle's mention of the Bhukodian relic for which your father gave his life makes you remember the final line of the will: "Guard our secrets with your life, as I did with mine."

With a desperate cry, you dive for the scrolls. Beldon's hand is slightly quicker, however, and his skeletal fingers clamp tightly on the scroll with the black ribbon an instant before yours do. Your hand begins to slip in along the length of the scroll, pulling both the ribbon and the wax seal from the parchment. Your uncle anxiously unrolls the scroll and begins to read it just as you try once more to rip it from his hands.

Neither of you is prepared for the tremendous explosion that blasts the entire landing from beneath you and puts an end to both your and Beldon's quest for the Sceptre of Power forever. ✕

133

As Arno demonstrates the Friends spell, you notice that something seems to be wrong with perhaps half the class. Their attention is wandering toward Arno's overweight assistant. You glance at the senior novice, whose cold gaze meets yours, then turns away immediately. In that brief moment, you realize that he has cast the spell on the entire class to identify the weaker students.

The rest of the day is spent in detailed instruction and coaching. By the end of the day, you've mastered the Friends spell by casting it on several of the other novices and have many notes to add to your spellbook, as well as several novices dogging your footsteps.

Add 2 points to your charisma and return to **103** after marking Friends in your spellbook.

134

As soon as you wake the next morning, you hurry to Thayne's hut to announce your decision.

"Teach me the Read Magic spell," you ask the elf. "I think I can find my father's books without a spell, but I may need one to help me understand whatever I find."

"That's sound reasoning," the elf agrees. He reaches into his trousers to pull out a crystal on a fine gold chain. You see that it's a perfect rose quartz prism. As it dangles in front of you, it divides the sunlight into a rainbow of hues that splashes across the wall of a hut.

"You'll need to borrow this," the elf says. "Be careful with it, though. It's rare and costly. If you're good at this spell, I'll see that you get your own."

A distinct tingle runs up your arm when you close your fingers on the icy crystal. Then the elf motions for you to follow him into his hut.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **158**. If it is less, turn to **200**.

135

Knowing that Estla must trust you if you're going to stay with Thayne's clan, you try to will your suspicions and plans out of your mind. You focus all of your concentration upon an odd-shaped boulder just over Estla's shoulder.

The old woman's grip is surprisingly strong. When her fingers clutch yours, you sense a sudden rush of energy into your palm and up your forearm. In that same instant, you feel your mind open completely to Estla's.

Your eyes drop from the boulder to her face, only to fuse with her own gaze. The tingling sensation flashes through your entire body, causing an instantaneous tremor to rock your shoulders. Just as suddenly, her hand and eyes release yours, ending the searing bond between you.

"We're not your enemies, human! Rest your suspicions or you will never attain your father's greatness."

Your first impulse is to challenge the old woman's "reading" by denying that you have any suspicions (**173**). But a part of your brain wants to admit that she's right (**196**).



Your class covering the Light spell meets in the lower level of the college tower. You and the other novices take the spiral staircase behind your father's statue down to a subterranean basement hollowed from solid basalt, either by countless years of tedious digging or by some powerful force that somehow sliced through the rock as if it were black butter.

"Light is one of the most useful spells a wizard can know," begins the young adept teaching the class. He has already cast the spell upon himself, causing a bright yellow globe of mystical light to be suspended in midair above his bearded and braided head. When he describes the incantation, you notice that he stresses the second vowel.

"Excuse me, but why are you emphasizing the second vowel in the spellword?" you interrupt without raising your hand. There's a flurry of murmurs around you, along with whispers warning you to be quiet. You've noticed a reluctance by the other students to interrupt any of the red-robed cadre, but you've decided not to worry about it.

"You tell me, Delling," replies the teacher. "Why is the second vowel so important? It was in your manual, you know."

"Yes, I know. I was only—"

"Checking?" he interrupts. "Would the son of Landor please demonstrate the proper casting of this spell?"

Your fellow novices are enjoying your confrontation with the young adept, one of the newest at the academy. You glance only once at their knowing sneers before you step forward and raise your arms above your head and clap three times in rapid succession.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **154**. If it is less, turn to **195**.

The pounding on your door seems at first to be coming from a dream, but the morning sunlight filtering into your chamber convinces you that it's real.

"What is it?" you mumble into the pillow.

"It's ten before eight. Novices eat at half-past six. You have ten minutes to eat and be in the Grand Master's study by eight o'clock!" calls Arno's voice.

"Huh? Wait a minute!" you call, pushing the covers back and swinging your feet to the cold floor.

Your first impulse is to find your heavy jacket, with its fur lining, and crude, warm mountain boots. Then you remember leaving your belongings outside the door before you went to sleep. Instead, you find a pair of thick sandals that you strap on your feet. Finally you don a black robe hanging from a peg on the door. Like the undergarments, the robe's inner folds conceal a great variety of pockets, laces, and compartments. The lightweight gown is surprisingly warm, almost as warm as your fleece jacket.

The long hallway is empty, probably because Arno woke you up so late. The large dining room is filled with bustling servers hauling great trays of sausages and bread to the noisy tables of black-robed novices. No one appears to notice your entrance this time, perhaps because you're dressed like everyone else. When you join a table of three novices, they mutter something to each other in a Tikan-dian dialect you don't understand, although they had previously been talking in Common. As if on cue, all three of your table companions push their plates away and rise from the benches, leaving you sitting alone.

Just as a servant brings you a clean dish and some steaming food, you hear Beldon's voice at your shoulder.

"They fear Arno's revenge too much to make friends with you, Carr. You've made a powerful enemy!"

"How did you know about—"

"Shh," Beldon interrupts you. "We're a tiny community here, nephew. Arno is the senior student at the academy, and he is jealous of your relationship with me. As you will learn, sorcery and jealousy are often opposite sides of the same coin."

"I seek no trouble with Arno," you protest, "nor with anyone else. I only want to follow your rules so that I might learn enough magic to understand my father's work. I've already discarded my possessions as Arno directed."

"Discarded your possessions? What do you mean?"

"Why, your rule about personal belongings. . . ."

You stop yourself, realizing from Beldon's amused eyes that you've been tricked by Arno on your first night at the college. There's no such rule at the academy!

If you hid your father's pouch, your intelligence seems to be working satisfactorily. But if you surrendered the pouch, along with everything else you own, you're not as bright as you thought you were. Deduct 1 point from your intelligence skill score. In either case, turn to **166**.

138

You see no sign of movement through the windows of the college as you follow the long path to the door of the black stone tower. The two wings of the college are slanted slightly seaward, as if to funnel visitors directly to the tower.

An even row of small windows, set higher than usual, lines both wings. They seem to be frosted over, although most of the winter snow and ice have already melted. You see no doors at all on the whitewashed additions.

Instead of a porch, there's only a slab of the same hard basalt that has been cut into blocks to fashion the walls of the tower. The effect is one of continuity, as if the ancient citadel had grown like an immense volcanic tree from the very bedrock of Seagate Island. The only doors you see are a massive pair of brass-studded panels with matching iron knockers. No sooner does your hand touch the cold metal than the massive portal swings silently open, revealing a spacious antechamber.

"Make yourself comfortable in the college your father built, Carr Delling," a man's voice echoes in the cavernous room. "I'll be with you shortly, as soon I change clothes."

The voice is vaguely familiar. You suppose that it's Beldon's, but you were too young when you last saw him to remember now. You wonder momentarily how he knew

who you were and why he wasn't surprised to see you. Then you remind yourself where you are and smile.

Better get used to that kind of thing, or I won't last long here, you mutter under your breath as you enter the College of Arcane Sciences for the first time.

Turn to **222**.

139

You sit at the camp table studying the dagger's fading aura. *The spellword must send some kind of command to the dweomer*, you think.

"Shine! Glow! Flare!" you mutter, but the dagger's dweomer grows dim. "Gleam! Dweomer! Aura! Glisten!"

You rack your brain, trying to recall any other words that might be used to command the magical aura to reveal itself. The aura produced by Thayne's spellword finally vanishes completely.

"I'm afraid there's no systematic way now for you to discover your own spellword," says your teacher. "You might guess it, but the odds are against it. I suggest that you quit for today. Tomorrow you must choose between two very powerful spells, and you'll need to be rested."

"What are they?" you ask the elf.

"Sleep (117) and Find Familiar (225)," Thayne replies.

140

The elf's recognition of your father's purse worries you, but you decide to deny knowing anything about it.

"That's just something I found at the curb," you lie. "Did you think I had stolen it?"

The elf's red brows furrow. His eyes sparkle with a trace of amusement.

"I only meant that you need to be more careful in a town of thieves. Pickpockets are to be found on every corner in Freeton, you know."

"A pickpocket can't reach inside my shirt without killing me first!" you exclaim.

"Ah! A fast learner!" says the elf with a mocking smile. "Thieves and assassins belong to the same guild, you know, and a man's life is worth far less than the gold inside

your shirt. But then again, perhaps it is Landor's purse they'd kill for."

His recognition of the bag shocks you once more. "I don't know what you mean!" you blurt lamely.

"Oh, come now. You know as well as I what that pouch can do! I recognized it immediately, even after all these years. I'd still like to know how you found it, though," he muses. "The Archmage's moneybag has been the object of many a quest among the adept, you know!"

The strange elf seems to know a lot about your father. You wonder if you should admit that you're Landor's son just to learn more about him (115) or if it would be safer to continue to hide your identity (169).

141

You've always had a good ear for foreign languages, and the syllables of Thayne's elven spellword are still ringing in your head. "Is this the right pronunciation?" you ask your instructor, "*Ishtyop?*"

The elf grins at your attempt and shakes his head. "Too much palate in the last vowel. It's not 'yo,' but 'io.' Listen now—'*Ishtiop!*' "

"Does it make that much difference?" you ask the elf.

"Only as much as the difference between night and day," Thayne replies. "The vowel you used would have reversed the spell and produced absolute blackness! Of course, that might be useful at times, but not when you need light."

You nod, satisfied at having learned a valuable lesson in magic. Spell components have to be exact or the results can be unpredictable, to say the least!

"*Ishtiop! Ishtiop! Ishtiop!*" you mutter as you duplicate the hand gestures Thayne used.

To your delight, a ball of light like the one over the elf's head suddenly appears above you. The hut is now so bright that you squint your eyes.

"Excellent!" commends your teacher. "This light will last for several hours and keep you awake while you choose between the next pair of spells. Would you rather be able to Read Magic or Detect Magic?"

Check Light in your spellbook and turn to 51.

From your crouched position, you reach to the ground and pick up a pinch of sand. As the dark intruder nears the hedge, you will yourself to be calm. Then, at the last possible moment, you leap from the bushes and fling the sand in the face of the stalker as you whisper, "Shhhhh!"

The intruder is a woman dressed in the tanned leather outfit of a ranger or frontiersman. She frowns and wipes the sand from her dark eyes, then grabs your robe so fast that you're taken completely off guard.

"Don't try your juvenile tricks on me!" she says in the rich Kandian accent of the original inhabitants of Tikandia. "I was trained in magic by the great Landor himself!"

The woman's mention of your father takes you by surprise so abruptly that you blurt your identity. "My father was your teacher?"

The intended victim of your unsuccessful magic hesitates while she studies your face. Then the dagger drops and her expression softens. "My father and I have been looking all over Seagate for you, Carr Delling!"

"What do you want with me?" you demand.

"Your help in restoring the Sceptre of Bhukod to its rightful owners, the Kandian people. My people are the descendants of the Bhukodian dynasty, and your father was one of us. Now you must wield the sceptre in Landor's place."

"I don't understand any of this!" you cry.

"Then listen to the words of Dalris, daughter of Perth, the archdruid, and lorist to all Kandians."

Turn to 84.

Beldon's words of warning are enough to convince you to hold back your curiosity for the moment. "If that door hasn't been opened in fifteen years, it will surely wait until I feel I'm ready to risk it," you tell your uncle.

"A wise choice, nephew," he responds. "Perhaps that time will come sooner than you expect. Come back to my study, and I'll give you a catalog and a manual of the spells we're teaching at the academy this term."

With a final glance at the strange elven inscription on

your father's door, you follow Beldon back down the circular stairs. In his office, he gives you a small scroll and a book. "Take this back to your quarters and study it carefully," he orders. "When you've selected your first spell, simply start by studying it in the manual and in class until you either learn it or fail."

Turn to 16.

144

"Well, this fence certainly doesn't look dangerous," you say. "That elf is crazy!"

You step forward quickly and prepare to vault over the waist-high fence. The instant you touch the rusty metal, at least six of the orchid-like flowers swing toward you from the mass of dark green ivy. As your eyes widen, the swaying blooms belch puffs of a musky dust into your face.

Your limbs become numb and you topple over the fence into a mass of writhing ivy tendrils. The plant's aerial roots invade your nostrils, ears, and eyes, seeking to feed on your brain. If you live, it will be as a mindless zombie slave of the yellow musk creeper that guards your uncle's academy of the arcane. ✕

145

Thayne makes you scour the mountainside for spiders before you begin the lesson. "If you're lucky, you won't have to eat more than a few dozen before you get it right," he tells you with a sadistic smirk.

You detach yourself from all emotion about what you must do to learn Spider Climb. By noon you have enough of the tiny arachnids for your magical experiment.

"What were the words again?" you ask the elf.

Thayne repeats the musical elven phrase, and you listen intently, locking your thoughts onto the singsong tones of each syllable. While it's still reverberating in your head, you kick off your shoes and walk to the rock face.

Recalling every detail of Thayne's demonstration, you mutter the phrase and quickly dab some bitumen on your finger. Then you snare a struggling spider in the sticky droplet and immediately lick your finger.

Suppressing a shudder, you swallow the two components. Immediately, your hands and feet feel swollen. Your palms and soles begin to secrete a minute amount of some incredibly sticky substance. Knowing you're ready, you leap at the wall of rock. Your hands and feet adhere to the vertical face with such strength that you can pull your entire body across the upright surface as if you were a fly—or a spider!

"Amazing! You did it on your first try!" Thayne calls from below. "Come down before it wears off! Until you have more experience using it, it will last only a few minutes."

The effects of the spell are already beginning to fade by the time you rejoin your teacher. Your heart is pounding with a mixture of excitement and pride.

"That was a good appetizer," you quip. "Did you mention something about lunch?"

Thayne scowls, but you detect an amused gleam in his eye. "Get your shoes on," he orders gruffly. "While you're eating, you can select your next spell. It will be either *Comprehend Languages* (175) or *Burning Hands* (215)."

Check *Spider Climb* in your spellbook and select one of these two spells for your next magic lesson.

146

"Why make it any more difficult than it already is?" you say to Dalris. You start toward the college's front entrance, but you soon discover that the door is shut fast and glowing with a faint bluish light.

"What's that?" you wonder aloud.

"Some magic-user you are!" Dalris sniffs. "It's wizard-locked from the outside. Use a *Knock* spell or something and get us inside."

"I don't know any spell that would cancel a wizard's lock," you tell the Kandian bard. "I guess we'll have to scale the wall after all."

Turn to 230.

147

"What's the matter, bumpkin? Lice in your pants?" calls the advanced student from behind you. The taunt causes



an outbreak of laughter throughout the hall. You feel humiliation turn your face scarlet. Deduct 1 point from your charisma score.

You swallow your wounded pride and try not to appear humiliated as you retreat toward the novices' table. Just before you reach it, a strong voice stops both you and the titters around you. Turn to **156**.

148

Magic can be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing, you think to yourself. I'd better not try it until I've got the movements and the words just right.

"Help me with the string," you urge Thayne. "Do I wrap it three times around the twig or four?"

"Four!" he replies gruffly, but you see a hint of a smile at the corners of his red moustache. He seems pleased that you asked before trying it.

You do everything very slowly, making sure to ask the elf whenever you're uncertain about your movements. Then you get him to repeat each syllable of the elven phrase he used, until your tongue can reproduce the sounds exactly.

"I'm ready," you announce after working on the spell for nearly two hours.

"Then do it!" your teacher encourages.

You make each gesture and say each word with great care. As you mutter the final syllable, you sense a third presence on the mountain. You test its reality by thinking that it would be nice to have some of the herb tea boiling on the fire by the hut. As soon as the thought forms in your mind, the boiling vessel quivers and rises in the air over an empty cup. The steaming liquid spills and sloshes but finally manages to land in the cup, which then drifts in a wobbly manner from the fire to your waiting hand. By the time you grab it, most of the hot tea has spilled.

"It takes a little practice to get it right," says your teacher, "but you've got the basics. Now, let's concentrate on the next pair of spells. Would you rather learn Spider Climb (191) or Feather Fall (209)?"

Check Unseen Servant in your spellbook and then select your next spell.

The narrow alley to your right looks sinister, but it's the quickest way to get out of sight of the pirates behind you. Clutching your pouch and the cutlass, you leave the sunshine and enter the dank, shadowy passage.

Inside the alley, you trip over piles of filth and debris scattered everywhere on the rough stones beneath your feet. The damp air is filled with an oppressive stench of decay and other nauseating but nameless odors. As you hear the ring of heavy footsteps pursuing you, you fight your disgust enough to press your body into a dark, crumbling alcove.

But then you hear over the sound of your own harsh breathing that the footsteps have stopped. You carefully peer out and see the dark silhouettes of your pursuers in the shadowy entrance to the ruined alley. For a long, chilling moment, the silence is so thick you can hear every drop of water filling the rancid puddles around you.

Finally they turn away, complaining that they have to deliver their hostage to the ship before the tide goes out. You scarcely breathe until the sounds of their footsteps have faded in the distance. Then you slip into the filthy passage. Turn to 197.

Thayne glances up from his review of your spellbook.

"These are excellent transcriptions!" he exclaims. "Every incantation is precise and workable. You're a fine student. I wish you had learned more than the spells here, but they'll have to do. Get your gear together. We've got a meeting with the druid priest and his daughter."

The elf's praise of your spellbook erases the fatigue of the past several days. You feel exhilarated as you collect your belongings, at the same time wondering what news the druid has brought from Tikandia. Turn to 14.

"Sleep is one of the most useful spells a magic-user can possess. With it, you can put a number of subjects into a deep coma. You can then do whatever you like to them.

Since pain will wake them, if you intend to harm your subject, you will have to strike cleanly and swiftly. A dagger thrust, perhaps . . .”

Arno’s dark eyes gleam as he describes the use of the Sleep incantation to assassinate subjects. You’ve suspected for some time that the senior novice’s character wasn’t exactly pleasant. Now you see that he’s even more sinister than you thought. You’ve often wondered if Arno’s dark features are fully human, but you can’t place him in any demihuman race you know.

“I’ll need an assistant for this demonstration,” Arno is saying, fixing his coal-black eyes on you. “Novice Delling, would you help us this morning?”

A titter runs through the class of black-robed novices. You know that they’ve been waiting since your arrival for this moment, just as you also know that a showdown with Arno is inevitable.

“Just tell me what to do, Arno,” you reply coolly. “I’ve studied this spell a bit, and I think I can keep up.”

From an inner pocket, Arno removes a small glass vial of what looks like pure white sand. “Now, take a tiny pinch of fine sand and fling it into your subject’s face, saying ‘Shhhhhh’ while thinking of nothing but perfect stillness,” he says to the class as he positions you in front of them. Arno’s hand is a blur as he demonstrates his words by tossing a few grains of sand into your eyes.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **216**. If it is less, turn to **178**.



You hesitate for only a second or two before handing the gray leather bag to the elf. Thayne pulls the thong to open the pouch, peers inside, then smiles wryly.

“Hold out your hand,” he orders, pouring the gold pieces into your palm. You examine the familiar coins but see nothing strange about them.

“Now watch closely!” Thayne commands. The elf utters a single word, “Lucre,” and shakes the empty purse. To your astonishment, there’s a jingle of metal! Thayne dumps four more gold pieces into his own palm and thrusts his hand under your nose. He’s holding four *more* gold coins, identical to those in your hand!

You frown suspiciously, thinking it was done by a sleight-of-hand trick.

“Ah. You don’t believe it,” says Thayne. “I can see it in your eyes. Here, try it for yourself.” The elf hands you the bag but pockets the new gold coins.

“Lucre!” you pronounce quickly.

There’s a mild tingle in your fingers where they touch the gray leather. You feel the bag’s weight increase almost immediately! Startled, you drop the pouch.

“How does it work?” you demand.

“Ha! The first question you had to ask! I knew Landor’s son would not be able to contain his curiosity!”

Thayne leans a little closer and whispers, “It works by the will of its maker, the power we call ‘magic.’ Do you still believe that the great Landor would have left his cherished widow and only heir penniless?”

“Did my father make this bag?”

“Oh my, no!” exclaims Thayne. “Such an item would be beyond the skills or wealth of even your famous sire. Landor discovered this small treasure, among others even more fabulous, among the ruins of lost Bhukod!”

Turn to **159**.

Just as you remember from your lesson, a sticky substance starts to seep from your palms and the soles of your feet. You leap onto the wall and begin climbing straight up

the side of the tower on all fours, past Dalris to the second-story window.

You peer through the dirty window just long enough to see the scattered tables and kitchen of the academy. "This is the dining hall," you whisper to your companion, who is several feet below you. "I'm going up to the next floor."

With a final burst of speed, you pull yourself over the parapet to the top of the tower, just as the sticky substance vanishes altogether.

While you're waiting for Dalris to reach the edge, you check the only entrance you can find, a trapdoor leading down into the tower. "It's not locked," you whisper when Dalris joins you.

"But is it trapped?" she asks. Dalris probes with her fingers at the edges of the trapdoor for two or three minutes. Finally she gives a satisfied nod and pulls it open. Torchlight from below spills onto your faces as you and the Kandian bard descend to the landing below the roof.

When you join her, she's standing at a door, examining an inscription: "ONLY FOR THE ONE WHO FOLLOWS IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF LANDOR."

"This must be your father's room!" Dalris whispers.

You nod through tears and reach with trembling hands for the door that has been wizard-locked for the past fifteen years. Turn to 186.

154

Very deliberately, you use a more palatal version of the vowel in the second syllable of the required spell word. The enchanted light above the teacher's head grows dim, then the chamber plunges into absolute blackness.

"Hey!" "What'd he do?" "Where's the light?" your classmates cry.

Amid their puzzled cries, you hear another spellword, followed by a brisk command ordering some unseen person to "fetch a light." Within moments, a lighted torch appears in midair at the doorway and sails into the chamber, directly into the instructor's hand! Those novices who have never seen or read about the simple but impressive Unseen Servant spell are even more confused.

“Settle down!” orders your teacher, trying to contain the novices’ anger at you for involving them all in the failure of your spell. “Novice Delling did not fail to work the Light spell. On the contrary, he went several steps beyond it. You’d all do well to learn from the experience. Where did you learn about reversing this incantation, Delling?”

“In the manual,” you reply casually. “It pays sometimes to scan the appendices of a book first, so that you’ll be more informed when you read the main text.”

“An excellent observation, novice Delling. Return to your quarters and copy Light into your spellbook. The rest of you remain here and learn what he already knows.”

Add 1 point to your charisma score and return to 16.

155

“We must trust each other,” you tell Thayne. His aunt’s sightless eyes are staring at you as if they can see your worried scowl. “Tell her that humans don’t like to have their souls ‘read.’ ”

“You do not need to tell me anything, Carr Delling,” says the elven matriarch in a clear voice. “I can detect your deception and suspicions without touching you. The great Landor would not relish the thought of his son being so deceptive. Take care what you tell this man, Thayne!”

You glance quickly from Estla’s sunken, omniscient eyes to her nephew’s frowning face. If you choose to admit that you came with Thayne to investigate your father’s death as well as to search for his spellbooks and the Sceptre of Bhukod, turn to 196. If you’d rather deny your plans and suspicions, turn to 173.

156

“I see that you’ve all had a chance to meet my nephew, the son of Landor!”

Beldon’s commanding voice thunders throughout the great dining room. He’s standing at the double doors to the kitchen, the silver symbols on his yellow robe sparkling with golden reflections from the chandeliers. Your uncle points to the table with the pair of blue-robed students.

“Sit there, nephew, next to Arno, our senior novice. He

will be your personal tutor until you progress to his level of knowledge.”

You whirl toward the table, only to see what you feared. The thin, dark man you just confronted has blanched beneath his swarthy skin, his mouth curled in a sneer. He stands and bows gravely to Beldon.

“As you wish, Grand Master,” he replies. “It will be my pleasure to assist your nephew, I assure you.”

Arno’s voice has the same resonant quality as Beldon’s, though not as impressive. You note a trace of an accent you can’t place, just as you can’t identify the man’s unusual facial features and complexion. Your new tutor’s expression has changed to a frozen mask, and you wish fleetingly that you had never offended Arno.

You wonder if Beldon knows of your confrontation with Arno and has assigned you to him to heighten competition between the two of you. You might insist on learning magic with someone else, at a more basic level (241), or you could take advantage of Beldon’s offer even if it leads to a conflict with Arno and the other students (204).

157

Before you, you see a mummified skeleton, its teeth gleaming through fragments of dried skin, seated upon a thronelike chair ornamented with grinning death’s-heads! The crypt thing’s skeletal body is draped in a voluminous brown robe, the cowl draped loosely over its skull. The enchanted light reflects yellow upon patches of bare bone on the forehead and cheeks of the gruesome creature.

Then you see the sceptre! The fabled wand of power once wielded by Bhukodian sorcerers is lying on the crypt thing’s lap. It’s a mace-shaped rod of golden metal, its bulbous end composed of a silver setting containing three glowing pearls. The other end of the Sceptre of Bhukod tapers into the bony grasp of the crypt thing. The guardian of the tomb cocks its head and points at you with the wand.

“So you’ve come to steal the treasure of the Bhukodian sorcerers!” the creature exclaims in a voice as dry as the crackle of ancient parchment.

“No!” you cry. “I’ve come to save the sceptre from my

uncle, who intends to use it for evil purposes. I shall see that it is returned to the world of the living, to the Kandian people whose ancestors lie here under your watchful eyes!"

"Well spoken!" Rufyl congratulates you. *"Your father couldn't have said it any better. Say no more. Just wait for the crypt thing to consider what you've said. It has no need of the sceptre. It only craves diversion."*

The monster's answer is swift. It extends the sceptre toward you. "Come, then! Take the wand and be gone!"

"No, I'll take the wand!"

Beldon's voice booms from the darkness behind you. He has somehow followed you here, and now you must risk your life to prevent him from taking the Sceptre of Bhukod, just as your father did fifteen years ago! Your first impulse is to grab the wand from the crypt thing's bony hand and use it against your uncle (218), even though you're not sure how it works. Lacking a weapon, your only other alternative is to use one of your novice spells (239)!



158

Inside Thayne's hut, you see a jumbled clutter of books, scrolls, jars, and maps everywhere you look. He brushes some of debris of his studies off the table and motions for you to sit down. Then he brings several dozen leatherbound books and stacks them in front of you.

Opening the top one, he says, "This book is written in early Common." He turns the pages and points to the archaic script. "Notice how the scribe used this character for the letter B and this one for . . ."

You settle in your chair for a long lesson. By the time

Thayne has worked through the entire stack, the light in the hut has grown dim. You can now instantly spot the differences among such written languages as ancient High Elven, Archaic Common, classical Wizard's Scrawl, mirror writing, and other scripts used in magical inscriptions.

Thayne suggests that you break for supper, but the excitement of what you've been learning is so high that you're not hungry. "I'm ready to try the spell," you tell your teacher. "How do I use the prism?"

The elf gives you a delighted smile. "Let the refracted light dance across the text you wish to read and command the glyphs to speak to you in your own language. Here. Practice on this enchanted treasure map."

He spreads a yellowed parchment in front of you. The lines have almost completely faded, and you recognize the characters immediately as a combination of Wizard's Scrawl and mirror writing. Dangling the crystal prism over the map, you let the last rays of the sun send multicolored rays playing over the faded glyphs.

"Speak to me in my native language," you command softly. The muted colors of the map begin to swirl together and the letters seem to be dissolve and reform into characters of modern Common. They form in your brain as if you could read them directly from the parchment.

"It's a map of some tunnels beneath Freeton!" you exclaim as the magical translation proceeds. "Some kind of smugglers' treasure . . ."

"Pirates, not smugglers," corrects Thayne. "I found that map a few months ago and have already collected my rewards. The important thing is that you managed the spell correctly. Your father would be very proud of you. Keep the prism. You use it quite well, and I have others."

Relieved, you ignore your tired eyes and ask enthusiastically, "What spells do I learn next?"

"None now," he replies, laughing. "It's late, and you must inscribe Read Magic in your spellbook while the details are still fresh in your mind. You'll need as much sleep as possible because your choice tomorrow is between two very difficult and unpredictable incantations: Find Familiar (225) and Sleep (117)."

Bhukod! The name fills you with a sense of mystery and excitement. Legends of the lost empire of elven sorcerers abound throughout Tikandia. They tell of Bhukodian wizards who possessed more arcane knowledge than ever again existed anywhere in the world after their reign ended five centuries ago!

"My father discovered Bhukod?" you cry.

"So it is said by some who should know," Thayne replies. "If those stories are true, the secrets of Landor's greatest spells were gifts from elven undead within the walls of ancient Bhukod."

Your eyes widen in astonishment. "Is there any proof that he found Bhukod?"

"Proof? These eyes are proof enough for me!"

"What do you mean?" you demand excitedly.

"I mean I saw the Sceptre of Power with my own eyes!"

"What is this sceptre, anyway? Is it valuable?"

"Valuable?" exclaims the elf, his green eyes narrowing to slits. "The Bhukodian sceptre is beyond value! But it has such power as you cannot imagine. Tikandian rulers have sought it for centuries. That is why Archcleric Oram of Saven sent his corrupt paladins after you two years ago, and that is why your uncle Beldon craves the sceptre so!"

"There are so many things I don't understand," you murmur. Then you ask, "How can I learn more about my father's discoveries?"

"By continuing his research into ancient sorceries," Thayne says easily, as if the answer were simple. "But first you must learn magic. You couldn't even begin to understand your father's discoveries without advanced occult knowledge."

For a moment, all your mother's attempts to keep you away from magic make you uneasy. Then you shrug off the feeling and demand excitedly, "Where? How do I start?"

Thayne grins at your eagerness to begin the grueling study of magic. "You could come to my camp, where I'll endeavor to teach you all I know," he offers, "or you could seek the 'truth' from someone like your uncle Beldon. In either case, you'd have an apt teacher!"

The twinkle in Thayne's eyes suggests he might be planning some trickery—but maybe he's serious. You're torn between accepting the elf's offer to teach you magic (109) and resuming your search for Beldon (217).

160

"What do you suppose the runes mean?" you ask Beldon, reluctant to touch the trapped portal. "They could mean that you're the one who is to follow in the footsteps of Landor. You're the new Grand Master of the academy."

He shakes his head slowly. "I rather think it refers to Landor's heir—which is you, of course."

"Well, I'll try the door, then," you tell him solemnly.

Beldon nods and steps away from the inscribed panel. You take a deep breath and reach for the door handle, your arm quivering. At the instant your fingers touch the brass handle, a flash of energy envelops both you and the door.

The magical barrier seems to invade every cell of your body. For the few seconds it lasts, you feel as if you're melting and being absorbed into the heavy timbers of the door itself. It's difficult for you to know where your body ends and the wood fibers begin.

The startling sensation is over just as quickly as it began, leaving you staring numbly into a dank, musty chamber. The only light is the pale gray glow from the dawn sun outside the filthy windows. Suddenly the truth penetrates your mind, leaving your senses numb with excitement. Your body has somehow passed through the thick portal, leaving your uncle behind in the hall!

"Can you hear me?" Beldon's muffled cry sounds far away. "Open the door from the inside so I can help protect you from your father's great powers!"

If you wish to let Beldon enter, turn to 52. If you'd rather search your father's quarters alone, turn to 241.

161

The notion of having your father's magical protection from evil sorcery is tempting, but you want to be sure of the magic before you use it. You decide that it's time you sought your uncle's advice. From what you've seen of sorcery, the

old saying that "A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing" is perfectly true.

Gathering the three scrolls in your arms, you cross to the door and manage, with some difficulty, to push it open. Beldon's face is red with excitement, and his eyes seem to bulge when he sees the parchments in your hand.

"Look, Uncle! Scrolls with my father's seal! This one contains some kind of protection spell!"

The slender mage stares at the opened parchment in your hand. His expression is one of wide-eyed excitement, mixed with something like awe or fear, as he reaches with trembling fingers for the small scroll.

At the instant Beldon's fingers brush the parchment, the rolled message bursts into flames! You cry out in alarm and drop the scroll onto the stone floor. Before either you or your uncle can stamp out the magical fire, the parchment has disintegrated into fine, silver ashes at your feet.

"It was trapped," Beldon explains. "Probably a cursed scroll, meant to kill thieves. If you had read that parchment, you might have had the same fate. I suspect that the rest of those scrolls may be just as dangerous. You'd better let me check them for magical traps."

You hand the remaining scrolls to your uncle. His thin fingers untie the red ribbon and have begun to unroll the parchment when it explodes in both your faces, and you don't even have time to realize that this is the end. . . . ✕

162

Trying to recall every movement Thayne made is more difficult than you thought. *Did he wrap the string around the stick three times or four?* you wonder, but can't remember exactly. Rather than ask the elf and demonstrate your poor memory, you loop the cord around the twig several times until you think it looks as it did when Thayne did it.

Dangling the wrapped stick in front of your chest, you start it swinging slightly and murmur the words you remember the elf uttering. Nothing seems to happen, but you're sure that you conducted the spell properly.

"Fetch me some tea!" you tell the invisible servant.

From out of nowhere, a blast of wind suddenly whirls the

dust at your feet, sending particles of sand and leaves spiraling upward into your face with such force that they sting your skin.

"What did I do?" you yell above the roaring wind.

"You summoned a whirlwind, imbecile!" comes Thayne's reply from beyond the wall of swirling dust and debris.

"How do I stop it before it becomes a tornado?"

"I don't know!" the elf answers. "It was an accident, and accidental magic is unpredictable!"

Just then, you feel the wind lifting your body from the ground. You scream the magic phrase over and over again, but the whirlwind seems only to gather strength. It starts to spin your body around with great speed, carrying you higher than the tops of the trees around the mountain settlement. Then, just as suddenly, the powerful wind ceases! From high in the air where the whirlwind has borne you, you plummet like a stone to the rocky mountainside far below! ✖

163

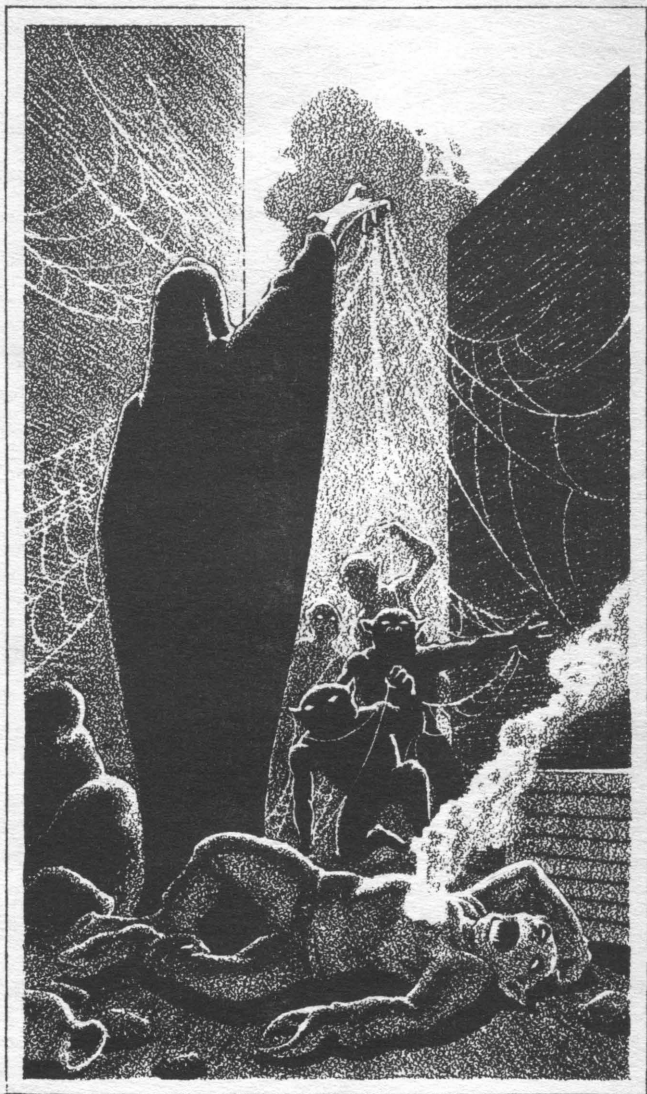
You draw the cutlass and back away slowly until your shoulders brush the wall behind you. Then you crouch in a fighting stance and wave the old sword menacingly.

"Get back!" you warn them. "I may not get all of you, but the first few will taste their own blood!"

Your strategy seems to work better than you hoped. The first few attackers stop so suddenly that those behind them crash headlong into their backs. You start to step toward them, over the smoking carcass of their dead henchman, then freeze when you see that the monsters are staring at something just above your head.

The cloaked stranger has reappeared and is hovering above you! He raises his hand high above his hooded head and dangles his fingers loosely. A single strand of silken fiber floats from his left palm and hangs in midair momentarily. Then a powerful wind blows from the depths of the hood, catching the silky thread and carrying it toward the horde of mongrelmen.

To your amazement, the single strand begins to multiply and divide, attaching itself to both sides of the alley. In



instants, a thick web is stretched across the path of the advancing monsters. You can't believe that such flimsy threads could stop such hulking creatures, but they do! The enraged mongrelmen thrash in the magical web like flies in the sticky lair of a spider.

You're so intent upon the scene before you that you fail to see the unknown sorcerer drop lightly to the alley beside you. The same pale hand that stopped the mongrelmen reaches out toward you! You squirm against the wall, forced to decide instantly whether to attack this powerful sorcerer with your sword (85) or to stand still and let his hand touch you (112).

164

"Aww, leave him be, Red!" growls the man guarding the pilot. "Look at his rags. He's not a good thief if he's one at all. If we be late, the bosun'll nail us to the mast!"

The one called Red relaxes his hands and pushes you away from his belly, bruising your back against the bricks. Subtract 1 hit point from your total.

He points to a narrow alley just ahead. "The shortest way to the wharf is yonder, through the ruins of old Freeton," he growls. "That's where all the thieves and cutthroats live in this hell-hole town. If you're scared, you can go back the way yuh came and stay on the main street o' the bazaar!"

You must decide quickly whether to take the shortcut through the ruins (62) or return to the crowded bazaar (69).

165

You master the mechanics of the Spider Climb spell quickly and easily. At the instructor's signal, you remove your sandals and swallow—though reluctantly—the bit of tar and the spider. You murmur the elvish phrase and bound high onto the tower's inner wall.

The palms of your hands and the soles of your feet secrete a magical substance so sticky that it supports your full weight. Like a large black spider, you scurry across the rough stones. You even manage to hang upside down briefly from the ceiling, just as Arno had done. None of the other novices manage to remain as long nor go as high.

When your instructor finally shouts for everyone to stop, you catch a glimpse of your rival's face. Arno's dark complexion is livid with jealousy and rage.

Add 1 point to your charisma and mark Spider Climb in your spellbook. Then return to 103.

166

"I see that you're beginning to understand the dubious camaraderie among your fellow magic-users," says Beldon.

Your face reddens, but you manage a smile. "Arno will pay for that, Uncle, as soon as I get an opportunity to—"

"Enough! At this academy, you'll respect those who have earned it. Senior novice Arno is one of my most diligent students. Besides, he could be a dangerous enemy. He's already mastered several second-level spells and at least a score of beginning incantations."

"Then I need to start right away if I'm to catch up with him!" you exclaim. "When and how do I begin?"

"That's exactly what I need to discuss with you, nephew. You see, if you start at the most basic levels, it could take you years to reach Arno's position. If I were in your position, I'd welcome the chance I'm offering you, as the son of our founder, to begin your study of magic at a more advanced level."

"What would I have to do?" you ask.

"First you'd have an interview with me and my adepts so that we could appraise and guide your interests in sorcery. Then you'd be given a list of the tutorials we're giving this spring at the college, and you could take your pick of the spells being taught."

"What would I miss by not starting at the bottom?"

"Only some minor cantrips," Beldon replies. "You could learn them all in less than a month without instructions."

Beldon seems to be asking you to reconsider your choice between starting as a total novice (193) or beginning with more advanced classes (221).

167

I'd better strike first, or I might not get a second chance, you think, grimly recalling tales of monsters in slums.

You wedge yourself against the rough stucco facade of the deserted building and draw your cutlass. With tense muscles, you raise the heavy old blade above your head like an executioner's sword, and wait.

The shuffling sounds get closer, and your heart starts pounding. Suddenly you see two *empty* boots step from the darkness of the ruined building!

Stunned by the sight of a pair of personless boots walking past you, you do nothing to stop them. Before you can collect your thoughts, the small boots begin to run away from you, through the narrow alley. In a flash, you race behind the eerie animated boots with your sword drawn.

The empty shoes lead you along a tortuous, winding path at breakneck speed. You're so intent upon catching them that you never see the open well until you trip at its edge and tumble into the dark cistern. Your head crashes against the masonry wall, and you feel your neck snap only an instant before all becomes blackness. ✕

168

You decide you're simply going to have to climb the wall and make the best of it. Dalris is well on her way up the steep wall before you have even begun.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **208**. If it is less, turn to **190**.

169

Freeton's reputation as a haven for thieves and outlaws has made you wary. This curious elf's sudden interest in your father's money pouch puts you even more on guard.

"I told you I found the bag. Let's drop the subject," you tell Thayne coldly, though you want to forget your suspicions and ask the elf about your father.

"As you wish, young master," Thayne replies with a mocking smile and bow. "How may I serve you?"

"You can tell me how to find Beldon, the sorcerer," you answer, ignoring the sarcasm. "I've come to live with him."

"Live at College Arcane? And study magic with that poor imitation of the great Landor?" Thayne snorts.

“I’ve never heard of this ‘College Arcane,’” you protest. You start to tell Thayne that Beldon is your uncle, but you stop because that would let the elf know you are Landor’s son. “Will you tell me how to find Beldon, or . . .”

“Patience!” Thayne interjects. “Follow the bazaar avenue toward the waterfront. It will twist and wind, but always remain on the cobblestones. You’ll see a tower of black stones—a ruined battlement—in the distance, but a fence will bar your way, forcing you to leave the street. Whatever you do, stay away from that fence! Work your way through the ruins keeping your eye on the tower until you see the open gate into Beldon’s place.”

“Why is the fence so dangerous?”

“Because of what guards it,” Thayne replies with a sinister smile.

Without another word, the elf’s body simply seems to lose its substance and become part of the shadows.

It must be an optical illusion! you exclaim to yourself.

You step toward the spot where the elf was standing but find only a solid masonry wall. Thayne has vanished without a trace, leaving you wondering whether you should trust his advice (68) or find your own way to Beldon’s academy of magic (97).

170

Beldon looks at you strangely, but he seems more interested in your father’s quarters than in you. He hurries past you to enter the one room in the entire college that he has not been able to investigate since your father’s murder. As you descend the spiral stairs, you hear sounds of mumbling and other strange noises. You guess they’re the sounds of the Grand Master trying every trick in his spellbook in a search for the secret knowledge hidden beneath your robe.

Once you’re inside your room, you remove the scrolls and wonder which of them contains the spell to summon Rufyl, your father’s familiar, who can guide you to the Sceptre of Bhukod and your ultimate legacy.

If you choose the scroll bound with the blue ribbon, turn to 7; turn to 240 if you pick the one wrapped in the black ribbon.



171

Almost instantly, Arno's lesson stops making much sense to you because you're not paying any attention to the senior novice. It's Prindel, his fat assistant, who has captivated your attention. The same person you saw as an overweight yes-man now seems to be the most intelligent, attractive friend you've ever had.

Even when the lesson is over, you follow Prindel to supper, hoping that he'll let you carry his tray and fetch second helpings for him. By the time Arno's spell begins to wear off, you're the laughingstock of the academy and have wasted your day.

Reduce your charisma by 2 points. Then return to 103 to study another spell without marking Friends in your spellbook.

172

"It's not exactly honest to suddenly charge me for this," you tell the elf.

"It wasn't exactly a lie, either," he retorts. "I just promised to teach you magic. I didn't say it'd be free. Spells are more powerful when the caster pays for them, you know."

"You just made that up!" you accuse.

"No, no! That *is* the truth!"

Grumbling, you reach into your shirt and remove the soft leather bag. You empty the four gold pieces into your hand, then, shrugging, you toss your father's pouch to the elf.

"All right. I've given you the pouch. Now I want to cast the spell," you insist. "Furthermore, I want you to lead me through the procedure to make sure it's done correctly."

Thayne nods and grins. "You paid for it, and you shall have it, just as you requested. We'll set up the brazier and get everything else ready before sundown."

You work rapidly, preparing the paraphernalia for the ritual. "No wonder this spell can be cast just once a year," you muse. "It's too much trouble to do it more often!"

Finally everything's in its proper place. As soon as the sun drops behind the treeline, Thayne orders you to light and stoke the charcoal in the brass basin. When it is so hot that the brazier is cherry red, the elf tells you to begin adding incense and herbs while reciting the same elven phrase over and over in a monotonous chant.

"Add the components slowly," he reminds you. "They have to last you fourteen hours!"

You nod but don't reply so that your chanting will not be interrupted. Moving mechanically, you establish a rhythm in time with your chant—incense, catnip, basil, arrowroot, savory, incense, catnip, . . .

As the morning sun begins to break in the gray mountain sky, your exhaustion is transformed into excitement. The hour of your familiar's appearance is nigh!

You concentrate even harder on the spell, trying to make the chanting as fresh and meaningful as it was long hours before. Suddenly you feel a terrifying presence. It seems to be centered on the brass bowl with its fragrant smoke, and you feel it pulling against you somehow. You strain even harder to identify the presence, only to feel a blackness consuming your consciousness. . . .

"Carr! Carr Delling!" Thayne's worried voice reaches your brain, bringing you back to the material plane from wherever the strange presence took you. "What happened?" asks the concerned elf.

You describe everything you felt or sensed, as exactly as you can. When you finish, your tutor looks troubled.

"What is it?" you demand. "Where's my familiar?"

"Your familiar either belongs to someone else or has been captured by a power much greater than my magic," he says solemnly. He tosses you the money pouch and explains why. "It's yours again. You were depending upon my magic to work and it didn't. The spell is yours, even though you

can't use it again until next year."

You clutch the leather bag and try to recall what you can about the nameless presence which seems to have more power than you, your familiar, and Thayne combined.

Turn to 106.

173

"I don't know what you're talking about!" you protest to the blind seeress. "I'm not suspicious! I just want to learn magic so that I can understand my father's work!"

You feel as if Estla's sightless eyes are studying your face. Then the elven matriarch rattles a quick phrase in her native language. Thayne replies in the same melodic dialect and glances furtively at you. For the first time, you can see a hint of hostility on the jovial elf's bearded face.

"My grand-aunt agrees to let you stay among us for three days only," he says stiffly. "She says you are not to be trusted and may even be a spy for your uncle."

"I'm not a spy for anyone!" you exclaim. "You promised to teach me magic! Is your word to be taken so lightly?"

Without answering, Thayne turns to Estla, and there's another quick exchange of words. The old woman turns abruptly and re-enters her hut. Thayne's gaze is cold as he nods and points past your shoulder.

"You will be given a hut of your own over there," he says formally. "Each day you are here, you will be allowed to choose one of two spells to learn. Those are the words of Estla, and her decision is final among our people."

You start to complain but are stopped by the stern look in Thayne's eyes.

"What are the first two spells I must choose from?" you ask. "Tell me now so I can think about them tonight."

"The first two are Friends and Unseen Servant."

"What do they do?" you ask the elf.

"The Friends spell will allow you to attract supporters to your side whenever you need them. Unseen Servant will summon an invisible valet to do your bidding."

You ask the elf to elaborate upon the spells, but he refuses. Thayne summons an elven boy to direct you to your hut and to fetch your supper. Then you are alone.

While you eat, you think about which of the two spells to select for the first entry in your own spellbook.

To attempt the Friends spell, turn to **25**. If your choice is Unseen Servant, turn to **90**.

174

Your thoughts are too scattered to attempt a spell, even if you could remember one right now. You crouch with your legs as tight as coiled steel. The figure gets closer . . . closer . . . *now!*

You spring from the hedge, grabbing the intruder by the neck and arm. The weight of your body crashes both of you onto the cold lawn. Just as you start to think this is going to be easy, your opponent recovers from the shock of your attack and reacts with surprising strength for such a small person. You barely have time to see the flash of steel by starlight, much less time to dodge.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **187**. If it is less, turn to **242**.

175

When Thayne appears at your hut at dawn, you tell him which of the two spells you've chosen for the day.

"All I know about Burning Hands is what you told me—that jets of flame can be shot from the spellcaster's fingertips. But I think Comprehend Languages would be more important for understanding whatever language the sorcerers of ancient Bhukod used, since my father relied upon their magic."

Thayne smiles warmly. "That's a most appropriate choice. I rather thought you'd select that spell, so I came prepared."

Your tutor takes a small rolled parchment from his cloak and hands it to you. "This scroll is not magical in any way. It's only a simple recipe for a healing tonic, but its ancient Gnomish will be a good test."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **88**. If it is less, turn to **53**.

176

The Burning Hands incantation is one of the simplest spells in the manual of magic that Beldon gave you. It requires nothing but a single spellword in High Elvish and a curious hand gesture with your thumbs joined and fingers spread.

“Why waste a class session on this one,” you mutter, “when I can learn it from the manual?”

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **100**. If it is less, turn to **3**.

177

“Ishtyop! Ishtyop! Ishtyop!”

You try to repeat Thayne’s spellword, raising your hands just as the elf had done.

“No! That’s the wrong vowel!” Thayne yells, but his warning is too late. Instead of the bright light you expected to see, the interior of the hut is thrust instantly into pitch darkness. It’s so dark the blackness seems to suffocate you.

“What happened?” you shout into the void.

“You reversed the spell!” comes Thayne’s reply. “You spoiled your chances to learn Light, because you can only do it once a day! Now you’ll have to wait until the magical darkness wears off. But maybe you’ll be able to think better in the dark. Use the time to decide on another spell. You can choose between Detect Magic and Read Magic.”

“Wait!” you shout. Turn to **51**.

178

The slight tickle of the sand particles is the last sensation you have before your mind goes completely blank. The next thing you are aware of is a sharp object pricking your cheek. You recoil from the tip of Arno’s dagger, suddenly realizing that every other novice in the room is convulsed with laughter.

You try to rise, but your hands and feet are trussed together behind your back, the way that farmers tie hogs before they slaughter them. Arno slashes with his dagger at the cords binding your ankles and wrists, then waits for

you to strip them from your body. From the lack of circulation in your limbs, you realize you must have been asleep for several hours!

“As you’ve just witnessed, you can do practically anything at all to a victim of the Sleep spell, as long as it isn’t painful! We’re sorry you missed the lesson, Delling. It was quite amusing,” Arno says with an evil smile.

Deduct 1 point from your intelligence skill score because you’re too distracted to think clearly. Subtract 2 points from your charisma score, because now everyone merely laughs when they see you. Return to **16** without adding Sleep to your spellbook.

179

It takes only a moment to realize the horrible truth. In your panicky attempt to cast the Feather Fall spell, something went wrong! Your timing was off, either with the spellword or with the feather. Whatever it was, it doesn’t matter much any more, as you plummet to your death on the hard black platform below! ✕

180

“He’s lying, Red! Slit the beggar’s throat so’s we can get this ship-jumper of a pilot aboard before the bosun hangs us from the nest!” the other pirate snarls.

You try to twist so you can draw Ulrik’s cutlass, but the hulking, sweaty pirate catches your arm easily and throws you back against the wall.

But you have another weapon. . . .

“Red, watch out! He’s got a seaknife!”

Before the blade clears your belt, the seaman jerks the naked cutlass from your hand, ripping your ragged tunic in the sudden struggle. Your leather pouch with the strange inscription falls to the cobblestones, spilling a gold piece onto the damp street. The pirate is so surprised at the sight of the coin he forgets his caution and stoops to grab it.

You push the heavy man, catching him off balance, and send him crashing to the ground. In the next instant, you grab the cutlass as well as the purse and dart past the startled pirate guarding the captive pilot.

You have only two escape routes: straight ahead, continuing the road you took in following the men—you assume it goes toward the docks (131)—or into the dark, narrow ruins which you think will eventually lead back to the bazaar (149).

181

“I know exactly where they are,” you tell Dalris. “That’s the room, just above us!”

The Kandian bard follows your gaze to a filthy tower window several stories above your heads. She steps to the wall and examines the stones, then nods grimly.

“I can climb the wall,” she says confidently. “Can you?”

If you have Spider Climb in your spellbook, turn to 230. Otherwise, you must decide whether to scale the wall using your mountaineering skills (168) or to use the front door (146).



182

Swallowing deeply to control your fear, you hurry to the edge and dive over the battlement. You fling the feather into the night air and yell “Drifter!” as loud as you can. It only takes an instant for your excitement to be replaced by abject horror. Your stomach lodges in your throat as you begin to hurtle through the air!

“You let go of the feather too late, bumpkin!” you hear Arno’s voice yell as you plummet to the stone far below. ✕

183

You toss the fine sand into Thayne’s face and murmur the spellword but nothing happens. The white grains just cling to the coppery coils of his beard and eyebrows.

“You’re not thinking what I told you to think,” he corrects you. “Try blanking your mind completely.”

The elf’s suggestion works at first, but you start getting nervous as the sand hits his face a second time and thoughts of the spell return to your mind.

“You did it again! Keep your mind a blank. That shouldn’t be too difficult for you. Now, once more!”

And, once more, it fails as you find yourself distracted at the crucial moment.

The trials continue all morning. Each time, you can feel yourself losing more and more control of your thoughts. Finally, Thayne waves you away.

“Enough!” he bellows, brushing the sand from his skin and beard. “You just don’t have the right kind of concentration for the Sleep spell.”

Turn to **106**.

184

Your stomach nearly rejects the tar and the spider, and the sticky substance fails to appear on your hands and feet as it did when you learned the spell. You glance up at Dalris and see that she’s moving more quickly now.

Hurriedly you toss another set of components into your mouth, chewing them up together this time before murmuring the spellword. Then you wait while your stomach churns, but still nothing happens.

“Come on!” Dalris calls in a hoarse whisper. “Or are you just going to stand there and eat spiders all night?”

Realizing that your spell has failed for some reason, you step toward the wall and start to climb.

Deduct 1 point from your dexterity because of your upset stomach. Then roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **208**. If it is less, turn to **190**.

185

Haslum collects a few dozen leatherbound books and stacks them in front of you on top of one of the benches.

“This book is written in early Common,” he tells you as he flips through the pages and points to the archaic script.

“Notice how the scribe used this character for the letter *B* and this one for . . .”

You settle in your chair for another long lesson. By the time Haslum has worked through the entire stack of books, it's nearly nightfall. You're sure now that you can instantly spot the differences among such written languages as ancient High Elvish, Archaic Common, Wizard's Scrawl and other scripts often used in magical inscriptions.

Haslum suggests that you break for supper, but you are so excited by what you've been learning that you're not hungry. “I'm ready to try the spell now,” you declare. “How do I use this prism?”

The scholarly instructor gives you a delighted smile. “Let the refracted light dance across the text you wish to read and command the glyphs to speak to you in your own language. Here, practice on this enchanted letter.”

He spreads a yellowed parchment in front of you. The lines have faded, but you recognize the characters easily as a combination of Wizard's Scrawl and High Elvish. You focus the crystal prism over the document, letting its multicolored rays play over the faded glyphs.

“Characters of Wizard's Scrawl and High Elvish, speak to me in my native language,” you command softly. The muted glyphs begin to swirl together, transforming into characters of modern Common. They form themselves in your brain as if you could read them directly.

“Ha!” you blurt out, unable to suppress your pleasure as you read the document. “It's a recipe for a love philtre. You take one Venus flytrap bloom, two pinches of—”

“Yes, yes,” Haslum interrupts impatiently. “The important thing is that you performed the spell correctly. Your father would be very proud of you. You may keep the prism, Carr. You've earned it, and I have others. It's late, and you must inscribe Read Magic into your spellbook while the details are still fresh in your mind.”

You must have added the dice wrong when you calculated your abilities, because this spell should have taken you much longer. Add 1 point to your intelligence and 1 point to your charisma scores. Then check Read Magic in your spellbook and return to **239**.

Your hands no sooner touch the wizard-locked door than the rough wood fibers seem to come alive and pull you toward the portal. It's as if your body is disintegrating and its fragments are being sucked through the grain of the wood into the room beyond! The strange sensation passes just as quickly as it came upon you, but you're no longer on the landing with Dalris. Instead, you're in a dark chamber smelling of age and dust—your father's old quarters!

"Carr! Are you all right?" The bard's coarse whisper from beyond the closed door behind you reminds you of your mission. You grope for the metal handle and twist. The rusty hinges squeak and groan, but the portal finally opens Landor's study for the first time in fifteen years!

Dalris rushes past you, already striking a flint in her tinderbox to light a small candle she has removed from her pocket. "Don't just stand there! Shut the door!" she whispers. "The magical seal is broken, but Beldon may not notice it for a while. Let's just hope that noisy hinge didn't wake up the whole college!"

By the time you've closed and bolted the door, the resourceful Kandian bard has already found a lamp and lighted it. Dalris is rummaging in desk drawers, looking under furniture, and tapping lightly on bookshelves.

"How big do you think his spellbooks would be?" you ask the bard. "Do you know what they look like?"

"Forget the lousy spellbooks!" she mutters frantically. "Help me look for the Sceptre of Bhukod! Your uncle might discover us any second now!"

Dalris's abruptness irks you. "Those 'lousy' spellbooks, as you call them, are just as important to me as the sceptre is to you. They're my father's only legacy to me, and I intend to find them. That's my whole reason for studying magic—so that I'll be able to read and understand them!"

The Kandian woman's expression softens. "I'm afraid I've lied to you, Carr," she says earnestly. "Landor's books and records are safe with us on the mainland. My father has enshrined them in his sacred grove, where they are guarded night and day. You'll be able to study them at your leisure as soon as we find the Sceptre of Power."

“Why did you lie to me?” you demand, more hurt than angry at your companion. “Just to use me to get in here?”

“Yes, to do that, and also to wield the wand of power against your uncle. My father and I—and Thayne, I might add—felt that the spellbooks would lure you more than the Sceptre of Bhukod. Now will you help me find the sceptre?”

Before you can answer, you hear the sound of muffled voices and shouts from downstairs. Someone has sounded an alarm, and footsteps are already sounding on the stairs!

“You must stay and help me search!” Dalris cries. “You’re the only human in the world who can touch the sceptre and live! I’ll stall those wizards with some magic of my own!”

She pulls a small rod-shaped item from her jerkin. It looks like a flute of some kind, fashioned of gleaming black wood with silver bands. Before you can respond to her hasty plea, she lets herself out the door and closes it behind her. Through the wood, you hear the haunting strains of her enchanted bard’s pipe. The stomping feet immediately stop, and you know that she has bought you some time.

Your father’s desktop is the first place you look for a clue to the powerful Sceptre of Bhukod. Your attention is drawn to a crystal cube of some unknown material, with three small scrolls suspended in its heart. You pick up the cube, intending to smash it open, but the enchanted crystal disintegrates in your hands! You manage to catch two of the scrolls, one bound with a red ribbon and the other with a black one, but the third parchment lands on the floor and burst into flames immediately! Before you can stamp out the fire, the brittle scroll is nothing but a pile of ashes. Turn to 120.

187

Your agility as a youthful mountaineer and shepherd manages to save your life. You spot the flash of steel just in time to dodge the intruder’s dagger thrust, then grab your assailant’s wrist and twist until you can pry the fingers away from the dagger’s hilt. With a vicious jerk, you force the thief’s head back and press the blade against the tender skin of his throat.



With the intruder's face exposed to the starlight, you nearly drop the dagger in surprise. Your captive is a young woman, dressed in the buckskin clothing of a frontiersman or ranger! The wild beauty of her face and body can't be hidden, however, even in the crudely tanned skins. Your hand relaxes on her single braid of black hair, but you keep the knife leveled at her throat.

"What have you come to steal from College Arcane?" you demand. "Tell me, or you'll only be able to talk to your gods!"

"Steal?" she replies with great scorn. "That scum who calls himself the Grand Master is the only thief around here! I've only come to collect what rightfully belongs to my people."

"You mean Beldon? What has he stolen from you or your people?"

The proud woman stares into your eyes for a long moment. Then she reaches forward calmly and pushes your hand and the dagger away from her throat. To your own surprise, you do nothing to stop her.

"You are not one of them," she says simply. "I can tell."

"One of whom?" you demand.

"One of Beldon's pet lice. Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm the person with your dagger, that's who I am!"

"But you wouldn't use it," she replies as a simple statement of fact—and somehow you know she's right.

You hand her the dagger and help her to stand. "Let's start over," you suggest. "I'm Carr Delling, Beldon's nephew. I've only been here a short while. I came after my mother died recently. Now, who are you, and why do you dislike my uncle so much?"

"You've been here since then? We've been looking everywhere for you!"

"For me? I don't understand. Once again, who are you, and who are 'we'?"

"We are the people of Kandia, the inheritors of Bhukod!" she says proudly. "We're also your people, Carr Delling! We're yours, because your father was a son of Kandia!"

What the woman says intrigues you. You've always wondered about your father's ancestry, but no one has ever sug-

gested that he might be a native of one of the original Tikandian tribes, especially the wild Kandians themselves.

"Tell me more," you urge the woman. "What's your name, and where do you come from?"

"I am Dalris, daughter of Perth, archdruid of Kandia."

"Well, Dalris, daughter of Perth, tell me why you have come all the way from Tikandia to find Carr, son of Archmage Landor."

"Because only you can restore the powerful Sceptre of Bhukod to the people of Kandia. Listen while I tell you the story of your father's greatest triumph. . . ."

Turn to **84**.

188

Recalling the steps from Beldon's manual of magic, you carefully mark all four corners of the old map with an open circle with lampblack. Then you concentrate as intensely as possible on the strange glyphs.

"Translate from this ancient Gnomish to Common!" you mutter. An aura spreads across the old parchment. The faded squiggles and angular inscriptions begin to dance before your eyes, forming and reforming, then finally assuming the familiar shapes of Common characters you can read.

"I can understand it!" you exclaim. "Some of the place names are foreign, but this is a map of the hill region just north of Saven!"

In your excitement, you hurry to the shelves for another document. You find an old book with symbols you've never seen before. Once more you mark the circle in each corner of the parchment, then whisper, "Translate this unknown tongue into Common," as the manual suggested for unrecognized languages, but nothing happens.

"It's only good for one object at a time," Arno says. "Relax. Go back to your room and copy this spell into your spellbook. It'll take some time to record it exactly. You may want to study another spell for tomorrow."

Add 1 point to your intelligence skill score, mark Comprehend Languages in your spellbook, and return to **103**.

The swarthy-skinned student is suddenly overwhelmed with spasms of gagging and coughing. Your cantrip has caught him completely unprepared, and he is so affected by it that he almost vomits. The heavier student in blue widens his eyes in surprise at his companion's humiliation from your cantrip.

"Arno! Control yourself! The novices are watching!" he whispers hoarsely, trying to help his fellow student break free of the paroxysms of your minor spell and keep his reputation for invulnerability.

The target of your cantrip exerts a visible effort to stop gagging, holding on to the edge of the table and swallowing deeply. Finally the blood leaves his cheeks, and his normal olive complexion returns.

He glances around quickly to stifle the tittering novices, then twists toward you. The malevolence in his face assures you that you've acquired a powerful new enemy. He raises a hand and makes a movement with two fingers. *He's casting a spell!* your mind screams. Then Beldon's voice interrupts the confrontation.

Add 1 point to your charisma score for tricking the advanced student with your cantrip, then turn to **156**.

190

The tower wall slopes slightly inward, enough to let you lean into it and help maintain your balance as you inch your way upward. Your hands and feet find tiny holds among the seams, fissures, and crevices in the smooth basalt rocks.

Above you, the Kandian bard is climbing swiftly, her fingers seeming to locate handholds by instinct on the tower's outer wall. Suddenly your left foot slips while you're watching Dalris! Your hands flail at the hard, rough stones but can't find anything to grasp.

Your only chance to avoid serious injury, or even death, is to cast a particular magic spell. If the Feather Fall spell is in your spellbook, turn to **28**. If it isn't, your quest for Lador's spellbooks and the Sceptre of Bhukod ends on the basalt porch over fifty feet below.

“Would I be able to climb any kind of surface and even hang upside down using the Spider Climb spell?” You like the idea of having such a useful skill, but suspect that there must be some limitations to the spell.

Thayne nods. “Any surface at all—no exceptions!”

“Then that’s the spell I want to learn.”

The elf’s bearded mouth twitches slightly, but the coppery curls hide whatever expression passes over his face. “You must pay very close attention to everything I do and say. This is one of the more dangerous spells, and we wouldn’t want you to break a leg or something worse,” he adds ominously.

You fight to suppress your excitement as you watch intently while Thayne produces a curious double-ended vial from a hidden pocket of his cloak. It’s a glass tube with two separate stoppered compartments, one containing a thick brown oily substance and the other some small scurrying spiders.

“This is bitumen, or tar, such as sailors use,” he explains, “and these are harmless house spiders.”

The elf dabs a drop of the bitumen on his forefinger, then switches ends of the vial and lets a spider, eager to escape its prison, trap itself in the sticky tar. He points to the sky with the stuck arachnid struggling on his finger to free itself. Thayne mutters a quick phrase in his musical dialect and then, to your surprise, sucks both the spider and the tar from his fingertip and swallows! You shudder and remind yourself of why you’re doing this.

“Now watch me,” the elf tells you. He walks casually to a rock face jutting from the mountainside and begins to climb it using nothing but the palms of his hands! You stare in astonishment as he moves like an insect or a spider in any direction he wishes over the vertical face of the rock! Finally he jumps down and, grinning, joins you.

“It’s easier with your shoes off, so I suggest you learn the spell barefoot. Shall we start?”

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **145**. If it is less, turn to **71**.



192

Shutting out your uncle's shouts from your mind, you toss the other two scrolls onto the desk and pull on the black ribbon. With the greatest caution, you break the wax seal with your fingernail and unroll a few inches of the scroll to read the topmost line: "To summon Rufyl . . ."

Images of hideous demons and pentagrams on the floor spring to your mind. *Could this Rufyl be some cursed servant from the underworld?* you wonder with a fearful thrill.

"Carr! Open the door! Do you hear me? Remember the danger, nephew! Anything in there may be trapped by magic!"

You frown at Beldon's insistent shouting and try to block it once more from your mind, but you can't. Being ignorant in the occult arts, it's difficult to decide whether to let Beldon help you (243) or to continue reading the scroll in your hand (202).

193

"I insist that I start at the bottom like everyone else," you declare. "I don't want to miss a thing, not even the smallest cantrip. I also don't want to miss the chance to let Arno teach me some tricks," you add.

Beldon frowns but finally shrugs his shoulders and nods. "If that's what you really want, you can get started right away. Come to my study, and I'll give you a catalog of the cantrips our novices are covering this spring."

The Grand Master points to the double doors on the right of the tower and waits for you to precede him. You enter a

long hallway, which reminds you of the novices' dormitory, except that the doorways are decorated by strange magical symbols. Some of them actually glimmer with unnatural auras. You feel sure that they're enchanted.

Beldon enters the first door on your left. It's an orderly chamber, lined with shelves from floor to ceiling. Each shelf is stacked high with ancient leatherbound volumes and rolled parchments in scroll cases.

"Here's a list of all the cantrips being offered this spring," says Beldon, handing you a small parchment and a thin booklet. "Take it back to your quarters and study it. The manual will describe each of the cantrips listed in the catalog. Whenever you select one, seek Arno and ask him to schedule some time to either help you or test you."

Turn to **226** to select your cantrips.

194

You sense that the woman is going to trust you even before she puts her dagger away and steps toward you.

"Who are you?" she says, peering at you closely. "I think I know you!"

You nod back over your shoulder. "Let's go back outside so that we can talk without waking anyone up," you urge the girl. She doesn't resist. As soon as you shut the door quietly, the primitively clothed woman grabs you by the shoulders and pulls you around to face her.

"You're Carr, Landor's son! You've been here all along, and we were trying to find you to bring you here!"

Her sudden recognition doesn't mean a thing to you. You're sure that you've never seen her before in your life, yet she and some other person or people have been seeking you, to "bring you here" as she said!

"I'm Carr Delling, all right. But who are you?"

"I am Dalris, daughter of Perth, archdruid of Kandia."

"Well, Dalris, what brings you all the way from Tikandia to find me and bring me here?"

"Because only you can wield the powerful Sceptre of Bhukod and avenge Landor's death! Listen and I shall tell you the story of your father's greatest triumph—and tragedy!"

Turn to **84**.

You keep your mind concentrating on two very similar vowel sounds, one the same as the instructor used and the other a slightly more palatal sound, rather like the difference between “ah” and “aye.” Unfortunately, the spellword that comes out of your mouth is somewhere between the two, and nothing happens—except the echoes of laughter in the chamber.

“Well, novice Delling, is that all?” the adept asks sarcastically. “Somehow we do not feel enlightened!” The laughter peaks at his bad pun, and your ears feel red and hot with embarrassment.

“Why don’t you return to your quarters and review this lesson—or, better yet, choose another spell entirely for your deadly arsenal!”

You head for the circular stairs amidst derisive jokes about your inherited magical skills ringing in your ears.

Deduct 1 point from your charisma and return to 16. Do not add the Light spell to your spellbook.

196

“What you say is true, Estla,” you admit. “When Thayne told me of my father’s spellbooks and the Sceptre of Power, I suspected that he also knew more about my sire’s murder than he was telling. I decided to come here with him to try to learn the truth for myself.”

For a long moment, you wait for Estla’s verdict. Her ageless face is raised to the darkening mountain sky, as if she is listening to the wind itself. Soon she nods and speaks.

“It is good that you have told me of your suspicions, Carr Delling. You have met with great tragedy this past week, and your soul bears the scars of your mother’s death.

“It is not surprising that you distrusted my nephew. His words about your uncle were unwelcome, and you were correct in assuming that he knows more than he revealed to you about Landor’s death and his great treasures.”

“What do you know about my father?” you demand, suddenly turning on Thayne. “How did he die?”

Estla interrupts before Thayne can reply. “There will be time enough to answer these and other questions, Carr

Delling. You may stay among us as long as you like, but I know you will want to leave as soon as your magic is strong enough to do what must be done.”

“What is it that ‘must be done’?” you demand.

“That, too, will be explained to you in good time, son of Landor. Meanwhile, you will be given the opportunity to learn the spells that will enable you to study your father’s records when—and if—you discover them. Whether you can understand them will depend upon your mental strength.”

For several minutes Estla talks to Thayne in the melodic dialect of woodland elves. He replies in the same language, then she ducks into her hut without another word.

“What’s all this about?” you ask Thayne.

“I’ll try to teach you as many spells as I can before Estla stops us. If you choose wisely, and if you’re smart enough, you’ll soon have enough magical knowledge to hold your own against whatever forces may stand between you and your father’s legacy.”

“What spell will I learn first?”

“That’ll be up to you,” Thayne replies. “You’ll need to start with something simple, perhaps Armor, which will harden your flesh against physical attacks (101). Or you might choose Light, so that you’ll never need to carry torches against the darkness (130). Think about it during the night.”

197

You begin to move swiftly, one hand clamped over your nostrils to stifle the sickening odor and the other on your sword. After a few hundred yards, you realize that you’re no longer headed in your original direction because the alley has curved away to your right.

Hold on! Stay calm! you tell yourself. *Slow down and watch for landmarks.*

You pause, leaning against an abandoned building, to listen for any sounds that might provide a clue to your location. At first, the alley is so quiet you hear trickles of moisture oozing from hidden sources to form filthy puddles at your feet. Then you notice soft shuffling sounds just inside the shadowy doorway by your side.

Someone—or something!—is coming out of the building! You could attack it by surprise (167) or find out if it's someone who can guide you out of the ruins (119).

198

The Spider Climb class is held in the main entry hall. The novices are positioned around the curved stone wall of the tower while a red-robed adept lectures from a step on the circular staircase. Your attention wanders from time to time to your father's statue, and you hope you haven't missed any of the details about the incantation.

Arno walks around the room, showing the tiny bit of tar and the live spider necessary to work the spell. The senior novice then utters an elvish phrase and pops both the spider and the dab of bitumen into his mouth. Then he leaps forward, pressing his palms flat against the black stones of the wall. You notice for the first time that he's barefoot beneath his robe and is using the soles of his feet as well as his palms. Like a blue spider, Arno's slight figure scampers up the wall. He even hangs upside down from the ceiling!

When the demonstration ends, the senior novice distributes bitumen and a spider to each novice. When he reaches you, he pauses. "You'll need skill as well as luck with this one," he mutters under his breath. "Your uncle can't help you this time."

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 165. If it is less, turn to 42.

199

"Uncle!" you cry, forgetting your fear and reaching for the mage's protective arms to embrace your closest kinsman. "M-Mother's dead! She died of fever when they wouldn't let me take her to the healer in Delmer!"

"He couldn't have helped her, Carr. Marla's illness was much stronger than the healer's puny ghosts," Beldon says derisively. "Grieve for your mother when there's time, nephew, but not while my Web spell is dying!"

Behind him, you both see and hear the snarling mongrelmen trying to tear their way out of your uncle's

enchanted web. Beldon pushes you away from his chest with a grip of steel. The mage's eyes no longer glow but remain fixed hypnotically on yours. He brushes your cheek with something soft and white—a dove's feather.

"Wing, wing, wing on wind, fly us to the alley's end!" Beldon chants rhythmically.

The mage's fingers are so rigid that they feel like marble, yet somehow they close around your own hand without crushing it. The aura you noticed when Beldon used the insect shape returns, enveloping both of you. You're conscious of a floating sensation, of movement and swirling winds. The spell's *dweomer* now is too thick for you to see anything except your uncle, but you have a impression that you're flying over the mongrelmen.

You can't tell how long the experience lasts, much like the passage of time in a dream. Without knowing when it happens, you finally light on a solid surface. All you know is that you're standing alone on a black stone porch outside a tower made from cut blocks of the same basalt as the porch.

Two long, whitewashed buildings extend seaward on either side of the central tower. In front of you, a pair of massive brass-studded doors stand ajar. From the description Thayne gave you, you guess you're standing at the front of College Arcane, the academy of magic founded by your father and directed by your uncle since his death.

"Uncle Beldon?" you call, pushing the doors open onto a spacious entry chamber. Turn to **222**.



Thayne's hut is a jumble of old parchments, books, maps, and other litter. The elf clears a patch of table top and stacks several dozen leatherbound tomes on it.

"Sit down," he orders, already opening one of the ancient volumes. "Study this glyph and learn to recognize it. It's a secret symbol used by the famed wizard Tenser nearly a century ago to represent the High Elven character *K*, as you can see in this volume . . ."

Thayne's hands are rippling through the pages of four books at one time, pointing out the peculiarities of Archaic Common, Wizard's Scrawl, ancient High Elven, and other glyphs typically used to inscribe magical formulas.

You try to follow what he's saying, but no matter how hard you concentrate, he always seems to be a step or two ahead of you. After four hours of tedium and frustration, you push away from the table and shake your head.

"I made a mistake, Thayne," you tell your teacher with a frown of embarrassment. "I can't handle the Read Magic spell, at least not right now. If I had more time, I could probably absorb what you're saying, but I'm just too tired and confused today."

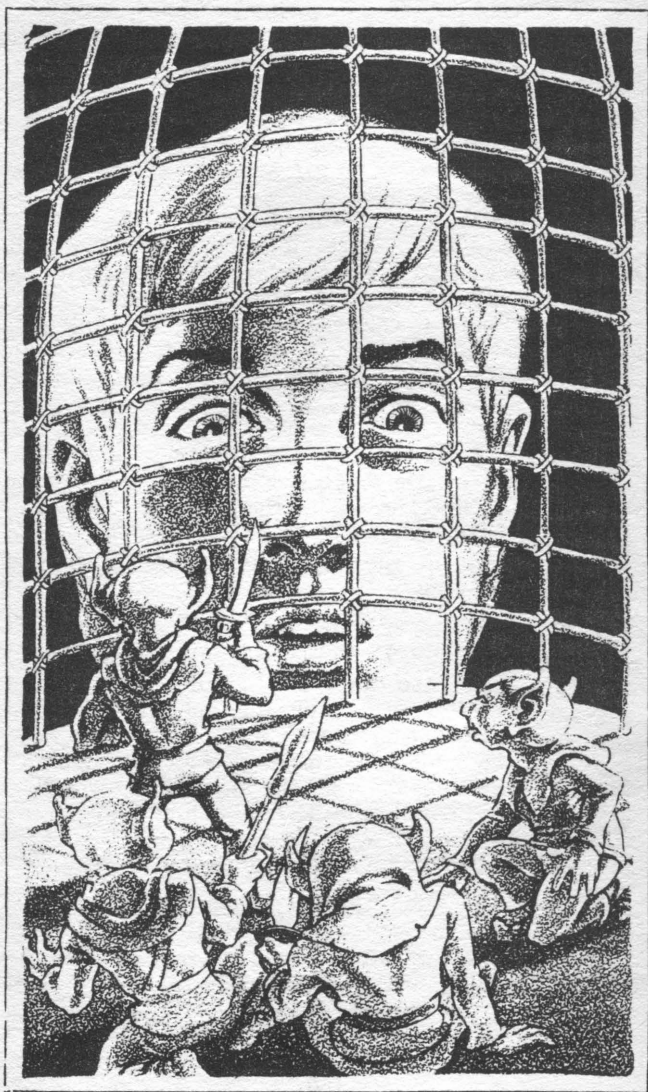
Thayne studies your strained face, then nods gravely. "Perhaps there'll be a better time for this spell. Go back to your hut and rest. Tomorrow you'll have to choose between two much more difficult spells: Find Familiar (225) and Sleep (117)."

201

The Exterminate cantrip excites your imagination. Although its range is rather limited, it nevertheless is extremely powerful. In the morning, you knock on Arno's door and tell him of your choice.

"So Landor's son wants to be an exterminator, huh? Then we'll do what we can to make your dreams come true, Delling! Bring me that cage in the corner."

Arno points to a sturdy cage fashioned of woven steel wire. Four tiny figures move about in the metal basket, but it's only when you raise the cage to your face that you can see what they are. Arno has somehow shrunk four gob-



lins to the size of mice! They're squealing in their native language and brandishing their tiny weapons in your face.

"Watch closely, Delling," Arno commands. "You don't want to miss a single thing."

The senior novice points his finger at one of the shrunken creatures and makes a low buzzing noise with his mouth. Suddenly the goblin clutches its tiny throat and collapses on the floor of the cage in a paroxysm. Seconds later, the helpless creature is dead.

"Your turn," Arno says with a smirk.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, you learn the cantrip easily and kill one of the goblins just as Arno did. If you are successful, add 1 point to your charisma, check the cantrip in your spellbook, and return to **226**. If the total is less than 19, turn to **18**.

202

Your fingers tremble with a mixture of fear and excitement as you stare at the first line of the scroll. You've never heard the name Rufyl before, but then again, you know the names of very few demons. Conquering your fear of the unknown, you uncurl the stiff parchment and continue to read the summoning spell.

To summon Rufyl, I, Landor, of College Arcane, do conjure and summon Rufyl, loyal familiar, friend, and servant at the side of my only son and heir. I charge thee, Rufyl, with the task of serving Carr Delling as you have served me, his father, for more than forty human years. Protect him, share all thy magical and worldly knowledge with him, and do his bidding, and never shall ye conspire with other sorcerers against thy master. All these things I command of thee in my hour of death, O worthy Rufyl.

At the very instant your eyes fall upon the last word, the familiar's name, a shrill whistling noise fills your ears. It seems to come from every corner of the dust-enshrouded

room. The sirenlike sound is so piercingly loud that it stifles your uncle's alarmed voice at the door.

Suddenly a form begins to materialize on your father's desktop! It seems to be creating itself from the energy of the shrill noise, because the whistling sound diminishes as the creature assumes a more solid shape!

You back away from the desk and begin to inch your way toward the door. Whatever this magical creature is, you want to be ready to escape if necessary. Color is slowly filling in the shadows and contours of the familiar's head and body, leaving you shaking with fear. Before you, you see a tiny red dragon, one of the most evil monsters in Tikandian legend! Turn to **21**.

203

You do as the manual of magic suggested, marking the corners of the map with a pinch of soot and muttering the recommended spell phrase, "Translate from X to Common!" To your delight, an aura instantly envelops the parchment, but then it fades. The characters remain as foreign as before.

"Fool!" snorts Arno. "You're supposed to fill in the X yourself! That's where you name the unknown language!"

You're embarrassed by your stupid mistake and repeat the procedure. This time, you say "Gnomish" instead of X, but nothing happens. There's not even a glimmer of an aura.

"Too late," Arno says. "It worked the first time and tried to find a language called X but couldn't. If you want it to translate from a language whose name you are unfamiliar with, you'd have to substitute the phrase 'unknown tongue' for X. Now you'll have to relearn the spell. Perhaps you can try it again another time."

You obviously made a mistake when you added your intelligence points at the beginning of your adventure. Deduct 1 point from your intelligence skill score and return to **103**.

204

The Grand Master of College Arcane whispers something in Arno's ear. Whatever he says seems to agitate your

new tutor. His swarthy olive skin reddens around his ears as he stiffens and glances at you. Then Beldon motions for the red-robed adepts to follow him out of the dining hall.

You say nothing to the sullen senior novice as you slip in beside him on the bench. The dark-haired man nods to his fat companion seated across from you both.

"Leave us for now, Prindel. I wish to have a word in private with my new charge."

The other man, his heavy body draped in a blue robe several shades darker than Arno's, nods knowingly and pushes away from the table. When you are alone with Arno, the senior novice murmurs to you.

"The fact that you're the bastard son of the great Landor means nothing to me. Stay out of my way, Delling, or I'll teach you tricks you'd rather not learn!"

"Just do as my uncle says and teach me everything you know as fast as you can," you retort, with enough petulance in your voice to fan Arno's jealousy. "I'm sure I'll catch up with you in no time!"

A servant appears at the table with a steaming plate of fish chowder and hot bread. You use the interruption to end your brief verbal duel and say, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the novices, "Now, if you'll excuse me, Arno, I'm hungry. I want to get to bed early, because I'm sure we have a heavy schedule tomorrow. You might make sure my room's ready."

Your suggestion sounds as if you were speaking to a servant rather than the senior novice. The black-gowned novices begin coughing and clearing their throats in flimsily veiled attempts to hide their amusement.

"I'll be back for you in twenty minutes, Delling," he says coldly. "Eat quickly. I have more important things to do than play nursemaid to a spoiled brat." Arno then turns and walks stiffly from the dining hall, leaving you alone to eat the first hot meal you've had in a week.

Add 1 point to your charisma score, then turn to 75.

205

"That was underhanded, Thayne," you complain. "Nothing was ever said about paying for these spells!"

The elf's eyes widen in mock innocence. "Have you ever heard of getting something for nothing? As it happens, powerful spells such as Find Familiar are even more potent when the caster pays dearly for them."

"I'll keep my father's pouch. Do what you like about the spell."

"You must pay to find your familiar," Thayne says resolutely, "but I will try to teach you the spell called Sleep instead, since you feel that you were tricked."

Turn to 117.

206

You untie the red ribbon and break the wax seal. The parchment remains tightly curled from many years of being rolled up. Ignoring Beldon's voice at the door, you carefully peel it downward until you can see a bold, black script, written in Common. The parchment is addressed to you!

To Carr, my only son and heir:

I know your mother must be dead as you are reading this because she would never have permitted you to enter her brother's house while she was still alive. Your eyes alone will be reading what follows, child of my beloved Marla. The hands or gazes of all others will activate one of the spells that has entrapped these parchments.

Read on, my son, to learn of my last days, surrounded by enemies and imprisoned in my own house.

Assassins and other sinister beings have invaded the academy I built. My end is near, perhaps just hours away. A convergence of great powers is upon me, and I must hasten to guard the secrets that they seek. These are the fruits of my life's labors, the very essence of ancient Bhukodian sorcery. You will not yet know of such things, but you must sacrifice all that you have, including your life, to prevent your mother's brother from discovering the hiding place of that most powerful relic of ancient Tikandia, the Sceptre of Bhukod. With

that wand of power, Beldon's evil will spread unchecked to every corner of the Tikandian continent.

I have trusted no human with its hiding place. Only my loyal familiar, Rufyl, can guide you. He may be summoned either by spell or by scroll. One of the parchments in the force cube will summon him to you.

Beldon will seek to use you to discover my secrets. Then he will seek to destroy you, my sole offspring, because of the Kandian blood in our veins. The other scroll will protect you against your uncle's evil greed for wealth and power.

For you, my son, I leave my spellbooks and records. They are not on Seagate Island, but in the hands of Perth, the archdruid of the Kandian people. He will exchange them for the one thing our people must always guard for the sake of the world—the Sceptre of Bhukod.

Guard our secrets with your life, as I did with mine.

Your Loving Father,
Landor

“Carr! Open the door! Can you hear me?”

Beldon's muffled demand makes you grimace through your tears. Reading your father's last words, his personal will and testament of love to you, has filled you with warmth and sadness, along with mystery and intrigue.

You look at the two unopened scrolls and wonder which contains the incantation to summon Rufyl, whoever he may be. You also wonder if you should try to read another parchment now (24) or wait until you have more privacy (64).

207

You feel something like a gentle tug at your right hip and hear a voice say softly, “How did he get in here, anyway?” You know immediately that the thin pupil in the light blue robe has tried to embarrass you in front of the other students. His cantrip failed, and the other students know it. You wonder if you should simply ignore the childish prank (110) or flaunt your father's name openly (57).

Your hands and feet seem to remember your days in the mountains better than your brain does. After only a few minutes on the tower wall, your fingers and feet are able to discover nooks and crevices invisible to the naked eye. You flatten yourself against the rough stones so that your weight will make your position more stable.

By the time you reach the parapet, Dalris is already opening a trapdoor leading from the battlement balcony to the landing below. You follow her silently into the torchlit tower, where you both stare at the legend emblazoned on the first door you see: "ONLY FOR THE ONE WHO FOLLOWS IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF LANDOR."

"We've found Landor's quarters," she says, "but that inscription may mean only you can enter."

"The only thing to do is try," you say as you reach with trembling hands for the enchanted portal. Turn to 186.

"Isn't Feather Fall a dangerous spell?" you ask the elf suspiciously. You're reluctant to imagine what would happen if it failed to work properly.

"All magic is dangerous in the hands of amateurs," Thayne replies stiffly. "I promise to teach you the spell as I learned it, with every detail exactly correct. I'll be happy to answer any of your questions about the procedure."

"Then I choose Feather Fall," you tell him.

"Very well," Thayne says flatly. His small figure has taken on a stiff air of authority. "This spell must be cast precisely, or the results will be catastrophic. You must confine yourself to small distances at first, and increase your range as your experience grows."

Thayne leads you away from the camp and quickly climbs a rocky ledge. "Now listen closely!"

The elf pronounces three quick, melodic words. At the same time he tosses something white into the air and jumps after it! You leap aside, expecting Thayne to land on top of you and kill you both. Instead, his body actually floats and wafts on the mountain breeze, drifting softly down to your side. You see a small white feather settle to

the ground nearby and realize that was what the elf tossed before he jumped.

"Your turn," Thayne says with a mischievous smirk.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **23**. If it is less, turn to **59**.

210

"The real reason I've come to College Arcane is to learn enough magic to continue my father's work," you begin. "I met someone in Freeton who knew of my father's research into ancient Bhukodian sorcery. He also told me about my father's missing spellbooks and the Sceptre of Bhukod."

Beldon's face grows even paler than usual. Your words seem to have disturbed your powerful uncle. "Who told you of these things?" he demands. "Exactly what was said?"

"It was an elf, or probably a half-elf, because he had a red beard," you begin. "His name was Thayne, and he said he had studied magic with you under my father many years ago." You proceed to tell your uncle everything you can recall about Thayne, including his warnings about Beldon himself. When you're finished, the wizard's eyes gleam with fury.

"Thayne is my mortal enemy and yours!" he exclaims. "It's rumored that he has found Landor's spellbooks and perhaps the Sceptre of Bhukod as well. If that's true . . ." Beldon leaves the thought unfinished and claps your shoulder firmly. "Well, he won't turn my own nephew against me! No one has more right to be here than you, Carr!"

"Does that mean I can begin my studies? When?"

"Immediately, nephew! We normally charge fees for instruction in spells, to cover the costs of all necessary materials. In your case, though, all expenses will be paid by the college in honor of your father. Here's a list of the spells being taught this spring, plus a manual and spellbook to record the incantations. Take it back to your chamber and study it carefully. Inform senior novice Arno when you've decided which of the spells you'd like to attempt first."

Turn to **103**.

Why am I fighting experienced swordsmen? you think with a sudden chill. Luck's the only thing that'll keep me alive!

Before the angry pirate can reach you with his scimitar, you dart into the mob of amused townspeople.

"This way!"

"Over here! We'll hide you!"

You dodge through the mass of bodies until you reach a crowd of vendors using an overhanging roof as a sun shade. You slow down so you can pass them unnoticed. Finally you find a dark opening in the baked mud wall and slip into it.

You find yourself in a short cul-de-sac, little more than a niche in the wall where the shopkeepers store empty baskets, barrels, and other containers. It is only around fifteen feet deep, but good enough to hide until the chase is over. You find a soft perch on one of the baskets and press yourself further into the shadows so that you can watch the sunlit entrance to the alley in comfort.

Just as you're beginning to get drowsy from exhaustion, a voice makes your heart leap.

"Have some cold wine to refresh yourself after all that exercise," it offers, though you're positive no one entered the cul-de-sac! Turn to 6.

You join your uncle at the front of the class and clear your throat, buying a moment or two to refresh your memory about what you've read.

"First you must set up the brazier and get everything else ready before sundown," you begin. "At the moment the sun drops below the horizon, you must light and stoke the charcoal in the brass basin. When it is so hot that the brazier is glowing cherry red, you begin adding incense and herbs while reciting the same spell phrase over and over in a monotonal chant."

"Without lighting the charcoal, demonstrate it for us," Beldon commands. You step to the huge brass pan and begin to sprinkle several handfuls of herbs into the brazier as you chant the elvish phrase you learned last night.

“Do it slowly,” your uncle reminds you. “Those components have to last you for fourteen hours!”

You nod, but you don't reply so that your chanting will not be interrupted. Moving mechanically, you establish a rhythm in time with your chant—incense, catnip, basil, arrowroot, savory; incense, catnip, basil, arrowroot . . .

Beldon seems pleased that you're so methodical about the spell. He also pays close attention to your rhythm and the smoothness of your movements. After nearly half an hour of unvarying, mechanical spellcasting, he stops you and turns to the class.

“I'm impressed with novice Delling's preparation for this spell,” he announces. “His casting was flawless. It remains to be seen whether he could keep that up all night without rest, but I'm calling his performance a success.”

Your elation is complete when you see Arno's sneer.

Reward yourself by adding 1 point to your intelligence skill score and 1 point to your charisma score. Mark Find Familiar in your book and turn to **16**.

213

You shake your head. “I told you I was new here. I haven't had a chance to explore the college yet, but there's no time like the present.” You turn toward the door, but Dalris stops you with a hand on your arm.

“I think I may have a little more experience than you in this kind of thing,” says the Kandian lorist. “We bards have to be skilled at several professions, you know—including the less legal ones. Let's do some more scouting before we rush into this thing. Tell me what you know about the tower.”

You describe what you remember to Dalris, pointing to the central dining hall above your heads, where the two white wings join the black tower. “Above that, there's a library and then the battlement, but that's all I know.”

The bard looks more closely at the wall. “I can climb the wall,” she says confidently. “Can you?”

If you have Spider Climb in your spellbook, turn to **230**. Otherwise, decide whether to scale the wall using your mountaineering skills (**168**) or to use the front door (**146**).



214

“You won’t frighten me, Arno,” you tell the senior novice. “Remember that my uncle ordered you to teach me magic. He’d be hard to live with if something happened to his only nephew.”

A surly expression passes across Arno’s features. “Then we’ll have to make sure nothing happens, won’t we?”

Without waiting for your reply, he enters the dining hall, with you at his heels. The senior novice heads directly for the spiral staircase and starts climbing. He leads you upward past a small landing with only two doors and through a square trapdoor into the cold night air. You’re standing high atop the tower’s battlement, perhaps three stories up.

“Feather Fall requires one of these,” he says, handing you a snow-white wing feather from a dove. “Whenever you’re ready, jump at the same time you release the feather, and say ‘Drifter.’ Watch how I do it.”

The senior novice climbs up on the square-notched battlement and leaps without hesitation into the night air. In the darkness, you hear him mutter the spellword. Gently Arno’s body begins to waft downward, with the feather drifting in the air beside him.

“Join me!” Arno dares when he lands lightly on the ground below. “Let’s see if you’re as smart as you claim to be!”

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 20 or more turn to **234**. If it is less, turn to **182**.



215

At the break of dawn, you bound across the camp. You've barely slept since last night when the elf told you how wizards armed with the Burning Hands spell are able to shoot jets of fire from their fingertips at their enemies.

"Thayne!" you call loudly. "Teach me Burning Hands!"

The bearded elf steps from his hut, squinting in the morning sunlight at the dead campfire beside you. "Watch and listen!" he commands.

Your tutor extends both hands toward the firepit, thumbs touching and fingers spread, then mutters a few elvish words. A sheet of flame streaks instantly from his fingertips into the cold embers and half-burned logs. The firepit flares, ignited by the flames of Thayne's magical spell.

You stand staring at the fire, awestruck.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" the elf demands. "It'll take you all day at least to learn how to do that!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **77**. If it is less, turn to **114**.



216

Your study has prepared you for Arno's incantation. You will your thoughts to be totally alert and fight the effects of the Sleep spell. Instead of ignoring the sand particles, you concentrate on them, visualizing them hitting your face.

By detaching yourself and imagining what it looks like from the other students' viewpoint, you're able to resist the senior novice's spell. Arno is visibly shaken when you brush the grains of sand from your eyes and shoulders.

"That was interesting, Arno, but ineffective," you tell your astonished rival. "May I try it now?"

The class is so still that you can hear them breathing. Tiny beads of sweat appear on Arno's dark forehead, but he knows that he must either give you the chance to cast the spell on him or lose face. He hands you the vial of sand and waits with a cynical smile.

You do exactly as the manual prescribed. The fine sand peppers his face as you say "Shhhhh." You clear your thoughts and empty your mind of everything except a sense of perfect quiet and stillness.

You sense a remote resistance as Arno tries to fight your spell, just you had done to his. Then the stillness returns as the senior novice's legs buckle and he slips in a heap to the floor, amid the cheers of your fellow novices. Quickly you remove a quill from one of the inkwells and sketch a jet-black moustache on Arno's hairless lip. Then you pinch your rival's arm beneath the blue robe.

"As you saw just now, you can do anything to a victim of

the Sleep spell," you announce to the novices with a malicious twinkle in your eye. "Anything at all!"

Arno blinks, then grows pale when he realizes what has happened and hears the laughter from the class. He scrambles angrily to his feet and points a trembling finger at you.

"What's going on here?" Beldon's voice interrupts, and you silently feel instant relief. When he hears what you did, your uncle smiles knowingly. Aside, so that your ears alone can hear, he whispers, "You'd better choose your opponents a bit more carefully, Arno. Some may be stronger than you imagine." Then, aloud he says, "Class dismissed for today. I think everyone's concentration is gone."

A new, even fiercer spark of hatred springs into Arno's eyes as he watches you leave with the Grand Master.

You seem to be smarter than your original die roll indicated. Add 1 to your intelligence and 2 to your charisma. Then mark Sleep in your spellbook and return to 16.



217

You turn away from the half-elf so that he can't see the indecision in your face. Outside the alley, the boisterous crowd at the bazaar is still mingling in the warm sunlight.

There's a curious honesty about the elf, but you're almost positive he hasn't told you everything. Thayne's remarks about your uncle are also disturbing, especially since you feel the need to share your grief over your mother's death with Beldon, your closest kinsman.

"I have to go to my uncle," you sigh finally, more to yourself than to your strange companion.

Thayne frowns, his smooth elven skin wrinkling around his red beard. "I must advise you not to enter his house. You may learn many secrets from your uncle, but he will also try to corrupt your emerging powers."

"Could you be worried that I might find my father's spellbooks or this Sceptre of Bhukod myself?"

"No, Carr," says Thayne. "It's your uncle . . . but, no, you must discover these things for yourself."

"What things?" you demand, even more confused.

"Disturbing things about your mother's brother," he answers cryptically. "By the way, I'd advise you to say nothing about me to your uncle. He and I are no longer friends, and you might be the recipient of some of the hostility Beldon has for me if he knows we've met."

Thayne adds in a tired voice, "At any rate, you'll find the academy at the end of the market avenue in the oldest section of Freeton. You'll see its massive stone tower, one of the old citadel battlements."

Without your noticing, the elf has pulled his dark cloak around him so that he is nearly invisible in the shadows of the alley. "Follow the fence. Though it may seem to lead away from the college, you must never touch what guards it," warns the shadowy figure.

"Touch what?" you demand, but there is no answer. You pursue the elf deeper into the shadows, only to see a solid stone wall, with no doors or other exits. The elven wizard has vanished without a trace! Turn to **68**.

218

Torn between the two monsters, one human and one undead, you choose the latter. You lunge for the crypt thing's gruesome shape, closing your hands around the cold metal of the sceptre's handle. At the moment you touch it, the gloomy crypt is flooded with a brilliant white light as the trio of giant pearls merge their enchanted rays into a single blinding flare.

The initial glare dies in seconds, and you can see Beldon's sinister figure, his yellowish ivory robe gleaming in the

mystical light. Over your shoulder, you hear a steady stream of mumbling sounds from the crypt thing, almost like the mutterings of a madman.

"Pay no attention to the guardian. He's just enjoying the show," says Rufyl in your mind. Your new familiar is there, and still invisible.

"How do I use this thing?" you ask the pseudodragon.

"Just hold it like a torch. It'll do the rest!"

"Come, nephew! Give the sceptre to your uncle, and he may let you stay here and play with whatever you can find." Beldon's figure has begun to acquire a green aura. You raise the Sceptre of Bhukod like a beacon above your head, following Rufyl's advice, as Beldon flings a fine dark dust into the rays of the wand and murmurs, "Black pearl, powder of doom, I summon death and gloom!"

"It's a Death spell!" Rufyl cries in your brain. *"It's his most powerful incantation!"*

From that moment, everything happens in such a rush that it's difficult for you to follow it all. The green dweomer streams from Beldon's eyes directly toward your chest. When it's only a few feet in front of you, the killing ray of your uncle's spell bends sharply upward into the center of the three shining pearls at the sceptre's end.

The power of Beldon's spell, now captured by the sceptre, travels through the handle directly to your hand. As soon as the imprisoned dweomer reaches your fingers, it explodes into your body, and you acquire an aura identical to Beldon's. In the same instant, green death rays stream from your eyes into your uncle's heart, and the Grand Master of College Arcane slumps to the floor of the crypt!

As soon as the dweomer of the Death spell has completed its circuit, it vanishes. Only the white brilliance emanating from the Sceptre of Bhukod remains to illuminate the silent crypt. Turn to 244.

219

"What's the matter, bumpkin? Does the smell of city food make you ill?" your intended victim sneers. You stop your feigned gagging as the entire dining room laughs at you.

"That child's play might work on simpletons, but it won't

work here!" the student in blue chastises you. "When we work a cantrip, it's more like this!"

The swarthy young man waves a hand and begins making crude noises with his lips, but a loud voice interrupts whatever magical punishment he had planned for you.

Deduct 2 charisma points for losing face in front of the other students, then turn to **156**.

220

You react reflexively to the sight of danger for the unsuspecting sailor. Whipping Ulrik's old cutlass from your belt, you shout, "LOOK OUT! THEY'RE AFTER YOU!"

The thugs' target thrusts the woman away as soon as you yell and he pulls a dagger from his belt. He glances quickly at you, nods abruptly, then turns to face the men attacking from the rear. Your cutlass poised, you scramble toward the sailor in a crude fighter's position.

You face an attacker who holds a polished sabre, its blade curved almost like a scimitar's. Over your shoulder you see that the other pirate is wielding a club, although he has twin daggers at his sides.

"Hey, a fight!" "Look at the beggar with the sword!" "Watch out! He looks dangerous!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **35**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **87**.

221

"I suppose I could pass up the cantrips," you tell your uncle. "When can I choose my first spells to learn?"

"Just as soon as I interview you so that I can advise the masters of the college of your reasons for wanting to undertake the study of magic," he replies. "Come with me to my study and we'll begin the interview right now."

Beldon leads you through the double doors and into the right wing of the college. The doors open onto another long hallway, just like the one in the novices' dormitory. Instead of plain doors with names on them, however, the doors in this wing are decorated in various colors and mystical symbols, some of which glow strangely.

The Grand Master ushers you into the first room on the left. Beldon's study is a neat, spacious room dominated by a huge desk surrounded by wall-to-wall shelves. Each shelf is stacked from floor to ceiling with hundreds of old books and parchment scrolls in protective cases.

"Sit down, Carr," he orders, waving you toward a chair next to the desk. Beldon situates himself across from you in his own massive chair.

"The first, and most important, question concerns your reasons for studying magic," he begins. "I know that you sought me after my sister's death. That apparently has nothing to do with your wish to become a sorcerer, though. Tell me why you wish to master the occult sciences."

You lean back in your chair, trying to collect your thoughts. Suddenly you recall the image of Thayne, the elven wizard, advising you to say nothing about him to your uncle. Before you met Thayne, you had known nothing about the academy or the spellbooks or the Sceptre of Bhukod, except for a few cryptic words from an old shaman.

Should you tell Beldon the truth—that you're at College Arcane because Thayne told you of mysterious treasures and intrigue involving your father (210)?

Or should you follow the elf's advice and say nothing about him or the treasures that have brought you here to pursue the fifteen-year-old trail of Landor's murderer and the hidden treasure—your father's magical legacy (81)?

222

Just inside the door, you see a bronze statue of a distinguished-looking man dressed in a mystical robe of some kind. You're drawn to his finely chiseled features—the penetrating eyes, the gaunt cheekbones, the high forehead. The sculptor's subject was not so much the man's physical appearance as his intelligence.

"Your father was an impressive man, Carr!"

"Uncle Beldon?" you ask haltingly, looking around.

"Here. On the stairs behind the sculpture."

A central spiral staircase is hidden from view by the huge statue. You must walk halfway around the bronze likeness of your father in order to see a slender man in a

pale satin robe descending the stairs.

"I've been waiting for you, Carr—ever since I learned of your mother's death. I knew you'd have to come to Freeton sooner or later. This is your home now, nephew. Welcome to Landor's famous College of Arcane Sciences!"

"I've come to trace my father's studies and find my legacy and his killer, even if it takes me a lifetime," you vow solemnly, staring at the sculpted face of Landor.

Out of the corner of your eye, you notice your uncle's eyes sharpen, losing their misty, heavy-lidded quality for an instant. "You must be very sure of yourself to embark on such a quest," he says, his voice suddenly very serious. "The path to knowledge even a tenth as great as Landor's is both arduous and dangerous."

"I'm sure it will be," you tell your uncle, suddenly lightheaded with both hunger and relief from tension.

"Come with me, Carr. Tomorrow will be soon enough to begin your new career in the occult sciences."

Beldon leads you from your father's statue and up the spiral staircase. You climb the steep stairs to the next floor where a large hall is filled with tables and smells of food.

"Our dining hall," Beldon explains as he joins you on the landing. "Find a place to sit while I instruct the servants to bring you some supper."

You see several dozen individuals scattered among the tables. They're clad in simple robes dyed in colors ranging from jet black to various shades of blue and red. Only those wearing similar robes are sitting together.

"Do those robes symbolize different ranks?" you ask.

"Very observant!" Beldon exclaims. "That is indeed their meaning! We begin in darkness and proceed to light. Thus, every article of clothing worn by novices is black, denoting absence of knowledge. As you see, even my garments are not pure white, but pale yellow. I must learn many things before I earn the colorless gown of an archmage."

"Then I should sit among those with the black robes?" you ask, but Beldon merely grins and turns away, leaving the choice to you. You know that the students in black are novices like you (238), but you wonder what would happen if you approached the tables of those in blue (36) or red (99).

223

The description of the Detect Magic spell in the manual of magic that Beldon gave you is difficult to understand, especially the parts concerning something called a "dweomer." A dweomer is the enchantment surrounding anything or anyone with active magical powers. The spell allows the caster to see the normally invisible dweomer.

I might need such a skill to find my father's spellbooks and the legendary Sceptre of Bhukod, you think.

Beldon himself is the teacher for Detect Magic. Your uncle meets with a select group of novices once a week in the upstairs scroll room across from your father's old quarters. You're surprised to see Arno in the class as a student.

Beldon's test for Detect Magic involves distinguishing one magical scroll from three identical scrolls on a table in front of each novice. The idea is to do it by a process of elimination, opening each scroll except the enchanted one. It's a costly—and dangerous—procedure, because each enchanted scroll is magically trapped with runes that explode when the scroll is opened!

It's soon apparent that the most critical component of this useful spell is a personal spellword that each caster must discover for himself.

I guess that's what makes Detect Magic so difficult, you muse. The key to working the spell appears to be any strategy I can use to discover my personal spellword.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **127**. If it is less, turn to **231**.

224

Your clumsy attack is easily blocked by the veteran fighter. His curved scimitar catches the blade of your cutlass and turns it away from his sneering face.

With a single, sweeping move of his arm, the pirate scoops the heavy sword from your untrained hand, sending it flying into the excited crowd. You try to duck away, but a vicious kick to your temple stops you. Pain and blackness descend, saving you from feeling the razor edge of the scimitar on your helpless neck. ✕

Remembering the very few things you learned about magic from your mother, you ask, "Does Find Familiar let a magic-user summon his or her magical assistant?"

The elf nods. "It's a special and costly incantation, Carr, and can only be cast once a year. If you're unsure of yourself, it can have totally unpredictable results."

You spend the rest of the morning gathering the many things you, or rather Thayne, will need. The elf orders you to fetch a huge brass brazier from Estla's settlement, nearly fifty pounds of charcoal, several sacks of special herbs, and even some rare Tikandian incense.

"How much does all this cost?" you ask your teacher.

"More than a hundred gold pieces," he replies.

"And you're going to let me risk it?"

Thayne laughs and shakes his head. "You are going to pay for it, my young friend—with Landor's money pouch! Not the gold in it, mind you, but the bag itself!"

Angrily, you recall the interest he showed in the pouch in Freeton, and wonder if you were wrong to admit it was your father's. Now you must give it up in order find a familiar without being sure you'll be able to work the spell.

"You don't have to decide right away," says Thayne, seeing your confused expression. "Let me know by nightfall, though, because you summon familiars in the dark."

Do you want to give your father's purse to the elf in return for learning the spell (172) or would you like to change your mind about it (205)?

*College of Arcane Sciences
Spring, 822 C.E.
Catalog of Cantrips*

The following cantrips are available to all students during the spring term. Interested novices must arrange for instruction and testing with senior novice Arno.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Exterminate (201) | 3. Hairy (96) |
| 2. Tweak (29) | 4. Unlock (121) |

You reread the list of cantrips one more time, referring to the manual to see which one appeals most to you for tomorrow's lesson. It's nearly midnight, and your mind is a jumble of new information and mystical facts.

If you decide that you want to get away from your studies for a while before selecting a cantrip, turn to **267**.

If you want to simply choose a cantrip so you can rest and forget about your lessons, roll one die and subtract 2 from the total to get the number of the cantrip you have chosen. If it is one you've already attempted, roll again.

When you have two cantrips marked in your spellbook, turn to **26**.

227

"Sorcerer's scum!" the girl exclaims. "You'll cast no spells on a Kandian, a heir of the Bhukodian dynasty!"

You have only a split second to realize that she thinks your hands are poised for a magical attack. You don't even have time to protest your innocence before she hurls the dagger into your throat between your empty hands.

The blade severs your jugular vein, dropping you immediately to the black stone floor beneath the giant bronze statue of yet another magical genius—your father. ✕

228

You raise your hands above your head in the gesture you've learned, and whisper the spellword for Light. Instantly the thick blackness around you is shattered by a blinding light over your head. As your eyes recover from the sudden glare, you get your first look at your strange new surroundings.

You've been transported into an ancient crypt of some kind, perhaps as old as the Bhukodian dynasty itself. In the partial gloom, you see rows of stone sarcophagi extending well beyond the range of your Light spell. The individual tombs show no sign of vandalism or even of weathering.

"Welcome to the graveyards of Bhukod, Carr Delling!"

The rasping voice of what Rufyl called the "crypt thing" comes from some distance away, just beyond the light of

your spell. You walk slowly toward it, trying to think of a spell you might use if it attacks you.

"It would not be wise to attack the crypt thing, Master Carr. It would simply teleport you out of its crypt, perhaps even into solid rock, where your bones would be crushed."

Rufyl's thought is disturbing, but you feel relieved to know that the pseudodragon is by your side.

"Where are you?" you ask telepathically. "I can't see you."

"I'm right beside you, Carr. My race is rather shy and prefers to remain invisible whenever we can. Your father found that to be a useful habit whenever he needed an eavesdropper."

Your mental conversation with Rufyl ends as you begin to discern a seated figure in the distance. The light from your spell erases the shadows and musty fumes as you approach the thing in the crypt. Turn to 157.

229

Your uncle's warnings concern you enough to convince you of the grave danger of opening the scrolls yourself. Bundling the parchments against your chest with one arm, you unbolt the door with your free hand and give it a jerk. The hinges creak with age, but the panel finally gives way.

When Beldon sees you emerge from your father's chambers with the scrolls, his face grows even paler than usual.

"Where did you get those?" he demands sharply, gesturing toward the scrolls.

You tell your uncle about the strange cubical crystal and how the parchments merely fell into your hands.

"That was a force cube, nephew," he explains. "It was set to disintegrate when it recognized your life-force. Your father planned for you to have these scrolls!"

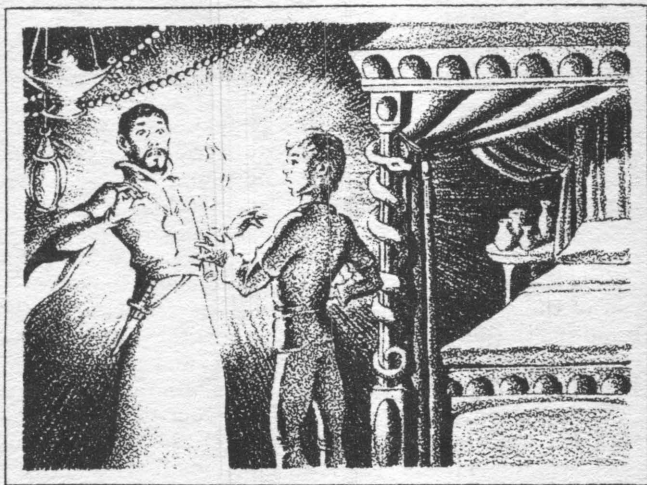
"What could they be?"

"Perhaps they are clues to the greatest treasure in Tikandia," replies the Grand Master of College Arcane. "Give them to me. We'll see exactly what they are."

Beldon grabs for the scroll with the black ribbon and pulls the bow with one hand while he breaks your father's monogrammed seal with the other. Your anticipation lasts

only a fraction of a second before the tightly rolled parchment explodes in your uncle's flushed face.

You instinctively throw your arms in front of you to protect yourself, only to expose the other two scrolls to the force of the blast from the first explosion. This time, a twin explosion converts the promise of a legacy to a sentence of death. ✘



230

“Are you coming?” asks Dalris. The nimble bard is already several feet from the ground.

“I’ll be there in just a few seconds,” you reply, removing your shoes and reaching beneath your robe for the vial containing the live spiders and bitumen you need for Spider Climb. You pop the nauseating components into your mouth and swallow while uttering the spellword.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **153**. If it’s less than 21, turn to **184**.

You sit at your table studying the three seemingly innocent scrolls. *The spellword must send some kind of command to the dweomer*, you think.

"Shine! Glow! Flare!" you mutter, but the trio of scrolls remains unchanged. "Gleam! Dweomer! Aura! Glisten!" You rack your brain, trying to recall any words that might be used to command the magical aura to reveal itself. Several of the other novices, including Arno, finally manage to detect their own magical scrolls somehow. You doubt any of them would share the secret because of the intense competition at College Arcane. After three hours of intense concentration and frustration, you hear Beldon clap his hands.

"I'm afraid that all of you who are left are too confused now to search systematically for your own spell word," says your uncle. "You might still guess it, but the odds are against it. I suggest that you quit for today. Tomorrow you may attempt this same spell again or choose another one."

Return to **16** but do not mark Detect Magic in your spellbook.



The intruder is moving too fast for you to attack him by magic or by physical means. You wait until the thief reaches the basalt porch before slipping from your hiding

place and following him.

At the front door of the tower, the shadowy form bends forward for a moment. You remember that you left the door unlocked, since you were planning to remain outside only a short time. The thief mutters a muffled exclamation of surprise, then stealthily enters the building. You wait until the door closes before following the intruder inside.

You stop at the unexpected sight of a young woman staring at the torchlit features of your father's statue in the entry hall! Clad entirely in soft leather, her single long braid and supple curves seem completely foreign to the college's cold stones. The intruder is beautiful and wild, like a woodland creature suddenly cast into the dinginess of . . .

Your untimely reverie is broken as the woman senses your presence and whirls around suddenly. The wildness you noticed from behind is even more obvious in her face. Her eyes flash with the recognition of danger, but she remains silent and cool. Suddenly a dagger is in her hand, and she crouches, catlike. The woman's movements are much too polished for those of a common thief.

"Put away your weapon. I'm not going to attack you," you say, trying to sound as convincing as you can.

Roll two dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **194**. If it is less, turn to **227**.

233

In desperation, you try to shield yourself with one arm. The razor edge of the scimitar slices easily into your left forearm, causing it to fall useless to your side. You hack blindly and weakly at the pirate with Ulrik's old cutlass, hoping to land a lucky blow. The volatile crowd laughs loudly at your clumsiness and calls for the buccaneer to finish you off. Turn to **224**.

234

Concentrating totally on your memory of Arno's actions, you vault over the battlement feet first, flinging the feather away from you at the instant your feet leave the battlement of the tower.

“Drifter!” you murmur, using a tone close to Arno’s.

Suddenly your body feels weightless! You lose awareness of your bulk and let your muscles relax, completely free from tension. The feeling is indescribable! You float slowly on the cold night breeze, wafting down to the front porch of the college, only a few feet away from Arno. The senior novice is sullen, obviously disappointed that you learned the spell successfully and survived the fall. You grin at him and wave as you head for the door.

Add 1 point to your intelligence skill score, record Feather Fall in your spellbook, and return to 103.

235

You do exactly as Thayne told you. The fine sand lightly peppers his face and your “shhhhh” echoes the one that Thayne demonstrated.

“You’re thinking about my face!” growls the elf. “Do it again, and think about perfect quiet, perfect stillness when you throw the sand.”

You turn away from your teacher to compose yourself. When you can control your thoughts, you wheel around and repeat the procedure. This time, it works! You tune everything out except the hushed whisper of the spellword.

As Thayne’s green eyes become even more like slits, the elf catches himself, mumbles an elvish word which may have been a curse, and shakes his head.

“Not bad,” he says. “Not bad at all! You may be your father’s child after all.”

Check Sleep in your spellbook and turn to 106.

236

You don’t have to wait long for Rufyl. Without a warning of any kind, the walls of the room seem to start to melt. You feel no movement whatsoever, only a sense of the world around you changing very rapidly. Then utter darkness descends suddenly upon you, as if you had gone blind.

“Hello? Hello? Where am I?” you call into the gloom.

“Where you chose to be!” answers a rasping voice. “In the crypt of the Bhukodian sceptre.”

“I—I can’t see anything,” you say. “Is there a torch here?”

“What need have I of light? I am a thing of darkness, of tombs. Do you mean to tell me that the son of Landor lacks even the ability to create light?”

If Light is in your spellbook, turn to **228**. Otherwise, turn to **11**.

237

You join your uncle at the front of the class and clear your throat, buying a moment or two to refresh your memory about what you've read.

“The first thing you do is prepare the charcoal brazier,” you begin. “Then you add the herbs and start the chant.”

“Whoa! Not so fast,” says Beldon. “When do you prepare the brass pan?”

Your mind goes blank. The novices begin to smirk at your reddening face, and Arno's coal-black eyes sparkle.

“You're not prepared, novice Delling,” the Grand Master chastises curtly. “Return to your quarters and either study this spell more carefully or select another one. Can you continue from here, senior novice Arno?”

Deduct 1 point from your intelligence skill score and 1 point from your charisma score. Then return to **16** without marking Find Familiar in your spellbook.

238

Satisfied that you belong among the beginning students at the academy, you head toward the four tables where the black-robed novices are eating. Immediately, all conversation ceases. Everyone twists his head to see who has entered.

The silence is unnerving, but you continue toward the nearest table of fellow novices. Halfway there, just as you pass a pair of students dressed in light blue robes, one of them points toward you and makes a pinching gesture with his thumb and forefinger. You hear him whisper a single phrase, something like “tweak,” and you suspect very quickly that you're the target of a prankster's cantrip.

Roll two dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **207**. If it is less, turn to **19**.

Somehow it seems easier to fight a human than to risk taking the sceptre from the terrible crypt thing's lap. You fumble beneath your novice's robe for the components of a spell, but an invisible force slams you to the stone floor.

"Idiot! Do you think I'm susceptible to anything you might have learned in a few weeks? Perhaps you'd like to juggle a few fireballs while I get the sceptre!"

Your uncle levels his hands at you and starts to raise his fingers. Suddenly his left leg kicks the empty air. "Something stung me! Now it's on top of me!" he yells.

In the gloom, you spot Rufyl's rosy outline on Beldon's struggling chest. The pseudodragon's scaly tail is whipping the air, jabbing its stinger into your uncle's legs and side, which are starting to acquire a bluish glow.

"Use the sceptre!" your familiar shouts silently. "*He's casting an Armor spell!*"

Without thinking of the crypt thing, you grab the sceptre from the creature's grasp. At the instant your hand closes on the wand's shaft, the three giant pearls flare, flooding the crypt with white light.

The bluish dweomer on Beldon's legs suddenly streams from his body into the midst of the pearls, to be swallowed by their light. Rufyl's stinger plunges repeatedly into Beldon's side until your uncle shudders several times and slumps to the floor of the crypt. Turn to **244**.

Your fingers tremble with a mixture of fear and excitement as you pull on the black ribbon. Fighting back your fear of the unknown, you uncurl the stiff parchment and continue to read the spell.

To summon Rufyl, I, Landor, of College Arcane, do conjure and summon Rufyl, loyal familiar, friend, and servant, to the side of my only son and heir. I charge thee, Rufyl, with the task of serving Carr Delling as you have served me, his father, for more than forty human years.

Protect him, share all thy magical and worldly knowledge with him, and do his bidding, and never shall ye conspire with other sorcerers against thy master. All these things I command of thee in my hour of death, O worthy Rufyl.

At the very instant your eyes fall upon the last word, the familiar's name, a shrill whistling noise fills your ears from every corner of the dust-enshrouded room.

Suddenly a form begins to materialize on the desktop! It seems to be creating itself from the energy of the shrill noise, because the whistling sound diminishes as the creature assumes a more solid shape! You back away from the desk and begin to inch your way toward the door, ready to escape if necessary. Color is slowly filling in the shadows and contours of the familiar's head and body, leaving you shaking with fear. Before you, you see a red dragon, one of the most evil monsters in Tikandian legends, but it's only two feet high! Turn to 21.

241

"I don't want to receive any special treatment," you tell Beldon in front of the other students. "I'm here to learn magic like everyone else in this room, and I want to start from the bottom, as they did."

Your uncle frowns momentarily, then nods. "Honestly spoken, Carr, as I might have expected from the son of Lander! Very well, you will receive no favors from me, nor from anyone else at this academy. Do I make myself clear?"

Beldon's question is meant for the other students. "As for your level of study, that's a matter for me to decide. I shall inform you of my decision in the morning. In the meantime, senior novice Arno will, I'm sure, teach you the more interesting of his many tricks."

Beldon's words make you wince. You hadn't expected that your new enemy was so advanced. Arno is studying you with a gleam in his dark eyes. You're reminded of the look of a cruel child about to pull the wings off a butterfly.

"Arno will also show you to your room in the novices'

wing. See that our new novice has more appropriate garments, Arno," Beldon adds, motioning for his red-robed cadre to follow him out of the dining hall.

The tables of the novices buzz with murmurs until you approach, then suddenly become very silent. You wedge yourself on a bench between two black-robed diners. The one on your left is swarthy and lean, perhaps a bit more than twenty years old, while the fair-skinned, chubby one to your right is around your age and wears spectacles.

The silence at the table is unnatural and awkward. You wonder if you should try to draw one of your companions into a conversation, either the darker man (13) or the one with the thick glasses (46). Or, if you choose to simply eat your meal in silence, turn to 75.

242

You jerk to the side, but you're too late! The burglar's blade plunges into your heart beneath the thin black robe. Landor's legacy now belongs rightfully to its finder, whoever that may be, and with your dying breath, you realize that your father's killer remains unpunished. ✕

243

Dabbling with magical creatures might not be healthy for novices, you think. I need professional advice before I go any further with this scroll.

You push on the door with your shoulder several times before its rusty, corroded hinges begin to give way.

"Push again, Carr! It's beginning to budge!" Beldon urges you from the other side. The door creaks open on your effort. When your uncle sees the scrolls in your arms, his excited face grows pale.

"Where did you get those?" he demands eagerly.

You hurriedly explain how the mysterious cube disintegrated in your hands and describe the first line of the scroll you opened. "Could that be a spell my father used to summon demons? Is this Rufyl a devil?"

"Let me see it," Beldon says with a tremor in his voice. "It may be cursed!"

You hand him the loosened parchment. Beldon unrolls it

and stares at it with a strange expression in his eyes.

"The parchment is bare!" your uncle exclaims. "There's nothing on it!"

You grab the loosened scroll and examine it quickly. The dark black ink of the scroll has vanished! Beldon grabs another scroll from your hands and rips the red ribbon and seal open. At the instant he begins to read it, the parchment explodes in both your faces, and you realize that you will never have a chance to learn its secret. . . . ✕

244

"Excellent! Splendid!" rattles the crypt thing. "You must return in another hundred years or so. I have so few opportunities to relieve my boredom here, you know."

"Is my father entombed here among the other wizards of Bhukod?" you ask the undead guardian of the cemetery.

"Landor no longer exists on the material plane," answers the crypt thing. "He lives as an ethereal being, unable to return to the material essence you call a 'body.' He remains as undead as I, yet without anything you would recognize as substance or energy."

"Does that mean he could return to the material plane of existence?" you ask the crypt thing.

"Such questions range far beyond the talents of a simple cemetery watchman," the skeletal guardian replies. "Perhaps you will find the answers you seek in Landor's books and notes when you return the Sceptre of Bhukod to the Kandian people."

"It's growing tired and wants us to leave," Rufyl warns. *"It's thinking that it can stand only a little chatter from living humans at a time. We'd better get out of here before it gets irritated, or we might have to stay here."*

"Send us to the surface, Guardian, so that I can return the sceptre to the Kandian archdruid and study my father's spellbooks—and so that you can rest!"

Your words are still echoing in the Bhukodian tomb when the crypt thing's powerful Teleport spell returns both you and your new familiar to the world of the living. But somehow you feel sure you haven't seen the last of the evil, magical forces that permeate College Arcane. ✕



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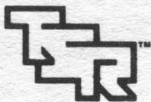
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In the UK £1.95
ISBN 394-74555-8
0-88038-285-6 8957
Printed in U.S.A.