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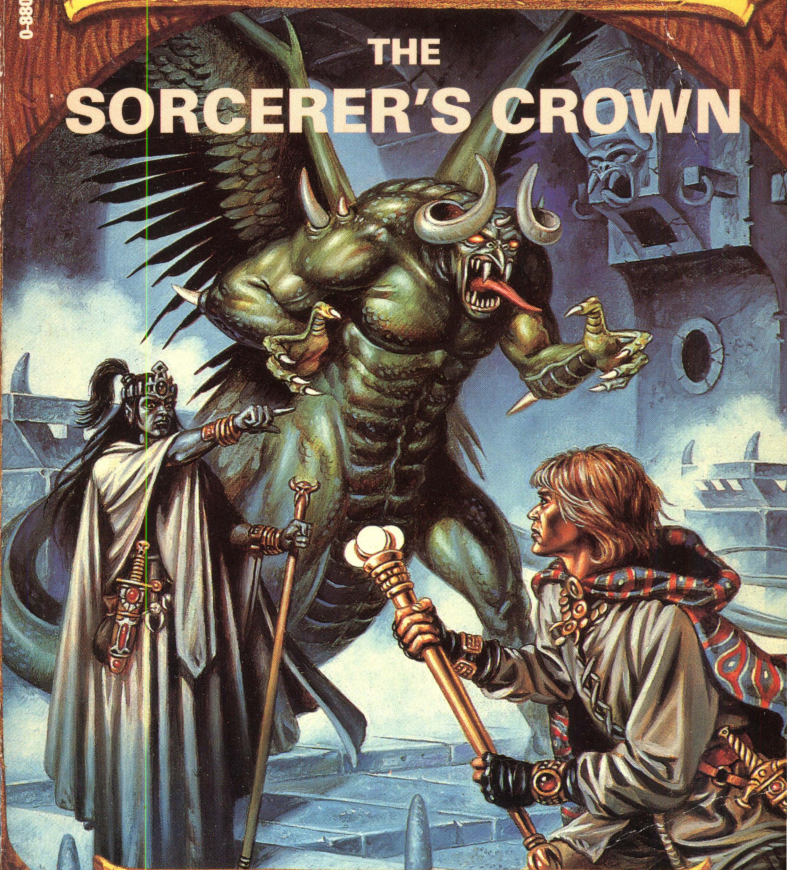
Volume 2 in the KINGDOM OF SORCERY Trilogy



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 9 GAMEBOOK

THE SORCERER'S CROWN



By Morris Simon

0-88038-308-9

**CHARACTER STATS CARD
THE SORCERER'S CROWN**

NAME: Carr Delling

CHAR. CLASS: Magic-user

SKILL POINTS:

Intelligence: 14 + _____ = _____

Dexterity: 10 + _____ = _____

Charisma: 12 + _____ = _____

HIT POINTS: 6 + _____ + _____ = _____

SCEPTRE OF BHUKOD:

(✓) yes _____ no _____

BOOK OF LESSER SPELLS

OFFENSIVE SPELLS:

Friends	Hold Person
Burning Hands	Fireball
Sleep	Lightning Bolt
Magic Missile	Suggestion
Light	

DEFENSIVE SPELLS:

Spider Climb	Armor
Feather Fall	Hold Portal
Wizard Lock	Protection
Fly	From Evil

SPECIAL SPELLS:

Detect Magic	Identify
Dispel Magic	

**TRAVELING BOOK OF
GREATER SPELLS**

Enchant Item	Contact Other
Polymorph	Plane
Other	

Place a check mark by each spell as you use it. Each may be used only once.

DOOMED FROM THE START!

Your quest to discover what new evil powers your rival Arno is unleashing on Tikandia seems doomed from the start as the swift galley quickly approaches. The archcleric's armed paladins are determined to board your ship. Your mind races as you study your father's spellbook. Suddenly your eye falls on a spell called "Polymorph Other."

Perhaps you could transform your pseudodragon familiar Rufyl into some kind of giant sea creature to destroy the galley, or perhaps even into a huge, winged roc to transport you safely to shore.

"I don't like either of those ideas, Master," Rufyl protests mentally, reading your thoughts.

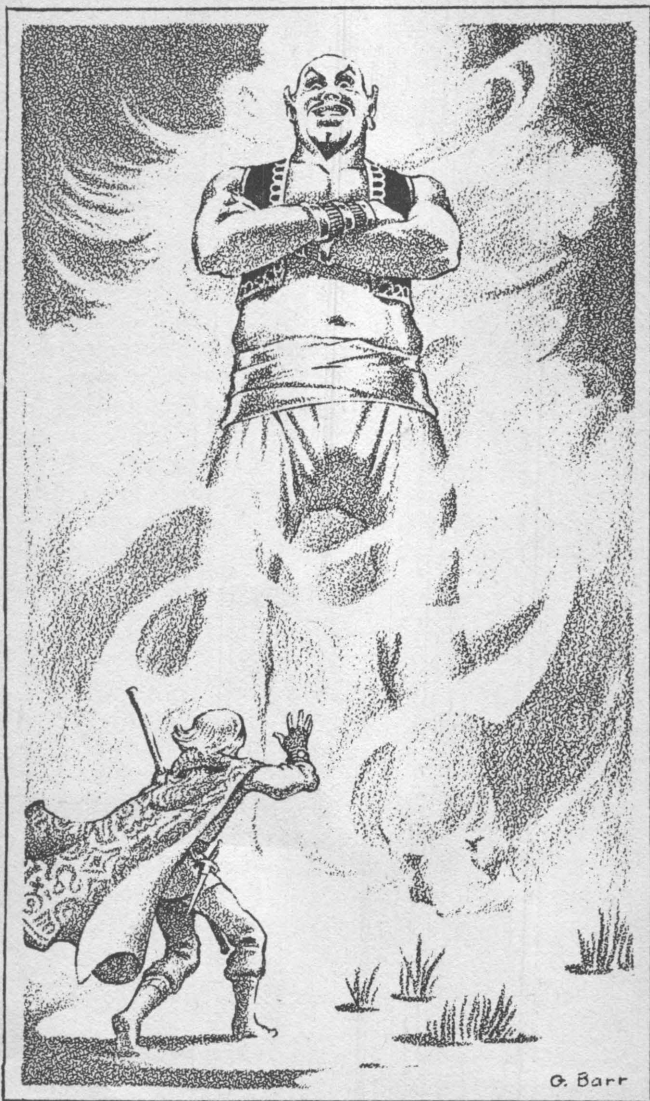
Rufyl is worried, and rightfully so, at the thought of using an untested spell, but the galley is almost alongside your ship now, and you've got to do something!

What will you do?

If you want to polymorph Rufyl into a giant sea creature to attack the galley, turn to **20**. If you'd rather transform him into a huge roc to fly you to safety, turn to **3**.

Whatever decision you make,
you're sure to find thrills galore
as you seek to discover the powerful secrets of

THE SORCERER'S CROWN



G. Barr

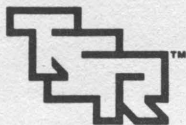
An **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**
Adventure Gamebook #9

Volume 2 in the **KINGDOM OF SORCERY** Trilogy

The **SORCERER'S CROWN**

By **Morris Simon**

Cover Art by **Clyde Caldwell**
Interior Art by **George Barr**



TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

**To magic-users
in every time and place**

THE SORCERER'S CROWN

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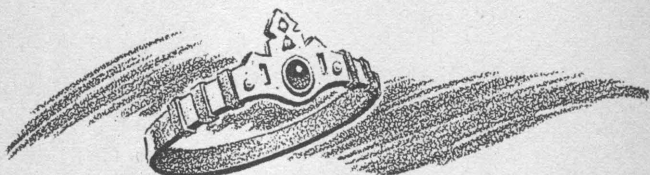
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AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!

Welcome, you who are about to seek to discover the powerful secrets of the fabled **SORCERER'S CROWN**, to an exciting, totally new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

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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!

THE SORCERER'S CROWN is the second 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. You will have opportunities in each book to increase the magical powers willed to you by Landor. Of course, your enemies, such as rival wizard Arno, may grow in power as well.

In the first adventure, **SCEPTRE OF POWER**, you were a boy of only sixteen, experimenting with comparatively simple spells under the guidance of Thayne, an elven ranger-wizard who learned his magic from your father. He and a Kandian bard named Dalris, the wildly beautiful daughter of Archdruid Perth, helped you locate and recover the Sceptre of Bhukod, a powerful magical weapon fashioned by sorcerer-kings of the ancient Bhukodian Empire. You would have failed in your quest had your father not bequeathed to you his loyal familiar, a telepathic pseudodragon named Rufyl.

THE SORCERER'S CROWN begins in the large druid grove of Wealwood, approximately five years after the conclusion of **SCEPTRE OF POWER**. It was in Wealwood that your father worked for most of his life uncovering the lost magical secrets of ancient Bhukod. After you recovered the legendary Sceptre of Bhukod, Perth insisted that you remain in his sacred grove as tribal mage, in the same log house erected for your father before your birth. Though you spend most of your waking hours delving into your father's coded spellbooks and extensive notes on the magical secrets of ancient Bhukod, you realize it will take you many more years just to reach the point where Landor left off two decades ago.

Your continual quest for more magical knowledge has taken its toll on your health. You are no longer the fresh-faced novice of sixteen that you were in the first adventure in the trilogy. In fact, you look considerably older and more haggard than your twenty-two years, causing Dalris to label your work a "greedy and dangerous obsession."





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 the **spells** you use during the adventure. Keep these records on the Character Stats Card at the front of the book. Each of them is described below.

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 by physical or magical combat with an enemy, or as a result of his own failure in casting a dangerous spell, or perhaps merely by accident. Whenever such an event happens, you will be instructed either to deduct a certain number of hit points from Carr's current total, or to roll a die to determine how many hit points to subtract. Record all such deductions in pencil on the Character Stats Card.

You may be fortunate enough to recover lost hit points at several places in the adventure. These rare occasions will permit you either to add a specified number of hit points or to roll a die to determine how many to add to your current total.

The one rule you must remember when you recover lost hit points is that *you can never have more hit points than you had at the start of your adventure.*

Magic-users must spend most of their time in musty studies, poring over arcane tomes. They rarely eat or exercise properly. In **THE SORCERER'S CROWN**, Carr Delling's physical strength has deteriorated from the time he was an athletic mountain boy on rugged Seagate Island. He begins the adventure with a base of 6 hit points, plus the best two of four die rolls. Simply roll one six-sided die four times and add the two highest scores to 6. Record the total on the Character Stats Card in the blank space labeled "hit points."



SKILL POINTS

Now you are ready to determine Carr Delling's **skills**.

Skill points will be used throughout the adventure to determine Carr's success or failure when he attempts different kinds of tasks. You help determine his skill points in each of three skills—**intelligence**, **dexterity**, and **charisma**—by adding an adjustment to base values in each skill.

Unlike your physical strength, your overall skills have increased since the first adventure. Besides the skill points listed on the Character Stats Card, you have 7 additional skill points, to be divided among your three skills in any way you choose. There are only two rules you must follow when dividing the additional skill points:

- 1) Without superior intelligence, a magic-user can't hope to master the arcane secrets of advanced sorcery. Thus you must always divide the 7 extra points in such a way that your total intelligence skill score is higher than the other two scores.
- 2) You must place at least 1 extra skill point in each of the three skill categories.

For example, you might decide to divide your 7 extra points and add them to your base value like this:

INTELLIGENCE	DEXTERITY	CHARISMA
14 + 5 = 19	10 + 1 = 11	12 + 1 = 13

OR

14 + 3 = 17	10 + 2 = 12	12 + 2 = 14
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The following explanations of each skill may be helpful in deciding how to divide the additional points.

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 learn and use new magic spells, decipher ancient scrolls, recall magical formulas, and other mental tasks.

In this book, you will test your intelligence by rolling two dice and adding the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, then you have succeeded.

Dexterity

Carr's **dexterity** skill score determines his success or failure at tasks involving agility, climbing, speed, dodging, or throwing.

As a magic-user, Carr must depend upon such physical strategies instead of brute strength. At the beginning of the adventure, this is the skill that has suffered most from his long years of study combined with an inadequate diet and very little physical exercise.

Test your dexterity in the same way described for the intelligence skill score. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If it equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you have succeeded.

Charisma

Your **charisma** skill score will determine whether you can convince others to follow your advice, believe in you, or simply to "like" you.

In *THE SORCERER'S CROWN*, Carr's charisma skill may vary, depending on the impression he's making at a particular time, and on certain magical properties and processes.

To test 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.



SPELLBOOKS AND SPELLS

The entire adventure of **THE SORCERER'S CROWN** takes place in one exhausting week of game time. Throughout this entire period, Carr will not have time to restudy the spells he already knows. These are the spells listed on the Character Stats Card under "Book of Lesser Spells." Once you use a spell from this list, you must check it off on your list because it's gone until you begin the adventure again.

Early in the adventure, Carr will collect some of his father's more powerful incantations in a "Traveling Book of Greater Spells," as shown on the Stats Card. These are spells he does not know yet, but which he *may* be able to use as if the parchment pages were magical scrolls. As soon as the words are read *once*, however, the magical writing will vanish from the pages forever and that spell may not be used again in the same adventure. When you use one of these spells, check it off as you did the other spells.

DESCRIPTIONS OF SPELLS

If the spells in **THE SORCERER'S CROWN** are unfamiliar to you, you may wish to refer to the following descriptions during your adventure:

Book of Lesser Spells

OFFENSIVE SPELLS:

Friends—Manipulates others by making them like the spellcaster.

Burning Hands—Shoots flames from fingertips at target.

Sleep—Causes victims to fall immediately into a deep slumber.

Magic Missile—Fires torpedo-like missiles of energy at victim.

Light—Produces a sudden, intense light, which may be used to blind victims.

Hold Person—Freezes victim in place so that he is unable to move.

Fireball—Hurls a ball of fiery magical energy at target.

Lightning Bolt—Shoots a bolt of lightning at target.

Suggestion—Enables user to plant ideas in victim's head.



DEFENSIVE SPELLS:

Spider Climb—Allows magic-user to climb sheer walls and cling to ceilings.

Feather Fall—Changes weight of spellcaster to that of a feather when falling.

Wizard Lock—Seals doors and other openings even from other magic-users.

Fly—Permits spellcaster to levitate and move through the air.

Armor—Hardens spellcaster's skin against most cutting and penetrating weapons.

Hold Portal—Secures doors and other openings against nonmagical beings.

Protection from Evil—Helps to guard spellcaster from evil forces.

SPECIAL SPELLS:

**Read Magic*—Permits spellcaster to read special magical codes.

Detect Magic—Allows spellcaster to sense the presence of magical auras, or dweomers.

Dispel Magic—Cancels the magical power of spells.

Identify—Identifies rare and disguised magical items.

**Deeppockets*—Enchants pockets of a garment to allow room for more contents.

*NOTE: Read Magic and Deeppockets are permanently cast for you throughout THE SORCERER'S CROWN.

Traveling Book of Greater Spells

Enchant an Item—Casts a spell on weapons and other articles.

Contact Other Plane—Permits the spellcaster to speak with beings on other planes.

Polymorph Other—Changes targets of spell into other creatures or things.



WEAPONS

Carr Delling is not a fighter, and he wears no armor. In addition to a small dagger, he is usually armed with an enchanted bronzewood quarterstaff and a supply of three darts tipped with a special druid poison that does not kill but instead paralyzes a victim instantly. Each dart may be used only once.

There is also a place on the Stats Card to note whether Carr is carrying the Sceptre of Bhukod. That famous relic from the first adventure in this series **may or may not** be an important factor in Carr's success.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play **THE SORCERER'S CROWN** when dice are unavailable, all you need is a pencil and some paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Draw a number each time you are told to roll a die, then replace it and mix them up again if you need to roll a second die.

YOUR Carr Delling is now complete, and you are ready to begin another unforgettable, and dangerous, journey into the world of magic and sorcery! Use your spells wisely, because there always seem to be greater dangers waiting on the next page. Turn to page 15—and good luck!

The golden hues of the sinking Tikandian sun bring a message to gentler dwellers of the wild: feed and hide before the thick evening shadows call the nightly hunters.

You watch silently as Dalris approaches one of the most fearful of those predators, the dreaded manticore. You've been stalking the vicious leonine creature for two days, and finally have it cornered in a dense thicket where the saplings are so crowded that the monster can't spread its huge batlike wings to escape or attack.

She moves with the stealth of a cat, you think, recalling the first time you saw Dalris's leather-clad figure on Seagate Island five years ago. Without the Kandian bard's help you might never have recovered the fabled Sceptre of Bhukod from the enchanted crypt beneath College Arcane.

Dalris is just as cool as she was on the island, as she approaches the dangerous manticore with only her Charm Mammal spell and her druid's torc to protect her. She agreed to help you collect one of the monster's tail spikes, as demanded by an ancient recipe for the powerful spell used to enchant darts. You feel a shiver of excitement as the daring bard addresses the beast in her most confident voice.

"Do not flee or fight, venerable one. We want only one of your quills. You have more than enough."

The twin red stones of Dalris's torc glow in the twilight, pulsing with the rising and falling tones of her command. The manticore's dark humanoid eyes seem captivated by the shining jewels, pinpoints of scarlet fire in the deepening shadows. The bard's magical necklace is her only protection if the druid spell should fail.

"Come on, Carr!" Dalris whispers impatiently. "Get your precious quill! Even a druid's torc won't keep a manticore docile for long!"

Even as she speaks, the giant carnivore tosses its bearded human head and twitches the thick tail with its cluster of menacing spikes. "Hold still!" Dalris commands sharply. The jewels of her necklace flare, momentarily recapturing the beast's attention. You wonder if the Magic Missile spell you prepared for just such an emergency will be enough to handle this dangerous creature.

“A spike from a dead manticore is useless for the enchantment of a magical item.”

Rufyl's telepathic reminder pops into your head at the same moment you consider using the Magic Missile spell. The little pseudodragon has remained invisible since you began stalking the manticore, a clear indication of the respect your familiar has for such beasts.

“Dalris's life is more important than the spell component,” you tell Rufyl mentally.

“Get the damned quill and let's get out of here,” Dalris whispers angrily. “We're running out of time!”

If you decide you'd better use your Magic Missile spell against the manticore, turn to 10. However, if you'd rather try to grab one of the tail spikes while Dalris's druid spell is still active, turn to 19. Of course, you might decide that getting the spell component isn't so important after all (50).

2

“We want to land at Delmer,” you tell the captain. “I used to live near there and know the area.”

The captain nods and turns to his small crew. “You heard the man! Make for Delmer!”

“I thought you told me that your mother's people refused to let you enter their village, even when she was dying,” says Dalris as you settle back again.

“That was a long time ago, and it was just my cousin Ulrik and his superstitious friends. Anyway, old Wendel, the village healer, liked my mother and defended us when the rest of the clan wanted to drive us out of Delmer. I'm sure he'll help us—if he's still alive, that is.”

Less than an hour later, the ship's master joins you and Dalris at the rail. Rufyl is there, too, but he is still invisible to keep from frightening the simple fisherfolk.

The master points toward a pale glow in the southern sky. “That's Delmer. You'll have to take a dinghy from here—we don't dare get closer. The cliffs are too steep to land anywhere else on this section of coast, so you'll have to sneak into the harbor.”

Within minutes, Delmer's fishing wharves are dead ahead. It's a moonless, cloudy night and the shadows of the

sleeping vessels loom menacingly in the harbor. The only light comes from small lanterns on the docks. Large dark shapes pass in front of them, casting shadows on the sea.

"Guards!" you whisper. "Big ones, too!"

"Probably gnolls—good sword practice," Dalris murmurs. You can't see the bard's face, but you suspect that her eyes are dancing with excitement. You say nothing, wondering whether to try to slip undetected into Delmer (30) or to openly confront the guards on the pier (144).



3

"Our only real chance is to get off this scow before those marines board," you tell Dalris hurriedly. "I'm going to use my father's Polymorph Other spell to change Rufyl into a roc so that he can lift us to the mainland!"

The bard is silent for a long moment, tears welling in her hazel eyes. "You mustn't do that!" she pleads. "Only experienced magic-users ever attempt that spell, and then only after years of practice. It could kill Rufyl!"

"Rufyl's been polymorphed many times before by my father," you reply calmly, "and I'm going to read his incantation exactly as he wrote it. I won't even need to use any spell components; it'll be like reading from a magic scroll."

Your confident manner seems to quieten Dalris, although Rufyl's mental protests are thundering into your brain as fast as he can send them.

"Relax, Rufyl. Just be still and let me concentrate on what I'm doing. If you keep interrupting my thoughts, there's no way to predict what will happen to you."

Your warning has an immediate impact upon your invisible familiar. Satisfied that he'll cooperate, you turn to the Polymorph Other spell in your traveling spellbook and begin to read your father's words just as they appear in his cryptic wizard's scrawl.

Cross Polymorph Other off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to **129**; if it's less, turn to **109**.

4

The mountain trail from Delmer to Freeton is just as you remember it from the last time you trod it, as a ragged orphan knowing nothing of magic. Twice during the long journey, you have to leave the trail and hide while wagons with wounded and filthy gnolls rumble past you toward the coast. They seem to come from the rugged interior, where Thayne's elven clansmen make their home.

"It looks as if Pazuzu's domination of Seagate is less than total," says Dalris. "Apparently, the coastline is the only area actually under the control of his evil horde."

"Thayne's people won't surrender easily," you reply. "Their resistance might spread to the ports, with the right encouragement."

You see more and more gnolls and assorted other enemy warriors as you near Seagate's largest city in the early morning hours of your fifth day on the road. The monsters are everywhere in the ransacked city. The only "tradesmen" left are orcish halfbreeds and prostitutes allowed to cater to the bestial gnolls. You see no paladins.

"They must be fighting in the hills," Dalris says.

You frown but agree. The thought of the Knights of Blessed Dyan leading a horde of evil humanoids against Thayne's noble kinsmen is too unpleasant to think about. You lead the bard and your ever-invisible familiar past the rubble and garbage to College Arcane. Turn to **92**.

5

"The only way to stop a ship filled with marines is to sink it," you tell Dalris, "and that'll take more than just a magic missile or two!"

You step closer to the rail and reach into one of the enchanted pockets of your billowing Kandian cloak for the ball of compressed bat droppings mixed with sulfur—the ingredients you need to cast your powerful Fireball spell. Concentrating intently upon the decks of the marines' ves-

sel, you feel the spell's dweomer building inside you and flowing into the components.

At the precise moment, you whisper the single spellword, "*Shassul*," and point to the ship with the bit of sulfur and guano clenched in your fist. An enchanted ball of energy springs from your fingertip and flares immediately into a white-hot sphere of fire. Even Dalris is impressed.

You remain motionless, pointing to the galley's midships deck, directing the magical fireball to its destination. You hear the futile screams of the marines as the sphere strikes the planks of the deck with a low roar and vanishes for a moment into the hold. Suddenly, there is a great explosion of red and yellow fire, followed by billowing black smoke.

"It must have struck the galley's oil vats!" exclaims Dalris, whose eyes are wide with both excitement and awe. "You have been learning a few things after all!"

Then you see the fishermen whose boat you're on staring at you wide-eyed and tell Dalris, "You might tell your kinsmen to make for the shore. That black smoke will fetch more galleys, and I don't want to waste any more spells on marines."

Turn to **159**.

6

My only chance is to use a Distract cantrip, you think hurriedly.

"Great Dyan!" you murmur, raising your eyes in mock horror and glancing over the paladin's right shoulder.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **138**. If it is less, turn to **131**.

7

The manticore's thrashing tail hurls you to the ground, knocking the wind from your lungs. You raise one hand very feebly and try to pronounce a quick spellword, but you can't get enough breath in your lungs to utter even the first syllable.

"Move quickly, Master!"

"Look out, Carr!"

Your stunned senses are barely aware of Rufyl's telepathic cry or Dalris's urgent warning. The manticore's huge mass is suddenly on top of you, clawing and biting until you welcome the darkness that ends your pain. ✘

8

You strain your eyes in the yellow haze, trying to decipher the encoded mixture of High Elvish and wizard's scrawl. The Contact Other Plane spell is more technical than most of the spells you've studied so far, though it requires neither special body movements nor material components. As you read through it, you realize suddenly that you don't know enough about other planes of existence to control the spell after all.

A cold sweat appears on your forehead and on the palms of your hands, but you continue to read. You bumble past the lines of the incantation requiring knowledge of the different "Outer" and "Inner" planes, past words and names you can scarcely pronounce.

Your brain instantly fills with a barrage of sinister voices, voices from every plane you carelessly mentioned in the incantation! Some of them are speaking in dialects that do not sound like speech at all, but are clusters of grunts and growls from unseen creatures. But the worst part of the experience is the hallucination.

The sulfurous fog vanishes, along with Dalris and Rufyl, leaving you alone in a black void. Suddenly, there are other entities there with you—unspeakably horrible monsters. Your brain becomes a bloody battleground where monstrous forces of good and evil—devas, demons, and devils—fight to dominate your mind. As your insanity worsens, merging terrible thoughts with a hideous reality, you discover too late the truth in Dalris's warnings about the dangers of experimenting with sorcery. ✘

9

At the instant you pronounce the last word of your father's powerful Polymorph Other incantation, the inscription vanishes from the parchment of your traveling spellbook. You glance from the blank page to see its effects

upon the paladin, but nothing at all is happening. The knight is far more afraid of Rufyl's switching tail than he is of your bumbling magic.

"Great! Incredible!" calls Dalris sarcastically from the road. "You can't even work Landor's spells when you read them over a helpless victim! Now you've wasted a perfectly good incantation by tinkering with it."

Your face is hot with embarrassment. This time, the bard may be right, you think. You point to the paralyzed horse with its bulging saddlebags.

Turn to 185.

10

Ignoring both Dalris and Rufyl, you extend your hands toward the large manticore and pronounce the spellword to evoke your magical missiles.

"Ruspal!"

Six swirling disks of pure energy, three from each hand, appear instantly at your fingertips. In a blinding flash of golden light, the swirling circles assume the shapes of elliptical bullets streaking toward the tawny side and chest of the giant monster.

Cross Magic Missile from your list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to 60. If it is less, turn to 28.

11

"This is a perfect opportunity to test my father's Polymorph Other spell," you tell Dalris excitedly.

The bard's face glowers with rage. "You're nuts!" she blurts. "We've only got a few hours before sundown, and that's when vespers begin at the cathedral. If we're not there to mingle with the pilgrims, we'll have to risk breaking into the archcleric's chambers like common burglars! This is no time to play with your precious magic, Delling!"

For a moment, you're tempted to change your mind about using the unfamiliar spell. Then you remember that you'll be reading Landor's exact words and won't have to risk using any unpracticed gestures or unusual components.

"It'll only take a minute to read the incantation," you

reply, pulling the traveling spellbook from your cloak.

Dalris whips her head around and stalks away with her thick battle queue lashing against her rounded hips. You force yourself to concentrate on the dangerous task at hand and turn to the Polymorph Other spell.

"Your father often spent several days preparing himself to cast the Polymorph Other spell," warns Rufyl mentally.

"Quiet!" you order the familiar. You begin mumbling your translation of the coded scrawl.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 26 or more, turn to **32**. If it is less, turn to **9**.

12

"If the Knights of Blessed Dyan are as corrupt and vicious as Thayne said, you probably better hit with as much power as you can," says Dalris to your surprise. The bard usually favors less drastic magic. You study the onrushing galley, your head a swirling jumble of powerful spells you've learned in the past several years. You narrow them down to Burning Hands (218), Magic Missile (162), Fireball (5), or Lightning Bolt (48).

Be sure to mark off the spell you choose from your Stats Card before turning to the section shown.

13

From what you recognize of the bestial gnoll dialect, the guards are boasting about their exploits when they swarmed over Seagate Island's ports. Each one is trying to outdo the other by citing impossible feats of derring-do.

"Corpeg not fear big human with pitchfork! Him much run from me and Corpeg much chase!"

"Pitchfork? Ha! This human what come for Widpol have big axe with two edges. Him swing and swing but Widpol too fast. Then me duck and stab 'im in groin!"

The guards laugh and stomp the pier above your heads, knocking even more dirt into your faces. You raise a hand to your lips, urging quiet, and begin pulling the skiff slowly toward the shore. The boisterous gnolls are enjoying recounting coups far too much notice you.

When you reach land, the three of you slip silently out of the small boat and into the shadows of the waterfront.

If you're in Delmer, turn to **206**. If you're in Freeton, turn to **92**.

14

"According to Thayne, Arno's thugs have barricaded the ports on Seagate," you remind the bard. "That probably means they'll be doing the same thing soon in Saven Harbor, if they haven't already done so. As for the main road, that's also the quickest way to advertise what we're heading toward Arno. You know these forests better than anyone, Dalris. Can we stay hidden all the way to Saven?"

The smooth skin of the bard's tanned forehead wrinkles. "There's one way, all right, but it'll take us directly through Yellow Marsh."

"I am truly worried, Master," thinks Rufyl into your mind. *"Even your father, at the height of his powers, was reluctant to venture into Yellow Marsh."*

Both your companions fear the prehistoric monsters of the Yellow Marsh, but you're having second thoughts. You've heard that Landor's magic was powerful enough to destroy whole cities, yet Rufyl, his familiar for fifty years, is suggesting that the dangers of Yellow Marsh were beyond Landor's control—and you know only a few of your father's spells!

If you wish to change your mind and go to Saven by boat or highway, turn to **22**. If not, turn to **157**.

15

You've never known Dalris to underestimate her druid skills, and she sounds too uncertain this time to risk talking to the roc. "If you can't tell it to go back, I doubt if it'd listen to me!" you shout. "Let's just hold on until it lands on Seagate Island!"

"I'll be ready to try to charm it!" Dalris replies.

"Right!" you agree, though you think it might take more than druid magic to handle the giant bird. You don't know yet how much of Rufyl's original mind remains inside the roc's smaller brain, if any at all. Turn to **86**.

16

The sight of the swift galley approaching your vessel, its rail bristling with the gleaming spears and swords of armored knights, unsettles your mind so badly that you can't concentrate on the spells you already know. You fumble in one of the hidden pockets of your enchanted Kandian robe for the traveling book of greater spells.

This threat requires more than simple magic! you think grimly as you turn the pages to glance at the encoded headings. The spell called "Polymorph Other" seems to be the only one in the book that might help you.

I could transform Rufyl into some kind of giant sea creature which could destroy their ship, you think excitedly, or perhaps into a huge winged monster to fly us to shore!

"I don't like either of those ideas, Master," your familiar protests mentally. *"The last time your father polymorphed me, I was stuck for three weeks as a rust monster! Besides, I can't swim and I'm afraid of heights!"*

If you want to polymorph Rufyl into a giant sea creature to attack the marines' galley, turn to 20. If you'd rather transform him into a flying creature large enough to carry Dalris and you to safety, turn to 3.

17

"Knowledge of either fact about Arno might be useless without knowing the other one," you say to Dalris. "Genies and Djinn like to trick humans with their Wish spells. I think a marid could be just as devious."

The bard glowers. "You're going to ask him about some damnable spell! You don't care about Tikandia at all! You're nothing but a power-mad sorcerer, Carr Delling!"

"But more magical knowledge is just what we need right now," you insist. "If Thayne's description of what's happening on Seagate Island was accurate, I'm not powerful enough to face Arno. It's just that simple!"

The bard buries her face in her hands and turns away while you ask the most burning question of all.

"What was my father's greatest secret?" you demand.

"Aha! Greed triumphs over virtue once more!"

"Just answer the question, Shanif!" you say angrily.

"I've already heard enough of that from Dalris."

"First you must hear a horrible tale, the story of the last days of Bhukod, for that is part of Landor's secret," the marid begins. "The desolation you see around you was wrought by the same tarrasque that destroyed the Bhukodian Empire," says Shanif. "Even now, the beast lies sleeping within the ancient temple, imprisoned by the powerful magic of the last sorcerer-kings of Bhukod. In a desperate sacrifice to save their people, the wizards of Bhukod lured the monster to feed upon themselves while they used their combined sorcery to cast a permanent Imprisonment spell upon it. It is that very prison which I now guard."

"A tarrasque? This close to Wealwood and Saven?" you cry, recalling the stories you've read about the horrible giant saurians and their voracious appetites for all living things. The monsters are virtually indestructible.

"Wait a minute," says Dalris. "If the wizards imprisoned the tarrasque, why do you have to guard it?"

"What is done by magic can be undone by magic," Shanif answers. "I was charged by the rulers of Bhukod before they died to insure that the tarrasque's slumber would never be disturbed by later wizards. Not even the great Landor himself could reverse my masters' spell."

You try to recall mention of these events in your father's notes. You have no recollection of any mention of names like "Yellow Marsh" or "Shanif" or even reference to a marid.

"That is why this remains Landor's greatest secret!" Shanif thunders, reading your mind. "Your father discovered another way into the tomb of the tarrasque, you see. It was here that he discovered the Sceptre of Bhukod as well as the twin crowns of Lolth and Aerdrie. And it is here that the greatest magical treasure of all awaits Landor's successor. That is the answer to your question!"

"Then the true ruins of Bhukod are here, in Yellow Marsh!" blurts Dalris, leaping to her feet excitedly.

"What is the greatest magical treasure of all?" you demand. "How can I enter the tomb of the tarrasque? What are the twin crowns of Lolth and Aerdrie?"

Turn to 178.

You fumble in the enchanted pockets of your Kandian cloak for . . . Suddenly you can't remember what you're looking for, or why! Arno's simple but effective Forget spell has erased your immediate memory of everything you have thought in the last few minutes.

Then you glance up at the bizarre scene before you. Some incredible monster with a hawkish head and feet on a human body is embracing a tall and graceful woman dressed in buckskin garments. You recognize her as your old friend Dalris, of course, and you feel a small alarm at seeing her embraced by the ugly creature. Then a richly clad cavalier scowls at you in disbelief, and a dark-skinned man wearing a glimmering tiara grins maliciously at you.

"Look at the Kandian fool!"

"The great Landor's son and heir!"

You know you're in some kind of danger, but—

The cavalier grabs your arm and shakes you violently. "Snap out of it, Carr!" he demands. "Use your spell! Arno and the monster are taking Dalris!"

But it's too late. A swarm of armed men quickly overwhelm the strange cavalier who grabbed you. Then they grab your arms and bind them behind you, as they gag you tightly to stifle any spellwords you might belatedly happen to remember. ✕

The bard's impatient command reminds you that it was Dalris herself who suggested that she use her druid magic to subdue the mantichore after objecting to your first plan to use your Magic Missile spell to cripple the beast and take the tail spike just before it died. Dalris complained that she would be violating her vows as a druid if she let you slay even this man-eating monster for such a purpose.

To honor the bard's wishes, you slip cautiously past the entranced mantichore and lunge for its twitching tail. You grasp it just below the cluster of quills that encircle its tip. Your sudden movement startles the giant beast so that it breaks free of the spell and whirls to attack you. The heavy tail thrashes in your grasp, its powerful muscles lifting



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your feet from the ground as you struggle to hang on.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **36**; if it is less than 18, turn to **7**.

20

Despite Rufyl's protests, you're excited at the thought of using a spell as powerful as Polymorph Other.

"Dalris, what's the most invulnerable and feared sea creature of these waters—one that could stop that galley without getting hurt in the process?"

"Probably a dragon turtle," she replies. "Why?"

You tell her quickly of your plan to polymorph Rufyl into a monster powerful enough to destroy the marine vessel. "But I don't want him to get hurt," you add.

The Kandian bard stares at you, her olive eyes wide in disbelief. "You're already insane!" she blurts hoarsely. "I can see it in your eyes. You're crazed with powers beyond your control. Don't you know that a Polymorph Other spell can destroy its subject if you're not absolutely sure of what you're doing? Are you willing to subject Rufyl to that kind of danger?"

"He's been polymorphed before!" you protest. "He told me that my father . . ."

"Landor was ten times the sorcerer you are!"

"Stand out of the way," you tell the bard coldly, though your heart is racing with excitement . . . and fear. You hastily flip to the page with the powerful Polymorph Other spell and begin to read the incantation aloud in your father's words. Since you use the traveling spellbook as if it were a set of magical scrolls in which the full power of the spell is in the words themselves, you need none of the usual components to cast the Polymorph Other spell.

Cross Polymorph Other off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the results to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 25 or more, turn to **78**. If it's less, turn to **109**.

21

"As you can see from my cloak, I'm a Kandian actor, as well as a minor soldier-of-fortune," you lie to Garn. Dalris

shoots you a crisp, angry look but says nothing to contradict your deception. The paladin's eyes take on a sad look.

"You, too?" he says simply. "I'm surrounded by liars in this city, and I thought for a moment that I had found a friend—perhaps even an ally against the evil forces that plague us in Saven."

"I don't understand what you mean, friend," you tell the polished warrior. "Do you, Dalris?"

The bard says nothing.

The cavalier strokes the corners of his moustache for a moment before asking in an even voice, "Did you know that ranking paladins such as myself have certain blessings normally bestowed only upon clerics? In my case, I possess the gifts known as Detect Magic and Penetrate Disguise, both of which I used to discover the truth about you as soon as we met."

Your face flushes when you realize how childish your story must have sounded to the experienced holy soldier.

"*You're right, Master,*" Rufyl blurts telepathically. "*It did sound somewhat ridiculous. Would you please give me some of that cheese when no one's looking?*"

"No!" you mutter aloud, angry both at yourself and at Rufyl's cheeky thought.

"I beg your pardon?" asks Garn. " 'No' what?"

He and Dalris are both looking at you as if questioning your sanity. "Nothing," you reply quickly. "I didn't mean anything. . . . I'll tell you what I know about Arno."

Turn to 172.

22

Rufyl's reminder that even your father avoided Yellow Marsh makes you change your mind. Your only question is whether to sneak into Saven by boat (113) or take the open highway, which is the fastest route (42).

23

"We know from Wendel's story that Pazuzu's great power has infested all of Seagate, including College Arcane," you tell the others. "If it were just a matter of Arno's evil designs, the other magic-users would have kept him under

control. I suspect that they did do just that, until old Haslum vanished a year ago.”

“And that’s when Arno first summoned Pazuzu!” blurts Dalris.

“If Pazuzu didn’t summon himself,” you agree. “In any event, the combined talents of every magic-user in College Arcane would not have sufficed to contain the awesome powers of a demon prince.”

“I think you’ve just answered my question about how to get inside,” says Dalris. “If we’re dealing with that kind of power, we should suspect anything and everything.”

You nod and gesture to the battlement above your heads. “Remember how we did this before?”

Dalris smiles and rubs her hands. “Rufyl, I’m afraid you can’t come with us this time. If you could fly . . .”

“I shall be content to remain here as lookout and guard, Mistress,” says Rufyl. You can feel his relief.

The bard has already begun to scale the rough black wall by the time you remove your shoes and swallow the mixture of tar and a live spider you need to cast Spider Climb. As soon as you mutter the elven spellphrase, your hands and feet exude a sticky substance which allows you to cling to the tower as if you were a spider yourself.

Cross Spider Climb off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **160**. If it is less, turn to **203**.

24

“It’s too late to hide in the woods,” says Dalris. “They’ve already seen us. If we run, they would just strengthen their patrols, making it more difficult for us to reach Saven. We’ll have to fight or try to bluff them.”

“I’m at your side, Master. Just tell me what to do.” You glance at your familiar, but Rufyl has vanished.

If you choose to confront the paladins, turn to **72**. If you’d rather try to bluff them first, turn to **107**.

25

“There’s nothing I can do!” you cry. “Maybe your father can help us if we can get back to Wealwood!”

"Not a chance!" Dalris replies. She looks at you with total disgust and draws her sword. "I ought to use this on you for meddling in things you don't know enough about. Now I have to try to kill our friend Rufyl, just because you're an incompetent sorcerer!"

The brave bard steps toward the roc, her shortsword poised. Not wanting her to die alone, you raise your enchanted quarterstaff and charge past her into the poised beak of the giant monster. ✘

26

The hand is lifting Dalris from the ground when your projectile buries itself in the yellow wrist. This time, the unseen creature makes a low, rumbling sound from somewhere high above you in the fog. You feel a strong wind and hear a great whistling sound rise all around you.

"What's happening, Master?"

Rufyl's anxious thought is just as clear as ever since it just appears in your mind without going through your deafened ears.

"I don't know!" you reply mentally. *"Can you sense any kinds of thought?"*

"There's a great anger flooding my brain, making it hard for me to listen to your mind, Master," Rufyl answers. *"I've never felt such . . . Look! The fog is clearing!"*

You look up to see a circular shaft of light opening all the way to the top of the thick sulfurous cloud. The midday sun beams down on you and Rufyl like a spotlight directed with pinpoint accuracy.

The vertical shaft widens until it reveals the figure of the giant creature whom you attacked. It's a marid, the most powerful of geniekind, towering at least ten feet above your head. Dalris, panic-stricken, still struggles helplessly in the marid's grasp.

"Throw another of your toys, foolish mortal!"

It's difficult to know if you heard the marid's voice through the air or sensed it directly with your brain. You stare upward in wonder at the bushy black brows and sinister sneer. The bright noon sun is directly over the marid's gleaming bald head, making it hard to see the creature's

face. Occasionally there's a blinding flash of light from a massive earring of gold.

"You should know your targets before striking them, son of Landor. You are but an insignificant blight upon this perfectly barren landscape and must be expunged!"

With this simple sentence of death, the marid raises his closed hand above you, blotting out the sun in the column of light. When he flicks open his fingers, a mighty jet of salty water springs from his palm, striking you and Rufyl with a terrible force. The power of the water is so fierce that it blinds you instantly and holds your head beneath the torrent . . . until you must breathe—and die. ✕

27

You have time to cast one incantation before you reach the foggy hollow. The only spells that make any sense just now are Armor and Protection from Evil, since you don't see anything to attack. If you wish to use your Armor spell, turn to **76**. To cast Protection from Evil, turn to **102**. If you want to save your defensive spell and use an offensive spell instead, turn to **114**.

28

Your magic missiles slam into the beast with such force that they knock the huge manticore to the ground. You approach the almost-still creature with great caution, watching the labored rise and fall of its side. A dreadful gurgling sounds in the beast's lungs, filling the forest with echoes of gruesome and unnatural death.

"Why did you do that?" Dalris challenges you. The bard's druid sensitivities have been shattered by your use of violent magic against the beast she had charmed. "I could have handled that animal!"

"You saw its tail twitching!" you reply defensively. "It was only a matter of seconds before that thing would have bitten your head right off your shoulders! I shouldn't have let you talk me into charming it in the first place!"

"Senseless slaughter has no place in a Kandian forest," the angry druid insists.

You ignore the bard's anger, firm in your belief that the

manticore was getting out of control. Pushing past her, you reach for the tip of the tail with its cluster of sinister darts.

“Don’t, Master! It’s waking up!”

Rufyl’s telepathic warning is a fraction of an instant too late. The manticore’s humanoid eyes flicker with hatred as its tail whips at your face in frenzied, dying vengeance. You raise your arms reflexively to guard your face from the gouging tail spikes. They pass your raised arms and find their marks in your unprotected stomach and chest. Deduct 3 from your current hit point total.

In a desperate lunge, you try to grab the writhing tail, but a spasm of pain from your wounds makes it difficult for you to hold on.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **36**; if it is less than 18, turn to **7**.

29

“He’s casting a spell!” you shout to Garn. “Get Dalris out of here!”

The paladin lunges for Dalris’s spellbound figure, wrenching her around to face him. Then he slaps the bard quickly to break the monster’s mental control over her.

“What the hell are you doing?” Dalris blurts as the powerful cavalier drags her to the hidden door behind you.

“Trust me!” he mutters. “Let’s go, Carr! We can’t fight them with spells or weapons. They’re much too powerful!”

Garn’s advice sounds dismal but wise. *If I hadn’t protected myself magically before entering the sanctuary, Arno’s spell would be working right now*, you think grimly. Guarded by the dweomer of the defensive spell, you start backing toward the door after Garn and Dalris.

“Get them!” Arno shouts to his congregation of renegade paladins. “Don’t let the infidels leave the cathedral alive!”

You have time to use one more spell to help you escape. Either Hold Portal (**40**) or Wizard Lock (**168**) might be useful to seal the sanctuary door behind you. If you haven’t already used it and want to cast one of these spells, mark it off on your Stats Card and turn to the indicated section. If you’d rather not use magic, turn to **135**.

30

"If we can get under the pier, we can stay in the shadows and get into town past the gnolls," you whisper to Dalris.

The bard signals her agreement with a quick nod and leans forward to help you paddle silently toward the fishing wharf. Just as you hoped, the lack of either moonlight or starlight allows you to move the small craft under the pier without being seen. Above your heads, the feet of the gnoll guards knock loose sand into your faces.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 13. If it is less, turn to 130.

31

"From what Thayne told us, we mustn't risk failing in our mission because of some unknown monster in Yellow Marsh," you tell Dalris. "The only thing we can do is face any guards in the road and somehow get safely past them into Saven."

As you reach the road, Dalris stares into the distance and says urgently, "Look!" But the two alert horsemen have already seen you and turned back toward you!

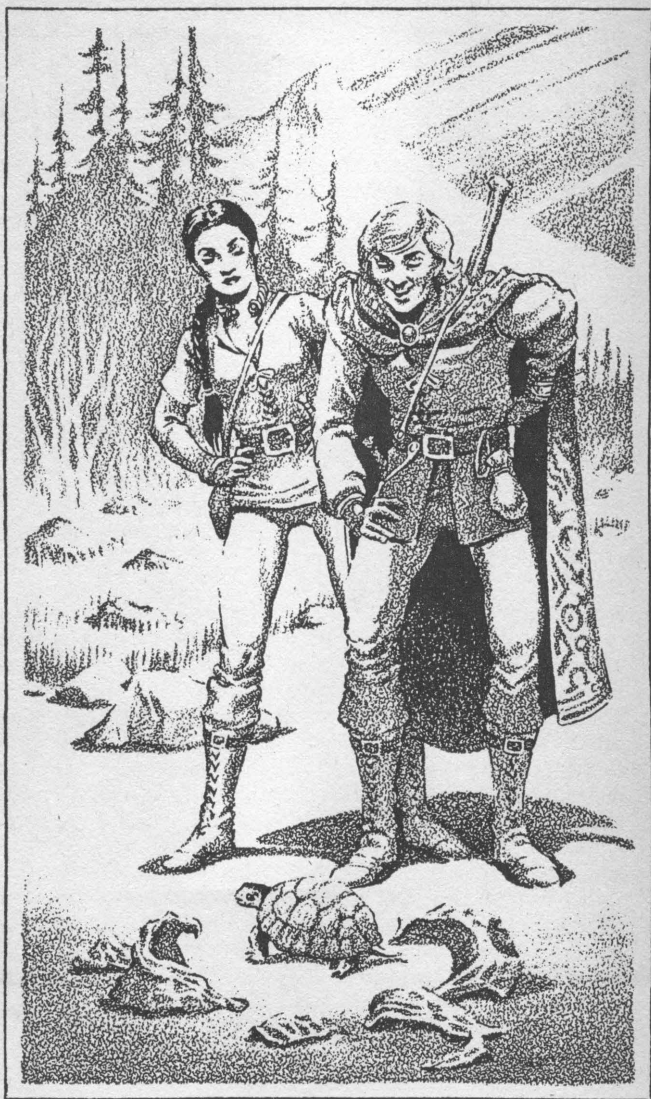
"Here they come!" Dalris exclaims. "Do we fight them (72) or try to bluff our way past them (107)?"

32

At the precise moment you utter the last word of the powerful enchantment, the paladin is enveloped in a greenish sheath of some opaque magical substance. At first it seems so thin that the warrior easily might tear it with his hands, but it hardens rapidly so that all signs of interior movement vanish. Then the long shell begins to wrinkle and darken, as if it were a pea pod shriveling and shrinking in the hot Tikandian sunlight.

"It's cracking!" you tell Dalris, who is standing in the road with a frown marring her beautifully tanned face.

"And you're already cracked!" she retorts, although you notice that her dark eyes are glued to the diminutive envelope to see what emerges. The enchanted shell finally collapses, leaving in the middle of the road a confused terrapin crouched and trembling with terror.



"Ha!" you exclaim, tossing a small pebble at the tortoise. It bounces off the polymorphed paladin's new 'armor' and frightens the creature so badly that it draws its head into its shell. "He won't be talking to anyone now!" you announce with glee.

"If you're finished demonstrating your father's magic, could we please get on with our mission?" Dalris asks acidly. You grin at her and step around the cowering tortoise to catch up with her.

"She's really thinking that you've wasted one of Landor's most powerful incantations when a gag would have worked almost as well." You scowl at the pseudodragon, then try to erase his depressing message from your mind as you follow the bard silently on the road to Saven. Turn to 100.

33

Just before the knight on the bay stallion reaches you, your feet slip on the clay surface of the road. You try to regain your balance, but it only makes your fall worse. Unable to stop, you slide under the stallion's flashing hooves. Mercifully, you never feel the full weight of the warhorse after an iron-shod hoof crushes your head. ✕

34

"I'm ready!" you tell Dalris. "Open the door!"

The bard nods and pushes on the small panel. The sound of angry voices suddenly fills the passage. You hurriedly check your preparations for your spell and slip silently into the sanctuary behind the huge chair. When Garn and Dalris have joined you, you stand erect to confront your old enemy.

Arno and the evil creature from the statue are still standing at the altar, letting their fanatical worshippers whip themselves into a murderous frenzy. Neither of them notices you until one of the corrupt paladins on the front pew shouts a warning.

"There they are! They're trying to kill Pazuzu and Grand Master Arno!" The mob quietens with incredible speed anticipating a signal from Arno or his terrible companion to tear you apart.

Your swarthy rival whirls around, smiling as he recognizes your face. "Ah, Carr. I rather thought it might be you! In fact, I imagined you'd appear sooner than this. And the daughter of Perth! Look, Pazuzu! The Archdruid of Kandia has sent his daughter for us to play with until we have the pleasure of his own company." He turns his amused glance on Pazuzu.

The hideous creature points a single finger at Dalris. In the candlelit sanctuary, the beam of violet light which streaks from his fingertip is breathtakingly beautiful. It envelops the bard's lithe figure, surrounding her like a radiant cocoon. The defiant scowl on Dalris's face melts, softening to a contented, lazy smile. You writhe in embarrassment as you watch—it's as if she were being bathed in warmth and a thousand sensual pleasures.

The bard's hand relaxes. She lowers her sword and begins to walk languidly, even seductively, toward the monster called Pazuzu.

"Fiend! What are you doing to her?" yells Garn, who leaps around you to grab Dalris's shoulders. The bard shakes off the paladin and reaches her arms toward Pazuzu. The look of rapture on her face magnifies her wild Kandian beauty, framed in the violet aura of the spell.

"Do something, Carr! She's spellbound!"

"Yes, Delling, please 'do something!'"

The paladin's plea and Arno's mocking dare tear you away from your helpless fascination with the change in Dalris. Your old rival is passing his hand across his own dark forehead and mumbling a word you don't understand.

If you've prepared an offensive spell or plan to use Fly, turn to 18. If you've chosen and cast a defensive spell—Armor or Protection from Evil—on yourself, turn to 29.

35

The yellow haze makes it difficult for you to decipher Landor's encoded scrawl. Just when you think you understand one of the words, the letters seem to move and you see that it's a different word entirely. You stammer and correct yourself a dozen times but finally slam the book shut in frustration.

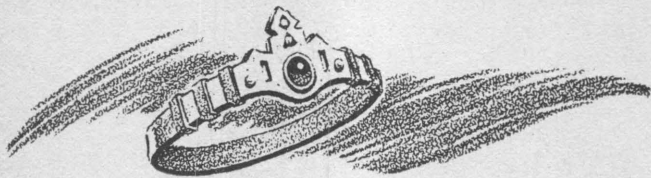
"It's no use," you murmur to Dalris and Rufyl. "You were right, Dalris. This is no time to play with advanced magic. I'd better stick to something I know. I've already wasted one of my father's best spells in this fog."

The bard raises an eyebrow, then frowns. "Let's just get on with it," she says. "You've wasted enough time tampering with things you don't understand." She draws her sword and turns away, as if to say she trusts her own skills with steel more than your dubious wizardry. Forlornly you wish that sometime she would encourage you.

"Do you have need of me, Master?"

Rufyl's gentle query soothes your injured pride, but only slightly. "Go on with Dalris," you order him. "I want to think quietly for a moment or two."

When the pseudodragon is beyond telepathic range, your mind races, concentrating upon your most powerful offensive spells. *I'll show her that my magic can be as useful as her sword*, you think determinedly. Turn to 27.



36

Reflexes you haven't used since you herded goats across the rocky crags of Seagate Island spring into action. Somehow you manage to maintain both your balance and your grip on the manticore's tail. You close your fingers on one of the creature's tail spikes, wrenching it free of the membrane that holds the quill-cluster.

"I've got it!" you shout, waving it in the air. "Kill this thing so I can let go of it!"

"That won't be necessary," says Dalris. You see her standing several yards away from you, her hands clenched in front of her face.

"Mignam flerol, lursip gravdam," she calls in the ancient spell language of aboriginal Kandian druids.

At your feet, the creepers of the forest floor start to writhe and lengthen, sending their tendrils up and over the manticore's heavy paws. The Entangle spell also causes the sturdy saplings of the thicket to bend together, their tops interlacing to form a domed cage over the huge beast. You release the monster's tail and squeeze through the tightening bars of living tree trunks. Dalris is waiting near the edge of the thicket beside a four-foot-high red dragon. Rufyl, your familiar, has returned to visibility.

"As you can see, I could have handled the beast without your help!" Dalris says icily. The bard's strict druid faith leads her to act as protector of all wild things, including ferocious man-eaters like the manticore. She objects to the use of magic against animals.

"I told you from the start we should have used my Magic Missiles to cripple that thing and take his spike before he died," you tell her. "Your Entangle spell might have trapped *me* in that cage with the manticore!"

"The two of you would have gotten along nicely," she mumbles stonily. "Can't you be content directing your obsession with magic toward your enemies without hunting helpless creatures for your experiments?"

"I'm tired of defending my father's incantations to you. He was a Kandian, and a proud one! His magic has its roots in the Bhukodian sorceries of your precious ancestors, and they weren't druids!"

You watch with amusement and joy as the bard's clear eyes sparkle with fury, bringing her wild beauty to life.

Dalris has heard your argument about her ancestors before, but it still has the impact you expect. The lithe woman turns away and bounds into the dense forest, leaving you and Rufyl on the trail to Wealwood.

"*Go after her,*" you command the pseudodragon. "*Her anger could make her careless and the manticore might have a mate nearby.*"

You seldom have to tell Rufyl anything twice. The intelligent familiar served your father for nearly fifty years before his death and knows telepathically when quick obedience is required. He has also befriended the outspoken Dalris and would do anything to protect her. The pseudo-

dragon's reddish outline begins to fade as he vanishes silently into the undergrowth after the bard. With a glance at the darkening sky, you hasten toward Wealwood, hoping to reach it before nightfall.

Turn to 46.

37

The trail leads inland and upward for several miles, taking you to a highland desert, a desolate region of scrub, broken boulders, and numerous fallen trees that rot where they lie. As you move through the darkness you see no sign of life other than cactus and desert grass.

"What a strange place!" exclaims Dalris. "I never knew there was a high desert on Seagate Island."

"Thayne mentioned it once," you tell the bard. "He called it 'Meldingrathwon'—the 'Graveyard of Trees.'"

"I dislike this place," Rufyl projects. "Can we leave?"

You smile at the pseudodragon's anxious snout and pat his scaly head. "It'll take us several days to reach Thayne's clan territory in the mountains, Rufyl. Try to relax."

Turn to 145.

38

You plunge your hand into one of the magical pockets of your cloak and grab the special trifold vial containing the powdered chalk, lampblack, and vermilion you need for the Friends spell, one of the first spells you ever learned. Turning your back to the boarding marines, you crouch under your cloak and daub the special mystical symbols in white, black, and red on your face.

"You there! What are you doing? Identify yourself!"

You rise as you whirl around to face the marine who's challenging you, smiling and waving your arms in a jester's fashion. "*Ulagmi!*" you reply, uttering the spellword as if it were your name. "We're players, sire! A poor Kandian lad and his lady, bound to make our fortune by song and dance in the markets of Saven!"

The marine is a paladin officer, the scarlet oak logs on his chest marking him as a Holy Knight of Blessed Dyan. His mouth seems to droop with the weight of his thick mous-

tache as he glowers and stares at the mystical symbols on your face and cloak.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **62**. If it is less, turn to **53**.

39

The roc blinks twice, watches the magical sand settle on its beak, then collapses with a crash at your feet.

"Now that's some spell!" Dalris exclaims. You thought she'd like this one—she prefers less violent incantations.

"Shh! I don't know how long my Sleep spell will keep him quiet, and he's more restless than most subjects would be," you mutter, pointing to the roc's twitching talons. You crouch over the unconscious monster's head, studying its breathing and wondering what to do next.

"Don't you have a way to remove the effects of your Polymorph Other spell?" Dalris asks in a whisper.

"The only spell I know that might reverse it is Dispel Magic," you reply. "The danger is that it might simply wake him up in the same form and we'd be back where we started. If the Polymorph Other spell had been mine, I'd have no doubts that it'd work, but with my father's formula, I just don't know."

"We don't have much of a choice, do we?"

The coolness in Dalris's voice tells you that she would never allow you to leave Rufyl in this condition, even if you wanted to. Shaking your head in grim silence, you raise your hands over the polymorphed pseudodragon's sleeping head and whisper an ancient elven spellword. "*Vyehdo!*" Turn to **146**.

40

Arno and Pazuzu are moving quickly toward the hidden sanctuary door when you slam it in their faces and mutter the single word, "*Kustaff*," which activates your Hold Portal spell. Then you turn in the dim secret passageway to follow Garn and Dalris.

Suddenly, the spellbound panel bursts open with a bright flash of energy, shattering your simple spell. The creature

called Pazuzu steps into the corridor.

“Did you think such childish magic would stop Pazuzu, Prince of Lower Aerial Kingdoms, whose allies include the mightiest dukes and daemons of Hell? Do you believe that you can best my loyal servant, Arno, who wears the Spider Queen’s crown? Know the wrath of Pazuzu, mortal!”

Desperately, you try to raise your hands to cast a spell, but the demon prince’s powerful mind generates a conical wave of psionic energy that slams into your defenseless brain with such stunning force that, mercifully, it knocks you unconscious before the hideous beast can reach you. ✘

41

“Take them!” growls the elder rider. “They’re not actors. They’re the Kandian spies we were warned about!”

Panic sweeps over you when you realize that your words have had no impact upon the ex-paladin. You dart for the forest, shouting at Dalris and Rufyl over your shoulder.

“Run! Get into the woods!”

The bard is already ahead of you, leaping like a graceful gazelle from the road into the thick brush, but the younger knight wheels his armored horse in front of her, cutting off your escape route. You whirl around, trying to run the other way, but the senior cavalier has already wedged his horse closer to hem you in.

“Stand where you are!” he orders. His battle lance is leveled inches from your chest. “Throw down your weapons!”

With the knight’s lance poised to kill you, your chances of escaping are slim unless you can distract him with a quick cantrip (6) or knock his lance aside with your magic staff (122). Then again, Rufyl is still invisible and might be able to help you escape (219).

42

The provincial highway to Saven is the most ancient road in Tikandia. For hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of years the sun-baked clay of its surface has been trampled by countless generations of human, demihuman, humanoid, and animal travelers. The three of you move along it at a fast but steady pace.

"We'd move a lot quicker with horses," Dalris muses.

"But without me!"

Rufyl's mental protest is accompanied by a vivid image of a miniature red dragon astride an armored warhorse. The pseudodragon's projected fantasy is so comical that you and the bard burst into tearful laughter, releasing the tension you've felt since Thayne's death.

"I fail to see the humor in my reluctance to ride one of those dangerous animals," your familiar thinks huffily. Just then, the distinctive sound of a snorting horse overrides Rufyl's mental conversation. The appropriateness of it makes you wonder fleetingly if it isn't part of the pseudodragon's daydream.

"I did not think that sound, Master," warns Rufyl.

"No, he didn't do it," mutters Dalris, freezing in her tracks. *"They did!"*

The bard stands till, staring ahead where two armored and mounted knights are rounding a bend in the highway. They rein in as they spot you in the road. The scarlet insignia of the Holy Order of Blessed Dyan, a pair of crossed oak logs wrapped in mistletoe, is emblazoned on their surcoats.

"They're paladins," Dalris murmurs. "Now we can see how accurate Thayne's information was about Archcleric Oram's Holy Guard having turned evil!"

At your side, Rufyl's scaly shape is already fading as your familiar uses his ability to disappear at will, even in the open. The two paladins spur their horses forward, giving you very little time to decide whether you should stand and confront them (24) or dart into the thick forest at the edge of the road to avoid their questions or a fight (54).



The several dozen well-armed marines lined up at the rail of the war galley appear too intimidating to handle, even with an offensive spell. "Let's avoid fighting them if we can," you tell Dalris. "The best way to handle a group that large is by gentler, persuasive magic."

"I know about 'white' and 'black' magic, but this is the first time I've ever heard of 'yellow' magic!" chides Dalris. "Being cooped up in that cabin for five years with your father's books has made you timid, Carr Delling!"

You start to protest her insinuations of cowardice, but merely shrug your shoulders and turn away from her sneering expression. As Dalris stomps away across the deck, to talk to her fishermen kinfolk, Rufyl asks in a quick thought, "*Why didn't you explain the limitations of your attack spells to her?*"

"*It's useless to say anything to her after she's made up her mind,*" you reply mentally. "*Besides, there's no time. I've got to decide on a spell and prepare it.*"

The invisible pseudodragon ceases telepathy, and you wonder if he has gone to soothe Dalris's disgust as he often does after your frequent arguments with her. Then the sound of a grappling hook slamming onto the deck near your feet jerks your mind back to the list of manipulative control spells you've learned over the past five years. The ones that appear to be most useful right now are Friends (38), Sleep (58), and Suggestion (74).

Be sure to mark the spell you choose off your Stats Card before turning to the section shown.

All the warnings you've had about what is happening to the paladins of Saven make you decide not to take any unnecessary risks that could jeopardize your mission. You glance at him coldly and remain silent.

The stranger studies you and Dalris carefully, paying particular attention to your clothing. "Your Kandian attire seems genuine enough, but your accent is not. And there's something quite peculiar about your cloak," he adds with a smile. "Do you deny having secret business in Saven?"

"Beware, Master," warns your telepathic spy. *"He knows that your cloak is enchanted and is testing you."*

If you're carrying the Sceptre of Bhukod, turn to **205**; if you're not, turn to **89**.

45

"There's a quick way to find out if Thayne's sources inside the academy knew what they were talking about," you tell them. "Let's use the front door. If Arno's friends have taken over the college, the sooner we know about it, the sooner we can do something about it."

"Wait, Carr!" warns Dalris. "After what we've seen in Saven, it'd be foolish not to expect a trap of some kind. You've learned a lot of magic in five years, but so has Arno. Can you check the door for magical traps?"

If you still have Detect Magic on your list, turn to **126**; if not, turn to **140**.

46

The fires of Wealwood are bright against the starless sky as you approach the archdruid's sacred grove. Most of the permanent residents of the settlement within the grove are servants and assistants to Dalris's father. The other inhabitants are ill and kinless Kandians who are staying with the archdruid until they're either healed or settled. It was in this beautiful setting that your father, the Archmage Landor, lived and worked for so many years.

"Magus Delling! Archdruid Perth is seeking you!"

Perth's manservant is standing outside the priest's great domed lodge of earth and logs, obviously keeping one eye out for you. You nod at the servant and duck through the main entrance of the beehive-shaped structure without waiting for him to accompany you into the familiar house. The archdruid's own quarters are to the left of the entry chamber, through a doorway guarded with enchanted ivy and sacred mistletoe. Perth's towering figure, wrapped in a hand-woven woolen robe, is standing over a figure seated at the long banquet table.

"Ah, there's my tribal mage!" the archdruid exclaims. "Come and see who's here, Carr!"

Then you recognize Perth's visitor instantly—and with great pleasure. His curly auburn hair and scraggly beard, bequests of some remote human ancestor, still seem almost comical against the smooth elven skin of his mother's race. Thayne was your father's student and friend before you were born. It was he who introduced you to magic five years ago, when you recovered the famed Bhukodian sceptre from the lair of the crypt taling beneath the academy of magic your father had founded on Seagate Island.

Thayne's eyes shine with quiet joy when he recognizes you and rises. "You're still uglier than any elf ought to be," you joke, embracing your teacher's leather-clad shoulders. Beneath the supple russet doeskin, Thayne's arms are sinewy and hard—the arms of a fighter as well as a woodland sorcerer. Elven races age much more slowly than humans do, and the only change you see in Thayne's face is a hardening of the facial muscles around his eyes.

"Half a decade has made you a man . . . but a pale one," says the elf, studying you. "Magic has taken its toll, as it did with your father. There are shadows in your face that can come only from long hours of meddling with dangerous secrets. Where's the mountain lad I knew on Seagate?"

"He hasn't learned to balance knowledge with wisdom."

You hadn't noticed Dalris's entrance because of your surprise at seeing Thayne. The bard's voice is calmer and cooler than when you left her with the manticore, and you suppose that Rufyl and she have had a mental "talk." Thayne's expression softens as Dalris's hand touches his bearded cheek with affection.

"At least you haven't changed! You're still . . ."

"We can reminisce later," Perth, her father, interrupts. "Tell Carr of the evils that now infest his father's academy, Thayne." You glance worriedly at Perth as you sit at the large table. Thayne quaffs a long draught of the black Kandian mead from his earthenware mug and begins his tale.

Turn to 68.

47

"Let me handle it," demands Dalris. "Don't squash it!" You continue to use your enchanted staff, but just to keep

the tiny but ferocious beast at bay. Dalris peremptorily brushes your staff aside and crouches close to the ground between you and the charging mouse. Her druid's torc flares, enchanting her throat so that animals will understand her words.

"Stop, friend," she says softly. The irate rodent stops and twitches its tail while smelling her face. "Tell me what form you had before this . . . man used his magic on you."

"That will not be necessary, Dalris, daughter of Perth. I shall show you!"

The mouse's telepathic reply appears in all of your brains instantly, with much more clarity than Rufyl's mental messages do. The three of you stand stunned as the field-mouse's tiny figure begins to dissolve into a yellowish, watery mass that suddenly expands into a towering fountain above you. The cylinder of liquid swirls, forming appendages which quickly assume the shapes of a head and the limbs of some giant humanoid creature.

"What is it?" you yell, stepping back from the whirling fountain to avoid being splashed by its magical spray. The bard does not answer until she can see the monster's gleaming hairless scalp and ancient clothing.

"I think it's a marid," she says finally, "a creature seldom found in our world, and only near the seacoast. Some sages believe they're even more powerful than genies or efreet's."

"You've learned your magic lore well, bard, but my race is far more ancient than those of genies or efreet's. Your father knew us, Carr Delling, long before he dwelt among the Kandians." The magical creature extends one huge finger toward Rufyl, but, surprisingly, the pseudodragon seems unworried. Turn to 133.

48

"We need something really impressive to stop a marine galley," you tell Dalris. "One of my father's best lesser spells is Lightning Bolt."

Before Dalris can respond with her usual foreboding comments about the dangers of magic, you take the required components from your colorful, capacious cloak. To cast the powerful Lightning Bolt spell you must rub a crystal rod

with a swatch of fur until the static energy crackles and pops, spreading into your arms.

You stand at the rail, focusing your thoughts upon the bow of the galley. You extend the clear crystal rod toward the marine vessel. Then you rub it rapidly with a small patch of rabbit fur until the air crackles and the hair on your arm and head rises. At the moment of greatest intensity, you murmur the powerful Elvish spellword, "*Slikkit!*"

You've picked a single spot on the vessel's bow, a patch of barnacle scars right at the waterline, as a target for the concentrated lightning. At the instant the word is pronounced, a jagged bolt of blue-white energy springs from the tip of the crystal rod and shoots across the water between the two vessels. It strikes the galley with a great cracking boom, like the thunder of a storm.

"Look at that!" cries Dalris. "That's some spell!"

Seawater is gushing into the gaping hole produced by your bolt of magical lightning. The armor-clad marine knights are screaming in great confusion. Some, ignoring the great weight they carry, dive into the bay. It will be



only a matter of minutes before their armored vessel sinks. Two large lifeboats are quickly dropped into the water to rescue those swimmers who remain afloat.

"We'd better bear for the shore, somewhere away from the harbor," you tell Dalris. "Warn your kinfolk running this boat that they'll have to just drop us and then sail away from here as fast as they can."

Turn to 159.

49

The marines' galley is knifing through the dark water of Saven Bay so quickly that your mind wanders from the spells locked in your brain. "Why waste a spell now when we might need it much more later on?" you mutter to Dalris as she joins you at the rail.

The bard's eyes narrow pensively as she stares at the row of polished spearpoints lined up along the galley's port side, each one held by a marine wearing red insignia.

"I doubt if a spell would do much good against that crowd, anyway," says Dalris. She signals to one of the fishermen to strike the single sail and drop anchor. The fishing scow has barely stopped drifting when the battle galley's crew hurl their grappling hooks onto the deck and begin pulling their vessel closer to yours.

"They're acting more like pirates than paladins!" Dalris whispers, as the marines set planks and begin to swarm across. Without a word, they start searching every inch of the small vessel. The fishermen, whose boat you've endangered, watch the search in silence.

"Identify yourselves in the name of Oram, Archcleric of Saven! Are you smugglers or spies?"

You turn from Dalris to see the gleaming tip of a sword leveled at your stomach. Its owner is a marine paladin wearing helmet and breastplate, bearing the scarlet crossed oak logs of the Holy Knights of Dyan on his surcoat. You glance at Dalris, who's waiting for you to reply.

"Players, milord!" you blurt. "Simple jongleurs from the Kandian coast, come to sing and play for the market crowds at Saven. Hoping to trade stories and songs for a few brass coins and city sights."

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 18 or less, turn to **53**. If it is more than 18, turn to **62**.

50

Dalris's harsh warning reminds you of your promise not to kill the manticore just for a component of a magic spell. The bard is risking her own life by using the Charm Mammal spell on the man-eating beast. But it was her choice: she opposed your original plan to cripple the monster and take a quill before it died.

"Let's leave it! We can try again when your spell is stronger!"

The bard nods without looking at you and begins to back away from the charmed monster.

"Watch out! It's breaking free!"

Rufyl's voiceless message screams in your brain at the moment the manticore's bearded human face wrinkles and casts off the effects of Dalris's enchantment. You swing your hands back to position for your Magic Missile spell and mutter a single word in ancient Elvish. *"Ruspal!"*

Three oval disks of energy appear instantly at the fingertips of each hand and form themselves into six bullets of blinding yellow light. The magical torpedoes streak from your hands past Dalris toward the manticore's chest.

Cross Magic Missile from your spell list, then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **60**. If it is less, turn to **28**.

51

Without hesitating, you aim both hands at the monstrous wrist, your thumbs joined in the correct position for the Burning Hands spell.

"Pfoebrauknajt!" you shout.

Jets of flame spurt from your fingertips, streaking toward the giant arm. Before the searing fountain of fire reaches its target, it explodes in a burst of steam as it is intercepted by an even stronger jet of water. You squint, disbelieving, as a fine spray of saltwater falls around you. Then a powerful voice infiltrates your brain. Turn to **119**.

The fine sand sparkles in the afternoon sun, then acquires an ethereal blue glow that grows as you continue to make the Sleep spellsound. Four of the marines collapse instantly in a comatose slumber at your feet.

The paladin officer leaps back at the first sign of trouble. "You're a sorcerer!" he exclaims, drawing his polished cutlass. You tense your muscles and raise your enchanted quarterstaff, preparing to meet the officer's attack, but it never comes. Instead, he waves his gleaming blade and three things happen almost simultaneously—you realize he's signaling to someone, you look up and see archers positioned in the galley's shrouds above you, and you realize that the Sleep spell wasn't the one to use.

"Cut him down, men! Him and his . . ."

Dalris's dagger is quicker than the marine's tongue. The bard lunges just once, finding her mark at the paladin's throat. Then she bounds for the rail.

"Jump!" she calls. "It's our only chance!"

You take a step toward her just as the air fills with the harsh sound of crossbow releases and the ominous whistling noise of their deadly missiles. One of them tears into your shoulder. As you stare down at the wound, you miss the sight of another one heading toward your head. ✕

"Take care, Master! He doesn't believe you!"

Rufyl's telepathic warning comes just as the sneering marine officer parts your cloak with the tip of his sword. You whip your magic quarterstaff forward, muttering its Kandian command words: "*Trope gahn!*"

The enchanted weapon's length telescopes outward with a flare of rose-tinted light just as it strikes the marine's sword arm and knocks his blade to the deck.

Dalris springs into the action, drawing her shortsword and standing with her back to yours.

"They're no minstrels! Shoot them, archers!" shouts the officer as he clutches his broken wrist.

"ABOVE! ABOVE! IN TH . . . AAAIIE!"

Rufyl's cry of panic and anguish streaks into your mind

just as the ominous whooosh of crossbow quarrels reaches your ears. There's a thud beside you as the pseudodragon's small invisible body collapses onto the deck. It begins to reappear, with two feathered bolts protruding from his scaly neck and chest.

There's no time to mourn because Dalris makes a desperate cry, "In the galley's shrouds, Carr! Look out!"

But it's too late. Your body is riddled with dozens of crossbow shafts, and your face slams into the filthy timbers of the deck. ☩



54

"Quick! Into the forest!" you exclaim, darting off the road into the dense wilderness at its edge. Dalris and Rufyl are only a few steps behind you when you dodge around a massive tree and freeze, out of sight of the riders. Dalris seems to almost disappear against the trunk of a nearby tree. The only sign of Rufyl is the faintest impression of clawed reptilian feet on the leaf-covered forest floor.

The thundering hooves of the heavy warhorses shake the ground as the two riders gallop to the spot where you left the road. The armored chargers paw at the hard clay and snort as their masters rein them to an abrupt halt.

"Here's where they entered the forest, Sir Harral!" calls a young knight. "Do you want to go after them?"

"Let them go," says the other in a tired but commanding voice. "That's old Perth's land in there, and the growth is too thick for horses. Anyhow, you saw that gaudy robe. We've got better things to do than chase Kandian natives through the woods. If they're headed for Saven, we'll get them, somewhere along the road."

With that, the leader of the pair wheels his mount and heads it back toward Saven. The younger one gives a final menacing glance in your direction, then follows his commander at a full gallop.

"Now what?" Dalris asks, shattering the uneasy stillness as the hoofbeats diminish in the distance. "Would you rather confront monsters in Yellow Marsh or evil paladin guards along the road?"

If you decide to enter the legendary Yellow Marsh, turn to **157**. If you'd rather take your chances with the armored knights, turn to **31**.

55

"I'll need the hollyphant-skin parcel I gave you at the Moonstar Tavern," you tell the paladin. "I couldn't tell you then, but I will now. It's the Sceptre of Bhukod."

"The Sceptre of Bhukod!" Garn exclaims. "Here? In my simple lodgings?" The paladin makes a holy circle around his heart and closes his eyes for a brief prayer. "If I had known what it was, I would never have suggested that . . ."

"Yes, Garn!" you stifle his awestruck apologies. "We need to be going in order to reach Seagate by morning. If you'll just give me the sceptre, it'll be out of your 'simple lodgings' and we'll be on our way!"

Turn to **106**.

56

"Tell us the nature of Arno's power," you instruct the marid. "If we know what we're fighting, then we can decide how best to fight it."

"Perhaps that is so," says Shanif. "Or you might choose not to fight it at all. Do you know how to fight a demon prince, Carr Delling?"

The marid's frightening question makes the hair on your scalp prickle. "A demon?" you cry. "Arno has a real demon on his side?"

"Not just any demon, but one who calls himself the Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms," Shanif answers ominously. "His Kandian name is Pazuzeus, but he is known by other names in other languages. Prince Pazuzeus is on close terms with some of the most powerful devils of the lower planes. His superhuman bodyguards include succubi and lesser demons, but they are seldom needed because of his great magical and psionic powers."

Both you and Dalris are too stunned to speak for a moment. Finally you stammer, "Wh-what does this Pazuzeus look like?"

"That is a different question, Carr Delling, but I will allow it. The answer is that Pazuzeus can take almost any physical form he chooses. He often prefers to have wings, though he certainly has no need of them to fly."

"How does Arno manage to control such a powerful creature?" you demand. "And how is he using the demon to manipulate the archcleric's paladins?"

Turn to 178.

57

"Let's just sail into Freeton as if we're a small merchant ship and worry about the guards when we get there."

"You heard the man," the vessel's master tells his small crew. "Set your course for Freeton."

The port's harbor lights are bright against the moonless sky when the crew drops anchor in the bay. You study the milling figures on the piers through the captain's spyglass.

"Those are gnolls!" you exclaim. "They're all over the wharf! They must have broken out of their reservation in the bogs."

"That's what Thayne told us," Dalris reminds you, "but they didn't have to escape from the reservation—the Knights of Dyan let them go!"

"This is incredible!" you exclaim as you study the bestial watchmen roaming the piers. Their huge bodies resemble two-legged hyenas in tattered fur clothing and shabby sweat-stained leather armor. Adding to their menacing appearance are heavy iron weapons.

While you climb from the fishing boat into a tiny dinghy with Dalris and Rufyl, you debate whether to slip past the gnoll guards (30) or confront them openly (144).

58

The marines are already swinging onto your deck and hauling on the grappling lines to bring your boat closer to their galley. You gather the deceptively thin cloak around you and fish for the vial of sand used for your Sleep spell.

“Get ready to attack them when they fall,” you whisper to Dalris and Rufyl.

You walk silently toward the leader of the boarding party, a heavy man wearing the bright red crossed-oak-logs insignia of the archcleric’s paladin guards.

“Why have you boarded our friend’s vessel?” you demand, with mock anger in your voice. “Since when do holy paladins commit acts of piracy on the open sea?”

The marine knight jerks his head toward you and calls the boarding crew to his side. “Did you hear, men? This Kandian beggar in the cape is calling us ‘pirates!’”

The officer’s subordinates chuckle, and toss a few common insults at you. You pretend to be offended by the typical phrases used by prejudiced Savenians, such as ‘native bumpkin’ and ‘aboriginal trash,’ all the while surreptitiously opening the vial of sand. You let the taunts mount until the marines’ faces are red with excitement. Then you whip your hand out and shower them all with the fine sand as you pronounce the “Shhhhh” spellsound.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to **52**. If it is 23 or less, turn to **66**.

59

In your haste to escape the living blob of mud rising from the mire at the marid’s feet, you lose your footing and fall face forward into the stinking ooze. Just as you turn your head to see if the strange creature is following you, a glob of the monster’s own gooey mass strikes you in the face.

The force of the mudman’s attack drives you deeper into the ooze, making it impossible to breathe! In panic, you attempt to wipe the yellow muck from your mouth and nostrils, but its consistency is like paste. Your chest gives convulsive heaves as your brain tries desperately to make you breathe, only to make it more difficult.

“*Don’t try to breathe!*” Rufyl shrieks in your head. He’s trying to tell you something else, but your oxygen-deprived brain can’t follow the meaning. You sink into a darkness even thicker than the mudman’s gooey missile. . . .

You awaken to a consciousness of water soaking you. As

you open one eye, you see Dalris leaning over you. Her worried expression changes to one of relief mixed with irritation.

"Perhaps you'd better stick to magic," she says with her dark eyebrows furrowed. "You certainly don't want to depend upon your mountain boy's agility any more. If it hadn't been for Shanif's quick reflexes and his magical water, you'd still be trying to breathe solid mud!"

You suddenly remember the marid, and you turn to where Rufyl, in glorious full color, is sitting in front of the huge monster who not only saved your life but knew who you are! Turn to 133.

60

The ground shakes when the huge beast collapses at Dalris's feet. Your magic missiles have slammed into the manticore's body with such explosive force that there's very little left of the monster's chest. The bearded humanoid face twitches twice, then its eyelids droop, forever.

"You killed it! Now you can't even use one of its quills for your precious spell! What waste!"

Dalris's cheeks are flushed with anger and hurt. The bard is a serious druid who takes the life of each creature—good or evil—seriously.

"Its tail was twitching!" you insist to the irate bard. "Your spell was weakening and you know it! That thing would have ripped you to pieces in seconds if I hadn't used the magic missiles."

"Master Carr is correct, Dalris. The manticore was breaking free of your enchantment when he killed it."

Rufyl's telepathed thought appears in both your brains at the same time, a trick the pseudodragon uses sometimes to mediate your stormy relationship with the powerful Kandian bard. Now that the manticore is dead, the little familiar is permitting his true color and shape to reappear between you and Dalris.

"But he didn't know that!" she exclaims.

"Perhaps not, but it was a good guess—and it saved your life!" you protest, reaching for her leather-clad arm.

"Keep your killer's hands away from me!" she warns, stepping away from you, tears in her eyes. She walks to the

manticore's carcass and raises her hands and her head to the darkening sky in silent prayer.

"She's calling upon her patron goddess, Brigit, to receive the spirit of the manticore," Rufyl tells you silently.

You've seen her meditate before and know that it may be hours before she returns to Wealwood, her father's sacred grove. Satisfied that Rufyl's telepathic skills will guard her while she composes poetic prayers to her favorite goddess, you decide to leave them and return to Wealwood.

"I know what she's doing!" you mentally reply to the pseudodragon. *"Stay with her in case that thing had a friend. Fetch me if there's trouble. I'm going back to the grove."*

Turn to 46

61

You're not entirely sure of the effects of the four spells in your traveling spellbook. Fumbling inside the magical pockets of your cloak, you remove the small spellbook and re-read just the headings of each spell.

"What are you doing, Carr?"

You glance from your spellbook toward the sound of Dalris's impatient voice. You can barely see her standing several yards ahead of you in the thick fog.

"I'm preparing a more powerful spell than the ones I already know," you murmur. *"Rufyl sensed something dangerous and I'm not taking any chances."*

"You're taking worse chances by playing with untested magic," she warns. *"I'm going on, with or without you."*

"Wait, Dalris!" you whisper. *"At least take Rufyl with you! Go stay with her, Rufyl,"* you command the familiar. The pseudodragon expresses reluctance to leave you, but he obeys you. The bard flashes a look of contempt at you and your precious spellbook before she and Rufyl disappear into the fog.

If you have a manticore's tail quill, you may use Enchant an Item (167) on your poison darts. You could also use Contact Other Plane (136), or Polymorph Other, either on the unseen monster (150) or on one of your companions (120). Be sure to cross the spell chosen from your list.

“Jongleurs? Did you hear that, man? This native gentleman says that he and his comely girlfriend are minstrels. This is a showboat, not a smugglers’ scow!”

The boarding party breaks into laughter, filling the air with crude jokes about actors and actresses. You glance at Dalris, who purses her lips in amusement.

“Aye, you handsome marines!” she shouts, getting into the role you thrust upon her. “And if you’ll land us at Saven, we’ll give you a show you’ll never forget!”

The bawdy laughter and cheers of approval grow even louder as Dalris cocks her head at the nearest marines and smiles coquettishly.

If they could only see the ice behind those promising embers! you think.

“What ice? And I don’t see any fire, either!”

Rufyl’s confused query pops into your head, reminding you that the pseudodragon eavesdrops on every thought within his telepathic range.

“Just a joke, Rufyl,” you reply mentally, “a bad one, perhaps, but a joke nevertheless. The marines are going to take us the rest of the way to Saven. Stay invisible and remain at my side until I tell you it’s safe to reappear.”

Your hasty explanation satisfies the familiar’s boundless curiosity, at least for the moment. You nod to Dalris, who is still flirting mildly with the three marines who are gallantly helping her cross the hastily positioned gangplank to their galley. You notice that she manages to keep the teasing on a safe level by switching from one man to another and even by pitting them against each other when it seems necessary.

As you and Rufyl follow them to the other ship, Dalris produces a small polished flute from her jerkin and begins to play a jaunty sailor’s ditty. Two of the armed marines begin to dance with each other, arm-in-arm, producing even louder guffaws from their comrades. You sit on a pile of hemp to watch the show, confident that Dalris’s bardic skills will see you safely into Saven.

The Kandian bard sings, dances, plays, and frolics for the entire short voyage. Her energy is so high that it almost

exhausts you just to watch her. By the time the ship drops anchor in Saven Harbor, the marines are in fine spirits and are looking moon-eyed at Dalris.

They put you both—and, unknowingly, Rufyl—in a small boat and row you to the busy dock of Tikandia's largest port. As soon as they leave you standing on the pier, Dalris, still smiling and waving at the marines, mutters under her breath, "Remind me not to let you invent a cover story next time. I had to do all the work because you have the acting skills of a lamppost!"

"You were wonderful!" you exclaim.

"I'm a professional bard," she replies coolly. "It was easy. Now let's find the cathedral and see if we can spot this old rival of yours."

Dalris turns and heads for the street at the end of the pier. You watch her long black braid dance lightly against the tight leather of her trousers and smile softly before following her haughty but captivating figure. Turn to **100**.

63

For the first time in years since you were a raw novice, the familiar incantation doesn't work. You can't explain it, but the two riders are totally unaffected by one of your most reliable spells!

"We'll have to fight them, Dalris!" you shout. Before the two paladins can react, you whip the enchanted quarter-staff from beneath your robe and meet their charge.

Roll 2 dice and add the results to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **200**. If it is less, turn to **33**.

64

The guard's beefy face scowls suddenly, and his eyes widen. Before you have a chance to realize that he has somehow seen through your disguise, he's waving his sword at you.

"Take the infidels! They've come to desecrate the sanctuary of Pazuzu! Kill them!" he screams to the crowd around you.

You try to reach into one of the enchanted pockets of your cloak for a spell component, but rough hands grab your

arms and twist them painfully behind your back.

"They're paladins!" Dalris yells. She, too, is trying to fight off the clutching hands of the angry mob so that she can reach her sword. In doing so, she pulls one assailant's cloak away from his body. By the light of the torch at the sanctuary door, you can see the scarlet crossed logs of the Order of Dyan adorning his suit of mail.

"Let her go!" you scream. "Rufyl! Help Dalris!"

"I can't reach her, Master!"

You try to jerk yourself away from the grasp of the veteran warriors who are pressing you to the ground, but your legs buckle under their weight. Then your back slams into the cobblestones, exploding the air from your lungs. Before you can draw another breath, the blades of the perverted paladins put an end to both your hopeless struggling and your questions about the mysterious entity the guard called "Pazuzu." ✕



65

"*Trope gahn*," you murmur, issuing the staff's elven command word. The enchanted weapon flares with its pinkish aura, catching your assailants off guard, but only for a moment. The eldest of the three is an experienced paladin who does not let the sight of a magical item's dweomer distract him for more than an instant.

"Strike the infidel!" he commands, thrusting his torch into your face.

You swing the staff around to ward off the flaming brand but misjudge your distance from the wall at your back. Your elbow slams into the hard stone surface with such force that you drop the enchanted quarterstaff!

“Get them, Rufyl!” you shout, hoping to divert their attention. You’ll never know if the distraction worked, because two of the swords sever your spinal cord while you’re bent over to retrieve your weapon. ✘

66

Before you can finish the spellword for your Sleep spell, the paladin officer swings the handguard of his cutlass into your face, shattering your jaw and several teeth.

“Take the girl!” he commands the marines.

Dalris springs away, drawing her sword, but the seafighters swarm over her, wresting the weapon from her. You try to mumble through your bleeding mouth, but the paladin immediately gags you with a rope of some kind.

“*Master!*” Rufyl’s anguished cry mingles with your own pain, which the telepathic beast has felt. The intelligent pseudodragon is panicking, losing his protective lack of color. His dusky red body suddenly appears amid the armed marines, tail stinger poised and ready to strike like a cornered scorpion’s.

“A RED DRAGON!” someone shrieks.

“Kill the thing before it destroys us all!”

“And the sorcerers who were smuggling it into Saven!”

The marines pounce upon your familiar’s small body, hacking and stabbing in a frenzied slaughter. You strain against the ropes that hold you, but the paladin’s cutlass puts an end to your frenzy, forever. ✘

67

“Let’s mingle with the worshippers and get inside the cathedral before it closes,” you urge Dalris. “We can scout out the safest way to come back later, if nothing else.”

The bard glances both ways in the darkening street and then raises the hood of her cape. You do the same with yours, although its brightly colored mystical symbols undermine the illusion of a devout pilgrim at Blessed Dyan’s shrine. Dalris frowns at your shortcomings as a thief, then lowers her head and steps into the street.

The front of the cathedral is thronged with the devout. You wedge yourselves among them and begin inching your

way with the crowd toward the vestibule. Rufyl squeezes his body between yours and the bard's so that no one will fall over an invisible pseudodragon in the dark. There are no torches on the street, so your flimsy disguise isn't noticed in the darkness until you reach the steps.

"Who are you?" demands a sturdy guard at the top of the cathedral steps, just outside the vestibule. He's a paladin of low rank, judging from his youth and the new insignia on his surcoat. Some pilgrims pause with you but soon see that you and Dalris are the objects of the guard's challenge, and they resume their steady crush toward the door.

"Worshippers, good sire," you respond in a thick Kandian accent, "pilgrims from the eastern coast."

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **91**. If it is less, turn to **64**.

68

"After Beldon's destruction, we hoped that Haslum would take over your father's academy and govern it as Lantor himself would have wished," Thayne begins.

"Who's Haslum?" asks Dalris.

"The college's archivist," Thayne replies. "Keeper of Scrolls is a coveted position among magic-users."

"No one knows the archives better than Haslum," you interject. "Wasn't he chosen to take Beldon's place?"

"Haslum vanished mysteriously nearly a year ago," says Thayne. "My sources inside the academy report that he was dabbling in something far beyond his skills. Judging by the great evil that has befallen us in recent months, I think he may have used a Gate spell to summon a demon."

"Haslum wouldn't be that careless!" you object. "Caution is his middle name around scrolls. Besides, I doubt if there was anything in the archives he hadn't already played with. As for a Gate spell, I've seen very little mention in my father's books about summoning demons. Exactly what is this 'great evil' you and Perth mentioned? What's going on in the academy, anyway?"

The elf's frown deepens. "Do you remember a slight, very dark student? Beldon's senior novice?"

“Arno!” you cry. You vividly remember the somber and malicious advanced student from your brief stay at College Arcane after recovering the Sceptre of Bhukod and before you came to Wealwood. Arno was your greatest rival. “What does he have to do with these things?”

Thayne drains the large tankard and signals a servant to bring more of the potent mead. When the servant leaves the archdruid’s lodge, the elf leans forward and whispers.

“The situation is graver than you know. The paladins have left their guard posts in the marshes, thus freeing the monsters they were guarding. Those evil creatures now control all of Seagate’s ports, including Freeton. I had to sneak through their barricades to leave the island.”

Thayne’s tale sends chills through you. The strategic position of Seagate Island in the straits called Pirates’ Alley could allow the hordes of bloodthirsty humanoids such as gnolls and orcs to blockade the continent of Tikan-dia’s main port of Saven! Even more disturbing is the news of the paladins’ desertion of their posts in the swamps. The Knights of Blessed Dyan would never have surrendered their position willingly!

“What does Arno have to do with all of this?” you demand, sensing occult designs behind these events.

“We believe that Arno has discovered a source of evil magical power as great as that of the Bhukodian sceptre,” Thayne whispers ominously, “and that he’s somehow using that power to control the paladin guards. Even now, Arno is at the cathedral in Saven, urging the archcleric to move the Holy Guard against your Kandian tribes!”

“How can that be?” cries Dalris. “The Knights of Dyan derive the magical essence of their paladinhood from their gods of lawful good.”

“That’s why I’ve come to fetch Carr,” Thayne answers. “The evil that Arno has summoned to Seagate is more powerful than Archcleric Oram’s gods. Carr, you’ve got to use the Sceptre of Bhukod against this diabolical force! Haslum tried to combat Arno’s designs and he vanished in the attempt. Come back with me, Carr, and wield the sceptre against the evil Arno in your father’s name.”

“Why go to Seagate?” Perth interrupts. “The evil has

already spread to the Tikandian mainland. Carr, you must go to Saven and confront this Arno with the sceptre. Such evil must not be allowed to grow another day.”

You remain silent for a long time. Both Perth and Thayne are right in different ways, but you have learned something they don't know about the Sceptre of Bhukod. You haven't had an opportunity to report your shocking discovery to anyone, and now you must reveal it at the worst possible time! Turn to 103.

69

It's nearly morning before Wendel finishes his tale, which is even more depressing than Thayne's version. Since arriving in Delmer nearly a month ago, the vicious gnolls have imposed a strict curfew on the entire village. The old cleric has heard that Arno's evil horde is everywhere on the island, including College Arcane. No one may leave the island without permission from the renegade paladins who serve as leaders of the army of evil humanoids.

“How can that be?” you cry. “Paladins are sworn to defend virtuous causes to the death, and to fight evil in all its forms. How could Arno have perverted so many dedicated and powerful fighters?”

“I wish I could answer that question for myself, but I can't. I always assumed that paladins would forfeit their special clerical powers when they shifted their allegiances from good to evil designs, but . . . I was wrong.”

“What kinds of powers do they have?” asks Dalris.

“It is as if every clerical spell possessed by the senior paladins has been reversed in its effects,” Wendel says sadly. “Cure Wounds now means Inflict Wounds and Detect Evil has become Detect Good. We live in fear on Seagate Island and now you must share it with us.”

“What do you mean?” you demand.

“I mean that it may be impossible for you to leave, and fatal for you to fight these monsters. Arno, or the power behind him, has cast a permanent Detect Magic spell on every port on Seagate Island. Any attempt you make to escape the island or to fight this horde will be discovered instantly.”

"I won't accept that!" you tell Wendel. "I won't rest until I stop Arno from winning all of Tikandia!"

"And neither will my Kandian people," adds Dalris. "The descendants of the Bhukodian sorcerer-kings are not that easily defeated!"

Wendel smiles understandingly and nods. "I hope you're right, daughter of Perth—for all our sakes. Yet for now, I fear your mission must end without success. Perhaps someday in the future . . ." ✕

70

You stand and face the hungry roc, raising your hands in the proper position to cast your Dispel Magic spell. The huge winged creature squawks and cranes its neck toward you.

"*Vyehdo!*"

Cross Dispel Magic off your spell list and continue below.

The High Elvish phrase echoes in the dank wilderness of the desolate swamp. Moments later, a yellowish-green aura seems to drop from the sulfurous air on top of the polymorphed pseudodragon's giant shape. It hardens into a transparent film at first, then into an opaque envelope that bulges with the roc's struggling figure.

Dalris rises to her feet beside you. "Is it shrinking, or am I imagining things?" she asks with excitement.

"It's working!" you tell her joyfully.

The outer surface turns dark and hardens so that you can no longer detect the monster's thrashing talons and beak as they try to tear it. The enchanted casing begins to wrinkle as it shrinks, resembling a sun-dried pea pod, until it's a four-foot-high amorphous lump.

"Why's it cracking?" asks Dalris anxiously.

"It's supposed to," you reply. You watch the hairline fractures streak along the surface of the envelope, following the contours of the wrinkles. Suddenly the outer shell shatters and falls away, leaving Rufyl's scaly red figure curled in a ball on the muddy ground. The familiar blinks his eyes and raises his small dragon head. You sigh happily.

"Where are we?" he thinks to both of you. "I don't remember anything."

“Good!” you tell the pseudodragon. “If I were you, I’d keep it that way. There are some things you’d be better off forgetting.”

“We’re in Yellow Marsh, Rufyl,” says Dalris, “and night-fall is only a few hours away. We have to try to reach the coastal road so that we can get to Saven tonight.”

Your familiar’s thoughts suddenly are colored by a rush of fearful emotions. The little creature’s scales begin to take on the ochre hue of the sulfurous mud, making him almost invisible. *“Please hurry, Master. We don’t want to be in the swamp after dark. Some of the deadliest predators in Tikandia prowl at night. Landor himself said so.”*

Turn to 157.



71

At the instant you mutter the last word of the spell, Dalris’s body arches in the monster’s grasp. The bard’s chest swells so suddenly that the yellowish fingers open, dropping the transforming body to the bare ground. You watch in horror as, with a hideous rending noise, Dalris’s beautiful form splits into a shattered, bloodless shell.

The towering thing that emerges from the bard’s carcass has a horned, batrachian head with a spiny carapace extending to the tip of its switching tail. You watch it rise on its hind feet, carrying its cavernous maw at least thirty feet above your head. It is filled with sharp, pointed teeth, each one nearly a foot long.

“A tarrasque! You turned Dalris into a tarrasque!”

Rufyl’s telepathic screech rips into your brain only seconds before the pseudodragon flees through the barren bog behind you, headed for the forest. “Rufyl! Come back!” you shout, but the terrified familiar vanishes into the fog.

“He will not return! You’ve unleashed a terrible monster upon your people, son of Landor! Within a week, the tarrasque will ravage Archdruid Perth’s entire domain. Soon all

of Wealwood will be as you see here, barren and desolate, destroyed by Perth's own daughter in the form you summoned with your bumbling magic!"

You try to spot the speaker of the message that thunders directly into your brain, but you catch only a fleeting glimpse of the giant humanoid hand dissolving into a yellow mist and blending with the fog. The tarrasque's huge forepaws swipe the haze where the hand had been, only to fan the stinking yellow fumes. Then the horrible creature turns toward you with saliva dripping from its lipless mouth and fangs. It's hungry. ✘

72

"All we can do is attack!" you reply. "You take the one on the black horse, and I'll get the other one. Rufyl, you try to scare their mounts."

"*That'll be easy,*" he replies, his thought a blend of excitement and malicious mischief.

"Do you want to use magic or weapons?" Dalris asks quickly. The two knights will be upon you in seconds, leaving you no time to read from the spellbook. You can only attack with a memorized spell (208) or your weapons (181).

73

The only spells you know that might prevent the veteran fighter from telling his friends about you are Hold Person (93), Sleep (139), and Suggestion (164). You might also use the Polymorph Other incantation in your traveling spellbook, and change him into something that *can't* talk (11).

Select any unused spell listed above. Mark it off on your Stats Card and turn to the indicated section.

74

You stand silently beside Dalris and the invisible Rufyl while the marines search your boat for contraband. The Kandian cloak, with its distracting mystical symbols, conceals your hand as you locate the tiny ball of honeycomb wax mixed with powdered viper's tongue—the material components of your Suggestion spell.

"*What are they looking for?*" asks Rufyl.

"I'm not sure," you reply, *"but perhaps I can suggest something to take their minds off the search."*

You spot the commander of the boarding party, a burly marine officer wearing the scarlet insignia of Archcleric Oram's private paladin guards, the Knights of Blessed Dyan. As soon as he turns, you pop the tiny ball of wax into your mouth and swallow it. Then you raise your hand and motion for the paladin to approach you.

As he does, you whisper the Suggestion spellwords, *"Mafran, mafran."* Then aloud you say, "Whenever you and your men are through with this onerous chore, perhaps you'd like to hear some traditional music and songs of the Kandian people," you suggest. "My lady friend here is an accomplished player and can help your men break the monotony of such tedious work as routine searches for non-existent contraband." The officer's eyes quiver under the impact of your spell. He seems to be trying desperately to concentrate on anything but your words.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **62**. if it is less, turn to **53**.

75

Wendel's story is horrifying. You learn that Arno's power over the paladins who were guarding the vicious humanoids in Seagate's prison colony is even greater than you suspected. The old cleric says that the paladins now serve as officers and organizers of an evil horde of gnolls, goblins, and other dregs of Tikandian society.

"I can't even begin to explain the depravity of the archcleric's so-called Holy Guard," Wendel says sadly. "I never cared much for Oram of Saven, but I didn't regard him as an evil man by any means."

"Perhaps he's not," you tell the shaman. "It's our turn to tell you a story. Dalris, tell my old friend everything that has happened since we left Wealwood."

As usual, she captivates her audience so completely that time seems to stand still while she weaves the fabric of her tale. It's dawn when she closes with a description of the scene in Garn's quarters so real you can feel the weight of

the crystal goblet and taste the cool, sweet wine.

Wendel has remained completely silent, needing to ask no questions because of Dalris's expert narrative skills. Suddenly he leaps to his feet and rushes to a nearby shelf laden with dusty leatherbound tomes with faded titles. He selects a particular book and brings the small volume to you. It's a very old manuscript written in faded ink, and the language is High Elvish, which you've mastered over the past five years. You hold the slender book closer to the lamp and check the title page: *Some Notes on Denizens of Foreign Planes of Existence, by Landor, Archmagus.*

"Look in the second chapter, under the heading of 'Daemons, Demons, and Devils,'" Wendel suggests, paying no attention to your excitement over finally finding a reference to such things in your father's handwriting.

You turn quickly to the suggested section, then flip through it in wide-eyed amazement until you spot the one entry which you must read immediately—"Pazuzeus, or 'Pazuzu,' Demon Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms!"

Your eyes are riveted to your father's description of the creature you saw in Saven. He provides incredible details about the monster, including a warning to paladins. It seems that one of Pazuzu's favorite pastimes is the perversion of paladins by tricking them into reciting his name three times in succession!

Finally, toward the end of the description of Arno's demonic ally, you read this single mystifying phrase:

"Once Pazuzeus has been attracted to the Material Plane by the promise of converts, only the combined power of light and dark, of sky and abyss, may return this powerful Demon Prince to his proper domain, the Abyssal Plane. Such power may only be wielded jointly by wearers of the twin adamantite crowns of Lolth and Aerdrie."

"What are these twin crowns?" you ask Wendel excitedly. "They seem to hold the answer to our problem!"

The cleric shakes his head. "I don't know the answer to that. I merely recognized the name 'Pazuzu.'"

"I know that Lolth is the legendary queen goddess of dark elves, and that Aerdrie is her opposite, an elven goddess of light and sky," says Dalris. "If you could get into the

library at College Arcane or talk to one of your father's old colleagues, you might learn more."

"That would be dangerous," warns Wendel. "Perhaps it would be better to ask Thayne's elven kin about their goddesses and these mysterious adamantite crowns.

If you decide to go to the library at College Arcane, turn to 4. If you'd rather avoid the college and visit Thayne's elven clan in the mountains, turn to 145.

76

The Armor spell is easy to cast and requires only a tiny fragment of blessed leather. You remove the small component from one of the magical pockets of your thin cloak and rub it on the palm of your left hand while mumbling the familiar phrase in High Elvish.

*"Mibra dogi, mibra hade;
Koton fearnar chopis lade."*

The magical force field of the spell surrounds your body instantly, its soft green dweomer barely visible in the stinking yellow fog. Your skin feels slightly numb beneath your clothing, but you know that's one of the side effects of the spell. Be sure to cross Armor off your spell list.

Satisfied that you're ready to face the ambush of the "intelligence" that Rufyl warned you about, you continue slogging through the dense fog. You can hardly see Dalris's slender form through the yellow haze, but note from an occasional glint of steel that the bard has drawn her sword.

Suddenly the fog intensifies, and the ground shakes! You freeze, trying to see Dalris's figure, but the haze is too thick. You hear a scuffling sound ahead of you and take a hasty step forward.

"Stay here, Master," Rufyl urges. "There's something too terrible to fight in that fog! I can sense its power!"

The pseudodragon's telepathic plea carries such fear and sorrow that you panic for Dalris's safety. Forgetting your magic for once, you rush blindly into the swirling yellow fog, clutching your magic quarterstaff in one hand and fumbling for your poisoned darts with the other.

"Carr! There's something here! It looks like . . . Holy Brigit! Help me!"

You burst into view of the bard just as a tremendous hand encircles her slender waist, pinning her arms to her sides. The giant fist is lifting her struggling figure into the thick cloud of sulfuric fog!

You don't have a spell ready to cast, but you might be able to hit the creature's arm with one of your darts (170) or with your enchanted staff (188).

77

You push Dalris away and reach for the dangerous Sceptre of Bhukod which has just killed your friend and teacher. The powerful wand flares momentarily before you can tie it safely inside the sheath of hollyphant skin.

"Give this to your father," you tell the bard. "I wish I'd never seen the cursed thing. I'll fight Arno and whatever mysterious forces he's managed to muster with my own spells. It's not worth the risk to take the sceptre with us. If Arno ever got his hand on it, his evil influences could destroy all of Tikandia."

Dalris takes the powerful wand and goes to the door. There, she stops and turns toward you to ask, "Are we going to start on Seagate Island, or in Saven?"

"I'm not sure. I need some time to think about that and to prepare a few surprises for Magus Arno. Meet me here in the morning with Rufyl."

The bard nods and goes out, apparently too upset by Thayne's death to object as usual to anything that sounds like an order. You turn toward the fireplace and toss the elf's tankard onto the coals before you go. Turn to 121.

78

"Be still, Rufyl," you command the pseudodragon. "I need you to be a dragon turtle and sink that galley for us."

"Please, Master! I beg you to leave me as I am!"

"Listen to him, Carr!" Dalris urges. "He's afraid of your Polymorph Other spell, and so am I. This is not a simple conjuring illusion you're trying."

"I know that!" you tell the bard impatiently. "Now be quiet, both of you, so that I can get it right the first time. Rufyl, show me your outline so that I can focus my energies

on it. If you don't cooperate, I can't promise what this spell will do to you."

You sense the beast's fears in your own brain as your familiar reluctantly follows your orders. Rufyl's reddish scales become visible between you and Dalris. You glance at the war galley—you can see the faces of the marines at the rail. Clearing your thoughts of everything else, you begin to translate your father's coded scrawl.

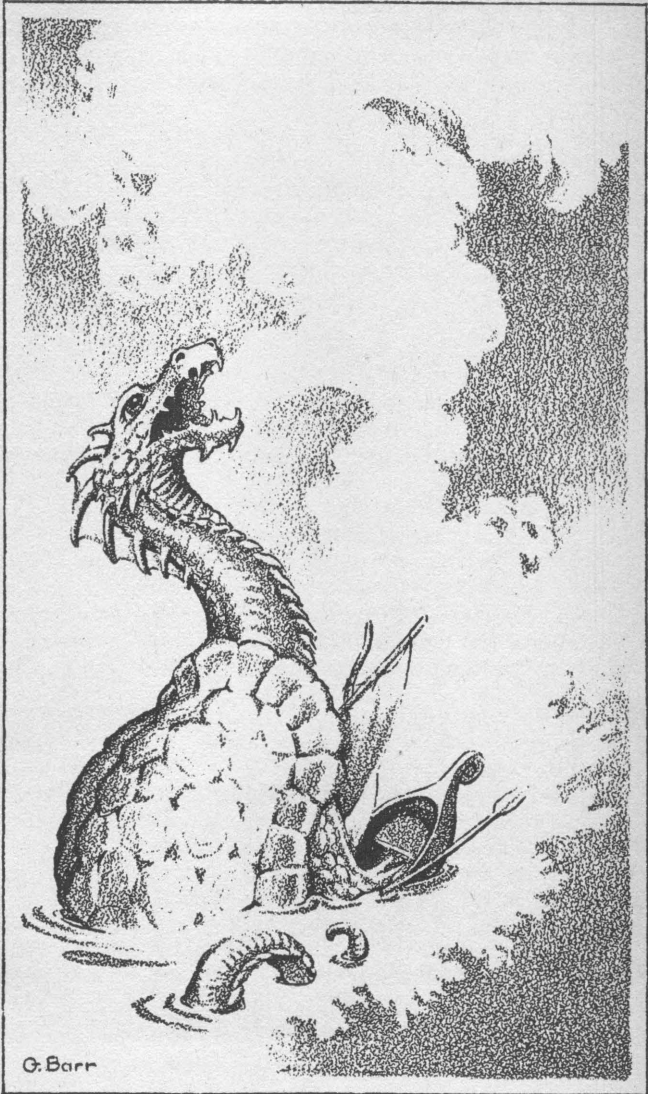
*"Forces of nature, hear my command!
I, Carr, Mage of Wealwood, thus demand
That the mortal shape of this beast be free
To assume whichever form I decree!"*

As soon as you utter the opening phrase, Rufyl's body goes limp, entering a dangerous nether state of existence on some other plane that will last until the spell is complete. The spell instructions then tell you to position the subject and to specify minute details of both the current and proposed shapes of Rufyl. You hope that your description of a dragon turtle—a creature you have never seen, just learned about in books—is accurate enough.

A grappling hook snags the rail and single boom of the fishing scow just as you finish the procedure. Rufyl's scaly shape starts to quiver and crack! Both you and Dalris clap your hands to your ears, trying to seal out the little pseudo-dragon's mental cries of agony, but you can't escape them. Your familiar's body begins to swell and tear, as if a huge creature in his chest were trying to get out. A hard shell begins to protrude from Rufyl's back and quickly spreads, forcing you and the bard to step backward.

"You idiot!" Dalris screams. "A full-grown dragon turtle is bigger than this boat! You should have placed Rufyl in the water. That's why Landor said to 'properly position the subject!' He'll sink us!"

You've barely digested what the bard is saying when a monstrous webbed flipper flings out from beneath the emerging dragon turtle and pins you to the deck! Dalris grabs your arm and tries to pull you free, but the massive shell explodes in a final surge of growth, crushing both you and Dalris. Your spell was successful, but only the transformed Rufyl is alive to know it. ✕



G. Barr

You suddenly remember Garn's warning about the Sceptre of Bhukod. If he was correct, the corrupt senior paladins have somehow retained the ability to use clerical magic and they may very easily detect the sceptre's presence—if you encounter more of them.

You could ask Garn to return the Sceptre of Bhukod to Perth at Wealwood where it would be safe and would not endanger your mission by its powerful dweomer (156). Of course, you may wish to take the sceptre with you to Seagate Island, risking discovery, so that you'll have it to use against whatever evil magic you may encounter (55).

"I'd rather not risk detection by Arno's forces just yet," you tell Dalris. "We'll have a better chance of infiltrating their barricade and scouting the academy of magic at Freeton if they don't know we're on the island. Let's slip in by the southern coast and try to join Thayne's people in the mountains."

You signal the captain, who nods his understanding of your decision and sets the course for the hidden cove. Night passes and the sky is lightening when the crew finally drops anchor in the deserted bay on the backside of the island.

Rufyl has remained invisible for the entire crossing and is sending a jumble of uncertain thoughts into your brain. You calm the nervous beast enough to get him into the dinghy with Dalris. Then you begin to row through the surf toward the white sand of the cove.

As soon as you land on the warm sand, you drag the small craft into a patch of reeds at the edge of a tidal pool while Dalris and Rufyl scout the rocky ground to the east. They quickly locate an animal trail used by the wild goats and deer that come to the beach nightly for salt. It's a steep path leading abruptly from the beach into the coastal cliffs that edge Seagate's eastern plateau. Your former home in the mountains above Delmer, on the other side of the island, was part of this same crescent-shaped ridge, yet the rugged terrain feels foreign to your tender hands and unused muscles. Turn to 37.

Rufyl's telepathic eavesdropping helps convince you that Garn is telling you precisely what he thinks and feels. The paladin's entire character seems so completely honest, even to the point of being naive, that you decide to trust him with the Sceptre of Bhukod.

"I believe you," you murmur. "I'll let you hide the item I have under my cloak, but you must agree to some rather curious conditions."

"What are your conditions?"

"First, and most important, you must defend the item with your life. It belongs to the Kandian people and it may well be the only thing that can save them from Arno's threatening allegiance with evil forces."

"Agreed!" Garn replies immediately. "What else?"

"If anything happens to me so that I can't reclaim the parcel, you must do everything in your power to see that it is returned to Dalris's father, Archdruid Perth, at Wealwood. You must do this without opening the package, no matter what circumstances occur."

The paladin scowls. "Why may I not examine this item?" he asks with caution in his voice.

"Because its great power is contained within an enchanted hollyphant-skin pouch fashioned by Archdruid Perth just for that purpose. I am the only person alive who may touch the contents of that pouch and live."

Garn glances solemnly at Dalris, who merely nods her agreement at what you've said. Finally the paladin extends his hand toward you. "Done! Give me this mysterious parcel and I shall guard it with my life."

"Not here," mutters Dalris.

Outside the Moonstar Tavern, you follow the paladin to a shadowy niche and give him the long hide-wrapped parcel. "Guard it well, Garn. The future of Tikandia may depend upon it!" The holy warrior bows and takes the enchanted package. In seconds, he has vanished into the dark streets with the fabled Sceptre of Bhukod.

"I'm proud of you, Carr," says Dalris suddenly.

"Huh?" you exclaim in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"That's the first time I've seen genuine trust of another

person in you since you began delving into your father's secret arts. There's hope for you yet, Magus Delling."

You try to think of a suitable reply, but the bard just smiles softly and gently encircles your arm with her hands. The bard's sudden gesture of closeness catches you by surprise and fills your mind with warmth. The two of you stand silently waiting for Garn to return and lead you to the secret entrance to the cathedral.

"*What curious thoughts both of you are having,*" muses Rufyl. "*They're so different, yet so similar! Master Carr is hoping that Dalris . . .*"

"Quiet!" you murmur to the invisible pseudodragon. "Keep your scaly snout out of our minds for a while!"

Dalris raises one dark eyebrow in a mixture of amusement and curiosity. She starts to say something, but Garn appears suddenly at the dark corner to your right and motions for you to follow him. The bard turns away with a toss of her braid and runs silently to the paladin's side.

"*Come on, you loud-brained chameleon!*" you order the familiar, as you walk swiftly behind your two comrades, both new and old. Turn to 108.

82

A spout of fire springs from your fingertips. You concentrate it into a white-hot gusher of such magnitude and force that it envelopes the knight instantly and unseats him from the armored bay stallion. The large warhorse rears on its hind legs in fear, but it doesn't attack. Instead, the riderless animal wheels and gallops toward Saven.

"Sorcerers!" exclaims the younger knight as he tries to ride down Dalris in the middle of the road. The lithe bard uses her thief's agility to dodge his lance easily, then slashes at the paladin's thigh with her shortsword.

The force of her attack surprises the inexperienced knight, who hasn't learned yet that underestimating an enemy can be fatal. Using her agility as her only armor, Dalris dives under the warhorse's high flanks to strike another blow from the opposite side. You watch with delight as the bard's jet-black battle queue dances in the dust of the skirmish as her supple body moves with the

grace of an acrobat.

Suddenly the armored steed's eyes roll backward. The warhorse neighs loudly as its hind quarters start to tremble. Then, within seconds, the heavy animal's legs collapse, paralyzed by Rufyl's sting. The horse's armored body drops to the road like a rock, pinning its yelping rider by one crushed leg.

"Let's go!" you shout. "We've got to reach Saven before they recover enough to warn anyone."

Reduce your charisma skill score by 2 points because the two knights' stories will make everyone in Saven more suspicious of strangers. Then turn to **100**.

83

"Trope gahn!"

Your command word echoes in the narrow alley. The enchanted quarterstaff flares with its rosy dweomer, startling the three warriors. By the time they recover from their surprise, the rod has magically doubled in length and you've already slammed its butt end into the forehead of the senior knight.

The knight collapses in an unconscious heap at your feet, leaving the two less experienced comrades even more wary of you. They crouch in a fighting position, holding their torches aside and leveling their swords at your midsection.

The one on your right thrusts his flaming torch at your face, forcing you to leap backward against the stone wall. While your attention is diverted, the other guardsman pokes at your ribs with his sword. You sense his movement just in time to jerk your body away, slamming your hip painfully against the building. The two men glance at each other and grin, realizing that they now have their strategy planned for them.

"HA!" yells the left one, slashing at your face with his blade. You parry the blow with the staff but barely have time to dodge the flaming torch of the other man.

Suddenly the young knight on the left screams in agony and drops both the torch and his weapon. In another second, he collapses with a crash to the cobblestones, a victim of Rufyl's paralyzing stinger.



"It's about time!" you think to your familiar. Taking advantage of the remaining warrior's inattention, you slam your staff against the side of his neck. He falls to his knees, stunned and confused. Before he has time to shout for help, you follow up with a crushing blow to the temple.

"Let's get out of here!" you tell the pseudodragon. Rufyl's half-visible form is almost comical as he hops with his vestigial wings flared over the fallen bodies of your victims and flits toward the alley entrance. Wincing with pain from your bruised hip, you run after him into the deepest shadows of Saven's dark streets.

Deduct 2 hit points, then turn to 174.

84

Removing the pouch of enchanted sand from its special pocket inside your cloak, you quickly toss a pinch of it into the roc's blinking eyes.

"Shhhh!" you whisper, touching your eyelids with the same fingers that tossed the sand.

The roc's giant beak parts in a long, low squawk. Its

glassy eyes blink more slowly, but you're not sure if it's because of your enchantment or if the carnivorous bird is merely toying with its next meal.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **39**. If it's less, turn to **211**.

85

"Thayne died to protect his people and ours from whatever strange evils your old rival has unleashed," Dalris cries angrily, breaking away. "We've got to do something!"

"And we will!" you reply as you reach for the dangerous Sceptre of Bhukod. It flares once when your hand touches it, but the aura fades as you slide the powerful magic item into the hollyphant-hide sheath.

"Since we don't know what magical forces Arno has discovered, it would be safer to take the sceptre with us," you tell Dalris. "We'll just have to make sure no one can get it in case its entrapment charm is gone."

"Where'll we start?" asks the bard. "Here on the mainland in Saven, or on Seagate at the academy of magic?"

"I'm not sure. I need time to think and to prepare my spells for the mission. You might pray to that goddess of yours and ask her for some special assistance. Will you find Ruffy and tell him what has happened?"

Dalris nods and looks at the closed door to the archdruid's chapel. You can hear a low mumbling sound and smell the smoke from a blend of exotic herbs. "Perhaps my father will be able to save Thayne," she says softly.

You frown at this evidence of her perpetual druidic optimism. Then you stick the Sceptre of Bhukod in your belt and head for the door to collect your gear for the dangerous expedition.

Place a checkmark by the Sceptre of Bhukod on your Character Stats Card and turn to **121**.

86

The giant creature soars to the southern coast of your native island, where the coastal mountains dive sharply into the sea. You've never seen this rugged terrain before,

and now you understand why no one has ever tried to settle in the south—the mountains are even rougher than those where you and your mother lived above Delmer.

Rufyl squawks loudly as his new roc homing instincts appear to recognize familiar territory. You begin to become even more worried as the legendary winged beast nears the cliffs of Seagate. On the faces of the highest, most inaccessible ridges, you spot huge piles of brush and logs wedged precariously into mountain crevices.

Suddenly Dalris shouts, “Did you see that? To our left, just below the cliff edge. Another roc!” yells Dalris.

You look where the bard directs you, catching a glimpse of a giant creature’s tail feather vanishing among one of the log heaps. “Roosts!” you scream. “He’s brought us to the rookery, and it’s teeming with hungry rocs!”

Your familiar flaps his transformed wings more heavily, slowing your descent to hover above an unoccupied roost.

“Get ready,” yells Dalris. “He’ll have to let go of us to land!”

Your thoughts are racing, trying to decide how to handle the dangerous monster you created with your own magic. You’d rather prepare a nonviolent spell like Sleep (84) or Light (187) so that you wouldn’t have to hurt Rufyl, but you don’t know if they’d work on a pseudodragon polymorphed into a roc. If the huge predator attacks, your Burning Hands spell (209) might frighten it long enough for you to escape. You might even be able to use your Dispel Magic incantation to cancel the Polymorph Other spell (151).

The creature’s huge talons open suddenly, spilling you and Dalris roughly onto the ledge amidst the scattered logs and brush. The giant feathered body blots out the sinking sun as it settles on the roost and eyes you as if it’s trying to decide whether to eat now or later.

Be sure to cross the spell you select off your Stats Card; then turn to the appropriate section.

87

In your excitement, you stammer and mispronounce the first two words of the last line in the spell. You know enough about advanced magic to realize that it’s extremely

dangerous to ignore mistakes like these. In a cold panic, you slam the book shut and try to concentrate upon one of the more familiar attack spells you already know—spells like Burning Hands (51), Sleep (94), Magic Missile (176), Fireball (201), and Lightning Bolt (195).

Be sure to check off your spell list the spell you choose to use; then turn to the designated number.

88

Dalris squints through the sanctuary peephole. “The warriors are moving around,” she reports. “It looks as if they’re getting ready to search the cathedral! We’ve got to move fast!”

You must decide quickly whether to launch your attack upon Arno by casting one of your more powerful offensive spells, such as Burning Hands, Magic Missile, Fireball, or Lightning Bolt, or by sacrificing the advantage of a surprise attack in order to use a defensive spell, such as Armor, Protection from Evil, or Fly.

Select one unused offensive OR one defensive spell listed above. Mark it off your list and turn to 34.

89

The cavalier’s smoothly tanned face creases with a smile when he sees your puzzled look. Dalris also remains silent.

“You both seem surprised that I know of your minor enchantments. You needn’t bother to try to conceal such things from a paladin who possesses the ability to Detect Magic. I also sense that you are not evil,” the cavalier adds gently in a low whisper. “That makes you, along with me, an exception in Saven these days. Be glad it was not one of my erstwhile colleagues who detected your auras.”

“*His words match his thoughts, Master,*” Rufyl reports silently. “*I believe he speaks the truth.*”

The pseudodragon’s telepathic analysis of the paladin’s honesty seems convincing, but you’ve heard and seen too much of the evil that the Knights of Blessed Dyan are doing these days to accept everything the stranger has said without question.

“What is your name, cavalier?” you demand. “Are you

one of the so-called 'Holy Guard?' ”

The warrior signals the barmaid for more wine and waits until she brings it before beginning one of the strangest tales you've ever heard. Turn to 154.

90

As the marines' ship approaches, you see armored knights in the uniform of the archclericy standing at the rail, weapons drawn, and ready to board your vessel. You count at least two dozen armed men poised to storm your ship at the slightest provocation. You rapidly review your list of memorized spells, wondering if any of them is powerful enough to handle the marines.

The question is, you ask yourself, do I want to attack the marines with magic (12) or should I use a spell to control them without violence (43)?

91

“Go away!” growls the surly guard. “This is a private service, open only to the faithful who have dedicated themselves to the great Lord Pazuzu!”

“Pazuzu? Who in the world is Pazuzu?” Dalris blurts, unable to restrain her surprise.

“Get out of the way, ignorant Kandian scum!” “Move aside, blasphemers!” The angry pilgrims press around you, and the guards at the cathedral door do nothing to stop them. You feel elbows and knees digging into your flesh, bruising your already tired muscles.

“I suggest we leave before they discover who we really are, Master. They're already thinking of murder!” Rufyl doesn't have to repeat his telepathic warning. Dalris links her arm with yours and you start bulling a path out of the crowd of fanatical devotees of Lord Pazuzu. By the time you

reach the fringes of the mob, you have scratches and bruises over most of your body from the hostile worshippers. Deduct 1 point from your hit point total.

You lean against a building across the street from the cathedral and stare speechlessly as the last of the throng filters into the massive edifice. A lone dark figure remains at the curb, staring at the closed cathedral doors. Suddenly the figure turns and begins to cross the street toward you. Sighing, you tense your aching muscles and get into a position to use your staff. The stranger stops.

"Relax your weapons, both of you. I mean you no harm. I saw what the crowd did to you and wish to heal some of your wounds if I may. I'm a paladin dedicated to the service of Blessed Dyan, and I resent what these crude people are doing to the Holy One's cathedral and to worshippers such as yourselves."

The man's face is shrouded in shadows. You glance at Dalris, who looks as confused as you. "*Be cautious, Master,*" Rufyl warns you. "*I sense that this man is suspicious of you and is trying to determine if you are an enemy.*"

"*He's not the only one who's suspicious,*" you think. Will you let this paladin practice whatever healing powers he may have upon you (124) or send him on his way before he comes any closer (175)?

92

The College of Arcane Sciences founded by your father before you were born looms in the gray dawn over Freeton's harbor like the watchtower it was in the days of pirates and smugglers on the Tikandian frontier. The single entrance in the center of the fortified academy is dark.

"How do you want to do this, Carr?" asks Dalris in a whisper. "Do we just present ourselves at the door, or do we get inside a bit more furtively?"

"*Pardon me, Master,*" adds Rufyl, "*but did you not say Thayne's sources inside the academy reported that Arno had taken over the College? Is it not likely that the College has changed under Arno's questionable guidance?*"

You shake your head. "At an academy of magic, there's always someone more advanced than you in certain areas

of occult knowledge. That one fact keeps things honest and even. You learn to respect your colleagues' powers even if their level is lower than yours."

Rufyl looks confused. The pseudodragon often has difficulty following the devious machinations of humans.

"Carr is saying that sorcerers like himself are just too damned independent to be dominated by each other," Dalris adds with a chuckle.

You sense Rufyl sighing.

If you've come to College Arcane straight from Wealwood, turn to **110**. If you've come directly from Saven, turn to **45**. If you've come by way of Delmer, turn to **23**.

93

"*Sesolom!*" you mutter quickly, casting your Hold Person spell on the hapless paladin.

The veteran warrior's armored body freezes, as if he were paralyzed. Dalris looks at you with twinkling eyes.

"Not bad for a tribal mage!" she muses. "How long will he be like that?"

"Several hours, at least," you tell her.

"Well, that's better than nothing," she observes. "We should be able to make it to Saven by then."

By the time you can summon the invisible Rufyl, the bard is already striding away from you both toward Tikanadia's largest port city.

Deduct 1 point from your charisma skill score because of the suspicion that will spread when the paladin recovers and sounds the alarm. Then turn to **100**.

94

Rushing at the huge hand lifting Dalris into the yellow fog, you fling a handful of sand from a hidden vial at the massive wrist.

"SHHHHHHH!" you mutter, wondering if your Sleep spell will have any effect upon such a large creature.

The grains of enchanted sand strike the hairless arm, only to change instantly into drops of water! The hand continues to lift Dalris's squirming figure out of your sight into the stinking fog. Turn to **119**.

Dalris and Rufyl are waiting outside Perth's spacious hive-shaped lodge when you arrive at daybreak.

"My father is still chanting over Thayne," she says immediately. "That's a good sign—he'd have given up by now if there had been no hope of resurrecting him. Have you decided where we should start?"

"If Arno's in Saven as Thayne said, that's where we should face him," you announce. "Whatever evil power he's using to manipulate the archcleric's paladins may not be as strong there as on Seagate Island, where he acquired it."

"What do you think it is?" Dalris asks, her eyes burning with excitement. Though she often scoffs at you, Dalris is always curious about magic.

"I'm not sure," you reply. "I need to see the effects of his magic upon the paladins before I can guess its source. Perhaps we can mingle with the Knights of Dyan and get a first-hand look at Arno's sorcery."

"Why are we leaving the grove?"

Rufyl's questioning thought prods your brain more sharply than usual, indicating that your familiar is agitated. The pseudodragon's scales are redder than usual, adding to his appearance as a miniature red dragon, though you know it's only a passing emotional reaction.

"What's wrong with him?" you ask Dalris. "I thought he'd be thrilled to have a change of scenery."

"I do not consider human cities to be 'scenery,' Master Carr. My race prefers less congested environs." The pseudodragon's telepathic tone is petulant, as if the beast is insulted by your plans to take him to Saven.

Ignoring your familiar, you turn to Dalris and say, "You're the native. What's the best route to Saven?"

The bard squats down and draws a rough outline of the Tikandian mainland near Wealwood, with one trail winding along the coast and the other straight across to Saven.

"This is the main provincial road heading directly into Saven," she says, pointing to the straighter line, "and this is the network of trails along the coast. The road would be faster, but the paladins might be guarding it. And if they're somehow under Arno's control, we could run into trouble."

“Doesn’t the coastal trail enter Yellow Marsh right around here?” you ask Dalris, gesturing to a spot several miles from Wealwood. Yellow Marsh is a barren wasteland extending along the coast and reputed to be a haven for giant monsters from Tikandia’s primordial past.

“Yes,” she replies quickly. “If you want to take the coastal trails, we could detour around Yellow Marsh and be on the main road for less than an hour at the most.”

“*Anything’s better than Yellow Marsh!*” Rufyl’s sudden panicky thought overwhelms your mind. “*I went there once with Landor, and I do not wish to go there again!*”

“Relax, Rufyl,” you soothe the anxious familiar. “If we take the coastal trail, we’ll try to detour around the marsh, just as Dalris suggested.”

“There’s one other way,” says the bard thoughtfully. “We could arrange with some of our kinsmen on the coast to take us into Saven Harbor in their fishing boats.”

You know that if Arno is really in control in Saven, getting into the city may be just as difficult as dealing with Arno himself. If you decide to enter Saven by the harbor, turn to 113. To travel along the coastal trails through the forests, turn to 14. If you’d rather go the quickest route, by the main road, turn to 42.

96

You strain your eyes trying to see through the thickening yellow haze. Despite Rufyl’s warning, you’ve decided to save your spells until you’re sure of the danger threatening you. Your right hand clutches the enchanted quarterstaff while your left one fumbles for a poisoned dart.

The yellow cloud has blotted the sunlight so effectively that the ground bears no grass or even moss. You’re treading in a damp soil whose mouldy odor adds to the stench of brimstone around you. Dalris, with sword drawn, walks a few steps in front of you, but the sulfurous fog is now so thick that it’s difficult to see her slender figure.

“IT’S COMING! WATCH OUT, DALRIS!”

Rufyl’s mental scream comes only an instant before you see the bard’s startled head jerk backward from the force of a giant hand clutching her torso, pinning both arms to her



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sides! Dalris's long battle braid whips like a writhing black snake against the huge fingers which are dragging her struggling body up into the dense fog.

Do you want to strike the monstrous hand with your magical staff (188) or one of your poisoned darts (170)?

97

Your hand is just a blur as it dives beneath your cloak for the tiny ball of compressed bat guano and sulfur you need for the powerful Fireball spell. Clutching it in the palm of your right hand, you point at the approaching knights and murmur "Twenty yards" in High Elvish to set the spell's dweomer for that distance.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to 182. If it is less, turn to 63.

98

"Leave the resistance on the mainland to me," says Garn. "There aren't many of us Holy Guardsmen who challenged the archcleric's edict, but the ones of us who did are dedicated to the overthrow of this foreign menace. I know how to contact most of them, and we shall organize to fight Arno and his legion of corrupt paladins."

"You'll need a base of operations," Dalris says quickly, "as well as staunch allies. My father can provide both. The Kandian people are proud fighters and will defend their homeland to the death. If you come as guests of the archdruid, you and your comrades will have all of Wealwood as a protected encampment against Arno's forces."

"I'll go to your father's grove at once," Garn tells Dalris. "But before I go, Carr, I will arrange with an old friend in the marines to sail you across Pirates' Alley, if you wish. You can leave at once for Seagate Island."

If Garn hid the Sceptre of Bhukod for you earlier this evening, turn to 79. Otherwise, turn to 106.

99

You cling desperately to the monster's talons, although they form what seems to be a safe airborne cabin. Tucked

under the roc's—or Rufyl's—massive feathered body, you're shielded from much of the wind produced by the beast's huge wings.

“He's not headed for the mainland! He's going southward, toward Seagate Island!”

Dalris's anxious shout comes from the other talon cage. You can't see her, but you can hear her yelling above the deafening wingbeats of the great bird. Suddenly you know why the transformed Rufyl is headed for the rocky island, and the answer terrifies you. The only roc roosts known in Tikandia are in the craggy highlands of Seagate Island. Rufyl's brain must have been altered so that he's now dominated by the homing instincts of a roc!

“He's taking us to the roc rookery on Seagate!” you yell to Dalris. “We've got to get him to put us down before we get there! Can you talk to him?”

“I can try,” shouts the bard, “but it'll be dangerous. If Rufyl's intelligence was destroyed by your Polymorph Other spell, he might misunderstand what I'm saying and drop us. It might be better to wait until he lands on the island.”

If you want Dalris to use her druid skills and try talking to the roc, turn to **166**. If you'd rather just wait until the roc lands, turn to **15**.

100

Dalris leads you quickly through the darkening streets of Saven, using shadowy alleys and shortcuts only a professional thief would know. Several times along the way, you notice that shadows somewhat thicker than others move in ways that shadows shouldn't, and you begin to wish you had eyes in the back of your head. But each time, the bard whispers a few words in a dialect you don't know, and the dark form seems to melt back into its surroundings.

“Don't take these shortcuts unless you know Thieves' Cant,” Dalris mutters to you when you question her. “There's not much ‘honor among thieves,’ but there is enough to keep us from killing each other without reason.”

Night has fallen completely by the time the bard points into the darkness ahead of you.

"That's the back of Saven cathedral," she whispers.

You see nothing but a high stone wall enclosing almost a full block of the city. Beyond its top, you can just make out the towering steeple of the most ancient church devoted to the archcleric's sect.

"Is there a tavern around here where we could rest a few minutes and try to find out if Arno's here?" you ask.

"Why don't we just go in the front door of the cathedral, as if we were pilgrims from the Kandian highlands (67)?" suggests Dalris. "But then, if we try to get information before we go in, we might have a better chance of finding Arno more quickly (127). What do you want to do?"

101

Deciding to use one of your most powerful spells against the armored paladins, you retrieve the clear crystal rod and the small patch of rabbit fur you need to cast the Lightning Bolt spell. Aiming the rod first at one rider, then at the other, you mutter, "*Slikkit!*"

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **105**. If it is less, turn to **63**.

102

Thayne's tale of evil forces invading Tikandia remains in your mind as you stumble forward in the stinking fog. You fumble frantically in the magical pockets of your thin cloak for the small vial of powdered iron and silver needed for the Protection from Evil spell. When you've found it, you stop where you are and carefully sprinkle a circle of shimmering dust around you. Finally, you stand in the circle and try to close your mind to all but the powerful abjuration.

"Lastus, lastus, lastus! Horal joo lastus!"

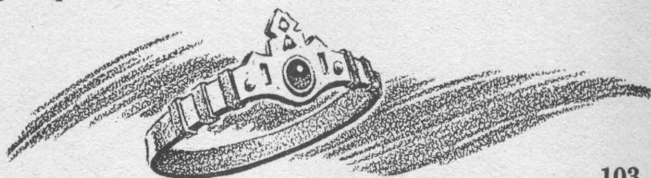
The stench of the yellow fog vanishes as a globe of magical energy forces the noxious fumes away from your body, forming a colorless but bright protective envelope around you. As you step from the magic circle, the spell's aura remains with you, so that you stand out in the swirling haze like a human beacon. Be sure to cross Protection from Evil from your spell list.

"Master! Dalris is in trouble!" Rufyl's frantic thought clears the aftereffects of the spellcasting from your head.

"Dalris!" you shout into the fog. "Where are you?"

"Help me, Carr! Help me!"

You race forward, slipping on the slick ground just in time to see Dalris's struggling body being lifted into the yellow fog by a giant hand encircling her waist. You rush toward her, hoping to force the monstrous fingers to release your friend. If you want to strike the hand with your enchanted quarterstaff, turn to 188. If you'd rather use your poisoned darts, turn to 170.



103

"I fear that the Sceptre of Bhukod may not be the answer to our problems," you say finally.

"What do you mean?" demands Thayne. The elven ranger-wizard is drinking his third mug of Kandian mead, and his face is flushed with agitation and alcohol.

"It would be easier to explain if I could show you. Perth, will you please fetch the sceptre?"

The archdruid looks confused, but he rises and goes through a narrow door which you know leads to the archdruid's private chapel. In less than a minute he returns and hands you a long leather-wrapped parcel.

"This wrapping is fashioned from the tanned hide of a sacred hollyphant," the archdruid says. "It will suppress the wand's energies as long as the bag remains tied. Anyone may handle the sceptre safely while it is encased in this sheath, but its great power will be unleashed instantly if the covering is removed."

You nod, then pull the drawstring on the magical container and remove it completely from the wand. It flares momentarily when your hands touch it, but the aura of white light fades when you place the sceptre in the center of the table. Your three companions gasp at the beauty of

the ancient magic wand of Bhukod's sorcerer-kings.

The famed object is fashioned of perfect silver and gold, with three large pearl-like spheres at its bulbous end and a row of hieroglyphic symbols engraved in a spiral around the shaft. Your father entrapped the wand so that only he or you, his sole heir, could wield the Sceptre of Bhukod against other sorcerers. The wand absorbs and reverses any spells cast against its wielder, but in the grasp of someone lacking the blood of Landor, it actually drains the user's own life force.

"Until a few months ago, I couldn't translate the hieroglyphics on the sceptre," you tell your friends. "Then I learned from Rufyl that my father inscribed these hieroglyphics on the sceptre, at the time he entrapped the wand."

"That's interesting," says Dalris, "but what does it have to do with confronting Arno?"

"I'm getting to that. Knowing that the inscription was one of my father's secret codes, I could finally decipher it. It says simply that the entrapment charm possesses only thirty charges and that it can't be recharged."

"What are you saying?" Thayne demands, now beginning to sound drunk.

"I think Carr is saying that, one day, the entrapment will end, and anyone—good or evil—will be able to use the Sceptre of Bhukod!" Dalris whispers.

You nod gravely. "Dalris is right. When my father's thirty charges are gone, anyone at all may use the great power of the Sceptre of Bhukod, for whatever purposes they choose! I have no way of knowing how many times its protective power had already been used before I found it. So we shouldn't be too anxious to use the wand except when it's definitely worth the risk. I think we should consider another plan to get Arno out of the academy and save the sceptre as a last resort if all else fails."

Thayne leaps to his feet, his face flushed with a volatile mixture of elven ire and Kandian mead. "Bah! The sceptre's the plan that will save Tikandia from Arno! If you won't wield it, I shall!"

"DON'T, THAYNE!" screams Dalris, but she's too late.

The drunken elf lurches forward, grabbing for the scep-

tre's gleaming shaft before anyone can stop him. The moment his hand clutches the enchanted weapon, it and he seem to explode in a blast of pure white energy. When the powerful dweomer fades, you see Thayne's lifeless body lying sprawled across the table, his fingers inches away from the wand and his sightless eyes staring at the ceiling.

"Grab his ankles!" Archdruid Perth commands. "If his spirit lingers, I may be able to enliven him!"

Stunned by the sudden death of your old friend and teacher, you cannot move a muscle. As Perth and his helper carry Thayne's limp body into the archdruid's private chapel, however, your paralysis is broken by the sound of harsh sobs from Dalris. You place your arms around her heaving shoulders.

Arno's evil has already spread to Wealwood and taken the life of a friend, you think with a terrible anguish welling in the pit of your stomach.

If you've changed your mind and now wish to take the Sceptre of Bhukod with you to deal with Arno, turn to 85. If you still think it would be wiser to leave the powerful wand with Perth until you're sure you need it, turn to 77.

104

Four bullets of pure energy fashioned from the dweomer of your Magic Missile spell streak from each of your fingers, two at the first paladin and the other pair at his younger comrade. They find their targets unerringly and explode in flares of white fire and smoke. When the smoke clears, the two knights are lying on the hard clay of the road with blackened and bleeding chest wounds where the magic missiles penetrated their armor. The riderless warhorses, badly frightened by the mystical pyrotechnics, are disappearing into the distance toward Saven.

"If anyone finds their bodies," you say thoughtfully, "the Holy Knights of Blessed Dyan will be alerted. They'll be checking every stranger they meet on the road. Let's get into the city and make sure they don't meet us!"

Deduct 1 point from your charisma skill score because of the extra precautions the paladins will soon be taking. Then turn to 100.

At the instant your mouth utters the last mystical syllable, a single jagged bolt of lightning streaks from the tip of the crystal rod. Halfway to the knights, the magical lightning branches into a forked bolt, one headed for the older man on the bay and the other for his younger colleague.

The smell of ozone fills the air, as surely as if a thunderstorm is coming. The twin bolts of lightning strike the two men squarely on their chests, exploding them from their saddles to the ground in unconscious heaps. Almost simultaneously, a great boom of thunder nearly deafens you and spooks the warhorses into a gallop toward Saven.

"An excellent *Lightning Bolt spell!*" Rufyl thinks appreciatively. "*Your father couldn't have done better.*"

"It was not 'excellent,' you bloodthirsty reptile!" Dalris chastises your familiar. "It was overkill, and it was stupid to waste such a spell on only two fighters, either of whom we might have talked into believing us. Now, every paladin in Saven will be looking for a 'killer sorcerer,' and we'll be lucky if we're not found by morning."

You start to protest, but Dalris's words ring true, so you just shrug and say nothing. *She's right*, you think. *I didn't have to use such a powerful spell on those two men.* You and Rufyl follow the silent bard past the lifeless bodies of your two victims.

Deduct 2 points from your charisma skill score because of the increased vigilance you may expect from the Knights of Blessed Dyan in Saven; then turn to **100**.

106

It's nearly midnight when you and Dalris board the small boat and sail for Seagate Island. The salty-tongued ship's master and his small crew never say more than a few words to either of you. You suspect that Garn has warned them not to ask questions so that they won't have anything to reveal if Arno should try to interrogate them. Only when the dark outline of the island looms on the moonless horizon does the captain ask you where you want to land.

"Do ye want us to put ye off at the main port at Freeton or somewhere else?" he asks.

If a marid has told you a tale involving a demon named 'Pazuzeus,' turn to 2. If you want to consult with some of your father's fellow wizards at College Arcane in Freeton, turn to 57. If you know a tale about a matched pair of crowns, turn to 80.

107

"It's too early in our mission to let anyone know who we are and what powers we have," you say. "If we attack those two and one gets away, there'll be guards at every entrance to Saven. Use your bardic wiles as well as your other kind, Dalris, to convince them we're traveling minstrels."

The bard frowns at your suggestion that she flirt with the paladins. "Use your own 'wiles,' magician!" she replies with an insulted toss of her battle queue. "Break out a spell if you need one to make them believe you. *I* can take care of myself without resorting to that foolishness."

You ignore Dalris as you decide whether to use a spell to manipulate the two knights. You could use either your Friends spell (215) or Suggestion (198). But you're tempted to show that contemptuous bard what you can do without resorting to magic (148).

108

The paladin leads you away from the front entrance of the cathedral to its farthest corner. You enter the mouth of what appears to be a dark service alley running along the side of the huge building. Garn sidesteps some empty barrels and other rubbish, gesturing for you and Dalris to be careful as you pass by them.

"*That means you, too,*" you remind Rufyl. The invisible pseudodragon signals his understanding with a mental grunt and follows you closely into the darkness.

"This is it," Garn whispers after leading you no more than ten or twelve yards into the alley. He points to a small barred window at his feet.

"How ingenious!" whispers Dalris. The bard squats to examine the opening. "The bars and glass are mere stage props to confuse common thieves and divert their attention from the secret door above it!"

"You're most observant!" says Garn, surprise in his voice. He grasps the middle bar and twists it. Then he does the same to the other two bars, first the one on the right and then the left one.

"Combination locks!" Dalris adds in a hoarse whisper.

"Right again," says the paladin. He pulls on the bars after setting their positions and a tall, narrow panel suddenly opens in the solid stone wall! You hear a faint sound of singing or chanting and notice that a dim light is issuing from the secret opening.

"Follow me," whispers Garn, "but be very quiet. The slightest noise will alert every guard in the cathedral."

"What about me, Master? Shall I accompany you?" Rufyl asks after Garn and Dalris have vanished inside the secret passage. You pat the familiar's scaly head.

"Stay here and guard the entrance. If you hear a commotion inside, or if we don't return by morning, you must go to Perth immediately and bring him here, to this secret opening. He'll know what to do, and . . . and he'll be your new master. Do you understand?"

Rufyl signals his acknowledgement of your command, but mixes it with a sensation of worry. "Be careful, Master. I know the archdruid would be kind, but I prefer to serve you."

"I'll do what I can to keep it that way," you think, as you squeeze into the secret passage where Dalris and Garn wait silently. You hurry to catch up.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **134**. If it is less, turn to **165**.

109

"No, Master, please don't attempt your father's *Poly-morph Other spell*," your familiar thinks into your mind. "It's terribly painful if it works and lethal if it doesn't!"

"Listen to him, Carr," insists Dalris. "He's not just a dumb animal. He's been our friend and companion for five years. Rufyl's the one who led you to the Sceptre of Bhukod and helped you thwart your uncle's plans to use it for evil purposes. Don't risk killing him!"

You point to the fast-closing marine galley with its armed

men ready to board your vessel. "Don't you see that Arno's influence has already spread to the open seas? If we don't stop them, all of Tikandia will fall prey to his evil. Please, both of you be quiet and let me try to cast this spell as painlessly as possible! Show yourself, Rufyl!"

The pseudodragon flashes a reluctant but resigned thought in response to your command, then permits his scaly form to assume its visible reddish color. You flip hastily to the Polymorph Other spell and begin to read, though your concentration is disturbed several times by shouts from the approaching galley.

"Look there on the deck! It's a baby red dragon!"

"Don't let it grow! When we get closer, shoot it and its friends!"

Rufyl's body goes limp as it's supposed to, to protect his life force, and you speed your incantation to hurry the transformation. In your haste, you stumble over some of the coded words and omit others. Finally you utter the last command word and stare at Rufyl's dormant body.

"Change, Rufyl!" you shout. "They're almost here!"

Dalris pushes forcefully past you and kneels beside the familiar's lifeless shape. She cradles his scaly head and looks up at you, both fury and desolation in her eyes. "He's not going to change! He's stuck in whatever plane your bumbling magic sent him to! See what you've done, you and your insane meddling with forces you don't understand?"

You open your mouth to reply to her denouncement, but the first word is stifled by a volley of crossbow shafts riddling your body and those of your two companions. ✕

110

"There's a quick way to find out if Thayne's sources inside the academy knew what they were talking about," you tell them. "Let's use the front door. If Arno's friends have taken over the college, the sooner we know about it, the sooner we can do something about it."

You step onto the black basalt slab that serves as the academy's threshold and reach for the door handle. At the moment your hand touches the cold metal, you're envel-

oped by a mass of flames! The heat of the Fire Trap spell is so intense that your agony lasts only a few seconds before you disappear into oblivion. ✠

111

Just as you swing the enchanted quarterstaff, your forward foot slips in the mud, throwing you off-balance. The monster's fist bumps you, dashing you to the ground, as it lifts Dalris out of sight into the yellow haze.

Roll 1 die and subtract the result from your current hit points. Then turn to 119.

112

"They're starting to search the cathedral!" whispers Dalris. "What spell are you going to use, Carr?"

"None!" you reply. "This is why Thayne and your father wanted us to take the sceptre. I doubt if any of my incantations could even scratch that creature in there. The sceptre may not, either, but I know it'll handle Arno, just as it did my uncle Beldon."

You remove the parcel from your cloak's enchanted pocket and strip the stiff hollyphant hide from the gleaming wand. The triple pearls at its bulbous end flare instantly in the dim light, flooding the secret corridor with more light than would be shed by several Light spells.

"Open the panel! Quickly!" you command.

Dalris whisks the small door open and dives through it to the other side of the archcleric's chair. Garn is next, flinging his fine leather cape over his right shoulder to free his sword arm. You duck into the sanctuary after them, holding the Sceptre of Bhukod high above your head as soon as you clear the cramped opening.

"There they are!" someone yells. "They're trying to kill Pazuzu! Stop them!"

Arno and the winged creature whirl toward you. In one searing glance, your old rival takes in everything. He doesn't seem the least bit concerned about Dalris and Garn, but glowers at the powerful Bhukodian relic in your hands.

"Your father's antique wand may have destroyed our teacher, Carr Delling, but it will not save you and your



friends from the wrath of Pazuzu," declares Arno.

You glance from the dark wizard to the creature he summoned from the heart of a wooden idol. The monster's bright yellow eyes look intently into yours, its beak parted in the semblance of a grin. Suddenly you realize that the being called 'Pazuzu' is trying to do something to your mind, and that you must fight it with all your strength!

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to **153**. If it is less, turn to **117**.

113

"What we want is a way to reach Saven without telling Arno we're coming. If the paladins are guarding the road, we need to stay away from it. Even if we go through the woods, there's a chance that a patrol would see us and report to the archcleric."

"Then it's by water," Dalris says approvingly. "I'll send a messenger raven ahead of us, and a fishing vessel will be waiting when we reach the southern coast."

The trip to the coast is a short one, especially with Dalris to guide you through the forest she has known since she was a child. Rufyl's thoughts along the way are filled with misgivings about sea travel, and both you and the bard try everything you can to get the pseudodragon to relax.

The fishing boat is a bulky scow with two sets of long oars, one large but ragged sail, and a powerful stench of rotten fish. The three of you make yourselves as comfortable as possible, you and Dalris still soothing Rufyl's fears. The taciturn fishermen return to their tasks. It's nearly dusk when you spot the port city on the horizon. You also spot something more menacing—a fast ship flying the flag of the Saven archclericy is bearing down upon you.

"Marines!" blurts one of the fishermen. "An' they be well-armed! I count twenty cannon!"

"She's breakin' colors!" the lookout calls. You can see a string of brightly colored pennants streaming from the mainmast to the bow of the marine vessel. They're message flags, meant to give an order to the men on the fishing boat.

"Can you read it?" calls the captain to the lookout.

"Aye! They want us to come to and let 'em board!"

The captain of your craft turns to you and Dalris and shakes his head. "There's a slim chance we could make the coast before they can blow us out of the water," he tells you. "We could lose that big ship once we get into the shallows. The only way they could chase us then would be by dinghy."

"Do we have any choice?" asks Dalris.

"We could let 'em board like they be askin'," he replies. "They'd blow us to pieces if we tried anything else. You just tell us what to do, mistress."

Dalris frowns, then looks at you, uncertainty in her eyes. "What do we do now?" she asks. "Let them board us (207), or run for the coast (189)?"

114

As you trudge forward in the stinking mire, you can barely see Dalris's thin shape through the thick yellow fog. Rufyl's warning of an ambush has made the bard draw her shortsword. Likewise, you decide to choose an offensive

spell from the powerful ones in your memory —spells like Burning Hands (51), Sleep (94), Magic Missile (176), Fireball (201), and Lightning Bolt (195).

“Go to Dalris, Master! The thing I sensed has her!”

Rufyl’s urgent telepathic cry forces you to decide quickly upon a spell. You rush forward just as a giant humanoid hand is pinning the bard’s arms to her side and lifting her out of sight into a patch of denser fog.

Be sure to mark the spell you select off your Stats Card; then turn to the appropriate section.

115

“Hold your weapons, friends!” you shout to the half dozen large gnolls who have their spears and pikes ready to thrust into your boat. Two of them also have pole lanterns which they hang over your head, causing you to squint in the harsh light. “We’re not leaving, we’re coming! We just left a merchant ship in the harbor.”

“Why you come island?” demands one of the bestial guards in his coarse gnollish accents. In the lantern light, his yellow-brown muzzle hairs are tipped with gray.

You pause only for a second before replying. “We come from the Kandian coast with important news for Master Arno! Take us to him at once!”

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 177. If it is less, turn to 194.

116

At first, you think that the powerful Polymorph Other spell isn’t going to work. Then you hear a terrible cry of agony, the bellowing and thrashing of a huge creature.

“It worked!” you exclaim, listening to the sound of a heavy body thudding to the marshy ground. The noise stops abruptly, followed by a shrill squeal.

“You haven’t destroyed the thing’s intelligence, Master,” warns Rufyl. *“I can still sense its thoughts—and its fury!”*

“Now what?” mutters Dalris.

You follow her gaze to the ground, where an irate field-mouse is charging through the mire toward the three of

you. It would be easy to smash the tiny rodent with your staff before it reaches you (204), although you're tempted to let Dalris use her druid skills to soothe its anger (47) and let it live.

117

The blast of psionic energy from Pazuzu's powerful mind is completely unaffected by the sceptre's protective radiation. One of the last clear thoughts you have is a regret that you prepared only for a magical confrontation. Psionic battles require many more weapons and defenses than you could ever hope to deal with.

You crumple senselessly to the floor of the sanctuary, with the nerve cells of your brain scrambled and disjointed. The Sceptre of Bhukod falls free of your limp grasp and rolls toward your old rival, but you'll never know if there were more charges in the wand or not. ✘

118

The bard is silent for a long time. You can do nothing but cling to the roc's huge talon and wait for her to try her druid magic again. Then, Dalris's sudden cry alarms you until you realize that it's one of elation.

"Rufyl's mind is still in this monster's brain somewhere, Carr! Look! We're turning away from the swamp and heading for the coastal highway!"

You wedge your face between two steel-hard claws to get a glimpse of the ground below. Sure enough, the giant bird is flying northward, beyond the miasmatic greenery of the coastal swamp. Within several minutes, you can make out the highway, a reddish ribbon of clay slicing through the lush forested hills along the Kandian coast.

"Be ready to run for the forest!" you shout to Dalris. "This thing may have heeded you once or twice, but that's no guarantee it'll do it again. If it's hungry, it'll grab the first thing it sees—US!"

You wait in tense silence as the huge monster soars inland, following the dirt road for a mile or two before zooming down to the hard-packed surface. The talons open just seconds before the great beast lands. You let yourself hang downward from a huge claw until you can hit the

road running. But your knees buckle and you hit the road surface with such force that you roll over and over before slamming into a massive tree trunk.

To see how much you are injured, roll 1 die and deduct the result from your remaining hit points.

"Carr! Wake up! I can't control it any longer!" Dalris's urgent cry pulls you from the depths of unconsciousness. You force your eyes open and fight the terrible pain in your back to stare at the bard's worried face. You smile stupidly, still disoriented and confused.

"Snap out of it, Carr!" the anxious bard demands. "Cancel your spell on Rufyl before it attacks us! It's not hearing me any longer!"

You shake your head, suddenly remembering what happened. You see the roc behind Dalris, cocking its beaked head and studying both of you. It reminds you of a hunting eagle eyeing its prey.

The only incantation you know that might remove your father's Polymorph Other spell is Dispel Magic. If you've already used it, or if you choose not to use it now, turn to 25. If you want to use it, turn to 216.

119

"Foolish human! Do you dare attack Shanif, mightiest of marids, with such puny magic?" The words fill your mind so completely that they seem to have come from your own thoughts instead of from an external telepathic creature.

"What is a 'marid,' Master?" Rufyl asks as soon as the monster's thought passes.

"I am Lord of the Yellow Marshlands!" The answer booms in your minds before you can reply to Rufyl.

"Dalris!" you shout into the thick yellow fog surrounding you. "Can you hear me?"

"I'm all right!" the bard cries from a great height.

Suddenly a soft whistling sound is all around you. The dense sulfuric haze begins to swirl more rapidly, concentrating into a yellow mist which then clusters into drops of yellow rain. The stinking downpour drenches you and Rufyl, staining your clothes and giving the russet pseudo-dragon an unsightly orange color.

The magical shower passes, leaving the noon sun beaming down upon you and your familiar, and upon the giant creature whose own magic was far stronger than yours.

Turn to 142.



120

I could change Rufyl or Dalris temporarily into a form powerful enough to handle the thing in the fog! you think.

According to your research, the intelligence of a subject cannot be increased by the Polymorph Other spell. *That means the new form will be restricted to the average intelligence of a pseudodragon if I use Rufyl, and the thing down there has got to be a lot brighter than that.*

You glance at Dalris's slim figure advancing slowly into the fog and know what you must do. You bow your head closer to the page and begin to translate every word of the Polymorph Other spell, focusing upon the bard as its target. At the spot in the incantation where you must name the new form to be assumed, you pause, then add a phrase describing Dalris's new shape as 'anything stronger than the thing in the fog.' You're on the last few words of the spell when Dalris's urgent cry breaks your concentration.

"Help me, Carr! Help!"

Leaving the last line unread, you leap to your feet and rush forward just in time to see a gigantic hand close around Dalris's upper body. In desperation you force yourself to concentrate on your father's cryptic scrawl and try to finish the Polymorph Other spell.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 27 or more, turn to 71. If it's less than 27, turn to 87.

121

Returning to your own small but comfortable log hut, you sit at a long table that stands beneath the hand-hewn book-

shelves containing the lost secrets of ancient Bhukodian sorcery. It was at this very table that your father, the famed archmagus Landor, conducted his research into the magic of his ancestors, the sorcerer-kings of Bhukod.

Since acquiring Landor's books and materials five years before, you've spent every moment you could spare at this same table, cramming every detail of Landor's precise descriptions into your brain as soon as you managed to translate them from his coded scrawl with your own Read Magic spell. The results of your labors are contained in a massive looseleaf book on the bottom shelf, each parchment page containing your own encoded copy of a single spell from your father's many books.

You open the heavy tome on the desk and pull the oil lamp closer. Then you leaf through the spellbook, page by page, to decide which of the lesser spells you will study for your mission, since you don't want to take the massive book with you. Finally you select a balanced group of your most powerful lesser spells and begin to study them, one by one. [NOTE: These are the spells listed under "Book of Lesser Spells" on your Character Stats Card.]

It's after midnight when you finish reviewing each of the spells in your arsenal and reach for your father's cloak with its permanent Deepockets enchantment. The garment is a colorful cape like those worn by traditional Kandian actors. It is embroidered with ancient Bhukodian mystical symbols which you recognize from Landor's spellbooks but which are simply unusual designs to anyone else. You systematically stuff the enchanted cape's pockets with all the components you need for the incantations you've selected.

As a final measure of magical power, you find the small bound sheaf of your father's original spells, which you've been working with lately. You plan for its spells to become the first entries in a new book of greater magical spells, but your translations are incomplete. You might still use any of these advanced spells as if they were magical scrolls. You just have to read them very carefully, not memorize them. [NOTE: These spells are listed under "Traveling Book of Greater Spells" on the Character Stats Card.]

Satisfied that your spellcasting arsenal is ready for the

mission, you reach for the enchanted quarterstaff Perth gave you as a symbol of your office as tribal mage. Made of bronzewood and banded with iron, the magical weapon will, upon your command, grow until it reaches a maximum of twice its normal six-foot length.

Then you gingerly open the stiff leather pouch to check your three poisoned darts. Dalris helped you gather the blooms of the tri-flower frond from which you have distilled the powerful narcotic on their tips. The merest scratch from one of your darts will cast your victim into an immediate coma just a shade lighter than death itself.

Tossing the pouch on top of the cloak, along with your staff and a small dagger, you collapse on your cot. You fall asleep still trying to decide whether you should begin your dangerous mission in Saven (95) or on Seagate Island (137).

122

“Trope gahn!” you mutter, swinging the enchanted quarterstaff at the paladin’s lance. The magical staff flares with a rosy glow a bare instant before it splinters the heavy wooden lance a few inches below the haft. You duck beneath the warhorse’s armored muzzle and dart for the road, hoping to reach the barren marsh.

Dalris wastes no time taking advantage of the distraction you provided. She slaps the younger paladin’s horse on the rump, sending it charging into the brush, and leaps into the road after you.

“If we can make it to the bog, their horses can’t follow us!” you shout as the swift bard catches you.

“Too late!” she gasps. “They’re running us down. We’ll have to fight!”

One glance over your shoulder confirms what Dalris has just said. The two knights have recovered from your surprise escape and are galloping full speed to cut you off before you reach the marsh. You whirl around, setting the butt of your quarterstaff in the clay of the road and aiming its tip for the first paladin’s throat.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to 200. If it is less, turn to 33.

At the instant you utter the last syllable of your spellword, the yellow fog around you vanishes. Nothing but a thick blackness surrounds you, a darkness so intense that you're afraid to move a foot. There's no sign of either Dalris or Rufyl in this strange place, not even a telepathic hint that the pseudodragon is reading your mind.

Just when you're getting accustomed to the deep blackness, your mind fills with a rush of words. They don't appear one by one, as if they were occurring in a sentence; instead they come in one great flash of awareness.

"WHY HAVE YOU DISTURBED ME?" is the message the words leave in your brain with such clarity and sharpness that you're too stunned to reply immediately. "YOU HEARD ME! WHAT IS IT YOU SEEK?"

"To . . . to know what creature waits in ambush below us!" you finally respond.

"WHAT? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU HAVE RISKED INSANITY FOR SUCH A FOOLISH QUERY?"

"Nevertheless, it's true. Who are you?"

"MY NAME IS ARIOCH, SIMPLETON!"

"Then tell me, Ariocho, what is the thing awaiting us in the yellow fog? Is it evil?"

"'EVIL?' 'IS IT EVIL?' YOU SAY!" This time, the words have a mocking impact inside your mind which is so strong that you are embarrassed at your own question. "YES!!" the voice booms.

You wait for an elaboration, but none comes. "Do you mean that it seeks to kill us?" you demand.

"OF COURSE!"

"Then, we shouldn't go any farther into Yellow Marsh?" you haltingly demand to know.

"NO!"

"Do you mean, 'No, we should not go,' or 'Yes, we should go?'" you insist.

"BOTH!"

"That's totally confusing," you mumble. "It's bound to be one or the other. Which is it?"

You wait long minutes, but there is no reply. The blackness around you begins to soften, taking on a golden glow

that gradually fades to the yellow haze of the foggy hollow in the marsh.

"Master! Are you all right?"

"Can you hear me, Carr?"

Dalris is shaking your shoulders while Rufyl is nudging your face with his cold reptilian snout. You breathe deeply and push them away. "I'm fine," you assure them, "but I think I may have just wasted a valuable spell. I contacted a being named Arioch who was most confusing." You give them a brief summary of your astral conversation.

"I think you're lucky to have escaped with your sanity," she says. "The only Arioch I know of serves as avenger for the archdevil Dispater! We certainly can't believe anything he said!"

"Then we can't believe his name, and we can't believe that the creature in the fog is evil," you mumble. "And we still have to decide whether to go on through Yellow Marsh (179) or back to the road (31)."

124

"Come closer so that I can see your face," you tell the stranger.

The cloaked figure steps into the spot of light from the tavern lamp. He's several inches taller than you, with a deeply tanned face and trimmed hair and moustache. From the top of his stylish hunter's cap to the tips of his fine leather court shoes, the man appears to be a cavalier.

"If you've had a good look, let's go inside the Moonstar where I can examine your wounds," he says.

Dalris gives you a hasty nod and turns to enter the tavern. You wince from the pain of your bruises as you take a step after her. The stranger grabs you as you lurch against the doorsill and supports your weight until you recover your balance. You feel tremendous strength in the cavalier's hands, and you know you wouldn't enjoy facing him in a physical confrontation.

Inside the tavern, a few regular customers eye you suspiciously as you enter with the well-dressed warrior. You think you see a sneer on several of their faces, but they turn back to their mugs and plates before you can be cer-

tain. You collapse in a chair while Dalris orders food and wine. Then you let the cavalier pass his hands over your injured ribs and and arm. You notice that his eyes are lifted upward, toward the ceiling, and his lips are moving slightly beneath his clipped moustache.

After only a few seconds, he stops and studies your face with a penetrating stare. That's when you notice that most of your pain has vanished, along with the redness on your arm. Roll 1 die and add the result to the number of hit points you have left. Do not exceed your original total.

"I sense that you have a mission here in Saven," he says.

If you're carrying the Sceptre of Bhukod, turn to 205. If not, turn to 89.



125

For the first time since you began studying magic, you find yourself hoping that a spell was less than perfect. If your Polymorph Other spell was too weak to change Rufyl's mind as well as his body into a roc's, Dalris's magic might work.

Suddenly the giant beast squawks loudly and shrilly. You hug its powerful talons more tightly as the mighty roc shifts its huge wings and drifts into a steep banked turn away from Seagate Island.

"It worked!" Dalris screams above the rushing wind. "He's taking us back to the mainland!"

The roc swoops along the thickly forested shore of Tikan-dia's coastline, apparently looking for a suitable landing spot. Below you, a barren marsh blanketed in thick yellow fog seems to offer no visible clearing large enough for the legendary beast's huge body.

“Tell him to land inland, near the road!” you shout.

“I did!” Dalris calls. “But I don’t think he understood me well enough. His brain is getting duller every minute!”

“Well, try again, unless you want him to put us down in the middle of Yellow Marsh—that’s what’s down there! We’d never be able to find our way out before nightfall!”

Once again, you hope that your reading of Landor’s Polymorph Other spell was not as powerful as it might have been. Yellow Marsh, with its legendary dangers, wouldn’t be a pleasant place to be after dark.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 26 or more, turn to **202**. If it’s less, turn to **118**.

126

“Display!” you command, pointing at the single door in the center of the college’s tower. The effects of your Detect Magic spell are instantaneous. A fiery dweomer flares around the heavy portal. It lasts for only a few seconds, but it’s long enough to show you that it is indeed trapped!

“I thank that Brigit of yours that you stopped me when you did!” you exclaim to Dalris. “We’ll have to climb the wall, just as we did five years ago. I hope my Spider Climb still works after all these years. Rufyl, you’ll have to stay here and be our lookout since those little wings of yours won’t get you up the tower.”

Dalris has already climbed several feet by the time you take off your shoes, eat the live spider smeared with bitumen, and mutter the elven phrase, all of which cause a sticky substance to ooze out of the pores on your palms and soles. You press your hands and feet to the sheer black rock and begin to climb like a human arachnid.

Cross Spider Climb off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **160**. If it is less, turn to **203**.

127

The Moonstar Tavern is just across the cobblestone street from the front entrance of Saven’s cathedral. It’s the most popular inn for all the Tikandian pilgrims who come to

worship at the ancient structure. You find a table near a window, from which you can watch the cathedral entrance while you try to learn what you can about Arno.

Dalris orders ale and cheese, wishing to avoid whatever dubious meats the cook has dumped into the communal pot. Following your father's rules for keeping your senses sharp while spellcasting, you sip on some light wine and nibble on a biscuit and cheese, although you've ordered two bowls of greasy stew for the ravenous Rufyl. You surreptitiously place one bowl on the floor for him. In just a few minutes you hear, *"Is there more stew, Master?"*

You check that no one is watching, then slip the full bowl down beside you where the invisible beast can reach it with his snout. When you feel Rufyl's snout brush your hand and hear the barest slurping sound, you quickly place the empty bowl on the table in front of you.

"Finished another bowl already?"

The serving woman has appeared quickly, as if she's been watching you from some hidden nook of the tavern. You wonder if she saw you feed the stew to Rufyl, but the familiar soothes you telepathically.

"Get one more bowl, Master, and tip her well because they haven't been busy for a long time."

You place the order, as well as one for more water, and wait until the woman leaves to tell Dalris what Rufyl read in the serving woman's mind. "I 'heard' him," murmurs the bard, "and I can see why she's worried. Look around us. This tavern should be packed this time of year, but I count only a dozen or so regulars. Something's wrong, Carr, and it has something to do with the cathedral."

You peer out the window at the great edifice. There are scores of people entering the cathedral, but it's too dark to see if they are actually worshippers.

"The tavern may not be doing business, but the arch-cleric's packing in the faithful," you mutter.

Dalris leans forward and tries to wipe a clean peephole, but you're interrupted by a strong masculine voice.

"Filth is all around you in Saven."

You twist around to face a tall, muscular man in his late twenties. His hair is meticulously barbered, as is his

clipped military moustache. He's wearing a fine horseman's cloak of split-suede leather secured at the throat by a silver chain. You see the dull glint of mail beneath the cloak and notice the silver spurs of a cavalier on his polished boots. Everything about the man reminds you of a professional soldier of the highest social standing.

"You seem to have more than a passing interest in the nightly procession of the faithful. May I join you?" he asks with courtly dignity.

"Be careful," Rufyl warns mentally. "He's a paladin and he's wondering if you're an enemy."

You glance quickly at Dalris, whose worried expression tells you that she received the familiar's warning, too. If you want to invite the stranger to sit with you, turn to 149. If you'd rather not talk to him, turn to 44.

128

"Just tell us how to stop Arno!" you demand. "That's the most critical issue right now!"

"Wisely put, son of Landor! I shall do more than tell you how to stop your rival. Hear now the tale of twin crowns, Carr Delling, and of their discovery by your father!"

The marid's mention of your father sends a chill along your spine. You sit with Dalris on a dead log while Shanif strokes Rufyl's head and begins his story.

"In the early days of Tikandia, when the elven races ruled, there existed a dual empire headed by two powerful queens. The somber one called Lolth was a dark elf, of the evil race known in Kandia as the Drow, while Aerdrie was fair-haired and gentle. The two queens seldom met, one preferring the gloomy depths of her abyss and the other enjoying the sun and sky."

"I've heard those names before," says Dalris. "They're goddesses, aren't they?"

"Demoness would be a better word to describe Lolth," Shanif replies, "but, yes. In fact, they are still worshipped today by some elves. Lolth has become much more powerful because of the devotions of the drow."

"Get on with your story," you urge the marid.

"As you wish, son of Landor. For a rare ceremonial occa-

sion, when both queens were to be seen together, a famed elven wizard fashioned identical enchanted crowns of adamantite for them to wear during the ritual. Centuries later, at the height of the Bhukodian empire, someone discovered Aerdrie's adamantite crown and enshrined it inside the temple of the sorcerer-kings."

"And my father found it?" you guess.

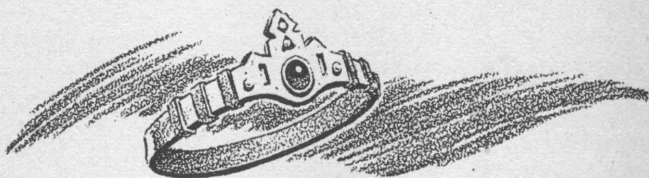
"Excellent deduction! Yes, Landor discovered the Sorcerer's Crown, as it was known at the time. He found it at the same place where he uncovered the Sceptre of Bhukod."

"What kind of magic enchants the crown of Aerdrie?" asks Dalris. "What are its powers?"

"Its powers are the same as the powers of Lolth's crown, which now adorns the head of your rival, Arno! That, of course, is the answer to your question, Carr Delling. You must confront your rival with equal power. You must find and wear the Sorcerer's Crown."

"But where is it?" you demand. "How did Arno find Lolth's crown, and how is he using it?"

Turn to 178.



129

"Our only chance to stop Arno is to get off this scow before those marines board it," you tell Dalris and Rufyl. "His evil influence has already spread to the high seas and will dominate Tikandia if we don't remain free to fight him. Show yourself, Rufyl! You're about to sprout wings and fly us off this tub!"

The reluctant beast is so afraid that his thoughts are nothing but a mass of jumbled fears. Still, he obeys your command and permits his miniature draconian form to assume its usual visible reddish tones.

"Look on the deck—it's a baby red dragon!"

The shout from the galley's lookout brings every marine on the vessel to the port side to climb the shrouds and gaze upon such an awesome and rare spectacle as an immature *Draco conflagratio horribilis*.

"Shoot it!"

"Kill it and its friends!"

You shut the cries of the excited marines from your mind and begin to read the Polymorph Other spell from Landor's parchment.

*"Forces of nature, hear my command!
I, Carr, Mage of Wealwood, thus demand
That the mortal shape of this beast be free
To assume whichever form I decree!"*

As soon as you utter the opening phrase, Rufyl's body goes limp, entering a dangerous phase of the spell when he exists only on another plane. You arrange his body in the center of the deck and begin to chant details you've gleaned from books about the appearance of a roc.

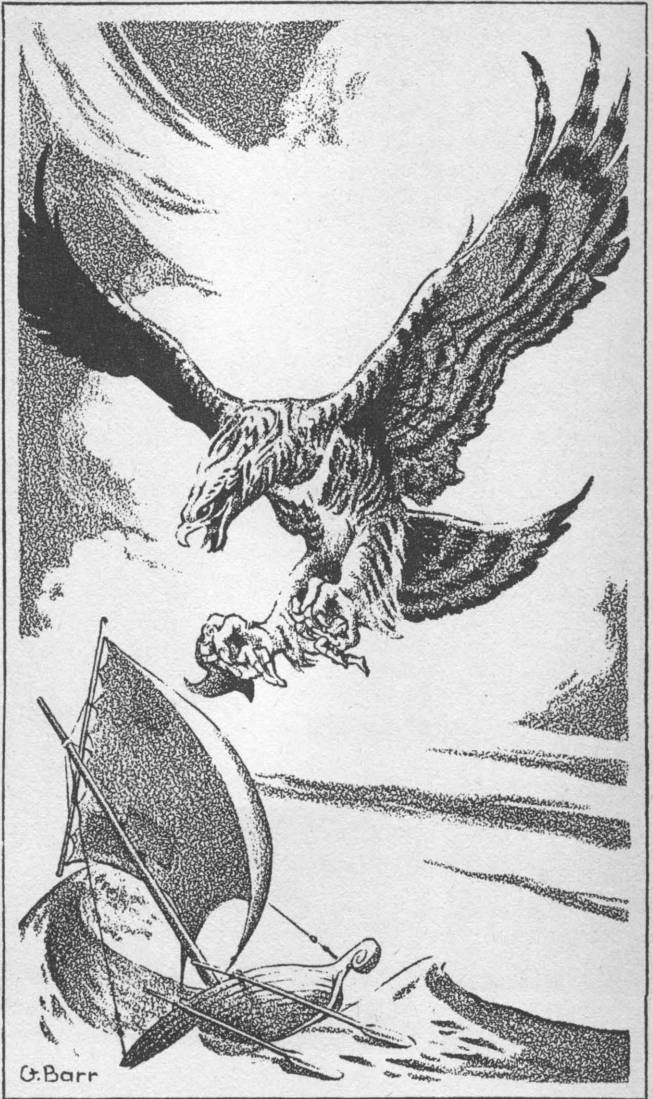
Just when you finish the long procedure, Rufyl's scal, shape starts to tremble. Your brain fills with your familiar's silent screams of agony from whatever plane his life force has been sent to. The little beast's body begins to swell as if an egg were hatching inside his chest. Suddenly, there's a gruesome rending sound as the scales split and a huge feathered creature emerges, growing ever larger.

"You did it, Carr!" yells Dalris above the combined screams of terror from the galley and the thunderous flapping of the roc's wings.

You expect to have the pseudodragon's thoughts appear in your mind as before, but the giant creature only squawks. "Your spell must have damaged his telepathy somehow," yells Dalris. "Squawk three times if you can understand me, Rufyl!"

The roc cocks a huge eye at the bard and seems to come out of some kind of stupor. Finally, it produces a rapid trio of deafening screeches. "Let's go, Rufyl!" you command, hoping that the spell hasn't altered your familiar's personality or intelligence. "Fly us to land!"

The powerful beast's wings unfurl, completely dwarfing the small fishing vessel. The bird's talons encircle you



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both, forming two secure cages for you to ride in. Then, with an effortless bound, the giant bird soars into the air, lifting you high above the two ships. You hear angry shouts from the galley as you fly toward Saven. Turn to **99**.

130

You've just managed to paddle the small boat between the pilings of the pier when one of your oars slaps the dark water. It's only a tiny sound, but it alerts the gnolls.

"Hawdip! Come quick! Humans is leaving island!" The guttural shouts are directed toward the large sail shed at the end of the wharf.

Before you can do anything to get away, two more guards emerge from the makeshift headquarters and join the four on the pier. With six of the armed monsters poised to strike, you don't dare try to fight, but you can probably take time to work a magic spell. However, you're not sure if you should reveal yourself as a magic-user to the gnoll guards. If you wish to use a spell, or if the Sceptre of Bhukod is with you, turn to **163**. If you'd rather just try to talk your way out of this situation, turn to **115**.

131

The only effect your simple cantrip seems to have upon the seasoned veteran is to heighten his anger.

"Kandian sorcerer!" he growls as he rams his spurs into his great warhorse's scarred flanks. The armored beast lunges forward, and the angry paladin plunges his battle lance deep into your chest. ✘

132

Joining your thumbs in the proper manner for the Burning Hands spell, you aim both hands at the older paladin on the bay stallion. From long practice, you know how to adjust the width between your fingers to produce jets of flame with maximum force and pinpoint accuracy.

"*Pfoebrauknayt!*" You mutter the Elvish spellword.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to **82**. If it is less, turn to **63**.

"This is your father's former familiar, Rufyl, I presume," says the marid.

"How did you know my father?" you cry, all thoughts of your mission to Saven forgotten.

"Are you sure that is the question you wish me to answer?" booms Sharif.

"What do you mean, *the* question?" you demand.

"I will answer any one question you choose to ask me, son of Landor, out of respect for your father."

"I thought fantastic creatures were supposed to grant three wishes, not answer one question," murmurs Dalris.

"I could do that easily, if that were my pleasure, Dalris of Wealwood. But I prefer to leave Wish spells to my lesser cousins, the genies and djinn. Being their intellectual superior, I enjoy mental rather than physical games."

Dalris grabs your arm and pulls you around to face her. "This is our chance to find out what Arno is up to without having to go to Saven!" she exclaims.

Your head agrees with the bard, but your heart yearns to know more about your father. You hesitate.

"Is it not a difficult choice, Carr Delling?" thunders the marid in your brain. "You desire to know your father's greatest secret, yet you also wish to ask me about Arno, your old rival from College Arcane."

"Since you can read my mind, you know that I seek to learn of the threat that Arno brings to Tikandia from Seagate Island, and of a way to end it. Can you give me that information, Shanif?"

"Those are two questions, not one. You must choose between knowing the nature of Arno's power and possessing the knowledge you will need to confront him."

You turn away from the marid, perplexed. Shanif will reveal Landor's greatest secret (17) or the nature of Arno's great power (56) or how to combat the evils that confront Tikandia (128). The choice is yours.

Once you close the outer door, the chanting on the other side of the passage wall becomes more noticeable. It seems

to consist of the same muffled phrase, repeated over and over again. The sound reminds you of the practice sessions at College Arcane where dozens of novices were required to repeat and repeat monotonous phrases in dead languages until their pronunciation was perfect. You don't recognize the words you're hearing now.

The secret corridor ends after about a hundred feet. A small slit in the end wall, approximately level with your eyes, lets a little light into the passage. The paladin and Dalris are staring intently through the opening.

"Have a look," Garn whispers, moving aside carefully so that you can squeeze your face and body next to theirs.

You stare through the peephole at the main altar of the great cathedral. You can see the entire sanctuary and nave by the soft light of hundreds of candles mounted around the walls. The 'pilgrims' you saw outside have removed their robes and are standing with their eyes fixed upon a small man facing them from the steps in front of the altar. Nearly every one of the worshippers wears the scarlet crossed logs of Blessed Dyan on a surcoat over full battle armor, some of which glows with the dweomers of various enchantments.

"They're all paladins!" Dalris mutters.

"Not any more!" whispers Garn. "They've all dishonored their oaths and their souls by listening to that vile magician and worshipping the demon on the altar."

You switch your attention to the small man the paladin mentioned. From the rear, you can only see the dark skin of his hands and the jet black hair hanging in uncombed tangles to his white-robed shoulders. Between you and the dark celebrant, a polished wooden statue stands in the center of the altar. Its hideous features draw your eyes.

The statue is of an incredible winged creature, with the torso and limbs of a muscular human male, but the head and feet of an avian monster. The soft candlelight, combined with the monotonous chants, make the figure's crested head, cruel beak, and taloned feet seem all the more sinister.

The leader of the ritual turns to face the statue, and you recognize the drawn features immediately. It's Arno, your old enemy from College Arcane! His very dark face is more

wrinkled and blemished than you remember it, as if his immersion in the darker side of magic has taken its toll. The mass of hair is held in place by a gleaming adamantite tiara carved with symbols and glyphs you don't recognize.

Arno extends his hands to the statue and begins a new chant, much simpler than the first. It consists just of the same name uttered in triplets again and again. Soon, the entire congregation of perverted paladins is shouting, setting up a rhythm that vibrates the walls of the cathedral.

"PAZUZU! PAZUZU! PAZUZU!"

You study Arno's features through the slit, trying to see if he's using any familiar magical procedures, but he is concentrating only upon the statue. Suddenly, one of the carved feathers on the wooden image moves! At first, you disbelieve your eyes, thinking that it may be a trick of the flickering candlelight, but then the crested head twitches! Arno's chant is bringing the statue to life!

If you have learned of a creature called 'Pazuzeus,' turn to **158**. If not, you may remain in hiding to see what more you can learn; turn to **210**. However, if you think you know enough, prepare to confront Arno! Turn to **199**.

135

You're sure you can outrun Arno and the monster called Pazuzu, and you don't want to waste one of your precious spells. Your two enemies are charging at you as you dash through the secret door and head for the alley entrance behind Garn and Dalris.

Suddenly the secret passageway is flooded with an unnatural light. You glance over your shoulder to see Pazuzu's crested head framed in the open panel from the sanctuary. Before you can turn away, the monster's eyes seem to ignite with an inner red fire. Twin beams of psionic energy rip into every nerve cell in your brain. You collapse in a helpless, thoughtless heap on the dusty floor. ✘

136

Your eyes are glued to the title of the Contact Other Plane spell. You're not exactly sure of the spell's effects because you haven't tried to translate your father's notes

on the known planes of existence beyond the material world. Those are advanced magical topics which you're just beginning to explore.

"Can't you stop reading that damnable stuff long enough to get past this stinking fog? Didn't you hear me?"

Dalris's irritated whisper slices into your thoughts. The bard is standing several yards ahead of you with her sword drawn. She nods toward the thicker fog. "Are you coming or not? There's something in there and we have to get past it if we're going to cross Yellow Marsh."

You point at the traveling spellbook's open page. "That's why I stopped," you reply. "This is one of my father's more powerful divination spells. If I cast it, we can contact a being on another plane of existence and ask it to tell us what kind of creature lives in that fog. We might even be able to ask advice on finding Arno!"

Dalris's face twists into a troubled expression. "You're really crazy! We don't have time for you to experiment with one of Landor's advanced spells. Even if we did, I don't think you're ready for that kind of magic. Now put that book away and let's get out of this bog."

"No, Dalris! There's nothing to this spell," you insist. "No gestures, no devices, no components, just a few words and some concentration. Please stay here long enough for me to try it. If it doesn't work, we'll do it your way."

"*I don't like it either, Master,*" adds Rufyl. "*I traveled with your father once to the Astral Plane. Some of the strangest creatures . . .*"

"Quiet, Rufyl!" you say, interrupting the pseudodragon's mental monologue. "Now, both of you, let me have just a few minutes of silence while I translate this spell."

Your two companions comply, waiting in the swirling yellow fog while you read the High Elvish inscription aloud one word at a time so that your pronunciation will be accurate. It's a long incantation, and you're aware of the unearthly silence all around you at the instant you utter the last syllable.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to 123. If it is less, turn to 8.

You're out of bed and dressed before the yellow Tikan-dian sun casts its first rays through the huge oaks guarding Wealwood. Grabbing your gear and a rolled map, you shut the door behind you. Landor's secrets were safe under Perth's watchful eyes for nearly twenty years, and the archdruid permits no locked doors in his sacred grove.

Dalris and Rufyl are already waiting outside her father's domed lodge. "I was just going to send Rufyl for you," says the bard. "You look like a minstrel in that bright cloak."

"Let's hope any guards we meet think the same thing. Where's your father?"

"Still chanting over Thayne's body," she replies solemnly. "He won't stop until he's sure there's no hope. Have you thought about where to begin our mission?"

"We must discover the source of whatever power Arno is using to corrupt the paladins, and that means we have to start on Seagate Island where he started," you tell your companions. "While we know Arno's in Saven, we have a perfect opportunity to scout the Island. If we find what we're looking for, maybe we can sabotage Arno's deal with Archcleric Oram and his corrupt paladins by undercutting his base of power!"

"We have hundreds of loyal kinsmen who fish the waters around Seagate every day," says Dalris. "Their boats are small and slow, but we can be on the island by nightfall."

You leave things in the bard's hands as you go to Wealwood's shore. The fishermen, who were just about ready to sail anyway, readily agree to convey the three of you to Seagate Island, not only because she's the archdruid's daughter. They clearly like and respect Dalris for herself.

After a long, leisurely day of unsuspecting fishing, the boat nears the island. At sundown, the boat's master brings a lantern and a map of Pirates' Alley and asks where you want to land. You study the nautical chart.

"I see only three ways to get past Arno's barricade. Here, at my mother's old village of Delmer, is one. The main dock at Freeton is another—because fishing and trade must continue," you say, pointing to Seagate's ancient port city, "and the third is here, on the southern coast. We could

work our way through the marsh until we reach Thayne's people in the highlands. They'll be willing to help."

"Which is least likely to be guarded?" asks Dalris.

"That's anyone's guess," you reply. "Thayne might be able to tell us, but he's dead." You clench your teeth for a moment and then continue. "We'll just have to choose one and hope we're lucky."

Will you land on Seagate Island at your mother's native village of Delmer (2)? Or at the main port of Freeton (57)? Or on the uninhabited southern side of the island (80)?

138

To your delight, your simple cantrip works! The seasoned warrior's head whirls around to look over his shoulder. In a flash, you whip your enchanted quarterstaff against his battle lance and knock it aside. Turn to 155.

139

Thrusting your hand deep into one of the hidden pockets fashioned by your Deepockets spell, you find the vial of fine sand you need to cast the Sleep incantation. You reach in front of Rufyl's vigilant figure to toss the sparkling grains into the paladin's face.

"Shhhhh!" you whisper, your finger to your lips.

The knight's eyeballs quiver twice, then roll backward before their lids clamp shut. His armored chest rises and falls deeply, and his heavy breathing is accompanied by snoring sounds.

"My, my, Wizard Delling, you seem to have discovered an instant cure for insomnia!" As usual, the bard tempers her admiration for your magical talents with sarcasm.

"He'll sleep all night, unless someone wakes him," you tell her. "That ought to give us plenty of time to take care of our business in Saven."

"Not if we stay here while you congratulate yourself," quips the bard. "Vesper services begin at sundown. That will be our best chance to sneak unnoticed into the cathedral. Get your pet dragon and let's go!"

"I am not a dragon, Mistress," Rufyl protests telepathically. "The antiquity of my race is—" You smile as your

pedantic familiar ambles forward to Dalris's side, his mental monologue on the history of pseudodragons promising to last all the way to Saven's gates. Turn to 100.

140

With intense concentration, you point your index finger at the college's only entrance and whisper the command word for your Detect Magic spell. If the object of your incantation possesses a magical dweomer, this should reveal it. You wait in breathless silence, but nothing happens.

"The door isn't spellbound," you tell Dalris and Rufyl. "Come on!"

You step onto the dark stone threshold and grasp the handle of the heavy panel, only to be consumed instantly by a blast of white-hot flames! Your intelligence was simply not high enough to counteract the combined Permanancy and Fire Trap spells placed upon the door by some unknown but powerful mind! ✘

141

You quickly form the first two fingers of each hand into a forked 'V' shape and point with one hand at each of the mounted knights. Then you mutter the mystical command phrase to activate your Magic Missile spell. "*Ruspal!*"

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to 104. If it is less, turn to 63.

142

You stare in amazement at this magical giant who somehow knows who you are and what you're thinking. You point to Dalris and start to ask why he grabbed her, but the marid answers your question before you can ask it.

"*Observe where the bard was walking, son of Landor!*"

You do as the marid says, stepping closer to examine Dalris's deep footprints in the sulfuric mire. Your own feet begin to sink in the yellow ooze, and the surface of the mud begins to bubble and quiver. While you stare in disbelief, a bulky form rises slowly from the muck ahead of you, a formless lump of the mud itself.



"It's a mud-man, Carr. Get out of the mire before it starts throwing itself at you!" screams Dalris.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **190**. If it is less, turn to **59**.

143

"I still say you're mistaken," you insist firmly. "Now will you show us the secret entrance to the cathedral, or do we have to find it for ourselves?"

The paladin stares at you coldly for just a second or two, then shrugs and says, "As you wish. You'll need all the help you can find." Garn turns away and signals the barmaid to bring a check for the food and wine.

"We'll be outside, Garn," says Dalris. Fury makes her voice colder than you've ever heard it before.

Turn to **214**.

144

"There are only three or four guards. We could take them with or without magic!" Dalris urges.

"How many do you sense, Rufyl?" you ask your familiar. The telepathic beast raises his dragonlike head.

"Six. Four of them are on the wharf and two others are asleep in the sail shed at the end of the pier."

Dalris gestures toward the dock. "If we can get under the pier, we might be able to surprise them. Without a moon, I doubt if they'll see us in the water. They're trying to keep people *on* the island, not off it, so they won't be expecting an attack from the water."

Paddling silently, you and the bard manage to ease the skiff beneath the pier. Through the wide cracks in the boards just above your head you can see a gnoll's dirty feet.

Turn to **130**.

145

The trek into the rugged highlands of Seagate's interior plateau takes you nearly a week. As you near the remote forested ridges of Thayne's native home, you begin to encounter wagonloads of wounded gnolls and orcish halfbreeds descending the mountains. Each time, Rufyl's

telepathic sense gives you ample warning so that you're able to hide and wait for the wagons to pass.

"The fighting must be fierce in Thayne's clan territory," mutters Dalris after one such wagon rumbles past you with its cargo of maimed and broken monsters.

"I never thought that Thayne's people would give up very easily," you reply. "They're much too proud of the High Elvish heritage."

In mid-morning of the sixth day on the trail, Rufyl stops you once more with a telepathic warning. "*I sense trouble, Master. In the trail, just ahead!*"

You lead your two companions into the cover of the thick forest along the trail, then carefully move parallel to it until you see a strange drama unfolding.

Ahead of you, and totally unsuspecting, is a mounted paladin wearing glimmering plate armor with visored helm and shield. The scarlet surcoat bears the crossed-logs insignia of Blessed Dyan. Lying in ambush in the bushes by the trail is a short, gnarled demihuman, dressed in a black leather tunic guarded by overlapping rings of bluish-white metal. The small creature's ugly head is completely bald except for bushy gray eyebrows which contrast vividly with his dark brown skin. The gnarled little fighter's only weapon is a war-dart held poised in his hand.

"What kind of creature is that?" Dalris whispers.

"I don't know, but he's either brave or stupid to fight a fully armored paladin with a single war-dart!" If you wish to intervene in the ambush, turn to 184. If you'd rather just wait and see what happens before doing anything, turn to 212.

146

The speed with which the incantation starts to take effect surprises you. The roc is enveloped instantly by an opaque shroud of green-tinted energy. The magical casing bulges as the beast squirms, and you fear for a moment that it can't contain the monster's sharp talons and beak.

"Look! It's starting to shrink!" Dalris says breathlessly.

Before your eyes, the enchanted casing containing the roc begins to harden and wither like the pod of a pea plant!

You can no longer see the roc's sides heaving, and you fear you've killed your familiar with untested magic. In mere minutes, the wrinkled hulk of the magical envelope is no larger than you are, and it begins to crack open.

As the casing splits, the pieces fall to the ledge. Rufyl's scaly red body lies curled in a ball amid the dried shell!

"Rufyl!" you cry, rushing to your familiar's side.

"Is it absolutely necessary to wake me, considering what I've been through?"

"No, I could have let you sleep while Dalris and I left you to your brother and sister rocs." You poke the pseudodragon and urge him to his stubby legs.

"Let's get away from this cliff before the sun goes down. I don't know when rocs feed, but I don't want to be around when they do." Dalris's whisper reminds you of the dangers surrounding you. The bard's leather-clad figure is already melting into the deepening shadows of the rocks near the edge of the precipice.

"Where are we, Master? I can't remember anything."

"Later, Rufyl," you mutter. "Right now, we need to get farther inland before nightfall. I'll tell you all about it sometime."

The familiar's thoughts are a confused jumble of half-memories, but he follows you dazedly. The rocks feel strange beneath your feet, even though you spent several years of your youth in rough terrain like this. Your tender, uncallused hands soon ache from the sharp edges of the boulders you use for handholds.

Turn to 37.



"There's nothing I can do for him," you whisper to Dalris. "The only thing we can do now is try to stay alive long enough to get out of this swamp by dark. If we can make our way back to Wealwood, perhaps I can find a way to reverse the spell in my father's notes."

The bard looks at you in disgust. "Why didn't you think of that sooner? Rufyl's more than just a familiar. He's our friend, just as he was your father's friend!"

"There wasn't anything else we could do!" you object. "Now let's go, before that roc smells or sees us!"

You push yourself away from the log, worming your body backward through the slime. You've nearly made it to a small clump of dead bushes when the huge predator screeches and bounds toward you and the bard!

"Too late!" you cry. "It's seen us! Run for it!"

Dalris leaps to her feet and dodges past you, her leather soles slipping on the wet clay. The roc watches her sliding on the mud for a moment, then switches its attention to you. You try to back slowly away from the hungry creature, but a fallen sapling brings you down. You land sitting in a patch of yellow mud, just before one of the monstrous talons pierces your skull. ✕

If she can convince them without magic, I can too, you think angrily to yourself as Dalris moves defiantly into the middle of the road. You brush dust from your Kandian cloak with its brightly colored mystical symbols and wait silently beside the bard for the two paladin guards galloping toward you, lances ready.

"Greetings, Holy Guards of Dyan!" you call as the two mounted paladins rein their armored steeds to a halt, making you cough in a cloud of red dust. "How may we serve you, sires?"

The younger of the two, a surly dark man around your age, lowers his lance toward your chest. "We'll ask the questions here, Kandian fool!"

"Hold your lance," says the older paladin. "Let's not kill him before he talks. State your business on the highway!"

These are paladins? you think. You try to hide your astonishment at seeing the traditional defenders of good virtues and honorable causes acting like thugs.

"Players!" you announce with a flourish of your cloak. "Gentle actors come to ply our trade in Tikandia's loveliest city. Songs, stories, music, and dancing—that's our game!"

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is 23 or more, turn to 183. If it is less, turn to 41.

149

"Sit and dine with us," you urge the handsome cavalier. Dalris shoots a troubled look at you but says nothing as the elegant stranger bows and joins you at the table. The other customers glance nervously at each other, then return to their plates and tankards.

The cavalier glowers darkly at Dalris, studying her native buckskins and the distinctive black braid hanging to her waist. Most men find her supple curves and hazel eyes irresistible, but this one doesn't seem to notice her wild beauty. In fact, he pays more attention to the enchanted bardian flute stuck in her belt.

"Is that a Kandian instrument?" he asks in his polished urban accent. "Do you compose, or merely play?"

"Both," she replies quickly, with a trace of red beneath her deeply tanned cheeks.

"He knows about Dalris's magical flute!"

Rufyl's interjected thought flashes a danger signal to you, and Dalris, too, judging from the look in her eyes. Then the stranger switches his gaze to you and your native cloak without waiting for the bard to reply.

"As for you, sir, your dress is traditional, but your speech is not. Could it be that you're more than a simple Kandian minstrel?" The corner of his clipped moustache is curled in the slightest of smiles, and his dark eyes sparkle in pleasure at this confrontation.

"His mind is on your cloak, Master," reports Rufyl. *"He senses your Deepockets spell!"*

If you've brought the Sceptre of Bhukod with you, turn to 205; if not, turn to 89.

“Wait, Dalris,” you call softly into the thick yellow fog. “Come back and let me show you something.”

The bard returns with a look of disgust on her face. “I thought perhaps this mission would give you a relief from dabbling in that stuff,” she says with a nod at your traveling spellbook, “but I can see now that nothing could tear you away from it!”

“Settle down and listen to this,” you whisper excitedly. Before she can object again, you rapidly translate the description of the Polymorph Other spell. “Don’t you understand, Dalris? I can change that thing in the fog into a harmless insect, or a mouse, or . . .”

“Wake up, Carr!” the bard interrupts. “Perhaps Landor could have done what you’re suggesting, but you’ve only been studying magic for five years. Polymorph Other is too powerful for you to attempt without careful research.”

“I’ve done background studies, Dalris,” you insist. “I’ve just never actually attempted to cast the spell. Isn’t it worth a try before we go probing into that stinking cloud with just a sword and a staff?”

The bard’s stern expression shifts to one of exasperation. “Do it, Carr. Just do it! You won’t be content until you’ve played with everything in that book!”

“It’ll be all right,” you assure her. “You and Rufyl stay quiet and let me concentrate.”

You start reading the spell itself, translating it verbatim from Landor’s secret code. At the precise moment your mind grasps each word, it vanishes from the pages of the enchanted book.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 26 or more, turn to **116**. If it’s 25 or less, turn to **35**.

The giant roc continues to eye the two of you with a glassy stare, cocking its head and ruffling its feathers.

“I think your pet’s about to eat us,” whispers Dalris. “Hungry eagles look just like that before they dine on their prey. Can’t you reverse whatever spell you used?”

You've already considered that. The only spell you know that might cancel the Polymorph Other incantation from Landor's notes is Dispel Magic. You were planning to save it in case you had to face Arno's malicious sorcery, but now you're desperate.

You extend your left hand, palm outward, toward the immense beast, then twist it inward with a snap of your wrist. "Vyehdo!" you shout at the same time.

Turn to 146.

152

The staff whacks the back of the huge thumb with such force that it would have broken a normal human arm. An ugly orange welt rises instantly on the yellowish skin, but the fingers still clutch Dalris firmly. The back of the giant hand smashes at your chest, slamming you to the ground.

Roll a die and deduct the result from your Hit Points. Then turn to 119.

153

The crested monster's mental power is greater than any force you've ever met or studied. Pazuzu's psionic assault is so overwhelming that you feel as if each nerve cell in your brain is vibrating to disintegration. Yet somehow you manage to withstand the onslaught and clasp the Sceptre of Bhukod close to your chest. But still you just stand there.

"Carr! Snap out of it!"

Dalris leaps between you and the monster and slaps your face as hard as she can. You twist away from her stinging blows, feeling life return to your groggy head, and thrust her behind you.

"Both of you, get out of here!" you order Garn and the brave Kandian bard. "This is a magical duel now. We'll have to rely upon the sceptre!"

"Did you hear, great Pazuzu? Landor's brat plans to use the Bhukodian wand against us!"

You whirl around to face Arno, whose evil grin tells you that something is very wrong. You hold the sceptre high, letting its radiant white light fill the cathedral of Blessed Dyan. The congregation of renegade paladins appreciates

the power of the wand, even if Arno and his malevolent ally do not. Many of them fall on their knees and shield their faces with their arms, while others pray loudly for the protection of their gods.

“SILENCE, KNIGHTS OF TRUTH!”

Pazuzu’s metallic voice thunders in the great church, slicing through the fearful reactions of his followers.

“Observe the power of Pazuzu, messenger of Lord Dyan and Prince of the Lower Aerial Kingdoms!” shouts Arno.

The monster raises both hands high in the air above his hawkish head. From their open palms, twin rays of absolute blackness project toward you, converging upon and enveloping the gleaming triple knob of the Sceptre of Bhukod. The cloak of supernatural darkness stifles the enchanted wand so effectively that not even a minute glitter can escape into the sanctuary.

“See, Knights of Truth?” calls Arno. “Landor’s magic is nothing when confronted with the power of Pazuzu!”

“He’s right, Carr!” says Garn from the rear of the sanctuary. “We can’t do anything. Let’s leave while we still can!”

Though you cringe at the thought of Arno having such power, you know that the paladin is right. You thrust the darkened Sceptre of Bhukod inside your cloak and dive for the hidden panel. You have just time enough to cast either Hold Portal (40) or Wizard Lock (168), if you still have either one in your spellbook. Of course, you may decide to save both time and magic and try to escape without using a spell (135).

154

“My name is Garn—Garn of Ristling in the west country. Until last month I was a Knight Paladin in the personal service of His Excellency, Oram the First, Archcleric of Saven, Highpriest of Blessed—”

“Fine!” you interrupt impatiently. “Skip the titles and get on with the story!”

“Let Garn tell it in his own way, Carr!” Dalris interjects, her face flushed beneath the deep tan. You don’t need Rufyl’s telepathic powers to know why she’s defending the handsome cavalier, and it irritates you.

"My impatient companion is Carr Delling, and I am Dalris, daughter of Archdruid Perth of Kandia," she tells Garn. "Please pardon the interruption and continue your story. *Some of us want to hear it!*"

The paladin nods, smiles at you slightly, and resumes.

"Less than two months ago, the holy archcleric received a visitor from Seagate Island, a thin, very dark man who has since changed everything in Saven."

"Arno!" you mutter.

"That's the name!" Garn exclaims, his face betraying his surprise. "How did you know?"

"Later. Tell your story first," you insist.

"Very well. This 'Arno' has become Oram's constant companion and advisor. It was he who introduced the cult of Pazuzu among the Knights of Blessed Dyan—the cult which now threatens to destroy all that is good in Tikan-dia. Even now, my former colleagues are gathering in the cathedral to honor this demon in another unholy ritual."

You glance at Dalris to see if she recognized the name 'Pazuzu,' but her face is stony and she remains silent.

"Wait a minute," you tell Garn. "I thought paladins were sworn to combat evil in any form, and that they were endowed with supernatural powers to detect evil forces. How could Arno have overcome such powers?"

The cavalier's face darkens. He stares at his wine mug for a long time before answering. "That's a question I've asked myself a thousand times, Carr of Kandia. I have possessed those powers for good since I took the oath to Blessed Dyan. I knew that the man called Arno was evil from the moment he entered the cathedral. The paladins he has influenced are no longer my fellows!"

"Then that's why you're not wearing the crossed logs of the Order!" blurts Dalris.

"Indeed, lovely lady," Garn admits politely, without a trace of flirtation. "My erstwhile comrades have switched their allegiances from Blessed Dyan to the demon Pazuzu and his evil stooge, Arno. Their paladinhood is forfeit, as far as I am concerned."

"If that's so, then they have also forfeited their supernatural powers to combat evil," you observe.

“A reasonable assumption, friend Carr,” agrees Garn, “but a false one, nevertheless. In fact, I have witnessed them using greater evil magic than the holy powers which I still possess. It seems that their conversion to Pazuzu’s new sect has bestowed even greater powers upon them!”

“This is worse than my father thought,” Dalris murmurs to you. “The evil power your old rival now possesses must be very strong indeed to have corrupted the entire Order of Blessed Dyan!”

“Rival?” demands Garn. “I don’t understand what you mean. How could you be a rival of someone like Arno?”

If you wish to reveal your identity to Garn, turn to **193**. Turn to **21** if you decide to try hiding it.

155

“Run for the swamp!” you yell, ducking under the warhorse’s neck and racing for the opposite side of the road. Dalris slaps the younger paladin’s horse on its rump, sending it rearing against the charger of the other warrior. In the confusion, she springs past them and is only a few steps behind you.

It doesn’t take long for the knights to recover, however, and when you glance over your shoulder as you run, you see them galloping toward you at full speed. “We’re not going to make it!” you call feverishly.

You hold your magical staff out and shout, “*Trope gahn!*”. The staff extends to its maximum twelve-foot length, longer even than the paladins’ lances. Then you wheel around in the road and brace yourself for the coming collision.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **200**. If it’s less, turn to **33**.



“There’s one more thing, Garn,” you tell the paladin. “I want you to take the hollyphant-hide parcel I gave you back to Archdruid Perth at Wealwood. I didn’t know you well enough before to tell you, but it’s the legendary Sceptre of Bhukod. It may very well be Tikandia’s last hope of defeating Arno and Pazuzu, and I don’t want to risk losing it if one of your former paladin friends senses its aura.”

Garn’s face tightens. He reaches forward and clasps your arm firmly. “Thank you for entrusting me with such a powerful treasure. Killing me would be the only way anyone or anything will take it from me before I reach Perth!”

“Then I can go to Seagate with one less worry on my mind,” you tell the paladin thankfully.

Dalris, impatient as ever, has already risen from her chair and is pacing the floor. “Can we go then? As it is, we’ll be lucky to reach the island before daylight!”

Note on your Stats Card that you are not carrying the Sceptre of Bhukod, and turn to 106.

“If even an archmagus regards Yellow Marsh to be a dangerous region, then that’s the safest way for us to slip into the city,” you say, and you head into the forest.

Even the ancient oaks on the western boundary of Wealwood seem to recognize the ominous quality of the adjacent marsh, which is shrouded in yellow clouds of stinking sulfuric fog. Their giant boughs on the marsh side are stunted and barren, as if a curse has been laid upon all life.

“I told you this was an evil place,” thinks Rufyl.

“Those branches have been killed by the sulfur, not by any great evil,” you tell the pseudodragon aloud.

“That’s actually a good sign,” adds Dalris. “It means that there’s not enough vegetation in there to feed the giant monsters that the legends say are in Yellow Marsh.”

“Yes, but it could also mean that only meat-eaters can survive there,” you mutter, “and I don’t want to be anyone’s meat!” The bard looks at you with raised eyebrows but says nothing as she steps into the fog of the most forbidding region of druidic folklore.

She sounds confident, but her hand was on the hilt of her sword, you think.

"Perhaps Dalris's caution is wise," interjects Rufyl into your own thoughts. You'd forgotten for a moment that pseudodragons are so egocentric. Any time a human within his telepathic range of several dozen feet thinks something, Rufyl automatically believes it's a communication meant for his mind alone.

"No, Master," Rufyl's thought corrects you, *"I was trying to warn you of the dangers I sense right now!"*

"What's on his mind?" Dalris mutters, stopping in her tracks when the pseudodragon's thought enters her mind. You both stare at the bleak, grassless fen surrounding you, straining your ears for a hint of the dangers Rufyl is "sensing," but you hear nothing.

"Somewhere in this fogbound hollow there is a great intelligence," the little beast insists, *"and it already knows about us. I can feel its mind planning to stop us in the bog, just ahead. We would be wise to prepare for an attack, or even wiser to turn back and leave this horrible place."*

Dalris's hand tightens on the hilt of her sword as she squints through the swirling yellow fog. "Get a spell ready, Carr," she whispers. "I just saw something moving over there—something big!"

You hope that the spells you already have prepared will be powerful enough to handle whatever threat you may face. Just in case they're not, you feel for the reassuring bulge of the traveling spellbook inside your enchanted cloak. If you want to use a spell you've memorized, turn to **27**. To use a greater spell from the spellbook, turn to **61**. If you decide that there's no real point in wasting a spell, turn to **96**.

158

As you watch the statue being transformed into a living monster, you realize that this is the powerful "Pazuzeus" which Shanif mentioned in Yellow Marsh.

Dalris, remembering the same thing, turns toward you in horror. "That's the demon prince!" she gasps. "We can't fight a real demon!"

You nod and motion for her to remain perfectly quiet. Then you glue your eyes to the peephole to watch and listen to what is happening in the cathedral. Turn to **210**.

159

The cries and curses of the marines grow fainter as the fishing scow leaves the sinking galley behind and sails for the Tikandian mainland, some distance north of Saven.

"This is a busy shipping lane," you tell your companions, calling their attention to several sails on the horizon. "Those vessels will reach the wreckage in less than an hour, so we have to make ourselves scarce."

The skilled fishermen land you at a wooded cove where a small stream empties into the bay. To the left, a dense yellow fog hangs over a barren swamp; on your right, the forest becomes luxuriant and looks like the one at Wealwood.

"Where are we?" asks Rufyl.

"Not far from Wealwood," replies Dalris. "This desolate area to our left is probably Yellow Marsh. Much as I hate to say it, that might be the best way to get to Saven. If the highway wasn't already guarded, it will be now!"

"Yellow Marsh!" you exclaim with dismay. "Are you sure? Do you suppose those legends about it being inhabited by giant monsters are true?"

"Oh, no one believes those stories anymore," the bard answers coolly. "My father thinks the marsh is empty of wildlife because fumes from sulfur pits have destroyed the vegetation. What's the matter, wizard? Isn't your magic strong enough to protect you from a little bit of smelly air?"

"Your father thought Yellow Marsh was a very dangerous place," says Rufyl, sounding as if he agrees.

Accustomed both to Dalris's taunts and Rufyl's fears, you brush them aside in order to make your decision. If you'd rather risk facing guards on the highway, turn to **42**. To travel through Yellow Marsh, turn to **157**.

160

The Spider Climb spell works this time just as well now as it did when you first learned it five years ago. You catch up with the bard and pass her, reaching the battlement in

less than a minute. The effects of the incantation begin to fade while you're putting on your shoes and have completely dissipated by the time you offer your hand to help Dalris climb onto the tower.

"You'd make a good thief with that trick," she says.

"You're not so bad on a stone wall yourself! How sharp is your sense of nonmagical trap detection?"

She walks past you to the weathered wooden door leading into the tower, the same one you used when you recovered the Sceptre of Bhukod. The bard's expert fingers run lightly across every crevice and crack of the door.

"I can't find anything," she says, "but it's locked magically and I can't open it."

"Let me try," you tell her. You focus your concentration on the enchanted portal, letting the dweomer of your Knock spell mount inside your brain until it feels as if your mind will burst from the pent-up energy.

"*Nutush!*" you command sharply.

Cross the Knock spell from your list and turn to 171.

161

"Not so fast," Garn says swiftly. He nods in your direction. "You're carrying a certain magical item which would give you away instantly in a crowd of paladins. I detected its powerful aura with my Detect Magic spell the moment I saw you."

"You must have sensed the contents of my cloak's enchanted pockets," you reply, a little too quickly. "They contain the magical components I must use to cast spells, as well as a few handwritten incantations."

Garn smiles sadly and shakes his head. "I've encountered such auras many times before, Carr. What I sensed is far more powerful than a magician's gown and spellbook. I don't know what you're carrying, nor why. My only concern is that you not take it into the cathedral—its dweomer is likely to broadcast our presence to any paladin there."

"*He doesn't know about the Sceptre of Bhukod, but he does sense its presence,*" Rufyl warns you telepathically.

"I will hide your magical item, whatever it is, in my private quarters," Garn whispers. "My enchanted armor and



weapons are there, because of their own dweomers. Your secret treasure will be safe, I assure you.”

Perhaps he's one of Arno's henchmen, trying to disarm me of the sceptre before I confront his master; you think, as you try to decide whether to let Garn hide the Sceptre of Bhukod (81) or to ignore his warning and take it into the cathedral to spy on Arno (143).

162

“If we can stop the first wave of boarders, we might be able to convince them that we're too dangerous to play with.” Dalris looks skeptical. “They shouldn't send more than a handful of marines to board a fishing scow. I can handle five or six of them with my Magic Missile spell plus my staff, if you and Rufyl can deal with the rest.”

“Rufyl and I can handle ourselves, but we'll save one or two opponents in case you get bored,” the bard replies with icy sarcasm. “Get on with your show, wizard!”

“They're coming!” Rufyl flashes to your minds.

The marine galley is close enough to grapple, and suddenly their lines fill the air, coming toward you. The ship's shrouds swarm with marines, some of whom are already swinging across the diminishing space between ships.

“I count nine! Let's take them!” you yell.

You can't see Rufyl's small figure, but you know that the familiar must be at Dalris's side as she bounds forward with sword and dagger in her hands to meet the boarders. You pick the first four marines to swing to your deck and point at them with the first two fingers on each hand.

“Ruspal!” you shout, and you see the invaders' heads swivel toward you. A pellet of pure energy streaks from each of your pointing fingers, forming into four torpedo shapes before they slam into your chosen targets. You can hear the gasp from their fellow marines through the cries of the victims of your spell.

Three of the men you hit land on your boat, bleeding severely from the gaping wounds caused by your magic missiles. The fourth one splashes into the sea and vanishes beneath the water in a mass of bubbling red froth. While the other five boarders are still stunned by what they've

seen, Dalris wades into them with the fury of a seasoned battle veteran, wounding two of them before they are even aware of her presence.

You rush to help her, your enchanted quarterstaff raised. Just as you jab the staff at one of the confused marines, his mouth curls into a grimace of pain and his eyes roll backward, although you haven't touched him! The marine collapses on the deck, his eyes frozen open in a stare of death.

"*Sorry, Master. I didn't know he was yours.*" Rufyl's gleeful thought explains what happened to the marine. The invisible pseudodragon stung him with his poisonous tail, paralyzing him instantly. You grin, realizing how impressive it looks to the other marines.

"*Let's try that again, Rufyl,*" you command.

You lunge at another man, this time simply pointing your finger at him. The armored marine smiles and steps forward to attack you, only to freeze and drop in his tracks as Rufyl's poison enters his veins.

"Get away from that devil!" someone calls from the ship. "Jump off that cursed scow!"

The marines need no coaxing. They're already diving over the sides to avoid such powerful and deadly magic. You're just starting to feel victorious when Dalris points to the warship's shrouds. "We forgot the archers!"

Dread overwhelms you. The three of you are trapped on the open deck with no way to dodge the rain of deadly cross-bow quarrels from the marine marksmen. ✕

163

You try to concentrate on the spells you've memorized to cast the most effective one. Just when you feel the magical energy growing inside you, an eerie blue aura springs all around you, as if you, along with Dalris and Rufyl and the entire boat, have been painted with some phosphorus marker. The strange dweomer is so bright that it illuminates the entire waterfront.

"What happened? Did you do that?" shouts Dalris, sounding a little frightened.

"I don't know!" you reply, your magic forgotten. "I didn't do it. Arno must have trapped the port somehow with a per-

manent Detect Magic spell which is picking up our own dweomers!"

"Whatever it is, we're sitting ducks in this light!" the bard says, trying to shield her eyes from the glare.

"Kill sorcerer!" one of the gnolls yells.

Just before the rain of heavy iron spears descends upon the illuminated targets of your helpless bodies, you realize that Arno's power must be even greater than anyone imagined at the start of your adventure. ✕

164

The tiny ball of honeycomb wax mixed with powdered snake's tongue is already in your hand. First you pop it into your mouth, at the same time muttering the spell phrase, "*Mafran, mafran.*" Then you approach the supine paladin and wave Rufyl off his chest. The knight's muscles tense to take advantage of any opportunity to escape, but your enchanted words stop him.

"Rest easy, good knight," you say soothingly. "You saw through our disguise immediately. We aren't actors at all, but special agents of the archcleric himself, returning from a mission among the Kandian tribes. We have important information for Oram's ears alone."

"But you killed my lieutenant!" the veteran protests, although his eyes are already glazed by your enchantment.

"We had no choice!" you say. "Haven't you noticed his reluctance lately to follow orders? He was one of those plotting to overthrow the arch— No, I've said too much already. Hide the traitor's corpse. Then guard the road and allow no one else to pass. Oram's life depends upon your services!"

The paladin nods enthusiastically, then runs quickly to the officer's body and begins to drag it into the bushes.

"*Excellent!*" thinks Rufyl. "*A masterful charm!*"

You turn to see Dalris's reaction to your spell, but the bard merely shakes her head as she turns toward Saven.

"*She liked the spell, but she doesn't want to encourage you in your obsession with magical power;*" explains Rufyl.

"I know what she's thinking," you mutter as you leave the charmed warrior to his guard duty and follow Dalris.

Turn to 100.



165

In your haste to get inside the secret passage and shut the outer door, you lurch against Dalris. The bard stifles a startled cry. Unable to keep her balance, she falls with a loud thump against the wall. The chanting from the other side stops abruptly. You freeze, scarcely daring to breathe, until the stony silence beyond the wall is broken by muffled shouts.

“There’s somebody behind the altar! Get them!”

“We’ve got to get out of here before they trap us!” Garn exclaims.

Turn to **217**.

166

“It’s worth the risk,” you yell to the bard. “Use your druid magic to tell it to turn around!”

“I’ll give it a try,” she answers, “but I’ve never tried to charm a large bird in flight before. Just hang on in case something goes wrong!”

Dalris is quiet for several seconds, perhaps asking Brigit, her patron goddess, for help. Then her strong voice shouts against the roar of the wind.

“Hear me, great bird! Hear me, friend Rufyl! It isn’t time to roost! You must return to the mainland.”

You wrap your arms and legs around one of the transformed Rufyl’s monstrous talons and duck your head against the wind to wait for Dalris’s spell to work or fail. The stones of her druid’s torc will enchant her throat so that her words can be understood by animals, but whether or not Rufyl will obey her depends upon how much his mind was changed by your spell.

Test the power of your Polymorph Other spell by rolling 2 dice. Add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 26 or more, turn to **191**. If it is less, turn to **125**.

Now's my chance to finish the *Enchant an Item* spell on my poisoned darts, you think, remembering the manticores quill in the top pocket of your jerkin. You remove the stiff spike and turn to the parchment leaf containing the spell you've been studying more than any other for the past month. Then you reach for the set of poisoned darts.

You begin to translate your father's encoded wizard's scrawl, using your permanent *Read Magic* spell. At the instant each word is read, it vanishes from the magical parchment as if it were a scroll spell:

The sorcerer must have fashioned the intended object from as fine ingredients as are available.

His work must continue without interruption for at least forty-eight hours until the . . .

Forty-eight hours! I haven't got forty-eight minutes! you think to yourself. Then you realize that you've wasted one of the most precious spells in your father's collection by destroying its first two lines!

"Carr! Help me! Help!"

Dalris's anguished cry rips through your dismay and brings you instantly to your feet. You can hear the sound of scuffling in the fen just ahead and begin to run blindly into the noxious yellow fog. You catch a glimpse of the bard just as she is being lifted into a thicker patch of the stinking haze by a giant humanoid hand!

If you want to attack the hand with your poisoned darts, turn to 170. Or will you save your darts and use your enchanted quarterstaff (188)?

You know that your *Hold Portal* spell would bar a door temporarily and prevent humans from opening it, but you're not sure about its strength against creatures like Pazuzu. Arno and his hideous ally are already stepping toward you when you back through the hidden sanctuary door and slam it in their faces.

"*Dullen kustaff, ebirsund!*" you mutter quickly, holding your hands, palms outward, toward the secret panel. The bluish dweomer of your *Wizard Lock* spell flares instantly,

just as your pursuers begin pounding on the door.

"Come on, before they break through!"

Garn's cry tears your concentration from the incantation and its fading aura. Satisfied that the Wizard Lock will hold the secret door long enough to escape, you use its diminishing blue light to run for the outer door.

Turn to 217.

169

"Carr? Dalris?" This time, the startled cry comes from the paladin, who has raised his visor and is staring at you.

"Look, Carr!" exclaims Dalris. "It's Garn!"

"Who's 'Garn'?" demands the gnarled warrior with Thayne's mind.

"What are you?" counters the cavalier.

"*Humans are so inefficient at communicating,*" Rufyl thinks, adding his smug mental barb to the confusion. "*Why don't you all just sit down in the shade and ask each other questions until your respective stories are known to everyone? Speech is such a waste of time!*"

You smile through the chaos and repeat the familiar's remarks. Then all of you relax and follow Rufyl's wise suggestion.

Thayne was indeed saved by Perth's powerful reincarnation spell, but his mind and personality now exist in the gnarled body of a deep gnome, a svirfneblen. The svirfnebli normally live deep in the bowels of the earth where they work as expert miners of rare gems and are excellent fighters and users of limited illusionist spells.

"The good Perth saved me," explains the demihuman ruefully, "but this body is all his reincarnation spell could come up with. Ugly, isn't it? Oh, I miss my red hair." He sighs and adds, "However, these darts are the best weapons I've ever possessed, as you will see. My only problem is sunlight. I can see perfectly in the dark, but sunshine almost blinds me."

The reincarnated svirfneblin is squinting, his gray eyes obviously pained by the sunlight.

"I'll work on that," you tell him. "How about you, Garn? What happened when you left Saven?"

"I went directly to Wealwood, but the place was already ravaged by my former companions, who now call themselves the 'Knights of Truth,' and their monstrous allies from the north. I searched everywhere for your father, Dalris, and learned that he had sailed to Seagate in disguise several days before I reached the grove."

"Perth is here!" says Thayne. "We smuggled him and some of the other druid priests through the barricade last week. We're all living in the mountains now, only a few miles from here. Arno's gnolls and renegade paladins are no match for elven bows—and svirfneblin darts!"

Dalris gives a shout of relief and hugs the squat figure.

"What about the Sceptre of Bhukod?" you demand.

Garn reaches beneath his breastplate and removes the magical wand, still wrapped in its protective hollyphant sheath. You thankfully take it from his mailed hand and store the precious object under your own cloak. Then Dalris tells both your friends the story of your adventures until now. As usual, the bard's tale is so captivating that few questions are asked and few remain by the time she is through.

"Then the secret weapon we need to resist Arno and Pazuzu is this 'Sorcerer's Crown,' and not the Sceptre of Bhukod!" exclaims Thayne in his new, rumbling voice.

"That's how it seems to us," you agree. "Furthermore, your aunt Estla has had the crown all along, if our information is correct."

"I do remember hearing something about Aerdrie's tiara, a very long time ago," Thayne muses.

"Why don't we just ask her?" blurts Dalris. "I want to see my father, anyway. He must be crushed by the loss of Wealwood."

Turn to 220.

170

With cool precision, you fling the first poisoned war dart at the gigantic hand. The small feathered shaft whistles as it flashes through the yellow haze and embeds itself in the hairless tan flesh of the monstrous thumb. The druid poison is usually strong enough to bring an elephant to its

knees within seconds, but this time it seems to have no effect at all! You quickly throw a second projectile . . . and a third. Turn to 26.

171

The powerful force of your Knock spell shatters whatever incantation has been placed on the unbarred door and sends it flying open with a loud crash.

“Whew! What a stench!” exclaims Dalris.

The unmistakable odor of death and decay coming from the stairway beneath you assaults your nostrils immediately. Just inside the doorway, you see the rotten corpse of a robed man, its face half-eaten by rats and other vermin.

“Step over it!” you warn Dalris. “It could be infested with rot grubs!”

You descend to the next landing, where you pause outside the door to your father’s study and remember the first time you were here.

“Do you know what we’re looking for?” Dalris demands.

You put aside your memories and turn toward the other door on the landing, that of the college’s archives and library of scrolls. “We want to find every reference we can to some twin adamantite crowns,” you tell her. “After seeing that thing on the stairs, I no longer fear that we’ll be interrupted—you and I are the only living humans in College Arcane. The others were sealed in here by spells too powerful to break, and they probably died of starvation.”

Dalris’s eyes widen in horror, but only for a moment. Then she whirls around and heads for the scroller. The college’s archives seem to have been ransacked, but not by thieves or vandals. The scrolls have been opened and discarded in a great heap on the floor of the library, as if someone had conducted a hasty search for some particular spell or information.

“They were looking for a way out of here!” you tell the puzzled bard. “Perhaps a few of them made it. Perhaps they polymorphed themselves into something that could crawl under a door. Perhaps they found a teleport scroll and are now walking the streets of Freeton or even Saven. We really can’t say. Let’s just get busy!”

The bard shudders but gets right to work. After only a few minutes, she mutters a druid curse in frustration. "It's no use, Carr. They're all written in some kind of secret jargon I can't read!"

"Wizard's scrawl," you reply. "I was afraid of that. Even I have to use my Read Magic spell on some of them. If you're up to it, why don't you scout the tower and see if you can figure out what happened here. I'll keep on looking here."

The bard nods grimly and leaves you to your research task. As usual when you're around scrolls, you lose yourself and all sense of time. Several hours have passed when you finally spot the phrase "Sorcerer's Crown" with reference to Bhukod. You scan the small document quickly but see that it's only an inventory of the items Landor recovered from the ruins. You start to discard it on the heap but a shout from Dalris startles you so badly that you run onto the landing with it in your hand.

"The door, Carr!" she cries, pointing up the steps to the tower door. "It's sealed from the inside!"

Horrified, you rush to her side. "It must have been a powerful Wizard Lock instead of a simple Hold Portal incantation," you announce, "and I've used my only Knock spell!"

"Then we're trapped in here, just as those other poor fools were!" Dalris cries. "And for what? This?"

The bard grabs the scrap of parchment from your hands and starts to rip it into pieces, but suddenly stops and looks at it. "Ha!" she snorts. "This scroll in Common is probably the one parchment I can read, and it's just a list of magical items I'll never see!" But then she calms down and murmurs, "Sorcerer's Crown, hmm." She turns the scroll in her hands and then holds it out to you, asking, "Is this the name of Thayne's matriarch, Estla?"

You take the parchment from her and study it more carefully. Sure enough, in the left-hand margin, you see Landor's familiar script where your father has added a terse but informative note: "Presented adamantite crown to Estla at Aerdrie ritual."

"Thayne never needed the Sceptre of Bhukod," you tell Dalris. "He already had the only weapon that would have worked against Arno—right here on Seagate Island!"

"The Crown of Aedrie!" the bard gasps.

"The one they call the 'Sorcerer's Crown,' " you add grimly. "Thayne's aunt has had it all along, ever since my father gave it to her at this ritual. With it, Thayne's elves could have resisted whatever evils Arno summoned by the power of its twin, the Crown of Lolth."

The look of wonder fades from Dalris's eyes as you both realize that there's nothing you can do to escape the magical prison to tell Estla, the elven matriarch, of the great power she possesses. All you can do now is wait. ✕

172

You describe your stay at College Arcane and your frequent confrontations with the dour senior novice who resented the ease with which you learned magic as well as your relationship with the great Landor. Then you add everything that Thayne revealed before he grabbed the Sceptre of Bhukod, and tell of Perth's warnings about Arno's pact with unearthly forces.

"Ah. The Archdruid of Kandia! The father of this lovely wildflower," says Garn switching his attention to Dalris.

You expect the bard to be annoyed by such foolish flirtation, but she actually grins at the older man's sense of humor. Garn has a disarming manner that permits him to say outrageous things in such a way that no one takes him seriously, but which also invites their confidence. Even you are beginning to feel comfortable in his presence.

"There's nothing to tell," the bard says offhandedly. "I'm finishing my third year of bardic studies at Fochlucan College and I collect Bhukodian artifacts, especially magical ones such as my flute."

"So that's what I sensed with my Detect Magic

divination—among other things,” he adds with a pointed look in your direction. “But that means you’ve already mastered both fighting and thieving skills, doesn’t it? Unless I’m mistaken, you can’t attend a bardic college without such preparations.”

Dalris blushes slightly and nods. “My father sent me to Saven as his envoy when I was in my teens,” she says. “I learned swordplay from a young gallant in Oram’s household. As for the thievery, those were times of great intrigue between the Kandian people and their colonial masters. I was more of an ‘information source’ than a thief, but the skills are similar.”

“A spy! You were a spy in Oram’s household!” Garn exclaims. A look of uncertainty clouds his even features. You can see that the paladin is wondering about Dalris’s methods of espionage. *Just like a paladin to look for evil everywhere*, you think with minor satisfaction.

“My people are descended from the mightiest rulers of Tikandia,” Dalris retorts defensively. “Your so-called Holy Guard has waged a bigoted war against native Kandians since the archclericy was founded! Excuse me—you call us ‘heathens!’ ”

“No, milady!” Garn protests in consternation. “It isn’t so. The Knights of Blessed Dyan have moved against the Kandian tribes only when evil influences have jeopardized our priests. . . .”

“Stop it! Both of you!” you whisper, though you’re enjoying the diversion of Dalris’s hostility to a target other than yourself. “You can continue this argument after we see what’s going on in the cathedral. Whatever Arno is doing, I need to see him in action in order to know what we’re fighting. Can you get us into the sanctuary?”

Garn, reddening slightly at Dalris’s reaction, welcomes your interruption and nods enthusiastically. “I can lead you to a hidden entrance known only to a few of the senior paladins. It leads directly into the sanctuary, just behind the main altar.”

“Then let’s go!” Dalris urges.

If you’re carrying the Sceptre of Bhukod, turn to **161**. If not, turn to **214**.

Rufyl succeeds in frightening the stallion, but it has the opposite effect than you intended. Instead of frightening the animal away from you so that you can escape, the huge warhorse flings its steel-shod hooves in your face! You try to dodge the powerful blows, but one of them lands just behind your left ear, shattering your skull. The last awareness you have is a telepathic scream of despair from your old friend, Rufyl. ✘

You and Rufyl crouch in the shadowy alleys of Saven until you no longer hear the frustrated shouts of the angry mob from the cathedral. When you think the danger has passed, you start looking among the dark, empty streets for Garn's lodgings, hoping that Dalris can find it too.

You don't dare ask directions, so it takes you nearly an hour to find the faded wooden sign marked "SAVEN-BRIDGE ROAD." It's a cramped brick street, hardly wider than the alley outside the cathedral, but it is the location of a row of old but stately apartment houses.

Just as Garn promised, a huge, dapple-gray horse is tethered to a hitching ring outside one of the last buildings. You glance up at the only lighted window on the entire street and send a silent comment to Rufyl: "*That must be it. Everybody else in Saven is asleep.*" You and the familiar creep up the ancient stairs to the second landing where lantern light spills on your feet.

"Garn! Dalris!" you whisper.

The door creaks open, letting you see the bard standing at a small table in a tidy, comfortable room. She smiles and nods at someone behind the door. It opens farther, admitting you. The taciturn bard says nothing, but her eyes are moist as she touches your arm in welcome. Garn comes from out behind the door, carrying a beautiful sword in his hand. The paladin sheathes the sword and clasps your arms in a warm welcome.

Soon you find yourself seated at the polished table with a heavy crystal goblet of cool wine before you.

"Do you understand now what evil has descended upon

Saven and will soon spread to all of Tikandia?" Garn asks.

"How often does that ritual take place?"

"At first, it was only once a week, but now it's nearly every night. It has replaced regular vesper services and no one but the Holy Guard may attend. The few of us who resisted the archcleric's call to attend these sacrilegious events have been dismissed from his service," Garn adds.

"Oram himself ordered the paladins to attend?"

The cavalier lowers his eyes for a moment, then nods with a heavy show of sadness. "I fear that our Venerable Master has grown too old to continue leading the Order of Blessed Dyan. His mind has been deteriorating for several years and it was easy for Arno to convince him that this 'Pazuzu' is an astral messenger from Dyan himself."

If someone named 'Shanif' warned you about a creature like Pazuzu, turn to **197**. If you learned from the same person about a pair of adamantite crowns, turn to **213**. If you did not talk to Shanif, turn to **192**.

175

"Keep away from me!" you warn the shadowy stranger. You let the Kandian cloak fall away from your enchanted quarterstaff, adding to the effect of your words.

"Please don't be alarmed," the man says. He walks past you and pauses in the tavern door. Then he turns and motions with his head for you to follow him inside. "If you won't let me undo some of the damage, at least let me buy you both food and drink. We're not all uncivilized in Saven, you know."

Without waiting for your answer, the stranger pushes open the door and enters. The brief glimpse you had of him revealed a deeply tanned, athletic man with military bearing and rich clothing. You turn to ask Dalris if she wants to risk talking with him, but she's already following him through the door.

When you enter the Moonstar, you see that Dalris and the stranger have taken a table near one of the front windows. A bargirl is standing by them, taking their order. You can feel the hostile gazes of the small cluster of regular customers when they see your Kandian garments.

“Order enough food for me, too,” urges Rufyl as you sit on the other side of the cavalier.

Turn to 44.

176

Reflexively, you point the first two fingers on each hand at the massive wrist and arm and mutter the spellword to activate your Magic Missile spell. Four torpedoes of energy instantly form in the air in front of your fingers and then shoot forward, burying themselves in the yellowish flesh, leaving four clean, bloodless holes. To your horror, the holes close instantly, and you hear the magic missiles explode dozens of feet beyond the giant arm. They passed straight through their target without damaging it!

Suddenly a huge voice roars through the fog. Turn to 119.

177

“Magus Arno not on Seagate Island. Him go mainland for speak with big priest.”

“Then where can we get some food and rest?” you demand of the gruff gnoll. *“We’ve had a tiring journey.”*

“We soldiers, not innkeepers, human! Find own place!”

The senior guard waves his underlings aside and growls some commands in his guttural language so rapidly that you can’t understand them. The hyena-faced guards mumble and walk away from the edge of the pier, leaving the darkness to envelop your boat once more.

“It worked!” Dalris whispers in a tone of disbelief.

“But we already knew that Arno was in Saven,” Rufyl interjects. *“Why did you ask for him, Master?”*

You stare at the pseudodragon’s hazy outline, wondering how a telepath can be so dense. *“Yes, but he didn’t know we knew it,”* you murmur. *“Dalris, will you try to explain our bluff to Rufyl while I paddle us into shore?”*

If you’re in Delmer, turn to 206. If you’re in Freeton, turn to 92.

178

“Those are additional questions, Carr Delling. I shall not answer. My promise to your father has been honored.”

The marid's huge form begins to dissolve into the yellow fog. "Wait!" you cry. "What promise?"

Your only answer is a whistling sound as Shanif's figure transforms into a cyclone of yellow mist and vanishes into the depths of the bog. You glance at Dalris, but the bard seems either too stunned by the marid's tale or too angry at you to say anything.

"Let's get out of this marsh, Dalris," you urge her. "I'd like to reach Saven before dark." She stares silently at the place where you last saw the marid. Finally she nods and rises to her feet.

"*An excellent decision, Master!*" Rufyl exclaims telepathically. The pseudodragon scurries past you and walks beside Dalris toward the road. The stinking yellow fog ends abruptly at the edge of the hard clay surface. When you join Dalris, she gestures to the west, where the late afternoon sun is much lower than it was when you entered Yellow Marsh.

"I recognize this stretch of road," says Dalris. "We're only a few miles outside Saven. If we hurry, we can be at the cathedral for evening services and slip inside with the pilgrims."

Turn to 100.

179

"I'm not going to trust what I've just heard," you tell the bard. "Whether it was a devil or not, its message was too confusing to be of any value to us. I guess I've wasted one of my father's best spells."

"In a place like this, hard steel is a better ally than amateurish magic," Dalris replies grimly. She draws her shortsword and steps away from you, balancing on a log to cross a patch of yellow mire.

"Stay close to her," you command Rufyl. "I want to have some time alone to think."

The telepathic pseudodragon sends a mental note of understanding, then darts after the bard. The miniature dragon is almost comical as he crosses the half-submerged log with his tail raised and wings spread to keep his balance. Turn to 114.

The eldest of the three guardsmen scowls at your filthy appearance and rough language. He steps closer, thrusting his torch into your face, and scrutinizes your features and your Kandian clothing.

“Look out! He sees through your disguise!”

Rufyl’s telepathic warning comes just as the corrupt paladin leaps backward, sword in hand. “Take him, men! He’s the one we want!”

You wheel around, pulling the enchanted quarterstaff free of your cloak and whipping it in a wide arc to hold off your assailants until its magic has time to work. The trio of warriors position themselves in a semicircle around you.

“Be ready to strike when I do, Rufyl!” you silently command your invisible familiar.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **83**; otherwise, turn to **65**.

“Let’s save our spells and not reveal who we are just yet,” you suggest. “We just might be able to get them off those horses with Rufyl’s invisible help. An armored knight off his horse won’t be able to move very fast.”

The bard smiles at your plan, pleased that you’re not going to use magic, and Rufyl replies enthusiastically.

“I know just what to do, Master!”

“Well, get ready, both of you. Here they are!”

As the riders approach, you tap your magic quarterstaff twice on the ground and whisper its command word, *“Trope gahn.”* The enchanted weapon is enveloped instantly with a glimmering rose-colored bubble, and then it telescopes outward to its full twelve-foot length. You step into the center of the road just as the paladins start to rein in their armored mounts.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **200**. If it is less, turn to **33**.

The powerful dweomer of your Fireball spell gathers into a stream of magical energy that shoots from your finger

toward the two knights. They see what's happening and try to turn their horses, but it's too late. The dense beam of energy stops at the distance you commanded as if it has rammed into a solid obstacle. Then the rest of the stream catches up with the first, swells into a great ball of fire, and explodes with a tremendous roar that shakes the ground beneath your feet.

When the fireball's glare has passed, both knights and one of the horses are nothing but smouldering corpses on the road. The surviving stallion is racing back toward Saven, its cloth barding and mane singed and smoking.

"Why did you use something that powerful?" Dalris demands. "The horse wasn't our enemy! Now, every paladin in the Order of Blessed Dyan will be watching for a sorcerer, and it'll be a lot more difficult to deal with them without a fight!"

Your face reddens because you know that the bard is right. The Fireball spell was much too potent to use against just two human fighters, and now you've wasted it. You can only hope that you never encounter a situation on your mission which does require such destructive power. You and Rufyl set off on the road toward Saven, leaving Dalris, tears running down her dusty cheeks, to linger and say a few prayers for the dead horse.

Reduce your charisma skill score by 2 since your magic will arouse much suspicion in Saven. Then turn to 100.

183

"They're Kandian players!" exclaims the elder knight, a smile crossing his face. "I haven't seen a real native song-and-dance team in years."

"I see them, Sir Harral," says the younger paladin, "but I don't know whether to believe them or not. The one with the fancy cloak might be a clown, but the girl looks more like a fighter to me!"

"Show the man, Dalris! Play him an original Kandian ballad!" you urge the bard, your voice rising and falling with exaggerated theatrical tones. She glances at you with a warm smile on her lips to disguise the cold fury in her eyes. You know she hates to play flirty roles with men to

manipulate them, but you can't see any other way to convince the skeptical paladin.

Dalris bows deeply as she removes her specially carved druid flute from her jerkin. When she raises her head, you see her sparkling olive eyes and brilliant teeth flashing seductively at the two men. One glance at the younger guardsman's face tells you that Dalris's bardic skills are as polished as ever. You breathe a sigh of relief and prop yourself up on your quarterstaff to enjoy the show while the exciting bard plays and sings some ribald songs designed to heighten her victims' enchantment.

After a full hour of singing, playing, and dancing for the knights, Dalris pauses and points toward Saven. "My partner and I have to get into town by dark," she says. "We've been hired by the Moonstar Tavern to entertain their customers, and we'll lose our jobs if we're not there on time. Can you give us a ride?"

The bard's coy smile is more than either of them can stand. Both men gesture for her to ride with them, but Dalris says saucily, "I'll ride with Sir Harral. Perhaps Sir Griff can give my friend a ride."

"Of course he can!" Harral assures her. "Come here, my girl!" Dalris climbs astride the bay stallion in front of the officer's saddle, allowing the older paladin to reach around her for the reins. The young paladin scowls and looks at you with distaste, then shakes his head.

"I'd better ride alone, Sir Harral," he says. "I'll have to carry that lance for you so that you can use both hands."

Sir Harral raises his brow. But he shrugs off the insubordination and says, "As you prefer, Griff." Then he hands the younger man his lance and spurs the charger away. Griff glances at you with a smug grin. "It's only ten miles," he says, laughing. He leaves you standing in the road.

"*Why are you angry, Master?*" asks the naive familiar, who has been invisible all this time.

"Oh, shut up and stay out of sight!" you mumble as you begin the final hike into Saven.

Dust covered and weary, you find Dalris waiting for you just inside the crumbling walls of the ancient citadel. Her flashing eyes are green and beautiful in the failing light,

but her sardonic smile irks you.

"Enjoy your walk?" she asks with mock sweetness before unleashing her own fury. "I like to pick my own audience! Corrupt paladins are not my idea of fun. Some magician you are! You can't even fool a senile old soldier and his puppy of an aide!"

"Let's just get to the cathedral," you say.

Turn to 100.



184

"This might be a good chance to talk to one of these renegade paladins and learn more about Arno's power over them," you whisper to Dalris. "If we warn him about that foolish ambush, he might drop his guard and trust us."

The bard nods her agreement. You motion for her and Rufyl to follow, then step boldly into the trail in front of the mounted knight. The warhorse, a huge destrier shrouded in chain barding, rears and paws the air.

"Have caution, cavalier!" you shout, pointing to the ugly ambusher's hiding spot. The little demihuman stands up in shock, staring at you, his dart still poised to fling. You tense your leg muscles, ready to dodge if the gnarled hand turns your way. You had hoped that he'd run when you revealed the ambush, but the squat man just grunts a startling phrase.

"CARR! DALRIS! I thought you were dead!"

You're completely stunned by the sound of your names being uttered by this stunted demihuman whom you've never seen before—especially when you realize that the voice is familiar. But the most shocking revelation of all comes from Rufyl.

"It's your friend Thayne, Master!"

If you landed on Seagate either at Delmer or Freeton, turn to 169. If you landed somewhere else, turn to 232.

“See if you can find something in these saddlebags we can use to bind and gag him,” you tell Dalris. “I don’t want to waste a spell on such a simple thing as this.”

She rummages quickly through the large leather pouch, tossing clothes, a hair brush, and other personal gear aside until she discovers a ball of stout twine.

“This is all I can find,” she says.

“It’ll do nicely—with a little cantrip or two to strengthen it,” you reply, reaching for the cord. You take it to where Rufyl is guarding the surly paladin and extend your left hand, palm up and open, with the ball of twine. You raise your right hand level with your face and form the sign for the number 3 and whisper, “*Jeffad*,” the High Elvish word for granny knot, to activate your Tie cantrip.

The loose end of the cord suddenly comes alive, shooting forward and diving to wrap itself around the astonished fighter’s wrists and ankles. The string ties itself into an amateurish but effective granny knot so rapidly that the man can’t move quickly enough to avoid the writhing cord.

Finally, it wraps itself several times around his neck and mouth so that any struggles to free his arms will strangle him. For the last knot, you decide to use another cantrip to tie the twine with the Knot enchantment. You thrust your right arm forward and give your wrist a quick twist, muttering a low “zzzzzz” sound. The end of the cord moves so fast that a blur is all you can see of it. When it stops moving, there’s a huge knot gagging the paladin’s mouth.

“All right. Let’s go. He won’t be going anywhere on his own, but someone else might come along and release him.”

“We need to hurry,” adds Dalris. “If we can reach Saven by nightfall, we can mingle with the pilgrims at the evening services in the cathedral.”

Turn to 100.

The trio of fanatics surround you, thrusting their torches close to your dusty, sweat-streaked face. You’re suddenly glad that you haven’t had a chance to wash the dirt of your journey from yourself or your clothes.

"He's a Kandian! Look at that cloak!"

"T'ish a fine cloak," you mutter. "Me old woman make it. It be warmer'n she was!"

The eldest warrior twists your face roughly toward the light with strong mailed fingers. He's scowling in distaste at your mock drunken humor. Cavaliers, especially paladins, deplore such coarseness and regard it as far too vulgar for gentlemen of 'good breeding' to condone. Apparently, the conversion of these Holy Guardsmen to the worship of Pazuzu hasn't changed their sense of propriety.

"Mind your filthy tongue, alley-scum! Get away from this holy building with your talk of sinful ways!"

The paladin thrusts you away, hurling you painfully to the cobblestones. Then the three of them rush past you into the alley, disappearing around a corner at its far end.

"Are you injured, Master?" asks Rufyl.

"I don't think so. Just bruised a bit," you reply, getting to your feet. "Let's see if we can find Garn's lodging house and plan what to do next."

Deduct 2 from your remaining hit points; then turn to 174.

187

Rufyl's polymorphed brain has become so dominated by roc instincts that the giant creature doesn't recognize either you or Dalris. There's no friendship in the way it cocks its great head and looks first at the bard, then at you.

"Do something fast," mutters Dalris. "I've seen that look on hungry falcons!"

"Shield your eyes!" you whisper to the bard. "I'm going to try to blind it with my Light spell. As soon as the glare passes, head for those crevices and wedge yourself as far inside as you can!"

Holding your right hand in a tightly balled fist, you raise it only inches from the giant beak, concentrating intently on the mounting dweomer inside your body, sending it first into your arm and then into your clenched fist.

"*Ishtyop!*" you shout, springing your hand open to release the intense glare of magical light.

The huge beast screams and bounds backward, its wings

flapping in alarm, to perch on the edge of the roost until it can see again.

“Go!” you yell to Dalris, but the bard has already reached the face of the cliff and is squeezing her slender body into the nearest crevice. You spot another crack large enough for you and run for it. You have to duck your head to enter, and you manage to wedge the top half of your body into its protective darkness. Behind you, the deafening noise of flapping wings echoes in the tight niche only moments before a mind-shattering pain rips your senses apart as two more hungry rocs, attracted by the glare of your spell, tear your legs from your helpless body. ☒

188

“Trope gahn!”

You shout the command word that doubles your magic quarterstaff’s length as you rush to help Dalris. Her arms pinned in the grasp of the gigantic hand, the bard is unable to use her sword or even her hands to ward off the huge fingers. Just as you reach her, your staff emits a rosy light and shoots outward, extending itself another six feet into the thick mass of yellow vapors.

“Drop her!” you scream, swinging the staff.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **152**. If it is less, turn to **111**.

189

“I don’t want to let them know who we are just yet,” you say hurriedly. “Tell your friends to come about and run for the coast. If we can make it to the forest, we still might have a chance to slip into Saven without Archcleric Oram or Arno knowing.”

In a language you’ve never heard her use before, Dalris snaps a command to the fishermen. Whatever she tells them has an immediate impact—their faces become agitated and they jump to their feet, grabbing for tiller and sail. The boom shifts and the canvas billows with a mighty pop. Within seconds, you hear the powerful swoosh of the hull slicing with a rush through the cold sea.

"What did you tell them?" you ask your smiling companion. "And what was that language you used?"

"I used Thieves' Cant to tell them that the marines were after them for smuggling untaxed gold out of Saven," she replies, a sly sparkle in her eyes.

"How did you know they were smugglers?" you ask.

"I overheard them talking in the secret language a few hours ago. My darker years as a cat burglar taught me more than you can imagine, Carr Delling," she adds, a secret smile on her face.

You knew that Dalris had had an exciting career as both a fighter and a thief before she began her bardic studies, but this new bit of information intrigues you. You start to ask her for some details, but a thunderous noise stops you just before a splintering crash jars the deck.

"We're hit!" yells a fisherman. "We're sinking!"

"*HELP! I can't swim!*" Rufyl's panicked thought screams in your brain. You hold out your hand and feel an invisible scaly paw clutch it. "Just hang on," you tell the pseudodragon. "We're only a few hundred yards from shore."

"We could swim it easily," agrees Dalris, "but look what we'd be heading for!"

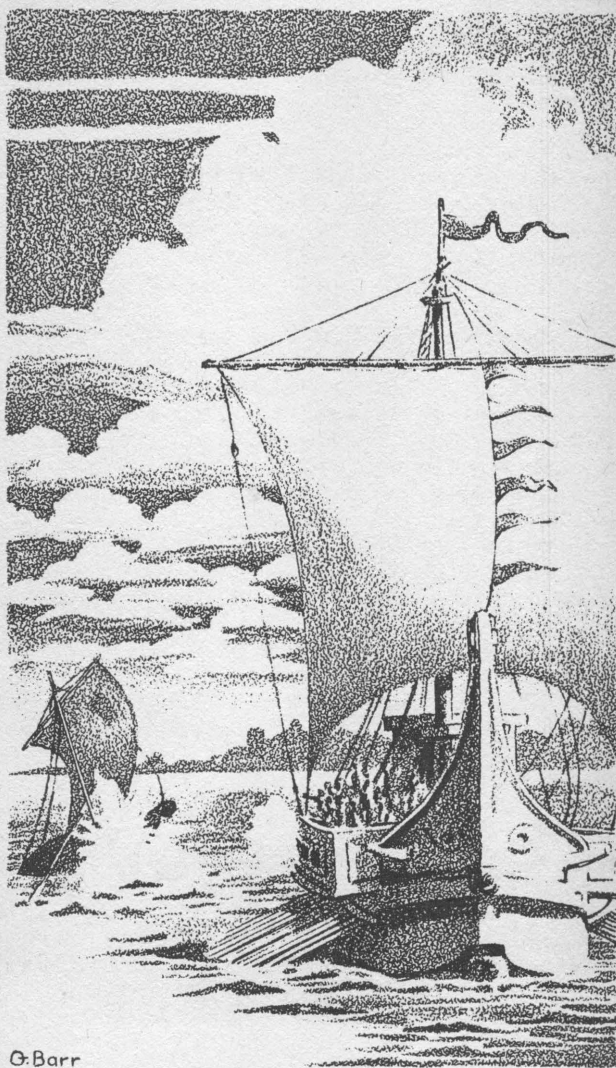
You follow the bard's gaze toward the coast, where the reason for her alarm is clear. The shore is lined with men-at-arms, including several mounted knights with fiery crossed logs in their chests, the insignia of Oram's paladin guards!

"We've got just a few minutes before the marines board us," says Dalris, "and we can't escape by swimming. I suggest you get a spell ready!"

If you want to use one of the spells you already know, turn to **90**. If you'd rather use one of the more powerful spells in your traveling spellbook, turn to **16**. If you'd rather try to handle the marines without using any magic at all, turn to **49**.

190

Dalris's warning comes just in time, because you pull your feet from the mud only seconds before a glob of the yellow muck lands beside you and starts to form another mud-



G. Barr

man. When it no longer senses your presence in the mud-pool, the stupid creature shrinks back into the mire from which it came.

The marid deposits Dalris beside you and points to Rufyl, sending his thoughts to you all. Turn to 133.

191

For once, you wish your magic hadn't been so powerful. Your Polymorph Other spell has worked so well on Rufyl that his brain as well as his body has been transformed into that of an unintelligent roc. Your familiar doesn't seem to recognize the bard's words. Turn to 86.

192

"I have no idea what that thing was, nor how Arno managed to summon it from its statue," you tell Garn. "You're right, though, about the level of magic which would be required if it were a demon. I'm sure that neither Arno nor I have enough knowledge to control a real demon, or even to summon one from its natural plane."

"Perhaps Arno didn't actually summon it, and isn't controlling it either," Dalris suggests.

"What do you mean?" asks the paladin.

"I mean simply that the demon—if that's what this 'Pazuzu' is—may have summoned himself for some reason, and may be controlling Arno rather than the opposite."

Dalris's idea makes excellent sense, and you chastise yourself silently for not thinking of it first. "That's a brilliant idea," you congratulate the bard. "But it'd make Arno just the stooge of an evil entity so powerful that nothing could stop it. I need to talk to some of my father's closest friends and fellow wizards at College Arcane. They might know of a way to stop Pazuzu, whoever or whatever it is."

"Then you should leave at once for Seagate Island," urges Garn. "The sooner we know how to fight this menace, the better." Turn to 98.

193

"Arno was my rival when we were students together at College Arcane on Seagate Island," you tell Garn.

“Then he *is* a sorcerer—and so are you!” The paladin’s dark eyes are alert, apparently watching your face for some sign of malevolence.

“Carr is not just any would-be wizard,” adds Dalris with a sparkle in her dark eyes. “He’s the son and heir of the great Landor.”

Garn’s studious expression transforms into one of shock, but only for a moment. Recovering his composure, he knits his finely sculpted brow. “You do mean Landor, the famed archmagus, whom Venerable Oram sought to destroy for practicing evil wizardry?”

“That’s not true,” you tell the paladin. “Landor was my sire, and I have devoted my life to the study of his magical legacy, the secrets of the fabled Bhukodian sorcerer-kings. None of those enchantments is ‘evil,’ nor did my father ever threaten Archcleric Oram. The Holy Guard hunted him because he dared to challenge some corrupt priests in the Kandian hinterlands.”

Garn frowns but nods. “I neither believe nor disbelieve what you say about your sire and his sorcery, but I do sense that you’re a good and honest man. Take my hand, Carr Delling of Kandia. Let us bond ourselves to the task of ridding Tikandia of this menace. Your knowledge of Arno and your magical arts may help us defeat him.”

A feeling of great warmth and energy surges throughout your body as you clasp the cavalier’s strong hand and look into his fiery gaze. The man’s charisma is infectious and spreads into your own personality, inspiring both pride and confidence in your own abilities.

Add 1 to your charisma skill score and turn to 172.

194

“Get them up here!” the older gnoll growls. “I want to search them!”

“*He did not believe your lie about Arno, Master,*” warns Rufyl in your thoughts. “*He has been told something about a sorcerer who will come to kill Arno, and he suspects that you are the one!*”

“*If he wants a sorcerer, then that’s what he should have!*” you telepath to the pseudodragon. You push suddenly

against the piling with your foot, shoving the small boat away from the pier with such force that Dalris almost tumbles into the sea. Turn to **163**.

195

Deciding that this situation requires one of your strongest spells, you reach into an enchanted pocket of your cloak for the clear crystal rod and swatch of rabbit fur needed to cast the Lightning Bolt spell. You try to remain calm in order to concentrate on the spell, even though Dalris's screams and struggles in the monster's grasp are making your chest pound with fear. You frantically rub the crystal rod with the bit of fur until the air crackles around it. Aiming the rod where you hope the creature is in the thick haze, you mutter the spellword.

"Slikkit!"

With a blinding flash of pure energy, a jagged bolt of magical lightning streaks from the tip of the crystal rod into the yellow cloud. There's a tremendous boom as the thunderbolt slams into its unseen target. Turn to **26**.

196

The pseudodragon's shocking revelation stuns you so completely that neither you nor Dalris remember the surprised paladin. You hurry forward, stumbling, to embrace your old friend in his new misshapen body, just as the knight's gleaming longsword descends upon your neck. ✘

197

"I fear that Arno was right about Pazuzu's penchant for astral travel," you tell Garn. "I'm almost positive that he—or 'it'—is a demon prince!"

The paladin frowns and nods at the bard. "Dalris has already told me about your encounter with the marid in Yellow Marsh. She too believes that Pazuzu and Pazuzeus are one and the same. But how did Arno chance upon such power? Isn't he too young and inexperienced to be manipulating demons?"

You nod approvingly at Garn's lay knowledge of magic. "That's exactly what I've been thinking, too. Shanif, the

marid from Yellow Marsh, could have told me how Arno has acquired such powers, but I chose to know about their nature instead.”

“Yes, Garn,” Dalris interrupts, “we decided we could discover how Arno did it if we knew what he had done.”

“I don’t understand it completely, but I know someone who might,” you tell your companions. “We must sail at once to Seagate Island while Arno is still in Saven.”

Turn to 98.



198

With a sly smile, you reach into one of the enchanted Deepockets in your cloak and remove a tiny ball of powdered snake’s tongue mixed with sweet honeycomb. You wait until the two knights pull their powerful warhorses to a halt in front of you before you pop it into your mouth. The elder of the two paladins drops his lance toward your chest and demands to know who you are.

“Speak, Kandian trash! Why have you left your tribal reservation? Do you have permission to travel on the arch-cleric’s highway?”

“*Mafran, mafran,*” you mutter, commanding the dweomer of the Suggestion spell to control the sound of your words. Then you add, bowing low, “We’re entertainers, sir.”

Cross Suggestion off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to 183. If it is less, turn to 41.

199

The sight of the monstrous wooden idol coming to life on the altar was terrifying, but not as much as the wild-eyed

devotion of the corrupt paladins. You realize in a flash that Arno has indeed stumbled upon some incredible power which must be stopped before it gets even stronger.

"We've got to put a stop to this evil menace immediately, before Arno can unleash that creature upon the whole of Tikandia!" you whisper to Garn. "How do I get in there?"

The paladin fumbles for a hidden latch near the floor below the peephole. "This panel opens in the sanctuary behind the archcleric's chair," he whispers. "We can probably enter the sanctuary without anyone seeing us for the first few minutes."

"That should be all I need," you reply.

"We can't fight all those warriors," Dalris warns. "There must be more than a hundred of them in there!"

"All I want you to do is protect me while I use whatever magic I can against Arno and his ugly friend. If you two can hold them off, we can strike and dodge back through here before any of those fanatics know what's happening."

"What can you do against that creature?" Garn demands.

You pause, troubled by the paladin's question. You're not sure if any of your spells will work against such a terrible enemy, but if you're ready to try them anyway, turn to **88**. Of course, if you have the Sceptre of Bhukod under your cloak, you might prefer to use it (**112**).

200

Your sudden attack with the enchanted quarterstaff catches the two knights completely off guard. Aiming for the vulnerable spot between helmet and breastplate, you jab the older of the paladins in the neck with the tip of your staff. His warhorse's momentum thrusts the knight's heavily armored body onto your staff with such force that it knocks the veteran warrior to the ground, where he lies, gagging and clutching at his throat.

At the same time, Dalris is standing fearlessly in front of the younger knight's warhorse. The stones of her torc flare, captivating the charger's attention while Rufyl strikes with his stinger at its rump. Suddenly, the powerful animal rears on its hind legs and the surprised rider slides off its

tail end. The horse's eyes roll and its tongue lolls loosely just before the paralyzed beast collapses on top of its stunned rider, crushing him instantly.

You knock the fallen older paladin's helmet off with a quick movement of your quarterstaff, and stand poised to deliver a death blow. As the guard's gagging diminishes, he reaches for his sword hilt, but you kick his hand away and brandish the glowing staff.

"Flinch and I'll crack your skull!" you warn him. At first, the officer's eyes widen in confusion. Then he glances around and sees the armored legs of his underling protruding from beneath the massive bulk of the warhorse.

"The archcleric's Holy Guards will hunt you down like vermin for killing a paladin!" the officer says in a harsh rasp—his larynx still suffers from your terrible blow.

"Why are paladins, who are sworn to combat evil, using lances to attack innocent travelers on the coastal highway?" Dalris demands.

"You're nothing but Kandian trash," he growls. "Filthy thieves and vagabonds who should be driven out of Tikandia along with those druid witches you call priests!"

"My father's an archdruid," Dalris exclaims, more with pride than with anger, "and he's no witch! Our ancestors settled Tikandia long before yours did! We're descendants of Bhukod itself!"

"Guard him, Rufyl!" you order your familiar. "I need to talk privately with Dalris."

The corrupt paladin's eyes bulge when he sees the pseudodragon emerge into visibility, his scaly red tail poised like a scorpion's, ready to plunge his stinger into the man's face. Smiling, you join the bard by the fallen horse.

"This is more serious than I thought," you tell her. "He's obviously an older guardsman, probably in Oram's service for twenty years. Something has changed him from a devout paladin to a prejudiced but powerful cavalier. That can only happen when a paladin knowingly commits an evil act. We've got to find out what other evils Arno has unleashed in Tikandia!"

"What can we do with him?" Dalris whispers anxiously. "If we let him go, he'll spread the word and his friends will

be on their guard. But . . . I don't want to just kill him."

"Neither do I," you assure her. "I could use a spell to silence him (73) or we could tie him up and hope that he stays put until we finish our mission in Saven (185)."

"Well, hurry and decide," Dalris urges. "It's late afternoon and we need to reach Saven by evening services at the cathedral in order to get inside."

201

This is a job for something more than a trick, you acknowledge to yourself quickly. Plunging your hand into the hidden pockets of your cloak, you retrieve the tiny ball of bat guano and sulfur you need to cast your powerful Fireball spell. Based on the arm and hand you can see, you point with your own hand holding the component toward what you hope is the giant creature's body behind the wall of fog.

"*Shassul!*" you yell.

The spell's dweomer hurls a small sphere from your fingertip, transforming it instantly into a white-hot ball of fire. It vanishes into the bank of yellow fog with a great flare, followed by a thunderous explosion as it finds its unseen target.

Turn to 26.



202

"It's no use!" Dalris yells into the wind. "Either he can't hear me or you did too good a job and his brain is too altered to recognize my words. I think he's just heading for the nearest landing spot, and it looks as if that'll be that barren area to our left."

You strain your neck, trying to see around the roc's huge belly at what Dalris is seeing. It's only as the creature

nears the ground that you manage a chilling glimpse of its intended landing site.

"That's Yellow Marsh!" you shout. The desolate marsh is blanketed with a curious yellow fog that extends beyond its shore into the sea. Through the murky haze, you can see the skeletons of countless dead trees and pools of stinking, stagnant water lying on the barren, muddy ground.

"Get ready!" yells Dalris. "He's coming in fast!"

The heavy bird is having difficulty breathing in the noxious yellow vapors above the swamp. He begins to slow his steady wingbeat to a sporadic one. You recognize the stench of sulfur and try to hold your breath until you drop past the thickest part of the fog.

Blinded by the sulfurous cloud, the roc is unable to find a clear path and crashes into huge dead limbs and even brushes tree trunks on its plummeting descent to the bog. Your position beneath the bulky feathered body is the safest one of all, because the monster is instinctively protecting its belly from harm.

As the roc lands with terrible awkwardness in a pool of stinking yellow mud, you fear being crushed beneath its great weight. But you find yourself being pressed upward into its downy belly feathers, which protect you both from being crushed and from suffocating in the slime. The monster instinctively opens its talons the moment it lands so that it can fight for a foothold on the slick mud, forgetting about you and Dalris long enough to permit your escape across the yellow ooze.

"Carr!" The bard's frantic whisper comes from your left, where Dalris is hiding behind a half-submerged log. "Can't you reverse your spell? I think that what was Rufyl is now pure roc, and rocs will feed on anything they see or smell—and that means *us!*"

You've been thinking about how to get Rufyl back ever since you transformed him, but the only way you know to reverse Polymorph Other is your Dispel Magic spell.

If you still have Dispel Magic on your spell list and want to use it now, turn to **70**. If you've already used Dispel Magic, or if you want to save it for a different situation, turn to **147**.

203

Your Spider Climb spell works perfectly, allowing you to scale the sheer wall with the ease of a real spider. You catch up with Dalris immediately and continue climbing past her toward the battlement. You grin over your shoulder in a childish display of competitiveness. Just at that moment, your concentration wanes and the spell's magical substance on your palms and soles loses its stickiness.

Trying to remain cool, you feel inside your cloak for the tiny white feather you need to cast the Feather Fall incantation. Your timing has to be perfect. You must fling the feather into the air at exactly the same time you start falling and at the moment you utter the spellword, "Drifter." To your horror, the feather sticks to the residue of goo on your fingers and remains there after your body falls away from the black tower.

"DRIFTER! DRIFTER!" you cry, shaking your hand violently in a futile attempt to dislodge the feather before your body lands on the rough basalt rocks below. ☒

204

You're not sure if polymorphed mice can carry the same diseases as their wild cousins, but you don't want to take any chances with this one running toward you. You quickly raise your enchanted quarterstaff and swat at the tiny but vicious rodent before it has a chance to bite you or your companions.

To your amazement, the heavy bronzewood staff halts abruptly in midair only inches above the small creature's head. Its bright black eyes glare at you with great intelligence—and hatred! The powerful mind the creature had before you polymorphed it is still inside the tiny rodent!

"Beware, Master! It's casting a—"

The monster's magic is so swift that it acts upon you even before your transformed brain can receive the rest of Rufyl's warning. But then again, your questionable intelligence as a grasshopper is too low to have understood it, anyway—especially while hopping for your life to escape from an angry and powerful fieldmouse! ☒



205

The cavalier's eyes widen in amazement as he stares directly at your face. Then his tanned forehead furrows, and he leans closer to whisper a warning.

"I don't know who you are or where you come from, but I can sense the power of the magical weapon you have brought to this city of evil. You must know that any other paladin possessing the Detect Magic spell will sense it as well!"

You glance quickly at Dalris, who's just as alarmed as you are to hear the cavalier's words. If he and other paladins have the ability to detect the dweomer of the Sceptre of Bhukod, they'll be able to track you wherever you go! You start to lie, but the man stops you with a gesture of his hand.

"Say nothing. It would be foolish to deny it, and even more foolish to make a public scene. Suffice it to say that I know about both your magical cloak and the powerful object you conceal under it. I also know that neither you nor the girl with the enchanted flute are evil."

"I warned you!" Rufyl's reminder pops unbidden into your thoughts, but you brush aside the invisible familiar's interruption.

"Exactly who are you, sir?" you demand.

"And what has happened in Saven?" adds Dalris, in a more gracious tone than yours.

The handsome warrior nods but waits until the barmaid brings another round of drinks before beginning his story.

Turn to **154**.

206

Wendel, the clan shaman, is the only person you want to see in Delmer. The last time you saw him was when you brought your dying mother to Delmer, hoping that the old man could heal her. The aged cleric was unable to save Marla, but he did protect her body from an angry mob who wanted to burn her as a witch.

"I want Wendel to describe how Arno manipulated the paladins," you tell Dalris. "He's the only cleric I'm sure I can trust after hearing Thayne's story, and I know him to have great wisdom."

Leading the bard and Rufyl to Wendel's door, you knock gently so that no other townspeople will be aroused. There's no answer for several minutes, but then you hear a shuffling sound beyond the thick portal.

"I sense great fear and anger," Rufyl tells you mentally. *"Someone with a weapon waits for you on the other side of that door!"*

Frowning, you press your face on the rough wood. Then you whisper loudly, "Wendel! Is that you? This is Carr Delling. I've come from Tikandia to help you."

Almost immediately, several latches slide open. The door cracks slightly, spilling soft lamplight on your faces. A thin little man with several wisps of white hair at his temples and silver-rimmed spectacles perched on his nose stares incredulously at the three of you. Tears of joy well in the old cleric's eyes as he lowers the stout club and ushers you inside.

If you've come to Delmer from Wealwood, turn to **69**. If you've come by way of Saven, turn to **75**.

“We wouldn’t have a chance in the world to fight those marines, and their ship’s a lot faster than this old tub! Instruct your kinsmen to heave to and let them come aboard,” you tell Dalris. “Once they’re on deck, maybe we can bluff or charm them into letting us land.”

As the bard turns to give the fishermen your orders, you stare at the approaching war galley and wonder if you should use magic to manipulate the archcleric’s marines. If you’d like to use a spell you already know, turn to **90**. If you’d rather read a more powerful spell from your traveling spellbook, turn to **16**. Turn to **49** if you think you can handle them without magic.

“Magic!” you reply. “Our arms wouldn’t touch those two through all that armor.”

Dalris nods her agreement and shuts her eyes. You know that she’s offering a quick prayer to her patron goddess, Brigit, in return for help with a druid spell. Your own mind races, trying to decide which of your offensive spells would be most useful in this situation. The ones that seem best are Burning Hands (**132**), Magic Missile (**141**), Fireball (**97**), and Lightning Bolt (**101**).

Be sure to check the spell you select off your Stats Card; then turn to the indicated section.

The roc continues to eye you both hungrily, and you think it will take more than gentle magic to frighten the beast off. Rufyl’s telepathic brain appears to have been transplanted by the monster’s predatory instincts.

“Be ready to run,” you whisper to Dalris. “Head for the crevices in the cliff face behind us!”

Slowly you shift your hands forward until their thumbs touch and your fingers are spread apart in the proper position to cast your Burning Hands spell. You could produce a more intense jet of fire by clustering your fingers together, but you don’t want to injure Rufyl, regardless of his present form.

"Pfoebrauknayt!" you murmur, swinging your hands up to point all eight fingers at the roc. Overlapping jets of white, yellow, and blue flames leap from your fingertips, fanning out in a wide arc.

The huge beast squawks loudly and leaps backward onto the rim of its roost. The golden-brown feathers on its breast are singed and smoking, but otherwise it seems unharmed. Glancing over your shoulder, you see that Dalris has made it to the rock wall. You take two quick steps toward the roc, spraying it again with your fiery spell.

Instead of driving it away as you hoped, your spell seems only to have infuriated the roc. After its initial surprise, the legendary beast realizes that the fire is more startling than dangerous. It hops from the roost toward you! Before you can turn and run after Dalris, its immense talons spear your flesh, the monster's great weight driving them deep into your body. Fortunately you're dead before the roc's beak descends. . . . ☒

210

You and Dalris stare wide-eyed through the narrow slit as a horrible apparition emerges from the statue at Arno's command. The chants of the corrupt paladins get louder and faster, thundering against the cathedral walls over and over again.

"PAZUZU! PAZUZU! PAZUZU! . . . PAZUZU! PAZUZU! PAZUZU!"

As if the creature is responding to their call, the winged thing hops from the carved pedestal to the altar's surface next to it. The crested avian head stretches upward and emits a low, whistling screech from its beaked mouth. The unnatural squawk mingles with the worshipping chants and mounts until it is louder than all the combined shouts of the congregation. Then, suddenly, the chanting and the squawks stop abruptly, leaving a profound silence that seems even louder than the screeching cry which still reverberates in your brain.

"Holy Brigit, protect us!" Dalris whispers, too frozen in horrified fascination to move.

"BRAVE DEFENDERS OF BLESSED DYAN, PAZUZU"

IS AMONG US! HEAR HIS MESSAGE FROM THE HOLY ONE!"

Arno's words have an immediate impact upon the glassy-eyed worshippers. You notice that his voice still has the same unusual accents you remember from College Arcane, remnants of a dialect no one could ever identify. If your Uncle Beldon knew of the senior novice's origins, the secret died with him in the enchanted crypt of Bhukodian kings.

"Speak to us, Great Pazuzu!"

"Bring us the commands of Blessed Dyan so that we may do his will!"

Arno steps away from the altar and sits on a large wooden throne to one side. Pazuzu hops to the altar steps where his 'priest' was standing and raises his hands to silence his faithful congregation of fanatical paladins.

"Hear then the wishes of Blessed Dyan!" the creature commands. Its voice is hollow and muffled, as if it were being shouted inside a metal tub, yet the pronunciation and accents are perfect and educated.

"Dyan instructs you to beware of insurrection from the infidels in Kandia, particularly those who call themselves druids. Even now, they seek to sabotage our holy mission to spread the true faith throughout Tikandia by sending their spies and agents among us!"

You feel Dalris, beside you, tremble and know that she shares your anger and fear.

An angry murmur spreads among the assembled warriors, growing until you can distinguish the words "kill" and "war."

"Silence!" thunders Pazuzu. "There are strangers among us tonight. I feel their presence and know them to be enemies of Lord Dyan. We must search every corner of this cathedral and Saven until we find them and cleanse this holy city of their wickedness!"

In the commotion that follows the strange creature's announcement, Garn touches both you and Dalris lightly and motions for you to head for the exit.

"He meant us. It's time to go!" he whispers with calm urgency.

If you want to take the paladin's advice and quickly

leave the cathedral, turn to 217. If you'd rather confront Arno and the creature he has summoned from the statue, turn to 199.

211

The spellword has hardly left your mouth before you realize that your Sleep spell isn't going to work on the giant creature. The roc's eyes blink like those of a hungry hawk ready to seize a helpless rabbit.

"Run!" you shout to Dalris. "Its instincts have replaced Rufyl's brain!"

While the bard turns to escape, you whip your enchanted quarterstaff from your Kandian cloak and mutter its secret command word, "*Trope gahn.*" A rose-tinted glow instantly surrounds the lengthening bronzewood staff, even as you jab it forcefully toward the polymorphed monster.

You doubt if you'll be able to do more than hold the roc at bay with the magical staff long enough for Dalris to make her escape. Sure enough, the third time you thrust the quarterstaff at the roc, its huge beak catches the sturdy weapon in midair and snaps it in two as if it were a twig! You turn to run, but the predator's hunting talons spear your body and press you to the ground so that it can use its beak to feed on your helpless flesh. ✠

212

"Let's just sit back and watch the fun," you whisper. "After what we've seen, I don't know whose side to take."

The huge warhorse thunders on the trail, its heavy chain barding flapping against its sides like a silk curtain. The mounted knight's visor is pointed straight ahead, as if he is completely oblivious to the little bald creature with the war-dart.

The gnarled wrist suddenly snaps forward, hurling the large dart at lightning speed. The thick, feathered missile strikes the paladin's breastplate dead center and shatters. You shake your head in sad amusement at the futility of such an attack until you see the greenish cloud of vapor billowing around the paladin's visored head. When the stunned cavalier slides helplessly from the saddle of the

rearing destrier, your amusement changes to shock.

The ambusher doesn't hesitate to take advantage of his success with the gas dart. Another of the powerful missiles is already in his hand. This one follows the first, also shattering against the hard chest plate, but instead of a gaseous cloud, it contains a pale yellow fluid. The acid instantly begins to smoke and burn a three-inch hole in the stunned paladin's armor!

"Stop!" yells Dalris, as the little creature rushes forward to bury a dagger in the stupified knight's exposed chest. You run after her, wanting to protect her from this dangerous fighter. The ambusher whirls around to face you before he can plunge the dagger into the stunned paladin.

"Carr! I thought you were dead!" the demihuman exclaims in astonishment.

"*It's your friend Thayne, Master!*" Rufyl thinks into your reeling mind. But there's no time for questions, nor even for answers. The groggy paladin sees you embrace his assailant and plunges his sword into your back. ✕

213

"I don't know exactly who or what that thing was, but I think I understand how Arno summoned it, and perhaps even how to send it back. Dalris, do you remember what the marid in Yellow Marsh told us about the pair of crowns?"

Dalris and Rufyl come closer to the table. The bard's eyes are filled with excitement. "That tiara on Arno's head was one of them! Is that what you're thinking?"

"Wait! What in the name of Blessed Dyan are you talking about? What marid?" cries Garn.

You pat the paladin's arm and smile at Dalris. "Tell our friend here what Shanif told us in the marsh. You bards have such excellent recall when it comes to fantastic tales and magical items."

In dramatic fashion, Dalris tells the paladin of your encounter with the marid. Her words create such a clear image of those events that you can see them occurring again. Garn's eyes become bright with mystery and excitement as the bard plies her craft with the greatest skill. The

small tidy room seems to vanish, its walls transformed into swirling yellow fog and the furniture into dead trees. For a moment, you can even smell the stench of sulfur and hear Shanif's deep voice.

Awareness of the paladin's comfortable quarters returns as the bard ends her fascinating tale. For a long moment or two, none of you can speak until the enchantment dissipates. Finally, Garn turns to you with a look of wonder in his dark eyes.

"Then you think that the adamantite tiara Arno was wearing in the sanctuary was Lolth's crown?"

"Exactly! And our only chance to stop Arno is to discover its twin, the one known in ancient Bhukod as the 'Sorcerer's Crown!'"

"If your father discovered Aerdrie's crown when he found the sceptre, why wasn't it in the crypt, too?" asks Dalris. "Where else would it be?"

"I can't answer that, but Rufyl might. He knew about the sceptre."

Every human eye in the room focuses hopefully on the little pseudodragon, Garn still a bit astonished at finding a small red dragon in his home. Rufyl fades a shade or two in alarm at the attention, but he sends the same mental message to everyone.

"I observed my old master handling many crowns during our long association. What does this one look like?"

"I forgot that you weren't there in the cathedral!" you blurt. "Describe it for him, Dalris."

The bard gives the familiar a rapid but very accurate description of the gleaming tiara on Arno's head. Rufyl's color becomes a little stronger as his excited thought reaches you. *"Ah, yes! I remember that crown well. Landor presented it to a blind queen on Seagate Island in honor of her descent from elven royalty."*

"Estla!" you exclaim. "Thayne's matriarch!"

"Wait!" urges Dalris. "If we go to the island to find the second crown, we'll be leaving Saven in Arno's control. If we stay here, we might not be able to stop him, but we can at least offer some resistance."

"I don't see any other way to stop Arno and his mob of

pervverted paladins," you tell her gravely. "We've got to leave for Seagate Island immediately. The sooner we find the Sorcerer's Crown, the sooner we can fight Arno on equal terms."

Turn to 98.

214

The bard is already out of her chair and headed for the door. You reach for your coins, but Garn stops you.

"This is my pleasure," he insists. You shrug your shoulders, thank him, and join Dalris outside the tavern while the paladin settles the bill.

"Do you believe him, or are you still a little too charmed by his smile to have asked yourself?"

The bard frowns quickly at your question. "You wouldn't understand 'charm' at all! The only thing you care about is magic and its power. People mean nothing to you!"

The paladin appears at the door, saving you having to respond to Dalris's sudden outburst. She scurries forward to walk at Garn's side, leaving you and your invisible familiar to follow them.

"*Humankind confuses me, Master,*" thinks Rufyl when the bard is out of his telepathic range. "*I sense a mixture of conflicting thoughts from Dalris.*"

"*It's not humankind that's confusing, nor even woman-kind, Rufyl. It's that particular woman whom I don't understand!*" The pseudodragon muses over your mental reply, while you concentrate on the pair in front of you.

Turn to 108.

215

In the few seconds before the mounted knights reach your position in the road, you hurriedly take a three-section vial from your enchanted robe. It contains the powdered chalk, lampblack, and vermilion you need for the Friends spell. With expert strokes, you mark the correct red, white, and black symbols on your face and wait for the riders to approach.

The two paladins rein their powerful chargers to a halt only a few feet in front of you and Dalris. The one on the

bay stallion is older and appears to be the other's superior. His companion is a glowering man of around your and Dalris's age. Both of them stare cynically at the curious markings on your face, which almost blend with the colorful Kandian designs on your cloak.

"*Ulagmi!*" you say, using the Elvish command word for the Friends spell as if it were a common greeting.

Cross Friends off your spell list; then roll 2 dice and add the result to your intelligence skill score. If the total is 24 or more, turn to **183**. If it is less, turn to **41**.



216

You push the bard out of the way and stand between her and the monster you created with your father's magic. Before its dull brain can respond to your sudden movement, you raise both hands toward the roc and shout the elven incantation for your Dispel Magic spell.

"*Vyehdo!*"

Cross Dispel Magic off your spell list and continue reading below.

The last syllable is still ringing in the air when a greenish aura forms around the startled beast, solidifying into a filmy substance which hardens immediately. The roc struggles, its talons and beaks flying. But it is instantly encased in an opaque, darkening shell, which begins to shrink before your eyes! Deep creases and wrinkles appear on the surface of the enchanted envelope as it diminishes in size and dries. Finally, it shrinks to the size of a small boulder and begins to crack everywhere there's a crease.

"It's hatching, just like an egg!" cries Dalris. The bard seldom acts mystified by your sorcery anymore, and it gives you a thrill to know that you've impressed her.

The amorphous shell shatters and collapses in the dirt of the road, leaving Rufyl's scaly body curled and huddled in a ball among its fragments. The little pseudodragon begins

to stir, raising its dragonlike snout and sniffing the air.

"What is this place? How did I get here, Master?"

Dalris smiles at the familiar's confusion and points toward the west, where the sun has already begun its descent. "Saven is about ten miles that way, Rufyl. As for 'how,' take my advice and don't ever ask. We need to hurry if we mean to reach the cathedral in time to mingle with the crowd of pilgrims at evening service."

"Didn't Thayne say the road was guarded by the renegade paladins?" you ask the bard.

"Yes, but we don't have a choice now. Look!" Dalris points down the road, where you see two armored knights galloping toward you, their lances poised.

If you want to hide in the forest, turn to 54. If you are willing to face the knights in the road, turn to 24.

217

"Move your clumsy feet, Carr!" Dalris demands.

Behind you, Arno's followers pound on the wall, trying to break into the secret corridor. You crash back through the hidden door, tumbling over Rufyl, whose red scaly form has become visible in the dark alley. Dalris and Garn rush through the secret door and pause long enough to twist the three bars to lock the panel from the outside. The paladin turns to speak but freezes when he sees Rufyl.

"Relax," Dalris says quickly. "He only looks like a red dragon. This is Rufyl, Carr's familiar."

"What do we do now?" you demand.

Garn looks doubtfully at Rufyl but says, "We split up and meet at my lodging house in exactly two hours," he replies quickly. "It's on the corner of Wharf Road and Saven-bridge, about a mile behind the Moonstar Tavern. You'll see a large gray stallion tethered in front of it."

You nod and watch as Garn disappears silently into the shadows and Dalris vaults over a low fence across the alley. You begin to stagger away from the cathedral toward the street, hoping you look like a drunken native minstrel. Rufyl has already faded back to invisibility by the time a trio of armored men wearing the crossed logs of Blessed Dyan suddenly appears at the next corner. The sound of

rushing feet behind you determines your next desperate action.

“Hail, Holy Guardshmen!” you call to the trio. “Can you spare a copper or two to wet a thirshty whishle?” You make your Kandian accent sound thick with drink. Urbane cavaliers usually regard native Kandians as uneducated primitives, and you hope they’ll not suspect a drunken native of intrigue.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your charisma skill score. If the total is less than 20, or if the Sceptre of Bhukod is with you, turn to **180**. If it is 20 or more, turn to **186**.

218

“There’s no point in using up my most powerful spells if I don’t have to,” you tell the bard. “I think a minor demonstration of sorcery will suffice to make these oafs stop and think twice before boarding. Just have your sword ready to back me up with hard steel.”

“You’re getting impossibly cocky, you know!” says Dalris, her hand loosening the shortsword in its hilt.

“Look out, Master!”

Rufyl’s telepathic warning causes you to leap aside just before a sharp grappling hook buries itself in the deck timbers at your feet. It gouges a deep scar in the sun-bleached wood as it drags until it snares the rail. Above your head, more of the lethal hooks whistle through the air, snagging themselves in the rigging of the small boat.

“Here they come,” Dalris mutters. “Get that ‘minor demonstration’ ready.”

As the first armed boarders begin to swing on the grappling lines, you select your victim, one of the larger marines in a breastplate and helmet, and extend your hands in the proper position for the simple but impressive Burning Hands spell.

“Pfoebrauknajt!” you shout, louder than necessary so that the other marines will pay attention to you. Flames streak from your fingertips to gather and concentrate with great heat and intensity on the armored chest of the advancing marine.

“AAAAIIIEE!” screams the badly burned man, as he tries

desperately to hang onto the rope. Just before the magical flame dies away, you aim it with pinpoint accuracy so that it burns the grappling line. The shrieking marine plummets in a smoky heap into the sea. A cloud of steam hisses up between the two vessels.

Your 'minor demonstration' appears to have paid off. The few marines who had reached your boat dive overboard to avoid the fate of their comrade. In their panic, they can't decide whether to swim or to take time to remove their heavy armor. One by one, they begin to sink.

"That's exactly how I planned it!" you say triumphantly to Dalris. The bard scowls at the bragging tone in your voice, but then her eyes widen in horror as she points across at the war galley.

"Archers!"

You whirl around to see what has frightened her. Coming toward you is a deadly swarm of black arrow shafts from the archers' volley. You are unable to move before your body is riddled with the deadly bolts. In your dying agony, your last thoughts are of Rufyl and Dalris, killed needlessly, by your overconfidence, in the rain of crossbow quarrels on the open deck. ✕



219

Realizing that the knight could drive the heavy lance into your heart just by spurring his horse, you decide not to do anything yourself but to let Rufyl help you escape.

"*I am at your side, Master!*" the familiar replies instantly to your thought of using him. "*What shall I do?*"

"*Scare the horse! Quickly!*"

The entire telepathic conversation takes only a second or

two. Whatever Rufyl does, he does it well. The armored bay charger suddenly rears in fright, nearly unseating the elder paladin.

Roll 2 dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to 155. If it is less, turn to 173.



220

The blind matriarch recognizes you instantly, although it has been half a decade since you've seen her. "My nephew told me you were dead, that the monstrous enemy, who is determined to destroy us all, had captured you and Perth's daughter."

You remember from the last time you spoke with Estla that her sightless eyes can see more than any other pair of eyes you know. "But you knew otherwise, of course," you say drily. The head of the mountain elves' clan smiles. Her smooth, ageless skin gleams in the sunlight beneath her shock of white hair.

"Did you hear, Thayne? Your pupil has developed some wisdom since he left us. Did I not tell you that he and the girl were safe? The son of Landor will survive such threats as this one, I assure you."

"Speaking of threats, Estla, we have a story to tell you. It concerns the future of Tikandia, and of your people here on Seagate Island. Dalris, will you tell our hostess the tale of the twin crowns?"

The bard clasps her father's hand once more and steps in front of the elven matriarch to relate the story of what you have learned to her assembled clan. The elves are spell-bound by the ancient Bhukodian legend. They particularly enjoy the idea that their matriarch is descended from the



goddess Aerdrie, and they're excited when they hear of the Sorcerer's Crown having the power to balance Lolth's crown.

"Show us the crown, Mother! Use its power against our enemies!"

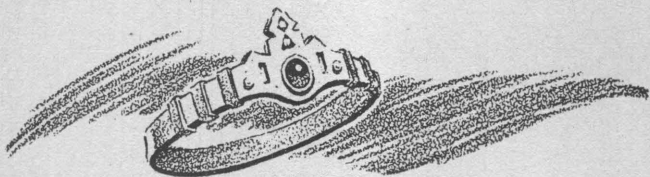
Estla raises her hands and addresses her people in a quiet voice which somehow carries to each person in the throng as if she were standing next to him. "The crown of Aerdrie was given to me by our friend, Archmagus Landor of Tikandia. It is fitting, therefore, that I return its power to Landor's son, Mage Carr Delling!"

The crowd of warrior elves cheers loudly, calling your name and Estla's, urging you to wear the Sorcerer's Crown and drive the evil hordes from Seagate Island.

The matriarch nods to a servant, who ducks inside her hut and returns immediately with a hand-carved wooden box. Estla opens the lid and extends the box toward you.

Beside you, Dalris gasps. "How beautiful!"

The gleaming adamantite tiara, a duplicate of the one Arno was wearing, is nestled on a silken cushion. With trembling hands, you remove the crown and place it on your head.



"Oh, Aerdrie!" calls Estla, her voice carrying into the sky. "Hear our prayers and send your assistance to us in this hour of great need and danger. Honor us with your wisdom, and empower this champion with the magical strength he will need to face the demon Pazuzu and his evil servant, Arno!"

The crowd gasps in wonder as a beam of ivory light surrounds you instantly and shoots into the mountain sky, a dagger of magical energy piercing the heavens. You feel the crown's great dweomer filling your brain and your body

with its power. It seems to consume you.

"Look!" someone in the crowd shouts. "A monster with wings!"

Stunned by the power that has you in its grasp, you struggle to gaze upward. There you see a magnificent creature descending in the crown's light toward you. It's a copper-skinned giant human with flaming bronze hair and yellow eyes. Twin golden wings extend from the shoulders of the astral creature. You recognize it from fantastic descriptions and myths as a solar, a powerful servant of good!

"I am Nithran, steward of Aerdrie!" he calls in a voice that echoes through your very being. "My mistress has directed me to guard her people and to defend them against the malevolent force which now governs Tikandia. The demon Pazuzu has overstepped his bounds and must never again be summoned to Aerdrie's holy island!"

"But how will we do this, Lord Nithran?" you call. "It is all we can do to survive in these rugged mountains against Pazuzu's hordes."

"Do not question the power of a solar, Carr Delling! Whatever force you require will be at your command as long as you wear the adamantite crown of Aerdrie. Pazuzu's dominions will be driven into the sea by my planetars and devas. Even now they are destroying your enemy in the ports of Delmer and Freeton."

"What will become of Tikandia and her people, noble one?" asks Perth.

"I am forbidden to speak of the future among those who will shape it. Yet, I will tell you that the paladin called Garn must recruit a new force of cavaliers, a force who will pledge themselves to combat Pazuzu's 'Knights of Truth' in the name of Aerdrie. If the Kandian people are to survive, it will only be through the courage of men such as Garn."

"What about me, Nithran?" you call. "How am I to help you in this cause?"

"You are the link between all Kandians and their past, Carr Delling! You have destined yourself to seek your father's legacy and to restore the magnificence of Bhukod to its descendants."

The shaft of ivory light vanishes as suddenly as it came, leaving a stunned silence broken only by the distant cries of battle between Pazuzu's evil forces and your own astral allies. You stare in silence toward the north, and wonder what the next bequest of your father will bring. ✘



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