

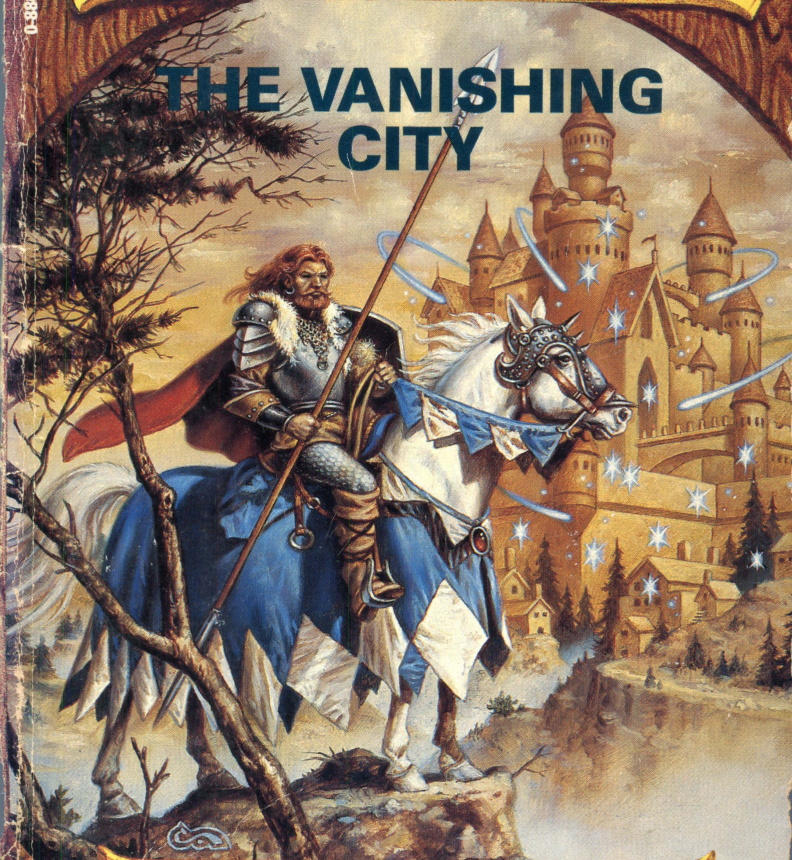
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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 15 GAMEBOOK

THE VANISHING CITY



By Allen Varney

CHARACTER STATS CARD

THE VANISHING CITY



NAME: Sir Theobold Redbeard

CHAR. CLASS: Fighter

AGE: 40

SKILL POINTS (23 total):

(minimum of 6 each)

Fighting: _____

Dexterity: _____

Perception: _____

EXPERIENCE POINTS: _____

HIT POINTS: 25 + _____ = _____

POSSESSIONS (check two):

_____ Healing Potion

_____ Healing Potion #2

_____ Bracer of Strength

_____ Amulet of Swiftness

_____ Helm of Awareness

_____ Ring of Dechronicity

_____ Wisdom Ward

OTHER POSSESSIONS:

SO NEAR, YET SO FAR . . .

Your search for the magical golden coin you so desperately need to complete your quest has led you to the area known as the Cliffside Caves, a series of forbidding caverns honeycombed into the rocky lower reaches of the Dragon Hills.

Suddenly, from a cavern entrance, a small creature emerges onto the ledge above you. It looks like a lion cub with two tiny wings, but its button nose, large brown eyes, and chubby cheeks seem almost human. In its mouth, it holds a bright gold disk. "The coin!" gasps Theona, your companion.

"And a baby sphinx holding it!" you reply. "Not much of a guardian, but at least one of its parents is inside the cave." You shiver to think of fighting a fully grown sphinx—a large, powerful, highly intelligent flying lion—especially one that is protecting its young.

What will you do?

Will you attack the cub by surprise, hoping to kill it and steal the coin before the parent sees you (218)? Will you try to lure the cub toward you, so you can grab the coin and run (128)? Other possibilities are to enter the cave peacefully (161), wait and do nothing (134), or leave the area immediately (177).

Whatever you do, only your decisions, and the luck of the dice roll, can help you restore
THE VANISHING CITY



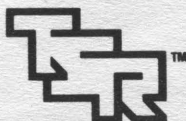
An **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®**
Adventure Gamebook #15

THE VANISHING CITY

By **Allen Varney**

(based on the role-playing adventure module **FIVE COINS FOR A KINGDOM**,
also published by TSR, Inc.)

Cover Art by Clyde Caldwell
Interior Art by Doug Chaffee



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AN EXCITING GAMEBOOK EXPERIENCE!

Welcome, rescuer of **THE VANISHING CITY**, to an exciting new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

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ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure Gamebooks have been designed to read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you finish reading the rules that follow, you are ready to play. Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute—with **YOU** as the hero!



YOUR CHARACTER

In this book, you are Sir Theobold Redbeard, a knight of great glory. Years ago, after a long and heroic career, you became ruler of the dominion of Lighthall.

You love your city, and you rule it as fairly as you can. The only problem is that things do sometimes get rather boring. The foppish noblemen in your court aren't like the fighters you once knew. And these blasted jubilees your subjects keep throwing in your honor seem dashed unmilitary, by gad!

Now, you know people will have their fun. You like fun as much as the next fellow, in a certain limited military sense. But you fought in His Majesty's loyal legions for a donkey's years, and you never needed fancy dinners and testimonials and blasted posh robes and fireworks—fireworks, by gad!

Well, subjects will be subjects, you tell yourself. Stiff upper lip and all that, you know. The good news is that this latest jubilee has brought your old companion in adventure, Theona, to Lighthall. She used to be a terrific fighter, but now she's donned holy robes and calls herself "Theona of the Righteous Glory." Dashed fine woman, sturdy and to the point. Not a bit of nonsense there. Makes an old soldier think of that empty throne beside him, and no lady to fill it. . . .

If only Theona didn't carry on so about a fellow having a small drink now and then. It's just to clear your head, of course. But to hear her talk, you'd think the gods are about to bring down lightning on every thirsty soul in Lighthall. Gad!



PLAYING THE GAME

This book is divided into numbered sections. **DO NOT** read the book straight through from section to section. Read section 1, then select the next section to read from the choices offered there. By making these choices, you guide the story to its end. Try to bring about the best ending possible to your adventure. There are many endings, and you can play until you find them all!

ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

YOUR Theobold Redbeard will be different from everyone 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 what Theobold is like. It also doubles as a bookmark.

Since we hope you will be playing this adventure many times, write on the card in pencil only, so that your character statistics ("stats") can be erased easily when you are ready to play again. If you have access to a photocopier, you

may wish to make several photocopies of the Character Stats Card before you fill it in. Permission is hereby granted by the publisher to make photocopies of the Character Stats Card *only*. Another alternative is to reproduce the card by writing on a 3" x 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to round out Theobold Redbeard's individual identity by establishing his strengths and weaknesses. Theobold's name, age, and character class 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

While playing the game, you keep track of three things—**hit points**, **skill points**, and **experience points**—on the tear-out **Character Stats Card**. An explanation of each of these follows.

HIT POINTS

Hit points represent your health or life strength. As an experienced warrior, you start the adventure with many hit points. Roll two dice, add their numbers together, and add the total to 25. If you roll a total of 2, 3, or 4 and want to try again, you may, but you *must* accept the result of the second roll, even if it is less than your first roll. Record this number in the blank space labeled "hit points" on the Character Stats Card.

Whenever you are injured, either in a fight or an accident, such as a fall, you lose hit points. The book will tell you when you lose hit points and how many you lose. Keep track of how many points you have left. If your hit points ever reach zero, you have been defeated and your adventure is over, whether or not the story has come to an end.

During the adventure, you may occasionally recover hit points through healing, either with medicine, magic, or

sufficient rest. However, *you can never recover more hit points than you started with.* Do not erase your original number of hit points, since you may need to refer to this record when Theobald is healed.

SKILL POINTS

Your many past adventures have made you strong, fast, and alert to danger. These abilities are represented in the game by numbers called **skill scores**. The higher your score with a skill, the better you are with that skill. For instance, a score of 6 in a skill indicates relatively poor ability, while a score of 10 shows exceptional skill.

In this game, you have three skills: **fighting**, **dexterity**, and **perception**.

Fighting is your prowess in combat. A high fighting score allows you to wield weapons with deadly effect against opponents both human and inhuman.

Dexterity shows your agility, quickness, and coordination. To run quickly, react swiftly to surprise, or keep your balance on a swaying boat deck calls for high dexterity.

Perception determines your ability to spot hidden or obscure objects and notice surprise attacks before they occur. Perception also lets you see ways to escape from tight spots or solve problems.

You determine your scores in these three skills by dividing 23 skill points among them. You may divide the 23 points any way you wish, as long as you place at least 6 points under each skill. There is no right or wrong way to divide up your skill points.

Write your three skill scores in the appropriate blanks on your Character Stats Card. Unlike hit points, which may change during your adventure, skill scores remain constant throughout the game. Each time you play, you can experiment with a new combination of skill scores.

Using Your Skills

During the game, you will test your skills using a procedure called a skill check. To make a skill check, roll the two dice, add the numbers you roll together, and add the total to the appropriate skill score. The book will tell you what to do next. This procedure is repeated in the text at each opportunity to make a skill check.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

As in real life, experience increases your chances of success in a given situation. Your experience points can help change a poor die roll into a successful one. Roll one die and write the result in the "Experience Points" blank on your Character Stats Card. You begin the adventure with that many experience points.

When you are about to roll the dice during the adventure, you may "spend" one or more of your experience points by adding that number to the roll. Each point you spend adds 1 to the total. However, you must decide whether to spend experience points *before* you roll the dice. Whether or not the roll is successful, once you have spent the points, they are gone and can't be spent again. They must, of course, be subtracted from your experience point total.

Sometimes, when you act heroically, defeat a great opponent, or do something clever or honorable, you will be rewarded with additional experience points. Add these to your total as you receive them.



POSSESSIONS

In your long adventuring career, you have picked up many unusual items. For instance, you wear magical armor that reduces the damage you take from powerful blows, and you have your trusty broadsword. You may also select any two of the following items before you begin the adventure. Make a note of the two you select on your Character Stats Card.

- 1) **Healing potion.** You may drink this potion at any time except during combat. It immediately heals all the damage you have taken and restores your hit points to your starting total. You may choose two healing potions for your two items.
- 2) **Bracer of Strength.** This gold wrist brace adds 2 to your fighting skill score.
- 3) **Amulet of Swiftness.** Add 2 to your dexterity skill score if you choose this jeweled neck chain.
- 4) **Helm of Awareness.** This brilliant helmet, engraved with ancient runes and symbols, adds 2 to your perception skill score.
- 5) **Ring of Dechronicity.** This magical ring allows you to "rewind time" once during the adventure. When you roll the dice, you may ignore the total and roll again—but then the ring's magic is gone, and it cannot be used again.
- 6) **Wisdom Ward.** This handsome medallion bestows keen insight and understanding one time during the course of your adventure. When you run out of experience points, simply roll one die and receive that many more. Then the ward's magic is exhausted, and it cannot be used again. Also, when you spend the last of your original experience points on a roll, you must wait until your next chance to roll the dice before the ward grants you more experience.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

If dice are not available, simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Then when you must roll a die, draw a slip from the container, note the number, and put it back. Mix up the numbers and draw a second time. Each draw represents one roll of a die.

Now, Sir Theobald Redbeard, your character is complete and you are ready to assume rulership of **THE VANISHING CITY**. Turn to page 13—and good luck!

“Balderdash!”

It's a hot summer day, but that hasn't stopped people from turning out in numbers in Lighthall's main marketplace. Crowds mill around in the dusty bazaar, while merchants hawk their goods and entertainers perform for a few coppers. Smells of fried food and perspiration fill the air. Children scamper through the crowd, some merely for fun, others to escape a pursuing victim whose purse has been “borrowed.”

You and Theona, however, need not concern yourselves with such things. Your subjects make way, smiling and bowing, as you walk among them. “Balderdash!” you repeat to Theona. “That innocent wine merchant back there was no more an immoral drunkard than I am myself!”

“You simply confirm my point, Redbeard,” says Theona in her dry, gravelly voice. With her short, stout body wrapped in the black robes of her order, she could be a mobile wine cask. Sandy brown hair, sternly cut, frames her red face. “I came to Lighthall to attend the jubilee celebration of a great monarch,” she goes on, her voice dropping to a whisper, inaudible to those nearby. “Instead, I find this monarch, a valued old friend, to be a bibulous fogey in dire need of salvation!”

“Now, see here, old girl, I've known you to hoist a few tankards in the past!”

“Ahem!” She stiffens. “I see no need to bring up my past transgressions. I prefer to think of my current need to show you the one true path. . . .”

As you listen to her, you consider making a true path back to the wine merchant's booth. Theona is a marvelous woman, certainly, and well-meaning, too, but—

Suddenly you hear a high-pitched whine in the distance, growing steadily louder. Before you can move, the sound is deafening, and a light streaks across the sky like a meteor.

Street musicians stop playing; merchants stop selling; people shout in panic. Everywhere you hear, "What's that?" and "Run!"

Something zooms down a distant street. You can barely make out a glowing trail at a busy intersection. The thing rushes the other way, now one street closer, then back again, a block nearer, in less time than it takes to think about it. All the time, the roaring grows louder.

People are screaming. Everyone is scrambling to run away from the approaching thing. Struck by sudden fear, you grab Theona and pull her close to you.

"Unh! Release me, Redbeard!" she cries indignantly.

"Be prepared for anything, my dear!" you shout back. You barely have time to draw a breath before the thing roars into the marketplace. You see a tiny, very bright light zipping along at eye level. The roar continues to get louder as it comes nearer. It streaks by, dodging past carts, booths, and people, and suddenly the roaring stops dead.

The light zips off down a side street. In its wake, everything is silent. People stand with open mouths, but you don't hear anything. They run, but you hear no footsteps. Everyone looks frightened or bewildered, but there's nothing to hear but the sighing of the wind.

"Goddess!" says Theona breathlessly. "What magic!"

You can hear her perfectly, and you are relieved to hear your own voice in reply. "I—don't quite know what to make of it. I suspect my armor has protected us from the enchantment—I, because I wear it, and you because I was holding you." Your words sound like babbling in your ears, but you feel you must say something to conceal your shock. "You're one of those clerical types, Theona. You know magic. Can you cast a counterspell?"

For once, Theona looks abashed. "My order forbids sorcery."

"Oh, marvelous!" you reply. "Just marvelous!" Amid the silence, you continue to hold her.

Another light races by in a new direction, inches from your heads, but something seems different. You can't quite place it. Then the light vanishes down a cross-street.

"Sir Theobold! Do you notice it?"

"Notice what?"

"The smells. They're gone!"

Sniffing, you discover that Theona is right. The odors of food, people, and horses have been replaced by the sweet scent of open grassland.

In rapid succession, more lights appear. One sweeps by over someone's head, then dips down to pass between another's legs, circles a cart almost too fast to see, and zooms off in a new direction. Suddenly the people around you are phantoms. Their hands pass through each other's bodies, through the wooden posts of the booths, and right into walls of buildings. People continue to scream, in total silence, while they run through each other like ghosts.

Another light comes blazing through the marketplace like a comet. After it passes, everything around you has stopped moving. The shoppers in the market are frozen in place like statues. The light has gone off in still another direction.

Solidity gone, and motion, you think, puzzled. What's left?

You're distracted by a bright light shining directly overhead. Something is streaking down at you, but you can't tell where it comes from. It's another white light, but this one is big, and growing steadily larger as you watch.

The strange light seems to cover the whole city like a dome. It spreads downward from above, surrounding everything, growing brighter all the time. Soon you can't see anything but pure whiteness.

"Down, milady!" you shout, bearing Theona to the ground.

And then suddenly it's gone.

The light has vanished, and so has the entire city! You're

lying in the middle of a grassy field, where the city stood just a moment ago. *You* haven't moved—*it* has.

"It's disappeared!" you breathe, climbing to your feet and helping Theona up. Your dominion, your possessions, your subjects, your friends . . . all gone. A cold, brisk wind blows over you, chilling body and spirit alike.

Theona stands beside you, gasping. "Is it—a judgment?" she asks, hardly loud enough to hear. "A punishment of some kind?"

Gasping harder than she is, you race to collect your thoughts. "I can't help thinking a punishment leveled against an entire city is a bit harsh, old girl," you say without humor. "Any being powerful enough—*ruthless* enough—to destroy an entire city must be quite insane. My only question—" you pause to look around at the unmarked landscape—"is how to avenge its destruction."

Suddenly you hear another sound—a loud humming, coming from overhead. It grows louder, then becomes a sweet-sounding musical chord. You look up to see more streaks of white light; two head off toward a range of cliffs nearby, while another plummets toward a lake a short distance away. The fourth and last streaks directly toward you like a meteor. Once more you wrestle Theona to the ground.

The streak of light strikes the earth less than ten feet away, hard. There's an explosion, and dirt flies up into the air, but you're not hurt. A ring of tall grass around the point of impact catches on fire, and for a moment you see nothing but a cloud of smoke. Then it clears—and there, standing before you, is an old man in copper-colored robes, outlined in transparent flames. You can see right through him!

You've seen great magic in your time, so, despite your fear, you manage to find your voice quickly enough. "Who—who are you?" you demand. "What do you know of Lighthall's doom?"

Theona breaks in. "He can't hear you, Redbeard. It's an illusion. We've seen our share of them in the past."

The image speaks in an old, fragile voice. "I hope this token has found a brave adventurer. To you I bring greetings from another dimension. We, the Ruling Wizards of the kingdom of Trann, are in great danger. And we believe you, too, are in the same danger.

"Our capital city, Solius—the jewel, the quintessence of our dimension of Trann—has vanished. A sorcerer of monstrous evil, Durhan the Conqueror, cast this powerful enchantment. The spell leaves our land helpless before his might, but we sense Durhan's spell has spread far beyond his control, crossing the barrier between the planes of existence, finding its way to your Prime Material Plane.

"The spell transported Solius into an unreachable pocket dimension. We suspect some similar area in your own dimension has likewise been affected. But they are not lost; they may yet be rescued."

The news both shocks and gladdens you. "Not destroyed, by gad!" you shout. "How do I rescue Lighthall?" But Theona signals for silence, and the illusion continues speaking with hardly a pause.

"We have been betrayed by an ally of Durhan's. We are now held captive in the royal treasury, beneath the site of our vanished city. Our magic has been restrained in our own plane of existence, but we have gathered our forces to cross the dimensions, following Durhan's own uncontrolled spell. We send tokens of our power to a rescuer in another realm. These four tokens—these coins—are all we had to work with. I hope their powers will aid you.

"For we beg you to help us. Obtain this single coin beneath me, and you have the means to reach us. Obtain the others, and you prove yourself worthy to face Durhan. Rescue us, defeat Durhan, and we can restore our city . . . and yours. We depend upon your courage."

With that, the old man points downward to a spot at his

feet, then fades gently away.

You let out your breath and draw another slowly. "Well," you say.

Theona glares at you. "Don't 'well' me, Redbeard. Dig out that coin!"

You dig with your fingers in the still-smoking crater. Just as the wizard said, you discover a coin, a copper piece about an inch in diameter. One face shows an elderly, bearded man with a wise expression, the same man you just saw in the image. On the reverse side is a picture of a castle. The coin is cool to the touch and radiates the unmistakable aura of magic.

"Warrick," you say as your fingertips brush the coin and you feel the magic course through you. "That wizard's name was Warrick. The others are Dyan, Jacaine, and Saybrook. The other coins are made of silver, gold, and platinum. Their powers are—"

"Whatever are you mumbling about, Redbeard?"

You stop with an effort. "Remarkable!" you say. Somehow you know exactly where the other three coins are! This is the special power of this copper coin: to find the other coins. It can also transport you immediately, by magic, to the Ruling Wizards' home dimension.

You stand up and pocket the coin. Then you stare at Theona for long moments, until at last she says, "You may move your gaze elsewhere at the earliest opportunity, Sir Theobold."

"Of course, milady. I was just speculating on what will become of you when I leave on this journey."

"We shall certainly find out together, Redbeard, because I am coming with you every step of the way. Tut, tut! No arguments. After all, somebody has to look out for you." Her expression is resolute, forestalling your objections.

Despite the grave situation, you smile slightly. *Wonderful woman!* you think again.

But now you have a decision to make. To rescue your own

vanished city of Lighthall, you must journey to the alien dimension of Trann and rescue its Ruling Wizards from Durhan the Conqueror. The Wizards have sent several magical coins to help you, but they are protected by powerful guardians, so that only the mightiest warrior can obtain them.

The copper coin tells you the location of the other three magical coins. All are within a mile's walk. You and Theona can choose one of these locations and try to obtain the coin there, or you both can teleport directly to Trann right now. Where will you go—the Cliffside Caves (95)? The Dragon Hills (179)? Haunt Lake (85)? Teleport directly to Trann (145)?



2

You draw your sword, swing at nothingness, and the tea tray falls to the ground with a clatter. Nothing happens. Evidently you chased off the ghost or spirit, or whatever it was. Turn to 219.

3

You stand outside the structure built like a dragon, near a small brick building. You can go into the dragon building (164), the small building (226), or go to one of the other structures remaining in this vanished city: a temple (224) or a building shaped like a sphinx (235).

If there is someone with you besides Theona, this companion will only go to the sphinx. If you wish to go elsewhere, the companion flies off, and you see her no more on this adventure.

4

If your companion is Popiel the dragonet, go to 142. If you are accompanied by a group of bronze golems, turn to 199.

5

Warily you examine the boots for cursed runes or suspicious markings, but you find nothing except a few curious symbols inscribed around the heel and a crude illustration of a bird's wing.

You slip on one boot. Though it looked too small for you, it expands easily to fit your foot. It's magical, all right. You place the booted foot on the ground and feel an odd springiness in your step. Theona looks on with interest.

When you put on the other boot, the magic becomes apparent. Flipping end over end, you hang in empty air, head down. "Whoa! By jasper, they fly!" you shout.

Theona bursts into laughter. "Redbeard, you are—ha-ha!—the least airworthy ruler I can recall seeing—ha-ha-ha!" She falls into an overstuffed chair, laughing uncontrollably, then begins pulling on the other pair of boots.

You try to regain your balance. "Confound—whoop!—confound it, Theona, come over here and—*yaaaah!*" Somehow a bedpost springs into your path, and you wrap yourself around it. Theona floats over, walking on the air as easily as on a city street.

"Having trouble, are we, Theobold?"

"Dash it, all the blood is running to my head!" you shout in frustration.

"Well, at least now you'll have something in—"

"Don't say it, cleric, as you value your faith! How do you work these things?"

With a few tips about balance and controlling direction, Theona helps you right yourself. You soon are bouncing nimbly from foot to foot in your usual walking gait. "They'll never replace horses!" you say. "Harrumph!"



Add the Boots of Flying to your list of possessions. Will you examine the scroll (206), go upstairs to the dragon's head (104), or leave (3)?

6

"Run, Theona!" you call, sprinting for the ledge. But before you can leap, a blood-freezing roar stops you in your tracks. The sphinxes apparently want to find out more about you.

The male glides overhead, almost noiselessly, and lands before you. "What is your business here?" he asks in a low, reverberating voice.

Below, Theona hasn't even moved from her place. "You can't back out of this now, Redbeard," she says with sympathy. You realize that running is useless until this situation is resolved. Subtract 1 experience point from your current total.

Will you talk with the sphinxes politely (168), use the silver or platinum coin (81), or attack (147)?

7

Well, the wizards are in the vault. Why not simply knock? You bring your sword hilt down hard on the iron door. The knocking resounds through the antechamber. Theona, astounded, asks, "What in the name of the goddess are you doing?"

Suddenly the door flies open, striking you and knocking you to the ground. A violent roar fills the antechamber: "Graaaahhh!" Standing over you are three vicious, brutish guardian ogres, slope-browed giants who wear loin-cloths and carry enormous clubs. Their pointed teeth grow at crooked angles, and their tiny eyes look at you hatefully.

If you weren't too shocked to think, you would curse your stupidity. Subtract 1 from your current experience point total for your blunder, then make a fighting check as the ogres attack you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, go to **196**. If it is 15 or less, turn to **48**.

8

"We did not take your treasure," you begin, but the dragon interrupts.

"Gone, all of it! Shiny gold pieces from the reigns of ancient emperors, lustrous silver ornaments of exquisite workmanship, enchanted swords and shields, gems of a hundred types, potions, scrolls, rings, amulets, bracers, braziers, statuary! Nothing remains of my lovely horde, nothing but this single silver piece!"

The dragon extends its broad turquoise-colored wings and flaps them angrily. Sparks play about its snout. The creature seems insane with the loss of its treasure.

"Yes, well, my condolences," you say. "I, too, have lost much—in fact, my entire city. But I mean to restore it, and your treasure as well, if you will give me that coin."

"Never! I would be left with nothing at all! Oh, my lovely, lovely horde!"

"It's useless," you mutter to Theona. Will you try bribing the dragon (**135**); use the gold or platinum coin, if you have either one (**29**); attack the dragon (**222**); or flee with Theona (**12**)?

9

Theona lies still on the beach, a splash of blood on her forehead. You race toward her with a cry. "Oh, no, no, old girl! I never intended—" You raise her head gently.

She opens one eye. "If you call me 'old girl' once more," she says in a weak whisper, "I'll personally see to it that you're worse off than I." The sentence ends in a fit of coughing.

You wipe Theona's forehead gently. "Oh, milady, what happened?"

“The ghost . . . stubborn sort, that one—”

You tend her wound with a poultice of mud and reeds, an old adventurer’s remedy. Theona is on her feet again eventually, but you must subtract 2 experience points from your current total for leaving a friend in a perilous situation.

If you have the diver’s body, you can bury it and send the ghost to its long-awaited rest (239), but you must ignore the experience point awarded there. If you don’t have the body, it’s time to leave the area (198).

10

With the power of the silver coin, you enlist the aid of Saybrook, the Ruling Wizard who has mastered all spells of illusion. Suddenly, from the thunderclouds around Durhan, emerge dozens of giant winged serpents!

Whole squadrons of the flying snakes descend on Durhan, the flames of the Shadow Belt glinting orange on their silvery wings. They circle his head, his waist, and his knees, screeching inhumanly all the while. You only hope they will distract him long enough. . . .

But the hope is in vain. With a cry of rage, Durhan surrounds himself with a globe of light that flickers through every color of the spectrum. As soon as a serpent touches the globe, it vanishes in a spray of silvery light. Soon they are all gone.

Mark off one use of the silver coin. It’s hopeless to try using it again.

Turn to 188.



“Neria has the coin,” you say. Immediately Theona winces, and you suspect you’ve made a mistake.

“Think it through, human,” says Demosthenes. “Neria said the sphinx with the coin always lies. If she lies and she has the coin, then her statement is true—except that she always lies. Contradiction! Whereas if Neria tells the truth and she has the coin, then her statement is a lie—contradiction again!”

You try to follow the sphinx’s reasoning. Working it through your mind slowly, you see that there is no way to satisfy the conditions of the riddle if Neria has the coin. As you reach this conclusion, Demosthenes lifts a paw to expose the gold coin.

“A shame, manling, but I will enjoy receiving your supply of fresh meat. Daily deliveries will satisfy us greatly.”

You groan inwardly. You try pointing out to Demosthenes that you can’t possibly bring him meat until you rescue the city and restore life to the countryside, but the sphinx stubbornly refuses to give you another chance. “A contest fairly won is a contest that is done,” he says.

You review your remaining options. Will you attack the sphinxes (147), try to bribe them to give you the coin (88), or give up and leave the area (177)?

“Run, Theona!” you cry. You race back for the cavern entrance, hoping the dragon is held up trying to maneuver around the tight corners of the tunnel.

You don’t get five paces before a bolt of lightning scorches the ground in front of you. Sparks of electricity fly up and jolt you through your armor. Subtract 2 from your current hit point total.

“Come back here and tell me what you have done with my treasure,” the dragon says, very quietly. Go back to 8 and try again.

“Your Majesty, I have here a most powerful magical device, made by a Ruling Wizard and of a magnitude that would do honor even to your illustrious court.” You hold out the coin and relate the story of your mission: Warrick’s summons, the wizards’ imprisonment in their own treasury, and the coins that provided their only means of finding a champion.

The Flame King listens without interrupting. The other fire elementals stand in silence around him. At the end of your narration, he holds out one colossal hand. You toss the coin gently into it, relieved to see that the hand’s heat doesn’t melt the coin into a blob of metal.

The king examines the coin while you tell him about its power. But this time he interrupts. “The Ruling Wizard has chosen their champion,” he says, as if pointing out the obvious to a foolish schoolchild. “If they thought you to be adequate, they should not desire further help.”

“What? But, but—by jasper, that’s the most topsy-turvy logic I ever—”

Theona’s sharp reproof cuts you off. “I don’t think he invited argument, Redbeard. We’re in no position to make demands.”

The Flame King speaks again. “I shall return you now to where you came from. Good fortune.”

He closes his hand around you and flames rise up, then die away. If it weren’t for the Boots of Flying, you would fall with the sudden sensation of weight.

You stand beside the temple built by Dyan the Ruling Wizard, on the floating island that was once the Ruling Wizard’s city of Solius. The bright sunlight overhead seems to mock you. You still have your coin, but you cannot visit the Flame King again.

“Well, that was positively ducky!” you grumble.

“He didn’t want to help, Redbeard. He would have found some other excuse. Meanwhile, we have work to do.” Turn to 224.

14

An assault without provocation hardly seems sporting. You approach the entrance to the interior of the reef and look in on the bizarre devilfish ceremony. The flat black fish swarm around a stained coral altar. On the altar rests the platinum coin. A large fish, an albino with pure white skin, leads the ceremony with some sort of guttural chanting. As you look closely, you smell a telltale scent of decay—that’s no albino, it’s a vampire! A vampire priestess leads this school of devilfish!

You shiver with dread, but you speak up just the same. “Now, I don’t want to make any trouble, but I do want that coin!” All of them turn at once, and dozens of red eyes stare at you. “So, um, is there anything you want for it,” you continue, “or any little chore you need done around the reef?”

With an incoherent cry and a lash of her tail, the vampire priestess signals the others to attack. You must fight, but you may add 1 to your current experience point total for your willingness to negotiate. Turn to 187.

15

“Yes, yes, this is Saybrook’s study,” pipes Popiel, fluttering around among the bookshelves. “He was here when Durhan’s ogres broke in and kidnapped him along with the other Ruling Wizards. It was terrible!”

“How did they capture so powerful a wizard?”

“He was betrayed!” Popiel cries, sparks flying from her mouth. “Durhan got an apprentice to drug his wine with black lotus powder. Fah! Nasty! And the wizards were just about to bring in help to fight Durhan, too. Look!”

She flies down to the desk, among the pages of writing, and fixes one sheet beneath her paw. “This is a message he

was going to send to a sorcerer in a nearby dimension. Listen.” She reads the message aloud.

“I have grave news, Astinus. Durhan has found the dreaded Shadow Belt of Orcus. You may well shiver, for he intends to use its power to conquer all of Trann.

“It may be that one or two of us, wearing my Rings of Protection, can engage Durhan in combat without burning in the belt’s awful heat. If so, then we shall try to rip away the belt. Yet I tremble to write the words, for you know that we wizards are not fighters of that sort.

“Before trying this desperate move, however, we will seek the help of the Flame King. Warrick, my fellow wizard, has arranged for a meeting with him at his home; the Travel spell is even now being encrolled downstairs. A happy thought, that the Flame King will consent to emerge and defeat Durhan for us. Otherwise, our beloved city—our entire kingdom—may be in peril of—’ The message ends there,” Popiel finishes.

“Rings of Protection?” you murmur.

“And a scroll to visit the Flame King, whoever that is,” says Theona. “Popiel, where are these things?”

“Yeek! I don’t know. I should think they’re somewhere in this house.”

You and Theona look around the study with practiced eyes. Make a perception check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 72. Otherwise, you find nothing. You can go back downstairs and look around (153) or leave the building (3).



The glass vat hanging from the ceiling catches your eye. Inside it hangs a mummified stalk, a wrinkled, fibrous thing with a huge inhuman eye on its end. Suspended in green fluid, the eye gazes down at the wizards on their slabs.

This is the eye of a beholder, but there is no beauty in it. The beholder, a monster with many eyestalks, casts various deadly rays. This one must cast an anti-magic ray, the weird energy that neutralizes all sorcerous powers.

You creep quietly to the edge of the pit and, stooping low, pry loose a rock from the near side. Theona's screams cover your return to the doorway. *Another moment, milady, and I shall revenge your ill treatment!* you think, hoisting the rock.

You take aim and throw. You hear a loud crash as the vat cracks, spilling the eye and the embalming fluid. The ogres look up, startled, then roar angrily when they see you. Casting Theona aside as a bored child tosses away a toy, the three horrible guardians pick up their clubs and charge you.

You raise your sword, but you are unprepared for the fury of their attack. Their strength and numbers, combined with your fatigue after your long climb, make for an uneven battle. You fall back from the doorway, but they continue to advance with roars and swings. There's nothing behind you now but the pit. . . .

With a tremendous crash of thunder, a triple bolt of lightning erupts through the doorway. The bolts strike all three ogres, and three scorched bodies fall to the stone. Behind them stand four noble figures. "The Ruling Wizards, I presume," you say, then fall forward, exhausted.

When you broke the vat with the mummified beholder eye, the wizards were able to use their magic again. They begin to explain everything, thanking you profusely. Turn to 149.

17

You lay the silver coin on the tray. You hear a snort of derision—"Hmmp!"—and the tray vanishes. The silver coin falls to the floor, and you pick it up.

"I never did know how much to tip," you say to Theona.

You decide to have a look around the room. Turn to **219**.

18

You stand on a rainswept mountaintop. Beyond a gap in the clouds floats a thirty-foot-tall man. His limbs and features are hideously distorted, and his expression is a mixture of pure hatred and agony. He wears a gray leather belt with a shoulder strap that stretches across his misshapen rib cage and twisted spine. Flames rise around him. This is Durhan the Conqueror.

He screams insanely in a strange language, but you hear his meaning clearly in your mind: *I am Durhan the Conqueror! I am all-powerful! I wear the Shadow Belt! Everything dies, everything obeys!* His pure, hateful madness strikes you like a barrage of arrows. Clearly there is no chance to negotiate with such a being. You must fight Durhan if you want to rescue your city.

Behind you, Theona whispers prayers to her goddess.

Is anyone with you besides Theona? If so, turn to **4**. Otherwise, you can attack Durhan with your sword (**221**); use a coin, if you have one (**42**); throw the glass globe of black vapors, if you have it (**129**); or simply watch and wait (**188**).

19

There are just too many devilfish. After long minutes of frantic combat, you give up the chance of ever reaching the platinum coin and try to withdraw, but there are so many of the fearsome creatures that you can't even slice your way to an exit!

In the end, your own prowess in battle proves your undoing. Your slashing blade thins their numbers so much that



one of the remaining fish is able to move behind you and sting you with its long, whiplike tail. The needles pierce your armor and drive into the small of your back, and you freeze with excruciating pain as the poison races through your body like acid.

Surrounded and paralyzed, you are in grave danger. Is Theona with you? If so, turn to 173. If she is not with you, you have no rescuer to save you from certain doom, and your adventure is over. ✖

20

With your mission here complete, it's time to move on. You note a beam of sunlight in a distant part of the cavern. Through a ragged hole in the ceiling, you see blue sky. This must have been the dragon's escape route.

You give Theona help climbing up, and together you emerge into the warm sunlight. Below stretches the wide meadow that once was your city of Lighthall.

Where will you go now? In the distance, beneath lowering clouds, you see the dismal Haunt Lake (85); while in the other direction, the Dragon Hills give way to the Cliffside Caves (95). If you don't wish to visit either of these places, you can use the copper coin to teleport directly to Trann (145).

21

Your Rings of Protection keep you and Theona from burning, suffocating, or dying from the sun's other dangers. But you float in emptiness, unable to move.

You flounder desperately, trying to "swim" toward one another, but though hardly a yard of distance separates you, it's useless. The whole universe seems filled with orange fire, yet there is nothing here, not even air, to push against. For all you know, you might be in the midst of a plume of this orange fire yourselves, one as insubstantial as a wisp of gas.

Then you think of your sword. Drawing it, you extend it hilt-first toward Theona. She grabs it and pulls herself toward you, and the two of you cling together like young lovers, overjoyed to have some human contact in this vast, awesome, silent world.

Silent, for you cannot speak or hear because there is no air. You are forced to make exaggerated lip movements to converse.

“Now what?” asks Theona.

“We go home,” you mouth in reply. She looks puzzled, but you simply indicate for her to hold onto you. Then you activate the last portion of the Teleportation spell.

In that silent world, you speak a silent word of magic, but both of you hear it clearly. In an eyeblink, the multicolored lights surround you again, and when they clear, you feel heavy. You stand in bright sunlight beside the temple built by Dyan the Ruling Wizard, on the floating island that was once the Rulings Wizards’ city of Solius.

“Theobold! What h-h-happened?” Theona stammers.

“By jasper, I need a drink in the world’s worst way!”

She reaches into her holy robes and pulls out a small flask. She unscrews the cap and takes a long swallow herself. “Sacramental wine,” she says, passing it to you. “Now, what happened?”

The wine is tart and too sweet, and the most delicious you can remember ever drinking. “Ahhh! . . . The last part of that spell was a conditional word. It would take us to safety if the destination proved unsafe.”

“Well, that it most certainly did, may the goddess protect me!”

You aren’t so sure. You can hardly think of the immensity of what you have seen, but the rings did keep you alive. What you need if you go back—and the very thought makes you take another swallow of wine—what you need is some means of transportation, like a flying carpet or something.

And, of course, you’ll need another Teleportation spell.

This one is gone from the scroll, and you can't remember words of magic once they have been spoken.

Turn to **224**.

22

You throw the silver coin into the wishing well, and at once a feeling of well-being pervades you. In your mind, you hear the voice of Warrick, the wizard who assigned you this mission: "Thank you, traveler, for your good wishes. Please accept the blessing of the city of Solius."

Cross the silver coin off your list of possessions and add 2 to your current hit point total. Remember, however, that you can never raise your hit points above the number you started with.

You wish for success in your adventure and hope that somewhere the wizards can hear you. You can toss the gold coin into the well if you have it (**171**), or the platinum coin (**97**). Or you can investigate the dragon structure nearby (**164**), or leave and go elsewhere (**3**).

23

"Do what he says, Redbeard!" comes Theona's voice from behind you. It sounds like good advice. You back away slowly from the sphinx cub. When the adult sphinxes observe that you are no longer a threat to their baby, they relax. The mother herds the cub back into the cave as the father greets you.

"You startled us, manling," says the sphinx. "We may be forgiven, I think, for overreacting to the peril we perceived."

"Not at all, sir," you answer as Theona comes up to join you. "The fault was mine."

"Indeed it was," says Theona sourly.

"That's enough for now, milady," you whisper.

Once calmed, the sphinx proves quite talkative. Turn to **168**.



When you hold the gold coin and concentrate, the plump figure of Jacaine, master of shapes and forms, appears in your awareness. "A dolorous situation indeed!" he says theatrically. "May this simple spell extend your few remaining days and heighten your appreciation of their fleeting passage!"

The vision fades, and immediately you begin to transform. You are startled when you shrink quickly, ever smaller and smaller. For a moment, you fear Jacaine's enchantment has gone awry and you will continue to shrink forever. But when filmy gold wings sprout from your back and your eyes bulge and grow many-faceted and extra legs appear at your midriff, you realize that the Ruling Wizard's spell has turned you into a golden housefly!

Now you feel more helpless, more frightened than ever. How can one little fly possibly defeat three gigantic ogres? You want to fly away, leave the wizards behind, and forget you ever ruled the city of Lighthall.

After a moment, you regain control of yourself, and then you get an idea. Flying up to the nearest ogre with a loud buzz, you flit annoyingly around his eyes. He squints and swats at you, but your insect reflexes are too quick for him. You dodge easily and continue to pester him.

The other ogres notice, and they begin swinging at you with their clubs. You dodge the blows easily and buzz at them, working them into a frenzy as you wait for your chance. Finally you light on one ogre's sloping forehead. Another ogre, anxious to destroy you once and for all,

swings his club, and when you fly away quickly, he conks his fellow monster squarely in the head!

The victim grunts and falls, unconscious. The other two ogres, still obsessed with swatting you, keep flailing away as you dart between them. You see another opening, land on one ogre's back, and the other hits him with a resounding *thwack* that drops him to the floor.

One ogre left. You pray that these brutes are as stupid as they seem as you land on his nose. He freezes, hoists his club, brings the club down, missing you by the length of your own wing, and strikes himself right between the eyes. He falls like a mighty oak.

Within moments, you return to human form. Cross off one use of the gold coin on your Character Stats Card.

"It must be tough to get good help around here," you mutter as you free the wizards. Turn to **149**.

25

"By jasper, if this giant is still around after everything else has vanished, he must be a guardian to keep me from my goal!" you cry. Drawing your sword, you charge the enormous warrior. He lifts one hand feebly to try to fend off your assault, but you leap over it and onto his chest. With a lightning jab of your sword, you finish the job that the giant's earlier opponent started.

"Oh, quite heroic, Redbeard," says Theona. "A shame we can't find any stray lambs for you to chop up next."

You look at her, gasping from your effort and realizing you're not as young as you used to be. "What—what do you mean, my dear?"

"This giant was already at death's door when we arrived. He wasn't much of an opponent."

"Oh, really, I say now!"

"Enough of such theatrics, Redbeard. Which way to the coin?"

"Well, I—well, dash it all! Right past this great dead

hulk, if you're going to be so cantankerous."

"And how are we to move your victim?"

Fuming at her disrespect, you try to pull the giant out of the shallow depression. Though you grunt and even scream with strain, the body doesn't budge an inch. Your impulsive murder has blocked the path to the silver coin! Subtract 1 experience point from your current total for this thoughtless deed.

"Wonderful," says Theona. "Well, where shall we go next?" Make your choice at **230**.

26

Ducking just beneath the sweeping claws, you feel a rush of air and smell a fetid paw. *That was too close!* you think desperately. You will need all your skill to emerge victorious against these furious opponents.

But you might have alternatives to fighting. If you want to surrender, turn to **108**. If you choose to run away from the sphinxes, go to **6**. If you want to continue the fight, do so at **120**.

27

"Excellent likenesses of their subjects, don't you think, sir? The wizards have exceedingly refined taste in art. Though, to tell you the truth, sir," and here Drivel's voice drops to a conspiratorial whisper, "these frescoes conceal more practical functions. The wizards use them to monitor the treasury, to track the actions of their enemies, and to conceal the entrance to the treasury room beneath this building."

"How intriguing," says Theona casually. "Perhaps you might demonstrate."

"Indeed, madam," says Drivel. At once, three of the room's four walls blink out, each replaced by something far different.

On one wall, you see a grotesquely distorted man, per-

haps thirty feet tall, floating in midair. Below and around him are roiling thunderclouds, illuminated by frequent flashes of lightning. He screams in a deep, tormented voice, and his hatred and agony seem to assault your mind. "Durhan the Conqueror," says Drivel simply.

The second wall shows the Ruling Wizards' treasury. Here, four robed figures lie on stone slabs, held down at their chests and ankles by thick iron bands. Suspended from a chain above them is a clear glass vat filled with pale green liquid. In the liquid is suspended a mummified eye-stalk, which you recognize as a beholder's eye. The beholder is a monster that casts an anti-magic ray that neutralizes all spells and magic items. While the eye gazes on the wizards, they are helpless. What's worse, you see three monstrous ogres guarding the wizards.

"Ew, this is terrible!" says Drivel, who sounds surprised at the sight of the treasury. "We had no idea! Sir, you must defeat those beastly guards and rescue the mawsters while you can. Look, we will show you the entrance to the treasury."

Behind the third wall is a short passageway. At the end of the passage, you see a hole in the floor and a spiral staircase leading down.

Drivel is trying to push you toward this passage with invisible hands, but you struggle against him. "Now, look here, old spirit. We've been hit with quite a lot all at once. Give us a moment to digest it, won't you?"

You have several choices. Will you go to the first wall and study Durhan (169), or will you shout out a challenge to him (200)? Or will you take the staircase down to rescue the wizards (214)?

28

While Durhan is stunned, you leap up onto his body, a small figure on his gigantic form. As soon as you touch the belt, the flames intensify. Perhaps the belt is trying to pro-

tect itself against your assault.

Are you wearing a Ring of Protection? If so, go to **52**. If you are not wearing the ring, turn to **86**, but because Durhan is stunned, reduce the difficulty of the fighting check in that section by 2. That is, you need only roll 16 or more, instead of 18 or more, to succeed and go to the indicated section.

29

If you use the gold coin, turn to **51**. If you use the platinum coin, turn to **130**.

30

With your blade slicing figure-eight patterns in the water, you slay devilfish by ones and twos, and ultimately by the dozen. But every victim is replaced by a fresh acolyte with sharp, shining teeth and smoldering red eyes.

There are simply too many of them. You give up hope of reaching the platinum coin and cut your way through the swarming devilfish, till the water is thick with the monsters' blood. The blood spurs the remaining devilfish to even greater frenzy, so that some begin fighting among themselves.

You kick your way to the surface frantically, swinging at the frenzied fish with every stroke. As you swim toward the shore, you see the remaining devilfish falling away, perhaps because of the sunshine filtering through a break in the clouds. At last only the vampire priestess remains. Her flat white body bleeds from many cuts, but her fury is undaunted.

You raise your blade to strike. Make a fighting skill check. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **202**. If it's 14 or less, you descend to a watery grave instead, as the priestess sinks her fangs into you and drags you into oblivion, thus ending your adventure and your life. ✕



31

You swallow hard. The Ring of Protection hasn't kept your throat from going dry. "Your Majesty, I offer you my life."

"Redbeard!" comes Theona's thought.

"Ah. Your Majesty, in my own world I, too, am a ruler, in a small way. You, of all those here, can understand that nothing matters to me so much as the safety of my people. If you aid in the battle against this tyrant Durhan, you guarantee their safety, as well as my undying gratitude.

"For this greatest of favors," you continue, "I offer the greatest of payments. I will remain here and serve you for my entire life, in whatever way you wish, as soldier, servant, jester, errand boy. I ask that you let my companion go free."

"What? Redbeard, how can you—"

"Yooour offerrr is impresssivvve," the Flame King says, silencing Theona's protests. Then he lapses into silence, while your life and the fate of your city hang in the balance.

"Yooour faith," he continues at last, "itselfff testiffies to the worrrth of yooour cause. I thinnnk yooou woould nnot be of mmmuch use in my reallmm, sirrr. And yooou see I have mmany servanntns allready. Yet yooour worrrds touch me. I will helllp."

Turn to 245.

“Sir Theobold!” Theona shouts suddenly.

As you survey the room, a gold tea tray floats toward you and a ghostly voice says, “May we help you?”

Though the voice isn’t threatening, something must have caused this destruction. Will you attack the invisible thing holding the tea tray (2), talk to the voice politely (133), run (102), or ignore the voice and the tray altogether (219)?



33

There is no sign of the sphinx family. Perhaps they feared your return, or perhaps they are out hunting. If you haven’t got the gold coin, you see no sign of it. The copper coin offers no guidance to its location, now that the coin has been removed from its original resting place. Go to 177.

34

“Wizards, grant me the strength to rescue you and save both our cities!” you implore.

There is a moment of silence, and then the interior of the well begins to glow with white light. It shines forth, bathing you and Theona in its glow, and for the first time since you began this mission, you feel calm. New energy flows through you.

Restore your hit points to their starting total. Remember, you can never raise your hit points above the number you began with.

Finally the light fades. Moved by a strange impulse, you draw your sword. As you test your new strength, you feel amazed at the ease with which you wield the weapon. You rest lightly on the balls of your feet, striking at and parrying imaginary opponents.

“What in the world are you doing, Redbeard?” Theona asks, puzzled.

You can hardly explain it, but your wish has made you feel young again. Add 1 to your fighting skill score. You hardly know how to thank a wishing well, but you make a silent vow to rescue the wizards. Then you are ready to leave this building (3).

35

Unhinging your lower jaw like a boa constrictor, you bite into Durhan, then swallow his enormous bulk down your throat, a foot at a time. Curiously, he makes no effort to dodge your jaws, nor does he struggle on his way to your stomach.

Finally you have swallowed him whole. But the fires of the Belt continue to burn fiercely. Inside your stomach, you can feel Durhan gesturing. Oh, no! He’s still alive, still conscious! You have to—

It’s too late. From inside your body, hundreds of obsidian blades, fiendishly sharp, erupt in all directions. You twist and cry out in agony, and when Durhan himself breaks free in a spray of blood, your adventure has come to a most gruesome end. ✘

You lay the silver coin on a smooth hollow in the platinum altar. As it sits there, small and insignificant, a cold wind rushes through the temple. From over the nearby horizon, you hear a distant rumbling, like thunder.

“Redbeard, what did you offer?” asks Theona. “That single silver piece? How dare you give such an insultingly small offering?”

The wind increases, growing chillier by the moment. You realize you must leave the temple. You retrieve the coin and go, knowing you cannot come back. Subtract 1 from your current experience point total and go to **209**.

Do you have a Potion of Water-Breathing? If so, go to **71**. If you have no such potion, take a deep breath and enter the lake; turn to **43**.

Popiel the dragonet flutters up from your shoulder and begins nosing certain spots in the pattern on the door. “This triggers—*unngh!*—a secret coding in—*urk!*—the lock,” she says as the sequence of motions grows more intricate.

You become utterly bewildered at her rapid motions. Just as you start to whisper, “The creature is touched,” to Theona, there is a dull clanging sound in the door.

“It’s open!” gasps Popiel, returning to your shoulder.

Touched by genius! you think, and the three of you enter the treasury. Turn to **83**.

“It’s a sorry tale indeed, sir and madam,” says Drivel the ghost. “The mawster and the other wizards had an apprentice named Valck, who grew powerful in magic. Durhan corrupted Valck, and Valck in turn betrayed the wizards to him. A lamentable tale, sir, the more so for its brevity.”

“Durhan is a sorcerer then?”

“Indeed, sir. And of late he has increased greatly in power. There was suspicion among my mawsters that he had found some mystical artifact. You may see for yourself.” At these words, the wall fresco that shows the crouching monsters dissolves. In its place, the wall shows a view of a gigantic, distorted human floating in the midst of black thunderclouds—Durhan the Conqueror!

Durhan screams continually, and his hatred and agony seem to assault your mind. You can study Durhan (169) or shout out a challenge to him (200).

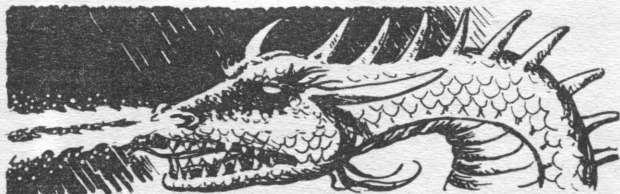
Or would you rather ignore Durhan and examine one of the other murals? Drivel says that placing a coin against a mural will reveal what it hides. If you have another coin, you may place it on the fresco showing the moneylenders (55) or the one depicting a ruler in his treasure room (176). Or you can leave the sphinx (102).

40

If you think Demosthenes has the coin, go to 236. If you think Neria has the coin, turn to 11.

41

Your boot scrapes a stone and makes a tiny sound, but the dragon wakes instantly! In the space of a drawn breath, it sees you, rears back, and exhales a deadly bolt of blue-white lightning.



With no warning, you have no chance to dodge. You raise your sword in an instinctive effort to block the bolt, but it's useless. The full force of the huge blue dragon's breath strikes you straight on.

Subtract 20 from your current hit point total. If your hit points are reduced to zero or less, your adventure ends here and you must start over again.

If you're still alive after this deadly barrage, you are hardly aware of it. While you lie stunned on the floor of the cave, you dimly hear Theona trying to decoy the dragon away from you. You know she has no chance against the monster, and her danger rouses you faster than any healing potion. You struggle to your feet, lights swimming before your eyes, and move to attack.

Turn to **222**.

42

Which coin will you use—the silver (10), the gold (166), or the platinum (115)? If you have none of these or don't want to use them, go back to 18 and try something else.

43

The water is foul, muddy, and extremely cold. Through the murk, you see a few stunted plants anchored to scum-covered rocks. You and Theona swim deeper, and the light from above grows faint. Farther down in the gloom, you spot what looks like a large coral reef. Flat, disklike shapes glide toward it along the bottom. Each shape is solid black, except for two dim red eyes at the front. Each has a long tail.

Devilfish! you think with a shock. No wonder there's a coral reef in this peaceful lake. The monsters built it with their foul magic!

Swimming downward, you almost blow out all your air in surprise. You've come face to eye with a devilfish acolyte! The small creature, from the lowest of the devilfish castes,

hisses a stream of bubbles and brandishes its tail, showing poisonous red stingers.

You know you haven't enough air to fight this opponent. A sudden clapping and thrashing from behind you distract the fish. Theona is decoying it away! With a strong kick, she bobs to the surface and swims for shore, with the devilfish following warily. You watch from below until you're sure she can reach the shore before the fish attacks. *Remarkable woman!* you think, for perhaps the hundredth time.

The reef below is a twisted assembly of coral growths, bones, and the wreckage of sunken boats. Devilfish swarm around it, as though worshipping at an altar. Deep within a hollow of the reef, you see the glint of platinum. These, then, are the guardians of the platinum coin, protected by its magic from vanishing with the rest of your world.

Your air supply is rapidly running out. Nothing but magic will secure that coin for you now. If you have the silver coin and wish to use it, turn to **124**. If you have the gold coin and wish to use it, go to **215**. If you have neither coin, go to **98**.

44

You lay the copper coin on the tea tray. The voice sounds shocked—"Well! *Really!*"—and the tray vanishes. The coin falls to the floor.

"Looks like servants are expensive around here," you say as you pick up the coin.

You decide to have a look around the room. Turn to **219**.

45

Shielded from the heat, light, vacuum, and other hazards of the sun, you and Theona discover that you are able to fly in this strange place but since there is no air here—though glowing gas seems to be in plentiful supply—speech is impossible. By pointing downward, you show Theona

where the Flame King lives, as you learned from the scroll. She rolls her eyes upward, but she follows you down into the flames.

Your speed increases with every minute, yet you feel as though you are standing still against the vast background. *Faster*, you will the boots. *Faster!* After many minutes, you feel that you must have crossed a world by now, but such a distance only takes you a fraction of the way farther toward the sun's core. You press on.

Pure white light is all around, along with a rumbling sound that is so deep you seem to feel more than hear it. As you go deeper, the rumbling gets louder and higher-pitched all the time.

After a while you notice that things that are colored red—your hair and beard, most noticeably—become darker in color, as if fading to black. Orange items seem to look more yellow. As you descend still farther, the orange fades into blackness, too. The light around you takes on a strong yellow-green tint.

You wish you could ask Theona if she sees this strange phenomenon, too, but then you decide that if she says no, you'll only think you're seeing things. If she says yes, then you'll only be confused together. You fly deeper.

The gas thickens. Now you must push your way downward, as though against a brisk wind. Finally you must swim against it. You cannot see Theona or she you. You can't even see your hand in front of your face. You know the burning gas can't blind you as long as the rings protect you, but now, in a sense, it has blinded you after all.

Seeing nothing, hearing nothing but the endless roar, feeling nothing but Theona beside you, you try not to panic. But how are you to find your way in such immensity? This sun could hold ten thousand planets, and you are only two people, totally without guidance.

Suddenly you break through a wall of gas into a pipe of some kind. As far across as a city, it is almost empty of gas,

or else its gas is transparent. It plunges downward, following exactly the same path you were following. Here it is much quieter.

“Can you hear me?” you shout to Theona.

“Barely! What is this, anyway?” She doesn’t expect you to know the answer, but it’s a relief simply to be able to talk.

All the while, you are flying, always faster. You pass branches in the tunnel that lead outward and upward. There are so many branches that it seems the whole sun must be shot through with them! But who uses these tunnels? You’ve seen no one yet.

You fly for what seems like hours. It seems as if by now your speed should have taken you around the world in a few moments. Your tunnel merges with other avenues, always leading downward. Once you see a single bright flame soaring upward in the tunnel, a flame that almost seems to have human form. But you are heading down so fast, and it is rising so fast, that you have only a brief glimpse before it vanishes high overhead.

Still, you hazard a guess at what it was. It must have been a fire elemental. Who else but these mystical flame beings could live inside a sun? The elementals must use these tunnels like roadways through their home.

The next sight is the most stunning yet. The tunnel suddenly ends in a wall. The wall is sheer black.

You slow down in time to avoid a collision. Hovering by the wall, you try to see where it ends, but the wall just seems to curve away into infinity. Could this be a part of an enormous sphere? “I believe we’ve found the Flame King’s dwelling, milady,” you shout. You have no real reason for the guess, but somehow it feels right.

“How shall we get in?”

After a moment of perplexity, you try knocking. Your fist sinks into the wall as though it weren’t even there. You and Theona look at each other without much surprise. You’ve

been flabbergasted so many times on this trip that you're numb.

Clasping hands, you take a deep breath and pass through the black wall with Theona. Turn to 146.

46

"Milady, let us leave this fearsome place in style," you tell Theona, holding out your hand. At your mental order, the dragon obediently lowers its head.

"Us . . . me . . . up *there*?" Theona of the Righteous Glory asks timorously.

"It will be a lovely ride. Trust me," you reply.

"That's what you said in Lower Delmanto."

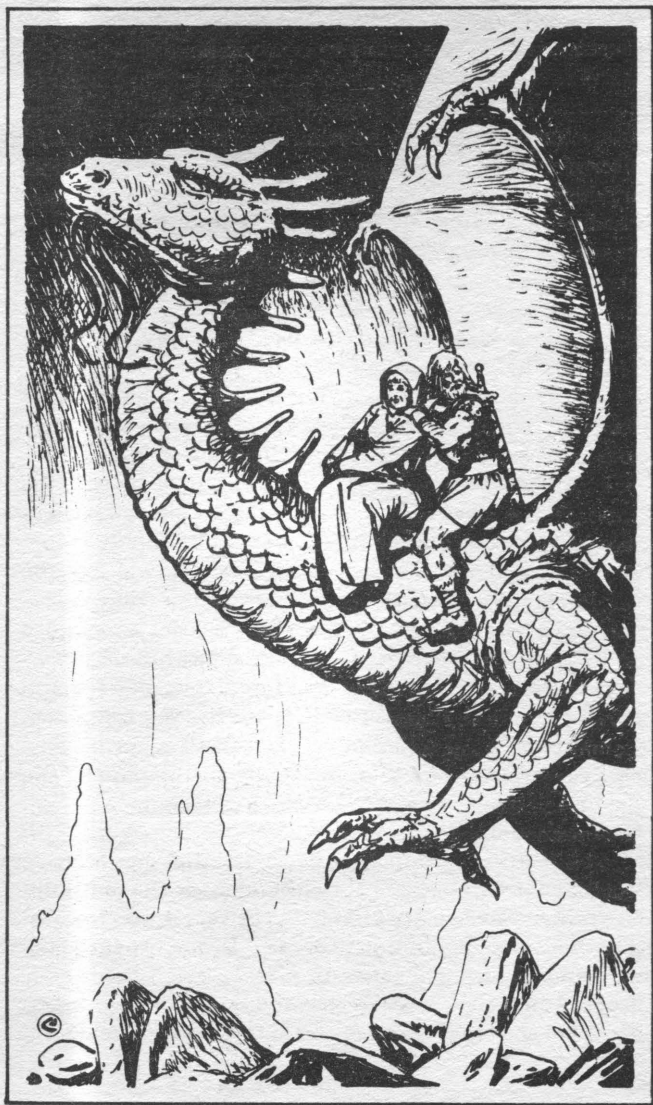
"Yes, yes, but that was a flying carpet, and the pilot didn't know how to work the thing. This beast is completely in my power. Really. Now climb up."

With a slight boost from you, Theona climbs up onto the dragon's shoulder, then onto its back. She sits there between two of the upthrusting plates like a lady riding sidesaddle, and you join her. All the while, you feel the monster struggling against the bonds of your control.

You order the dragon down a short tunnel and into a smaller chamber, where a gaping hole shows blue sky overhead. You knew a dragon this old and this smart would have to have an escape route. "Up, steed!" you command, and the great wings spread. With a fresh wind in your faces, you and Theona take to the air on the back of the huge blue dragon.

Over the countryside you fly, Theona whooping with excitement all the while. Yet every beat of the leathery wings is another stroke of the clock against the platinum coin's power. The beast is simply too powerful; you can feel the enchantment beginning to break. "Down!" you cry suddenly, and the dragon lands in a wide green field, near what was once the center of your lively city of Lighthall.

You send the creature flying off into the sky once again,



toward a distant mountain. The dragon shows resistance to this command, but it obeys you nevertheless. Now the platinum coin's magic is exhausted, and it cannot be used again.

"You certainly show a lady an unusual time, Redbeard!" says Theona, looking for all the world as though she'd climb right back up on the dragon's back.

Where will you go now? The Cliffside Caves (95), Haunt Lake (85), or will you use the copper coin to teleport directly to Trann (145)?

47

The platinum coin grows warm in your hand. In your mind, there appears a tall, willowy woman with a queenly manner. She appears to be in her mid-forties. This is Dyan, perhaps the greatest of the Ruling Wizards.

"Tut, tut," she says. "I fail to see why you could not deal with these creatures yourself. However, a sphinx's mind is not usually too complex. Do what you will."

The vision of Dyan fades, while a platinum glow appears in the male sphinx's eyes. You feel as if invisible reins stretch from you to him, allowing you to control his actions. "Give me the gold coin," you tell the sphinx.

"I hear and obey," he says tonelessly. One paw reaches down for the gold coin—and suddenly his mate roars in anger!

"What have you done to my husband, sorcerer?" she shrieks, leaping at you. You forgot the platinum coin can only control one creature!

The female sphinx smashes into you, and you both go down in a tangle. Your concentration broken, the platinum glow fades from the male's eyes. *Oh, no!* you think, lamenting the waste of your coin's magic. You cannot use the platinum coin again.

What's worse, you now must fight two enraged sphinxes. Go to 26.



48

You fight like a madman, driving the ogres back inside the treasury room. Amid the battle, you catch only the briefest glimpse of the treasury. Fleetingly you take notice of its large size, its emptiness, the four wizards lying bound on stone slabs. Other than that, you see only your three foes, your flashing sword, and nothing else.

Evading their clumsy swings, you recall the old thrill of battle, the way it was in your youth, with only you and your sword arm standing alone against a host of foes and nothing protecting you but your breastplate and your own skill! The lightning moves, the—

Your foot slips in a pool of ogre blood, and you fall to the floor hard. With the wind knocked out of you, there is nothing you can do to prevent an ogre from picking you up and throwing you through the air like a wooden dowel-puppet.

You crash through a glass vat suspended from the ceiling. Foul green fluid splashes over you, and you smash into the wall. Subtract 8 from your current hit point total. If you have no hit points left, your adventure ends here.

Stunned, you try to draw your breath. Through a hazy curtain of red, you see the ogres approaching warily, suspicious of tricks. But you have no tricks left. You just feel old.

Suddenly lightning erupts from the stone slabs, and a great wind rises from nowhere, sweeping the ogres off their feet. Brilliant light fills the room, and the ogres begin to pound on each other madly. "Magic!" you gasp. The Ruling Wizards of Trann are free!

While the chaos continues, a kindly-looking old man in coppery robes comes over to help you up. "Are you all right?" he asks. You nod tiredly, and he continues. "I am Warrick. You must be the adventurer who received my call for help. A thousand thanks, ten thousand, for breaking that vat!"

You look down at the floor, where the vat's contents lie in a pool of fluid. The mummified beholder eyestalk, taken from a monster that neutralizes magic, will never again neutralize the magic of the Ruling Wizards. Before your eyes, it shrivels and dissolves.

The ogres are dead by each other's hands by now, from the power of the spell that set them against one another. It's time to meet the other wizards. Turn to **149**.

49

This is a strange-shaped building, constructed in the form of a large sitting dragon. The stonework is amazingly detailed. The dragon's head is rearing back fiercely, its mouth open wide. The mouth has been bricked over, and the eyes are empty.

"Such workmanship!" says Theona. "I would almost swear it was the real article! Who would ever live or work in such a building?"

You know, from what the copper coin has told you, that this is the home and headquarters of Saybrook, the most high-spirited of the Ruling Wizards. "It's certainly attention-getting," you remark, and you think, *Gad!*

In the belly of the stone dragon, you spot a large steel door. It hangs askew on one hinge, squeaking in the breeze. It seems that someone got here before you, but you hear no other sound.

Beside the dragon building, there is a small brick building with open archways and a shingled roof.

Will you go through the door into the dragon's belly (**164**), examine the small brick building (**226**), or leave (**3**)?

50

Theona should be able to handle that haunt if anyone can. You wouldn't be surprised if you returned to the surface to find the ghostly figure begging her for mercy. You enter the cold water without worries . . . at least about Theona.

Do you have a Potion of Water-Breathing? If so, turn to 78. If you have no such potion, go to 234.

51

When you concentrate on the gold coin in your hand, the plump form of the Ruling Wizard Jacaine appears in your awareness. "My, oh, my!" he exclaims. "The perdurable peradventures of life lead inevitably to the threat of oblivion. Think, warrior, upon your foes: the days that do not linger!" With a wave of one pudgy hand, he vanishes, and you begin to transform.

As you rise from the floor, the dragon's eyes widen. Its head rises to follow your ascent, then shrinks back as you start to glow. Your wings shine brilliant gold, and the nimbus of light around your sword flickers like golden fire. A ring of fire crowns your head in the shape of a halo.

Behind you, Theona whispers frantic prayers.

"Begone!" you cry to the dragon, your voice echoing from every wall. The monster backs away like a naughty puppy, then races down a side tunnel. Finally, with a flap of its wings, it flies through a large hole in the cavern ceiling and away into the sky.

Mark off one use of the silver coin on your Character Stats Card as you return to your own shape. You go to comfort Theona. She cringes near the cavern entrance, repeating her prayers over and over under her breath. "It's all right, milady," you say gently. "It was just an illusion."

"Sir Theobold! I thought it was . . . you were . . ."

"I know. It was only me. Anything more you saw was an illusion. Only the monsters are real, my dear."

You retrieve the silver coin, learning of its power as soon as you touch it. If the giant is with you, he curses casually and leaves the cave to continue hunting his prey.

To find out more about the silver coin, go to **64**. To leave, turn to **20**.

52

With the Ring of Protection guarding you from damage by burning, you feel the fire of the Shadow Belt no more strongly than the warmth of the sun on a bright summer day. You're free to concentrate on Durhan.

You dig your fingers under the leather belt. You're surprised at how ordinary it feels, how simple it appears at this close range. But the appearance is deceptive. When you pull back on it, blood spurts from Durhan's body. The belt has grown into his flesh!

Durhan howls in agony, then shouts indescribable sounds. That can only be the beginning of a magical enchantment.

Before he can cast what will certainly be some sort of deadly spell, make a fighting check to try to rip away the Shadow Belt. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **99**. If the total is 14 or less, you don't have enough strength to tear off the belt, and Durhan finishes his spell. The belt grows larger and heavier, and so does Durhan, and the clouds, and Theona below. Then you realize that you're shrinking, smaller and smaller, to the size of a dog, a mouse, a grain of sand, a mote of dust, down into oblivion. . . . ✕

53

The gold coin is slightly tarnished, but it's well made. The portrait side shows a balding man with plump cheeks, heavy-lidded eyes, and a gloomy expression. On the reverse is a large building in the shape of a sphinx.

"Who's the man?" asks Theona.

You learned his identity when you touched the copper coin. "That's Jacaine, one of the Ruling Wizards. He's a gloomy sort, but he doesn't let morbid thoughts interfere with his appetite. He specializes in the magic of transformation."

That is the power of the gold coin. You may transform yourself temporarily into a different form three separate times in this adventure. When you do, you gain the special abilities of your new shape. For instance, if you become a crow, you can fly. You will return to your human form after a short time.

Include the gold coin in your list of possessions on your Character Stats Card and mark off one use each time you change your shape. After you have changed your shape three times, the coin's magic is exhausted, and it can't be used again.

You're ready to leave this area now. Go to 177.

54

Your mind reels as you try to think of some distraction. You look around the antechamber, but nothing likely springs to view. Finally you decide these ogres are stupid enough to fall for an old trick. You pull off a wristlet and prepare to attempt the oldest trick in the book.

Slipping silently to the edge of the doorway, you toss the wristband high into the air. Even if they don't see it, they'll be surprised by the clatter when it lands beyond them, and that's when you plan to strike.

At least, it should have worked that way. But instead one long, hairy arm reaches up and snatches the metal band out of the air. With a grunt, the ogre spots you and hurls it right back at you, fast as an arrow.

Make a dexterity check to try to dodge the oncoming band. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 12 or more, you successfully dodge the missile, taking no damage. If the total is 11 or less, you

are hit painfully by your own wristband and must subtract 1 from your current hit point total.

Of course, you have now lost the element of surprise. But the good news is that when they attack you, the ogres forget about Theona. She scampers away, allowing you to fight the monstrous guards without having to worry about her. If you want to use a gold, silver, or platinum coin, go to **96**. Otherwise, make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, go to **196**. If it is 14 or less, turn to **132**.

55

When you touch it to the white circle on the painting of the moneylenders, your coin disappears from your hand. Cross it off your list of possessions.

The fresco immediately fades, and before you, a short tunnel appears in the wall. In the gloomy recess, you see a hole in the floor and a staircase spiraling downward. You may or may not know where it leads, but in any case, add 1 to your current experience point total for making this discovery.

You can go into the tunnel and down the staircase (**214**); leave the sphinx (**102**); or, if you have another coin, you can place it on another mural, that of the ruler in his treasure room (**176**), or the one showing the monsters (**79**).

56

Beastly ceremony, you think as you watch the devilfish. The chanting rises and falls; the fish pound on the coral with their tails, causing an awful racket; now and then an acolyte shouts something in a stream of babbling bubbles. *Altogether fetid. Was this going on all the while I ruled my peaceful kingdom?* you wonder. This adventure has shown you more than you ever knew about your kingdom—indeed, more than you wanted to know.

The priestess of the ceremony, a pure white vampire, seiz-

es the platinum coin in her fangs and carries it up toward the roof of the coral enclosure. There you see a bloated human body. *It must be the body of the ghost above*, you decide. The devilfish have made a hundred cuts on the diver's body and have draped it with seaweed, apparently in a fiendish parody of vestal garments. The priestess places the coin in the diver's mouth, and the rude noises that follow make it clear to you that the ceremony has ended in an outburst of cruel laughter.

The devilfish swim out of the coral room by twos and threes, many remaining near the altar. You must swim silently to enter without alerting them.

Test how well you can navigate the twisting entrance to the room by making a dexterity check. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **112**. If it is 12 or less, go to **165**.

57

Leaping up toward Durhan, you clutch desperately at the Shadow Belt. On his gargantuan body, you seem no larger than a small monkey. Fire fills the air around you, as though the belt is defending itself from your assault. Are you wearing a Ring of Protection? If so, turn to **52**. If you are not, go to **86**.



58

Approaching the sleeping dragon quietly, you draw your sword. You remember the time back in Lower Delmanto

when you sneaked up on that gargoyle with the treasure chest. It turned out he'd only been pretending to be asleep, and his surprise attack was nearly the end of you. Thus you are quite tense as you near the dragon.

When you're close enough to see whether the silver coin is heads-up or tails-up, you raise your sword and strike, again and again! The huge blue dragon wakes with a start, already bleeding from a deep gash. Startled, you slip and narrowly miss delivering a killing blow through the monster's eye.

You have injured the dragon badly, and it is totally enraged. You must fight this fearsome creature with all the skill you can muster.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **151**. If the total is 15 or less, go to **238**.

59

"Now, look here, you overgrown kitchen match, you ignited demagogue, you flickering elephantine candlestick—"

"Redbeard, don't!" Theona gasps.

"You little apprehend what may become of you and your servants, all these blasted sun-worshipping fireheads, and your whole bloody ball of flame! Durhan the Conqueror may drench it like a spent torch in a horse trough! And if not him, let me tell you what I may enlist the Ruling Wizards to do—no, blast the blasted Ruling Wizards. I'll tell you what I can do myself, with my good right arm and my . . . trusty . . . sword. . ."

Suddenly you realize that you are threatening a being who holds you, quite literally, in the palm of his hand, and your blustering tirade trails away. The Flame King merely looks down at you. His fiery face shows no expression, but if you look as foolish as you feel, he must be amused.

"Well done, Redbeard," comes Theona's dry comment.

“When we return home, you can shake your fist at the moon and get it to help you, too.”

There are quiet chuckles among the attendants. The King says, “Perrrhaps yooou may give me lessonnns sometimmme,” and the chuckles explode into laughter. Deduct 2 experience points from your current total for this diplomatic blunder and return to **146** to try something else.

60

You make a wild grab for the glint of gold in the cub’s jaws. Your gauntlet touches the coin, but the cub refuses to let its new toy be taken from it. Its tiny teeth and claws dig into your hand. The damage is too slight to feel, but when you turn to run, the cub refuses to let go and you pull it right along with you!

The adult sphinxes howl twin roars of anger, the legendary paralyzing roars of the sphinx. For an instant, your muscles refuse to obey you, as though transfixed by that awful sound. Then the beat of large wings overhead jolts you back to awareness as the parents fly to the attack!

They land on either side on the path, blocking your escape route. You sweep the cub to the ground with a brush of your hand and think about leaping over the ledge, but first you must dodge two enormous paws as they swoop toward you.

Make a dexterity check to dodge the blows. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **26**. If it is 14 or less, go to **232**.

61

One heavy club rises, then another. They intend to beat you to death where you lie. . . .

“Yaah! Ogre ogre! Whoooopeee!” Theona of the Righteous Glory, esteemed cleric, flaps her arms like a madwoman. Her raucous screams fill the treasury. The ogres turn toward her, startled.



It's now or never! You roll away and grab your sword. "Don't even think about attacking her, monsters!" you gasp. They turn back toward you, confused, and the fight continues.

But you wince at the pain from the blows you've taken, and your timing is off. Your sword feels heavy in your hands, and your grip is uncertain. If you have a gold, silver, or platinum coin, you can use it instead of fighting (96). Otherwise, you must exert your greatest skill to recover from the injury and emerge triumphant over your opponents.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 196. But if it is 18 or less, the ogres overwhelm you and your adventure ends here. ✘

62

What will you offer? A potion of healing or of Water-Breathing, or a bracer, an amulet, a helm, a ring, or a ward that you chose at the start of the adventure (67)? You can also return to 121 and choose something else to offer, or you can leave the temple (209).

63

Your broadsword slides from its sheath. A leap, a battle cry, and a swing, and your blade slices cleanly through the ghostly form. Nothing! The ghost shows no sign of injury whatsoever. You realize now that you can't hurt it, and fear strikes you like a blow.

The ghost extends one bare, white arm. The arm stretches out toward you, and though you try to dodge, the water slows you down. The arm touches you, and cold lances through your shoulder. Subtract 5 hit points from your current total.

"Ghost! Ghost! I shall lead you to salvation!" Theona cries from shore. "Come to your eternal rest, haunt!" She

waves her arms and hoots, doing anything she can to distract the ghost. To your relief, it works! The spirit drifts to shore, while Theona backs away.

You have another choice. The copper coin tells you that the platinum coin is underwater. Will you go into the water, trusting Theona to escape from the ghost (50)? Or will you go back onshore to protect Theona (208)?

64

The coin is a small, finely crafted silver piece. On one side is the profile of a young man with a high forehead, a noble nose and chin, a full head of hair, and a faint smile. On the reverse is a dragon. Its proportions make it look very young, almost babylike.

Though you know nothing of the small dragon shown on the coin, you recognize the young-looking man, for the copper coin has told you about him. Saybrook is the boldest and liveliest of the Ruling Wizards; some would even call him headstrong. He specializes in the magic of illusion.

That is the power of the silver coin. Three separate times during this adventure, you can cast mental illusions that appear real to all the senses of the viewer. You always see and control the illusion your victim sees. Note the silver coin on your list of possessions. Remember, after you have used the silver coin three times, its magic is exhausted and you cannot use it any more.

It's time to leave the area. Turn to 20.

65

Which coin will you use—the silver (10), the gold (166), or the platinum (152)? If you have none of these or don't want to use them, go back to 18 and try something else.

66

At the perimeter of your vision, you notice two large sphinxes inside the cave, obviously the cub's parents. Their

human facial features, surrounded by bushy manes, look strange atop the tawny lion bodies. And they're watching you! Taken by surprise like this, you could never hope to defeat them.

Almost in midswing, you alter the path of your sword, so that instead of butchering the sphinx cub, you use the flat of the blade to herd it gently away from the cliff ledge. It cries out in protest.

You turn to the adult sphinxes. "I, uh, I was trying to keep it from falling off the edge," you say, hoping you sound convincing.

The larger adult, a dark-colored male, speaks in a deep, vibrant voice. "Get away from my cub at once!"

If you leave the cub, you'll have to leave the coin as well. Rapidly an audacious idea forms in your mind. You could seize the cub and bargain with the parents, the cub's life for the coin! Of course, you haven't yet ruled out peaceful negotiation, but right now the sphinxes look none too friendly.

Will you back away from the cub as ordered (23), seize the cub and try to bargain (183), use the silver or platinum coin (81), or forget about the cub and the coin and run for your life (6)?

67

You place your offering on a shallow indentation in the platinum altar. It simply sits there. You don't know what you expected to happen, but nothing does.

Go back to 121 if you want to offer something else, or turn to 209 if you choose to leave the temple.

68

Before you know it, you are flying down a deep pit after Theona. Wind rushes past you, and you cannot breathe. Far below, Theona's sturdy form is silhouetted against a circle of light. The pit goes all the way through the island!

The boots carry you down as fast as a sparrow hawk. You grab Theona clumsily around her legs, and in her panic, she tries to grab you. As the boots slow you down, not far above the exit from the bottomless pit, the two of you become entangled. During the slow rise back to the antechamber, you embrace one another desperately, gasping, not daring to speak.

Finally you float back up to within sight of the rim of the pit. Theona's eyes close in relief as she sees it come nearer. "Oh, goddess. Oh, sweet, merciful goddess," she says. "Oh, Redbeard, I don't—" As sometimes happens to people who narrowly escape death, her words become curiously irrelevant. "My, my! Who ever expected you could fly as well as this, and in those boots?"

You are almost at the edge of the pit now, and her words remind you for the first time of what you are doing. Instantly you grow self-conscious. *I could drop her at any moment*, you think. Accordingly, you try moving more carefully to avoid such a disaster, but your old nervous clumsiness returns, throwing you both off balance. You land on the pit's edge, but you drop Theona, and she begins to fall once more with a loud shriek. Turn to 158.



69

The tunnel bends to the left, but you feel the breeze from the right! There can be only one explanation.

You step resolutely toward the wall to your right. You

extend one hand, and sure enough, your fingers pass straight through the wall! "Another illusion!" hisses Theona.

"Ssh!" you reply, and you step through. The illusion immediately vanishes, and you see that where the tunnel appeared to bend to the left, there is only a pile of bones. As the illusory wall blinks away, you find yourself standing at the entrance to the dragon's lair.

The blue dragon dwells in a large, dark, echoing stone cavern that is empty of treasure. The cave is hot and smells of ozone. The only object you can see is an enormous sword, with a dulled and pitted steel blade almost eight feet long, stuck in the rock floor.

Then you spot something else. A single silver coin lies beyond the sword . . . right between the brilliant blue claws of the dragon! The monster is sleeping, its long tail curled around its massive body. What a specimen! The dragon is larger than any you've ever fought, and far larger than you would like to fight now.

Is the mountain giant with you? If so, proceed to 217. If not, go to 77.

70

The Flame King seems affronted at your appeal to his honor. "Dooo yoou believe, thennn, that I am incapable of rulinnng? That I shallll not remmmarrk on evilll in mmy owwn domainnn?"

"What I mean, Your Majesty, is—"

"Is that I risk mmy life annnd leave mmy reallm defennseless to go with yoou annnd face this deadly opponennnt," he interrupts. "No. I cannnnot."

"But, now, see here—" you start to protest.

"Yet yoour cause is just," the Flame King continues. "I grannnt yoou a tokennn gift, a spell of prowwess." At his words, a wave of heat rushes through you. It is not painful but invigorating, burning the age from your limbs and the

blockages from your veins. At once, you feel more athletic and keen of mind. Add 1 to each of your three skill scores.

Before you can speak again, a wave of fire rises from the Flame King's hand. You feel that same queasiness again. "No, wait, I have to—" you protest, but it is too late. The flames fall away, and you stand by the temple of Dyan the Ruling Wizard, on the floating island that is the site of Solius, the wizards' city. Overhead, the sun shines powerfully.

"Well, that didn't work out so well," says Theona.

"True, true. But on the sunnier side—"

"I can't believe you said that."

"—on the sunnier side, I feel better than I have in ages." It's true. The Flame King has healed you and Theona of all the damage you have sustained in this adventure. Restore your hit points to their starting total. However, you cannot return to the sun. Turn to 224.

71

The Potion of Water-Breathing races down your throat like something alive, and the air around you becomes amazingly thin. When you step into the water, you welcome the rush of liquid into your lungs. You and Theona find that you can even talk in a bubbling speech that carries remarkably well through the water that surrounds you.

The water is foul and muddy. As the trail to the coin leads you deeper, the light overhead grows dim. In the gloom below, you spot what looks like a large coral reef. Several flat, disklike shapes glide toward it along the bottom. Each shape is solid black, except for two dim red eyes at the front. Each has a long tail. They are the only living things you see.

"A coral reef?" says Theona. "In a lake?"

"Devilfish," you mutter.

"Oh!" she gasps.

Once you've identified the fish to Theona, she understands. The devilfish have constructed the reef with their evil magic. You shiver uncontrollably—the very idea of such evil, intelligent monsters frightens you.

You both sink down to the muddy lake bottom, where you find you can walk easily. You follow the path of a devilfish to the reef. Dozens of them cluster around a hollowed-out interior, like acolytes around an altar, but darkness conceals their activities. You catch a glint of platinum and know the coin is inside the reef.

"This looks as if it could be a bit sticky, milady," you tell Theona.

"Don't bother trying to negotiate, Redbeard. I've run into these unspeakable fiends before."

Theona's words sound like excellent advice. Will you rush to the reef and attack the devilfish by surprise (187), wait outside for a chance to sneak in and grab the coin unnoticed (56), use another coin (227), or swim back to the surface and leave the lake (198)?



72

You know from the copper coin that Saybrook, of all the Ruling Wizards, is the greatest master of illusion. Here in this study, what is real and what is illusion?

Closing your eyes, you run your hands over the desktop and down the sides of the desk. Everything is as it seems, until suddenly you discover a hollow in one side. Opening your eyes, you see your own hand passing right through the desk!

Through the illusory panel, you draw out a small leather

case. Inside the case are two plain silver rings. They radiate a powerful aura of magic. Will you try putting on a ring (143), or will you leave the rings in the study and leave the dragon building (3)?

73

“For Lighthall!” you cry, charging the ogres with your sword held high. The stupid creatures, startled by your attack, let Theona scramble away to hide in a corner of the treasury. But now they pick up their clubs, heavy wooden weapons that look like tree trunks. Discolored metal spikes stick out along their lengths.

These foes, fearsome as they are, make you remember every scar, every strain of your adventure so far. You recall that it’s been years since you’ve had to fight for such an extended period. But you cannot give in to your fear now. All you have to do to renew your resolve is see the helpless wizards, look at Theona, and remember your battle cry. You have too much to fight for!

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 196. If it is 13 or less, go to 132.

74

Dominagon the Blue rears back to strike the death blow, and you consign your spirit to whatever destiny awaits it.

But from the floor beside you, Granite the giant suddenly springs to his feet and rejoins the battle! Taking Dominagon by complete surprise, the giant strikes with his enormous sword, driving the blade deep into the creature’s underbelly. Then Granite falls back, exhausted by the effort. Within moments, the body of Dominagon the Blue falls atop him, dead.

Granite grunts with pain as the enormous carcass hits him. Blood drips from the corners of his mouth, and he looks at you with a grin. “At least I’m taking the lizard

with me," he says weakly, and then he breathes no more.

After a few moments of respectful silence, you pick the silver coin up from the floor. You vow to be courageous in rescuing your city, so that Granite's heroic sacrifice will not be in vain. You can't bury him now, but you will give him a hero's funeral when you return.

To learn more about the silver coin, turn to **64**. If you want to leave, turn to **20**.

75

Using a tactic that has served you well in combat through the years, you feint to the right, then bend low and swing your broadsword down and then up again, right into the male sphinx's belly. Pushing upward hard, you impale the creature on your sword.

The body falls like a limp sack, right at the feet of the female. You prepare for her assault . . . but she freezes. She looks down in disbelief at her dead mate, then howls mournfully at the sky. From inside the cave, the cubs take up the howl, and now three lonely cries echo across the countryside. The pathetic sound paralyzes you more effectively than their roars ever could.

At last the howling ends, and the female glares at you. You never knew before that a sphinx could cry. "You have killed my mate and threatened my cubs," she says, "and for what? For one single coin. Manling, I should tear your tongue from your mouth, that you can never tell another of what you have done. Or I should throw myself upon your sword and join my husband.

"But now I must preserve my own life," she continues, "so that I can care for my cubs. Without me"—her voice cracks, but she continues—"they have no one. Here, manling, take your precious coin, and go far away." She flings the gold coin at you with a flick of her paw, then turns her back on you and enters the cave.

If you want to know more about the gold coin and its

powers, go to **53**, but first make a note of this section number, **75**, and return here when you've finished. Ignore the new destination given at the end of that section.

You stand on the ledge, not knowing quite what to do. Theona strides up and pulls you down the path without a word. At the bottom, she turns to stare up into your eyes, and you don't like what you see in her face. "We're going to Trann right now," she says. "I'm not letting you stay here any longer. I can't bear the thought of any other harm you might do here."

You can't argue with her, nor can you leave her here alone. There's no other choice; you must use the power of the copper coin and teleport to Trann.

Go directly to **145**.

76

As a gold dragon, you are a powerful fighter in close combat. But then, so is Durhan.

With a roar and a flap of your wings, you swoop down on your enemy. Lightning bolts crackle past your horns, and the flames of Durhan's Shadow Belt lick at you, but your dragon scales are impervious to heat.

Your forefeet grab Durhan by the arms, your rear claws latch onto his legs, and you arch your back, stretching him like a victim on the rack. His skin tingles in your grasp, and a moment later, he dissolves into smoke. Have you won so easily?

No! Downwind from you, bones begin to coalesce from the smoke, then muscles and veins form across them. Eyes and teeth appear in the smoke, floating free until a skull grows to encase them. Flesh crawls over everything, then clothing and the Shadow Belt, and in moments, Durhan has reformed intact.

You look at him through keen dragon eyes and wonder why you aren't flying away in panic. Only the thought of your city, and of Theona, give you the courage to continue

the battle. Gathering your strength for another assault, you dive at Durhan.

He seems to be disoriented from the reforming process, and you strike him head on, hard. With triple blows from your teeth, claws, and tail, you wonder how he can withstand the damage, but the belt flares brightly with your every hit, healing Durhan as soon as you injure him.

Durhan draws strange patterns in the air, preparing a spell. His chanting goes on so long it disturbs you. Such a lengthy spell must be deadly indeed!

The belt is the source of his power; so be it. You will go straight to the source! Before Durhan completes his enchantment, you have one chance to dive in, grab the belt in your jaws, and tear it away.

To get past his defenses, make a dexterity check. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **99**. If it is 13 or less, Durhan finishes casting his spell. You feel your wings and body harden into immobility, and as a lead statue, you plummet to oblivion. ✕



77

The dragon appears to be sound asleep. Will you sneak up and grab the silver coin (233); attack the sleeping dragon (58); use the gold or platinum coin, if you have either one (29); or leave the cave (141)?

78

You swallow the sweet-tasting liquid. It rushes down your throat, and abruptly the air around you feels thin. When you step into the water, you welcome the rush of liq-

uid into your lungs. You find you can sink through the murky lake down to the bottom, where you walk as easily as on a city street.

In the dim light, you see a large coral reef. Several flat, disklike shapes glide toward it along the lake bottom. Each shape is pure black, except for two dim red eyes at the front. Each has a long tail. They are the only living things you see.

Devilfish! you think. The nefarious monsters must have constructed the reef with their magic. Fear burns through you like acid as you creep closer.

The coral reef is hollowed out to form an oval chamber, open at its wide end and very dark at the other. Weird coral formations sprout from the walls on all sides.

The first sight that catches your eye is a glint of silvery-white in the darkness. It's a platinum coin, resting on a misshapen altar of stone that's encrusted with coral. The strange fish are spread out before the altar, clearly engaged in some kind of hideous worship.

You have many choices. You can attack the devilfish by surprise (187); talk to them (14); wait outside for a chance to sneak in and grab the coin unnoticed (56); use another coin, if you have one (227); or return to the surface (9).

79

When you touch it to the white spot on the painting of the monsters, your coin instantly disappears from your hand. Cross it off your list of possessions. The fresco fades, revealing something else altogether.

This apparently is a magical monitor that the wizards used to keep track of their enemies. Floating before you, in a vision of some faraway place, is a grotesquely distorted man, perhaps thirty feet tall. Below and around him are roiling thunderclouds, lit by frequent lightning bolts.

Twisting slowly in the air, he screams in a deep, tortured voice. His expression is a mixture of hatred and agony.

Before you realize it, you are shaking uncontrollably, like a frightened child. Though you have seen nothing like him in your long career, you guess that this must be Durhan the Conqueror.

Durhan stops screaming for a moment and appears to listen. His twisted face turns toward you, and his eyes fix on you in an insane glare. He cries out in a strange language, but you hear his meaning in your mind: *What enemy spies on me?*

Will you run away (102), stay and study Durhan (169), or shout out a challenge (200)?

80

You think you are ready to use the Teleportation spell to visit the Flame King. Before you read the spell aloud, make a careful inventory of your current possessions, as listed on your Character Stats Card.

Theona watches anxiously as you stumble over the syllables of the spell. Everyone says that any dunderhead can read a scroll, whether or not he's trained in the arts of magic. But, blast it, you've never been good at it.

As you read the words aloud, they vanish from the scroll. The parchment is as clean and unmarked as though no one had ever thought of writing upon it. Your recitation nears its end, and the air goes dry around you. Sounds seem more distant. Your voice gains a new power, a new resonance, as though some new reader had taken over to bring the spell to its inevitable conclusion.

Then, in less time than it takes to blink, you are gone!

The queasiness that marked your passage to Trann reappears in your stomach. Lights of many colors surround you. Then they fall away, and yet light surrounds you—light, and tremendous heat!

Do you and Theona wear Rings of Protection? (These are the only rings you might have picked up on this adventure.) If you do, turn to 155. If you don't, go to 211.

If you want to use the silver coin, turn to 195. If you want to use the platinum coin, go to 47.

When you ask about how to defeat Durhan, the voice speaks warmly: *Your courage is gratifying, but your strength cannot match that of Durhan. Seek instead the only remaining force that he fears: the Flame King.*

“And where will I find the Flame King?”

In the center of our sun.

Behind you, Theona gasps, and the gasp turns into a fit of coughing. You conceal your fear by helping her up and slapping her on the back. *The sun!* you think. *Gad!*

You finally ask the voice, “Who is this Flame King exactly? And how are we to reach him?”

With a whirling in the fabric of space itself, several items appear before you on the platinum altar. You gingerly touch them, then pick them up. There are two rings, two pairs of leather boots, and a scroll. You ask what they are, but the voice remains silent.

Theona reaches for a ring and two boots. “Hold, milady,” you caution. “We know nothing of these gadgets.”

“Hush, Redbeard. They cannot do us harm if they came from her.”

Sighing, you watch her don the ring and the boots. Nothing untoward happens, so you put on the other ring and boots. When you wear the ring, the day’s heat seems greatly reduced. It’s probably some form of protection. And your boots lend a lightness to your step. With a leap, you float right up into the air. They’re Boots of Flying! Mark the rings and the boots on your list of possessions.

Next you look at the scroll. On it is written a magic spell. “A scroll of teleportation,” you say, and there is no question of your destination—this scroll will take you to the sun itself! Mark the scroll on your list, too.

“What an idea!” you say.

For once, Theona says nothing. Like you, she tries to grapple with the enormity of this task.

If you wish to read the scroll and cast the spell now, go to **80**. If you wish to go elsewhere before using the spell, or you don't want to use it, turn to **209**, but make a note of that section number, **80**. At any time during the adventure, except during combat, you can use the scroll to teleport to the sun.



83

The vault is a large room, but it seems to be empty of treasure, except for a few stray coins scattered on the floor. Four figures lie stretched out on stone slabs, restrained with iron bands. Some kind of monstrous, mummified eye in a glass vat of pale green liquid hangs suspended from the ceiling.

You take all this in in an instant, just before the guardians of the room charge you. Three vicious-looking ogres, giant humanoids with enormous arms and small brains, are howling for your blood. They wear loincloths and carry huge wooden clubs. The monsters are heavily built, their skin is covered with coarse bristles, and they brandish the long nails of their free hands like claws, ready to strike at your eyes. They're almost upon you!

Do you have a glass globe filled with black vapors? If so, turn to **118**. Otherwise, you can use the gold, silver, or plat-

inum coin, if you have one (96). Or you can fight. If you elect to fight, make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to 196. If it is 14 or less, go to 132.

84

You lay the platinum coin on the tea tray, and you hear a small gasp of surprise. "Oh, veddy happy to please, sir, indeed!" says the voice as the platinum coin vanishes from the tray. Cross it off your list of possessions.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to tell us—"

"Ew, most certainly, sir. We understand that our mawster and the other Ruling Wizards are imprisoned in the treasury beneath this building. As you have, eh, demonstrated your good faith, we will reveal the secret entrance."

One of the wall frescoes dissolves away, revealing a blank wall and a short passageway. At the end of the passage, you see a hole in the floor and a spiral staircase leading down.

"Are the wizards under guard?"

"We know little more than what we have told you, sir. Should you wish to rescue them, you will need the key to the vault." A heavy gold key of ornate workmanship appears on the tray, and you remove it. Add the key to your list of possessions.

Drivel the butler has nothing more to tell you, and there seems little more to discover in the sphinx. If you want to enter the passageway and go down the staircase to rescue the wizards, turn to 214. If you want to leave the sphinx, go to 102.

85

"I've never liked this place, Redbeard," Theona says softly when you arrive at your destination.

"Agreed, milady."

You look out at a large, stagnant lake. Here and there, a few reeds poke up through the mossy surface, but all the

mosquitoes and pond life have vanished. There was never much good to say about the creatures that lurked here, but their absence makes the lake seem more dismal than ever.

This is Haunt Lake, location of the platinum coin. If you have been here before in this adventure, go immediately to **150**. If this is your first time here, turn to **131**.

86

The fire from the Belt of Orcus burns hot and deep. Your screams of agony drown out Durhan's own mad screams. Subtract 9 from your current hit point total. If you have no hit points left, your adventure has ended dramatically.

If you are still alive, you haven't dropped your sword. Its hilt is so hot that it has burned a permanent bond with your skin. With every movement bringing agony, you must try to evade Durhan's groping hands, thrust the sword under the Shadow Belt, and try to cut loose the belt.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or less, Durhan pulls you away and destroys you in a fiery burst. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **99**.

87

"A tricky situation indeed!" you whisper to Theona.

"This lizard thinks we took its treasure!" she replies, flustered. "What will we do?"

Retreat springs to mind, but this is out of the question. You can try talking with the dragon (**8**); use the gold or platinum coin against it, if you have one of these (**29**); or attack the dragon (**222**).

88

Demosthenes said the hero who claims the coin might do it through "wealth." Perhaps a bribe might do the trick. The sphinx claims to need nothing but fresh meat and water, but magic can tempt any intelligent creature.

What will you offer in trade for the gold coin? The sphinx isn't interested in your broadsword or other weapons, nor in any of Theona's possessions. And you dare not offer the copper coin, since you need it to teleport to Trann. But any other magical possession you have will work, unless its magic has been used up.

If you have no magical items or don't wish to offer them, you can attack the sphinxes (147) or leave the area (177). But if you offer an item to Demosthenes, delete it from your list of possessions and turn to **213**.

89

From her holy robes, Theona draws out her old set of lock-picking tools. "Don't gape, Redbeard," she tells you, blushing. "A servant of the goddess recognizes prudence. I keep these merely to gain entrance to the seminary, should I ever return there late at night lacking my key."

Theona kneels before the lock, inserts the narrow tension wrench, and tries a diamond pick. After a few moments, she murmurs "It's a lever lock," switches tools, and goes at it again.

The work is delicate, tense, and frustrating. "Drat!" she says a dozen times in the span of a few minutes. Finally she says, "I think I have it. I think—" Within the door, you hear a *clunngg!* sound, and instantly the floor drops out from under Theona. With a yelp, she starts to fall.

"Theona!" you cry as a breeze from below gusts through the trapdoor and into the antechamber. Are you wearing Boots of Flying? If so, turn to **68**. Otherwise, make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 16 or more, go to **158**. If it is 15 or less, turn to **163**.

90

Your eye is caught by a frieze circumscribing the roof, above the columns.

The carvings depict seascapes, coral reefs, and—among other sea monsters—devilfish. The monsters all flee from a beautiful armor-clad woman who bears a sword.

Farther along, other carvings show the same woman surrounded by a halo of fire. Beside her is an altar, with several toga-clad supplicants before it. They carry coins, livestock, and other treasures.

In the last carving, the woman gestures imperiously to her followers. A band of tall, brutish humanoids stands beside her. There are mottoes along the base of the frieze, but they are written in a language you cannot understand.

“It looks like this lady made quite an impression,” you muse. “I wonder if she’s still around.”

Turn to 121.

91

The tail thrusts upward too fast for you to dodge, and its needles pierce your armor and penetrate your flesh. You moan in agony, your cry rising in a huge rush of bubbles. Subtract 5 from your current hit point total.

With the air knocked out of you, you must defeat this fish quickly. Seizing it by the gills, you pull it close. With its belly up, the creature is powerless to sting or bite you. You drive your hands up into its gills with desperate strength, and the creature falls away in its death throes.

You hear its dying howls as you kick for the surface. You steal a look below and see dozens of fish flocking around their stricken companion. Then you break the surface and draw deep, sweet breaths. Now it’s a race between you and the rest of the school. You manage to reach the shore only moments before the swarm reaches you!

Looking out over the turbulent waters, you realize you can’t possibly go back down after the platinum coin. You must leave. But where’s Theona?

Go to 9.

Lying in the cliffside depression, completely filling it, is a huge mountain giant.

The giant is badly wounded and barely conscious. He breathes slowly, each breath resounding like an echo in a cavern. He wears several layers of torn and bloodied leather armor. A shield as big as a horse lies nearby, smashed to splinters. What's left of the shield's crest shows a dragon's head impaled on a spear. The giant seems to have no weapon.

"I've waged no war, Theona," you say, "but this fellow surely has! It's not like these giants to be violent, except when they get drunk."

"Well, you would know about the effects of drunkenness. Still, this giant looks more like a mercenary than a drunkard."

Theona is right. The giant is deeply tanned, like a professional soldier who has seen service in many climates. His long brown hair is wet with blood and perspiration, as is what's left of his beard. Most of the beard has been torn from his chin. You see numerous two-foot-long hairs scattered around the battlefield.

The copper coin tells you that the path to the silver coin lies straight beyond the giant, in the depression in the cliff behind him. Will you try talking to the giant (240), kill him (25), or leave the area and go elsewhere (230)?

"Heeere in mmmmy dommmmain," says the Flame King, "Durrhann willlll nevrerrr harrmm mmmee."

"Dash it all, if I had even known Durhan exists, I would have thought I'd be safe from him, too! Beg pardon, Your Majesty. I didn't even live in this dimension, don't you know? And then Durhan's spell went out of control, and bang! My whole city up and disappeared! If you leave him alone out there, he may accidentally blow out your

whole flaming candle—I mean kingdom.”

“Mmmy mmmagic exceeeds Durrrhan’s. I do nnnnot worrrry.”

“No, naturally not. Yet why even live with the prospect that this little nuisance may someday annoy you, however briefly?” You continue, arguing as you have with your advisers in court . . . except that here, you’re not the one who can say, “I’ve made up my mind. The argument is over!”

But the Flame King does not silence the debate. He listens to your reasoning, responds, engages in debate. His attendants speak up as well; they seem to be prime ministers or commanders or some kind of important subordinates. And alone, you argue against them all.

By jasper, this is the kind of fight you’re more suited to nowadays. Enough of the sword-slinging and monster-bashing. This whole adventure has convinced you that such frolicking belongs to younger warriors. The true and lasting accomplishments are those of the bargaining table and the court bench. Years of running your dominion have taught you how to fight on those equally bloody but more polite battlefields.

So you keep arguing, knowing that the fate of your city depends upon it. You shout, you pound your fist in your palm, and there in the center of the sun, where the temperature is twenty million degrees Fahrenheit, for the first time you begin to sweat profusely.

Finally the Flame King says, “Verrry wellll. I willl helllp yooou.” Some of his advisors shout their protest, but he speaks once more. “I have mmmade up mmmmy mmmind. The arrrgument is overrrr!” Turn to 245.

94

You smell a sudden burning odor, and the pillars around the temple begin to tremble slightly. They sag and stretch and grow, as though pounded by a smith, then reform, one by one, into ten muscular bronze figures, each sixteen feet



tall. They support the roof with arms as thick as tree trunks. On their foreheads are strange runes. You recognize them as golems.

Suddenly the golems speak in unison, in deep, resonant voices: "Yours . . . to . . . command."

Stunned, you hardly know what to say. "Uh, please don't put down the roof until we get outside." Theona puts up no resistance as you escort her out. The golems set down the stone roof as lightly as though it were made of balsa wood.

When they stand before you in orderly ranks, you review your options. With such fighters at your disposal, you may actually have a chance to defeat the mighty Durhan. But if you don't want to face Durhan yet, you can't very well have this metallic platoon following you around.

Will you ask the temple goddess to take you and the golems to face Durhan (181), or will you command them to resume their places supporting the temple while you go elsewhere (209)?

95

After a long walk toward the bleached cliffs near Light-hall, Theona groans, "You'd think these wizards could have at least put all the coins in one spot."

"Tut, tut, old girl," you say. "They only want their rescuers to be physically fit." You try to ignore the weight of your armor. What you'd give for a horse! But every animal, bird, insect, and, for all you know, earthworm has vanished from the area along with your city.

At last you reach your destination, a low cliff with scrub trees at its base. Twenty feet up, you can see the mouth of a cave with a wide ledge in front of it. The carcass of a deer hangs over the lip of the ledge. Here and there are a few large brown feathers.

This is one of the Cliffside Caves, the location of the gold coin. If you have been here before in this adventure, turn to 33. If this is the first time you've been here, go to 101.

If you want to use the silver coin, go to **139**; the gold coin, **24**; the platinum coin, **207**.

You toss the platinum coin into the well. Cross it off your list of possessions.

At once you hear in your mind the voice of Warrick, the wizard who assigned you this mission: "Peace and good health to you, traveler, for your generosity. The people of the city of Solius, and all of Trann, thank you."

A sense of well-being flows through you, and your injuries knit as though healed by a potion. If you have taken any damage in this adventure, restore your hit point total to its starting number. Remember, you can never increase your hit points beyond their starting total.

The voice continues, offering you information. Turn to **119**.

With no magical protection and no Potion of Water-Breathing, you realize that entering the lake was a bad idea. It looks like your long career of adventuring has dimmed your wits. The devilfish see you as you kick for the surface, and you never see them coming after you until they drag you underwater . . . forever. Good-bye! ☒

With a sickening ripping sound, the belt tears away from Durhan's flesh in a spray of blood. Durhan inhales sharply and crumples up, in too much agony to scream.

His eyes fly wide open. For a moment, you see a glimmer of sanity, a horrified awareness of what he has done, of what he has become. But it lasts only a moment; then the expression passes, his eyes roll up in his head, and he plummets to the ground below, dead. By the time his grotesque

form has shrunk to normal size, the thunderstorm has cleared up and you have returned to your human form.

The Shadow Belt writhes in your hand like a fish out of water. On its underside, you see an array of wriggling filaments, stained with blood where they grew into Durhan's body. Disgusted, you drop the belt, and instantly it vanishes. No doubt the spirit Orcus has reclaimed it, so that he may tempt other would-be conquerors in ages to come. *Not any time very soon, I hope, you think, exhausted.*

Turn to 244.

100

You pull out the stoppered iron flask that contains your healing potion. "Drink," you say, tossing it to the giant.

"Is it . . . poison?" Granite asks.

"It will heal you."

"The way I feel now, I might have wished for poison." He lifts the tiny flask clumsily between two fingers and brushes away the stopper. The liquid inside is less than a swallow for him.

In moments, his bloodshot eyes widen and clear. The bleeding from his numerous gashes stops. Wounds scab over before your eyes, then the scabs flake away to show healthy pink flesh beneath. The giant stops perspiring, blood returns to his face, and he breathes more slowly and deeply. Even his beard begins to grow in again!

"Thunder and lightning!" booms Granite, bounding to his feet. "A precious vintage indeed! Thank you, stranger, for that draught of magic. I feel twenty years old again, and ready for another try at that dragon. Dominagon did not escape unhurt in our battle!"

You see nothing in the depression behind him but rocky earth. Where is the trail to the silver coin? Granite answers your unspoken question when he strides right through the cliffside, and the rocky wall vanishes before your eyes!

“An illusion,” says Granite, turning back to face you from the mouth of a large tunnel. “Dominagon is a wily one! It will be a pleasure to be rid of him.”

It seems that Granite the giant has decided to join you. You see no reason to argue with this, for you have a good idea who guards the silver coin.

Turn to 228.



101

From inside the cave, you can hear a low, gruff voice, reciting what sounds like a nursery rhyme. “. . . ‘then Furry Jaws pulled in his claws and flew away to Mallinaw’s. The End.’ Now, go outside and play with your new toy.”

Out from the cavern entrance, onto the ledge above you, emerges a small creature, a lionlike cub with two tiny wings. Its button nose, large brown eyes, and chubby cheeks seem almost human. In its mouth, it holds a bright gold disk. “The coin!” whispers Theona.

“And a baby sphinx holding it!” you reply. “Not much of a guardian, but at least one parent is inside.” You shiver to think of fighting a sphinx—a large, powerful, highly intelligent flying lion—especially one protecting its young.

The sphinx cub hasn’t seen you. Will you attack it by surprise, hoping to kill it and steal the coin before the parent sees you (218)? Will you try to lure the cub toward you, so you can grab the coin and run (128)? You can also enter the cave peacefully (161), wait and do nothing (134), or leave the area (177).

102

Outside the sphinx, a shadow passes across the land, cast by a large floating island as it crosses the sun. The darkness passes, and you wince in the sun's bright light. It looks whiter and feels hotter than your own realm's sun.

If you ran out here to escape something inside the sphinx, subtract 1 from your current experience point total for your cowardice; you cannot come back here again. If you did not run, or you left because you must still find something, you may return here if you wish. Conditions will be restored to the same state in which you first saw them.

Where will you go next? You see a stately temple in one direction (224) and a giant statue of a dragon in another (49).

103

You reach out and miss, and the wind whistles by as you fall. Another grab, another miss, and now you tumble, head over heels, as the light at the bottom of the pit races upward.

With a scream of panic, you claw at the pit's side and grab an obstruction. It breaks off in your hands, but it slows you enough to let you grab at another, and another. You made it!

You taste blood in your mouth. Gasping, you feel more blood in your lungs and see it at every fingertip. Subtract 2 from your current hit point total.

You look down. You are hanging at the very edge of the pit's bottom, your feet kicking in empty space above a long, long, *long* drop.

You pull yourself painfully up the wall of the pit. The climbing becomes easier once you can use your feet. Up you go, a step at a time, a foot a minute. You concentrate on thinking of nothing else but the climb.

After what seem like several thousand years, you reach the lip of the pit. You climb over the edge and lie gasping on

the ground. Add 1 to your current experience point total for this amazing feat. But where is Theona?

The vault door stands open. From inside, you hear the sounds of coarse laughter. You peer into the room, and what you see amazes you.

The treasury vault is a large brick room, almost empty of treasure. Instead, you see four stone slabs, where four human figures lie restrained by iron bands. Suspended overhead by a chain is a clear glass vat full of pale green fluid. The fluid holds the mummified eyestalk of a beholder, the many-eyed monster that casts an anti-magic ray.

The imprisoned figures, who you realize must be the Ruling Wizards, are guarded by three monstrous ogres. The powerful, animal-like, incredibly ugly humanoids are toying with Theona. They push her around among themselves like a cat toying with a trapped mouse. The poor woman is taking it bravely, but she looks almost exhausted.

If you have a glass globe of black vapors, turn to **118**. If you want to use a gold, silver, or platinum coin, go to **96**.

Otherwise, you can attack the ogres (**73**); try creating a diversion so you can rescue Theona (**190**); or, if you make a successful perception check, you can look around for something to help you. Roll two dice and add the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **16**. If you fail, you must select one of the other options.

104

At the top of the stairs, you find another steel door like the one in the belly of the dragon. And like the other one, this one hangs open, blasted by some unknown intruder. You listen for a moment. Then, hearing no sounds but your own, you pass through the door.

Inside is a small room with rounded stone ceilings and a wooden floor. The eye sockets of the dragon's head are windows, providing a nice view of the the field where you arrived. The view shows a huge thunderstorm floating in

the distance, beyond the edge of the island. It seems oddly localized. Otherwise, the weather is beautiful.

The room is filled with scrolls in unreadable languages, books in expensive bindings (written in the same unknown tongues), and art objects. Tiny statues, mostly of dragons, rest on bookcases and end tables.

One corner of the room holds a mechanical model of the Trann solar system, in which hundreds of islands hang suspended from wires, circling a central sun.

"Look here," says Theona, pointing to a large wooden desk. "This must be the study." The desk legs are carved with coiled dragon tails and inlaid with silver. On the desk are some quills for writing and a few sheets of parchment. Magical? No, you find nothing odd about them, or about anything else in the study.

Is anyone with you besides Theona? If so, turn to 15. If not, go to 186.

105

You've run into the undead many times in the past, and they've always meant trouble. This one is likely no different. "Back, milady!" you murmur to Theona.

If you have the gold coin and want to use it to attack the haunt, turn to 180. If you have the silver coin and elect to attack the haunt with it, go to 137. If you have neither coin, or you want to attack with your sword instead, turn to 63.

106

With a jerk that makes your joints pop like burning wood, you pull Theona up from the pit. She sails through the air, throwing you slightly off balance, and that's all that manages to get you out of the way of the ogres' swinging clubs.

Theona hits the floor of the antechamber with a thud, but she does not cry out. *Probably too scared*, you think, and you can well understand why! But with Theona safe, you

can devote your full attention to battling the ogres. Turn to 196.



107

The dragon watches with greedy eyes as you pile your possessions on the cavern floor. As soon as you're done, it grabs them in its cerulean claws. "The armor, too!" it cries.

"Now, dash it all, that's going too far!" you protest.

"Your armor! I must have it all!"

Grumbling, you unstrap your breastplate. When you pull it over your head, you hear a warning cry from Theona, and a split second later the lightning bolt hits you squarely in the chest. *How stupid to expect a fair bargain from a dragon!* you think in the instant before you think no more. Your adventure is over. ☒

108

You back away from the sphinxes, hoping to put an honorable end to this foolish struggle. "Truce!" you call out loudly. But as you spread your arms wide to indicate surrender, the female sphinx leaps at you. Clearly, for an enraged mother, there is no possibility of truce!

The giant creature bears you to the ground and lands heavily on your breastplate. The wind rushes out of your lungs, and the tremendous weight causes unknown damage to your internal organs. Subtract 6 from your current hit point total.

You stare up at the sphinx's sharp yellow teeth as a drop of saliva strikes your forehead, and you prepare yourself for the end. But the male sphinx shoulders his mate off you, then looks you over carefully. "He is no threat," he says at last. Both sphinxes move back to let you stand up.

"You are, no doubt, the 'hero' who has come to fetch the coin," says the male. "We were told of you in a vision when the coin arrived, and we were told we should guard it. Only a great human could take it, we were told, through strength or wealth or cleverness. But you are not great. You are not worthy of the coin. Go, and do not return!"

With your chest still hurting and your heart pounding, you know you can't survive another battle. The two sphinxes stare after you as you trudge down the path to where Theona waits. She walks with you across the grassland.

"I can't help thinking you handled that rather badly, Redbeard," Theona says.

"Please, my dear," you reply, "just shut up."

You must leave this area. Turn to 177.

109

Your ultimate goal, of course, is the restoration of your city. "Can you bring my dominion of Lighthall back, O great lady?" you ask.

The vision shows regret. *Your home is in another realm, beyond my power. Nothing can revoke the enchantment that went astray and stole your city—nothing but the defeat of Durhan.*

Return to 191 and ask for something else.

110

When dealing with a powerful monarch, you can't always expect that your own actions will determine his reactions toward you. Sometimes sheer luck, good or bad, decides the issue.

You hold out the glass globe of black vapors. In this heat,

the gas seems to swirl faster and faster. "Your Majesty, a blessing from a great and magnanimous lady. Please accept it as my gift." You tell of the temple and how you obtained the globe. Perhaps if the Flame King sees that a goddess has blessed your cause, he'll feel shamed into helping you, too.

You lay the globe in his flaming hand. The vapors boil with greater agitation every moment. The king lifts the globe and looks at it curiously. *Blam!* The globe suddenly erupts like a bomb, in a bright burst of flame. The heat from the king's hand caused the gas inside to explode!

The king jumps backward, shocked. You are just as shocked as he is, but the audience of fire elementals is the first to recover. You hear in your mind their nervous whispers, their sighs of relief, their repressed giggles. The reaction spreads through the crowd at the sight of their ruler, stunned by the fiery equivalent of an exploding cigar. The chuckles grow louder, less restrained.

The Flame King turns slowly, staring at all of them in turn. Silence falls—a tense silence. He turns back to you. "Yooour prannk was most effectivvve," he says flatly. "Yooooou willl have ammmple time to recalll this amusemennt innn the futurrre. Take them awaaaay!"

"No, now, wait, it was all a mistake, an accident!" you cry, and Theona echoes your words. You're both right. It was a mistake, but justice has little effect on the Flame King's hot temper. You end up alone inside a flaming cubicle, wondering how long your Ring of Protection will last, wondering if Durhan has achieved victory, wondering if you will ever see Theona or your home again. . . .

Your adventure is over, but only an unpredictable accident caused you to fail. Better luck next time! ✕

111

Out of the corner of your eye, you spot a furtive movement behind the bed. Drawing your sword, you shout,

“Come forth!”

“Mercydon’tkillmepleasemercy!” squeaks a small, high voice, in one continuous stream of words. From beyond the bed flies a remarkable creature.

It looks like nothing so much as a miniature blue dragon, hardly a foot high. Its fragile wings span about two feet, while its teeth and claws are as small as a kitten’s.

Such an unusual appearance must be a trick of some kind! You raise your sword. “Redbeard!” Theona cries. “Don’t you dare harm this creature! It’s clearly some kind of pet.”

“Yes, indeed. Don’t you dare harm me. I mean no harm. I’m the Wizard Saybrook’s familiar, Popiel.”

A familiar! You know of these magical animals from your past adventures. A magic-user may sometimes employ a spirit, good or evil, to aid and focus his energies. The familiar is usually an animal such as a cat or toad, but it can be nearly anything. “What are you?” you ask curiously.



“A dragonet,” she answers. “A small dragon. I breathe lightning. Watch!” At these words, you throw yourself backward, but Popiel’s snout produces nothing but a few bright sparks. “Well, I’m working on lightning. I’ll have it right someday. Are you here to rescue Saybrook? Oh, please say yes!”

You pick yourself up from the floor, fuming inwardly at Theona’s grin, and answer, “Well, we had something of the sort in mind. Can you tell us anything that might help?”

“Tell you? I can *show* you. But I won’t go—I won’t, unless you head directly over to the treasury where Durhan put them. No, I won’t.”

“Yes, well, we’ll talk about that later. Can you guide us around your—” you look around at the room “—your interesting domain?”

“Oh, of course. Just watch me! Now, tag along after me. Move smartly! That’s good. Most humans I know are clumsy as broken eggs. Careful there!” Talking without pause, Popiel leads you up the staircase and through the dragon’s neck to Saybrook’s study. Turn to **104**.

112

You float into the altar room as quietly as a strand of seaweed in a gentle current. Angling past the coral growths, which stretch out toward you like bony, grasping hands, you float up next to the body.

You open its mouth and reach toward the platinum coin. As soon as you touch it, knowledge of its power floods your mind. If you want to know more about the coin, go to **192**, but first make a note of this section, **112**, so that you can return here when you’re done. Ignore the directions at the end of that section.

You are about to turn to leave when a thought nags at you. *You know, old fellow, I simply can’t bring myself to leave you here among these beasts.* Carefully, quietly, you pull down the body and sling it over your shoulder. You can

still hear the devilfish swimming nearby, frighteningly close. Between shivers, you wonder how you'll get back to the surface with such an awkward load.

Then you spot a glimmer of light overhead. Sure enough, it's a narrow exit, right through the roof of the coral reef. With painstaking strokes, you work yourself and your burden through the passage, then kick upward toward the light.

Before you break the surface, you look back down. The devilfish have spotted you! With a horde of the monsters in close pursuit, you swim desperately for the shore. Panic gives you speed, for your feet touch bottom and you race up the shallows just a few feet ahead of your pursuers.

After the potion's effects, the air tastes strange in your throat. "I thought I was about to join you there, old sport," you tell the body. Then you sink to your knees, gasping.

Is Theona with you (239), or did you leave her on shore (9)?

113

With grief cracking your voice, you tell the wizards, "I'm afraid I did not succeed in rescuing you without sacrifice." You recount the details of Theona's plunge through the pit trap.

Dyan cuts you off. "How long ago?" she says. "Quickly!" "I—well, perhaps two minutes, maybe more—"

"Wizards!" she commands. At once, all four of them leap into the air and fly out the doorway, then zip down through the hole. Rushing after them, you look down through the trapdoor and see them emerge from the island into the space beneath.

You have a long time to wonder if their rescue effort is successful. Theona's voice, her short-cut hair, her severe expression that could dissolve so quickly into a wide smile—everything about her haunts you now that she is gone.

A figure appears below and rises up the shaft. "Alas, I fear doom has come to your noble companion, kind sir," Jacaine says gloomily. "I scanned the space below us with the eyes of an eagle but found nothing. Her sacrifice lends resonance to the little life remaining to us all." He sighs.

After a time, Saybrook and Dyan also return, empty-handed and despondent. "I had hoped we could catch your friend in time. I have no words that can comfort you in your loss, warrior," says Dyan, and she falls silent.

Saybrook, usually cheerful, now speaks in quiet tones. "I can turn water to diamonds, sunlight to songs, dragons to stone, and thorny briars to mere air," he says, "but all is illusion. And against the reality of your loss, illusion is useless."

Fighting back tears, you thank the wizards for their effort. "I hope she will find happiness in the arms of her goddess," you say. "I suppose we had best continue the mission. Grief will have to come later. But, dash it, I could use a drink!"

"I heard that, Redbeard!" calls a familiar voice from the shaft, and up floats Warrick, holding Theona in his arms. She continues, "You didn't think you could fall back into your customary debauchery that easily, did you?"

After you finish a joyous reunion and find your voice, you ask Warrick, "How did you find her?"

"It's my specialty," he says with a broad smile. "A wish."
Turn to 126.

114

When you place the gold coin in a smooth depression on top of the platinum altar, a sense of great well-being fills you, and the gold coin disappears. Mark it off your list of possessions.

A woman's gentle voice speaks in your mind: *Welcome, children*. Theona falls to her knees, and you follow her example.

My loyal servant Dyan, who built this temple, will be pleased to know that such a brave warrior has reached Trann. The rescue of the Ruling Wizards is imminent, if you only remain true to your quest. Now, ask what you will.

Perhaps what you hear is a mere illusion, but you see no need to analyze it right now. What will you ask about? How to rescue the wizards (167)? How to defeat Durhan the Conqueror (82)? How to restore your own city, Lighthall (197)?

115

You summon the controlling power of the platinum coin, but in your mind, the noble face of Dyan, leader of the Ruling Wizards, shows distress as she speaks. *I fear Durhan is much too powerful an opponent to be controlled*, she cautions.

Her fears come true, for the platinum glow shows in Durhan's eyes only briefly. He freezes, trembles, then waves a hand and dispels the glow. The platinum coin's magic is now exhausted, and you cannot use it again.

Hah! comes Durhan's cruel laugh in your mind. *My thoughts, my mind, mine, mine, mine! Slave of the mind, enslaver of the mind, power over all minds with the Shadow Belt!* You're afraid you know what this means, and in a moment your worst fear proves true. Your attempt to control Durhan's mind has given him the idea of mental control. Now he has cast a spell to dominate your own brain!

You see him with your mind's eye, as you saw Dyan when you used the platinum coin. But Durhan appears as an attacker, trying to grip your spirit in glowing bonds of energy. You concentrate and try to picture yourself struggling against him. With sword and armor of your own imagination, you must fight Durhan as you have fought so many foes in the real world. But if you fail, your spirit is his!

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more,

turn to 241. If the total is 14 or less, you fall victim to Durhan's mental control and become a mindless servant of his evil. Your adventure is over. ✘

116

Stepping carefully, you reach the dragon without a sound. You may turn as blue as the monster if you hold your breath much longer, but the silver coin is almost within your reach.

Almost, but not quite. The monster's claws rest across the tiny silver coin. You can't reach it without waking its guardian. *Well, so much for that idea*, you think ruefully. Gulping, you raise your sword.

You aim carefully for a point squarely between the ridges of the monster's eyes. The skull is flat there, but the scales look quite tough. With a battle cry to galvanize your strength, you drive your sword in deep, then leap away.

The dragon wakes with a scream of agony. Its eyes stare at you, but after a moment of panic, you realize that it sees nothing. The creature's leathery wings flap frantically, while its tail thrashes like a reed in the wind. "*Hrrrraaaaaggh!*" the dragon shrieks. The evil sound spurs you to greater speed as you race for the exit.

Sparks of lightning fly from the dragon's snout, while blood spurts from its mouth. Pools of blood form on the rocky floor in sizzling puddles. You reach Theona just as the blinded monster breathes once, twice, three times in a brilliant stream of lightning bolts. The bolts trace a path of explosions along the cave walls, leaving smoking scorches in their wake.

"Great goddess, Redbeard, what have you done?" says Theona, her eyes wide.

Soon her question is answered. The dragon thrashes ever more weakly, then finally collapses in a twitching mass on the floor. Its wings and neck splay at odd angles, and its eyelids slide across its bloodied eyes. At last the creature

lies still. Add 2 experience points to your current total for defeating this huge dragon single-handedly.

When you touch the silver coin, you learn of its power instantly. Turn to **64** to find out about the coin's powers, or else you may leave the cave (**20**).

117

You grip the silver coin tightly in your palm. Into your awareness comes the man depicted on its face. Thin, noble, nicely dressed, and carefree—this is Saybrook, greatest of the Ruling Wizards in the realm of illusion.

“What a scene!” says the vision of Saybrook. “It’s part of my nature to encourage such glum creatures to lighten their mood. Watch, and you’ll see them actually become quite bubbly.”

He fades, and suddenly the entire altar area fills with bubbles! Large and small, displaying rainbowlike colors, they surround the devilfish.

The monsters’ noise displays their panic. The fish are afraid they won’t be able to breathe. They swim frantically off through every exit and disappear into the gloom. Now alone, you enter the altar without danger. Mark off one use of your silver coin and go to **112**.

118

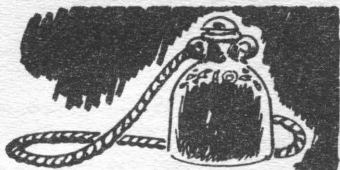
Remembering the instructions you received at the temple, you dash the glass globe against the floor of the treasury. As it shatters on the stone, the black vapor billows out to fill the chamber. At the first whiff of it, you and Theona begin to run.

“Black lotus!” she shouts, coughing. You can’t reply, for the mist is choking your lungs and bringing tears to your eyes. The deadly black lotus, the flower whose vapors bring death to even the mightiest creatures, is well known across the dimensions.

You manage to avoid most of the vapors by retreating

from the room. And now that you look back at them, you see that the clouds of black have focused their deadly vapors on the ogres. For some reason you do not understand, they do not flow across the forms of the imprisoned wizards, nor out the doorway. Instead, the smoke reaches down the monsters' throats like something alive, choking them to death in moments.

The vapors linger in a dense cloud around the ogres' bodies. Coughing, you and Theona venture back into the room to free the wizards, who dispel the vapors as soon as they are released. Turn to 149.



119

The voice of Warrick speaks, sounding most urgent. "This is Warrick of the Ruling Wizards. I append this message with haste. Leave the kingdom at once if you value your lives, for Durhan the Conqueror wears the Shadow Belt of Orcus! With its power, he will soon overcome us all!

"If you are brave and mighty, consider a mission to the only remaining being powerful enough to defeat Durhan: the Flame King, who lives at the heart of the sun. You will need a ring or other protective talisman to withstand its fires, some means of flight to move around in its interior, and a spell of Teleportation to get there. You can secure these inside the dragon. Here they come! Fare—"

Warrick's voice breaks off abruptly. For a moment, you and Theona say nothing. But her wide eyes tell you she, too, heard the voice. "The sun!" she says at last. "Goddess!"

Your only thought is, *Gad!* Will you go into the dragon building (164) or go elsewhere (3)?

120

The battle calls for a skillful blade and lightning reflexes. You have both in full measure, or at least you did in your younger days. Now, the tightness in your chest and the shakiness in your legs tell you that your best days may be past.

To find out if you still have what it takes, make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 75. If it is 15 or less, go to 154.

121

As you enter the temple, your footsteps echo hollowly on the marble floor.

The atmosphere of the temple, solemn and contemplative, seems to soothe Theona. "What serenity!" she sighs. "A fitting monument to the peace that comes with acceptance of the goddess."

"How can you know this temple is to the same goddess as your own?"

"It does not matter. All devotion to the great sorority of higher beings contributes to her glory."

"Um. Yes, of course. Do you want to make some kind of offering?"

"We have no food, no votary candles, and no money. What would we offer?"

Actually, you realize, you do have money: the magical coins, which are evidently legal tender in this realm. If you don't want to make an offering at the platinum altar, you are ready to leave the temple; go to 209. If you do make an offering, decide what you will offer: The copper coin (216)? The silver coin (36)? The gold coin (114)? The platinum coin (191)? Something else (62)?

What is the best way to kindle the Flame King's interest in helping you?

You can try appealing to his honor, with the idea that a king who overlooks cruelties in other realms becomes less sensitive to cruelties in his own (70).

You might argue that a ruler's charity toward others increases the loyalty and happiness of his own subjects (237).

Or you can argue that Durhan is more powerful than the Flame King realizes, arousing the king's self-interest in protecting his domain (93).

Dominagon the Blue strikes with both clawed forefeet, landing hard on the giant's chest. Granite gives a moan of pain that breaks off abruptly, and his head lolls limply on the ground. The giant is dead, and you let it happen. Subtract 2 from your current experience point total for allowing a fellow warrior to go to his doom.

Delaying has done no good, and now the dragon turns on you and Theona. With wings torn and blood streaming from many deep wounds, Dominagon is mad with rage and pain. It's useless to try to reason with the dragon now; you must fight. The creature hurtles toward you.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to 151. If it is 11 or less, go to 238.

When you grasp the silver coin, the tall, trim form of Saybrook, the Ruling Wizard, appears in your mind. "Ho there," he says, brushing at his brocaded vest and black leggings. "Something of a tight spot, eh? Well, I'm just the one to pull you out of it. Watch the fun."

He vanishes from your mind's sight, and your eyes see

the results of his magic: Toward the reef swims a titanic silver shark! Its vacant black eyes and numerous rows of teeth terrorize the devilfish. The swarm retreats through holes in the reef and disappears in the gloom. The shark vanishes as soon as they're gone. Mark off one use of the silver coin on your Character Stats Card.

After a quick trip to the surface for air, you swim back down to the reef. Exploring it, you find the platinum coin on an altar of coral. If you want to learn more about this coin and its power, go to **192**, but first make a note of this section number, **124**, so you can return here when you're finished. Ignore the directions at the end of that section.

You turn to swim back to the surface, only to discover a human body suspended from the coral roof. Bloodless and white, the body is pierced with corals and cut in a hundred places. You realize it must be the body of the diver who could not find rest, the body of the ghost above. You pull it down and drag it with you to the surface for burial.

Is Theona with you (**239**), or did you leave her on shore (**9**)?

125

"Ew, we're sorry, sir," says Drivel the butler. "We have no notion who may be guarding the mawsters just now. However, it was beastly ogres from one of the inner islands who stormed in here, seized mawster, and carried him off."

"Ogres," you sigh.

"Veddy strong brutes indeed, sir. Should they in fact be the knaves who guard the wizards, you may be advised to seek the vapors of the black lotus. Ew, the ogres are disastrously susceptible to that flower's vapors, sir."

"And where might we find a black lotus?"

"Well, that is the sticky point, sir. They have not been found anywhere in the system of Trann for generations."

You sigh again, in frustration, but Drivel's next words prove more encouraging.

“Actually, sir, it is said that supplies have been obtained through prayers to the Lady Serania, chosen deity of the Ruling Wizard Dyan. Dyan has erected a temple to her near here, and you may find that an offering and a prudent request for aid may bring you the vapors you seek.”

As Drivel finishes speaking, one of the wall frescoes dissolves. The painting of the moneylenders gives way to a blank wall with a short passageway. At the end of the passageway, a hole in the floor holds a spiral staircase leading down. “This is the pawth to the wizards, sir,” says Drivel. “Best of luck.”

You may enter the passageway and go down the staircase to rescue the wizards (214). Or, if you have another coin, you can place it on a peculiar white spot on one of the other two murals. According to Drivel, this reveals what the fresco hides. If you want to place a coin on the painting of the ruler in his treasure room, turn to 176. If you choose the painting of the monsters crouching on their treasure, go to 79. If you want to leave the sphinx and go elsewhere, turn to 102.

126

“Now to confront Durhan!” says Dyan decisively. “He wears the Shadow Belt of Orcus, a powerful artifact of evil. And we must meet him on his own terms.”

“Oh, misery!” moans Jacaine.

“I am with you, if I may be of help,” you say. “Where must we go?”

“Into the reaches of the mind,” says Warrick. “Join hands.”

The wizards join hands, and Dyan and Saybrook offer you theirs. You grasp them willingly, but with a certain uneasiness. What do they mean, and how—

Suddenly the world vanishes before your eyes. You and the wizards are floating in a mist of sensation, where random images of your senses pass like seabirds in a fog: The

scent of incense burned at Dyan's temple. The breath of a blue dragon, striking out at Saybrook. Floating islands seen through a thunderstorm. The clink of coins falling into Warrick's well. Sensations, from your own past and the wizards', strike like a barrage of arrows.

Gradually the images grow darker and more horrible. A single figure seems to link them all, a gigantic, twisted humanoid wearing a simple leather belt. His body is distorted horribly, and his face mirrors pure, insane hatred. Then he is there before you, towering over you and the wizards. He shrieks in an unknown language, but somehow you hear his meaning in your mind: *Enemies! You die!*

In this realm of thought, the wizards fight with anything they can imagine. Saybrook calls up titanic dragons, while Jacaine summons black walls that stretch as far as you can see. Warrick creates hordes of gape-jawed fish that surround and gnaw at Durhan's Shadow Belt. Dyan, most powerful of the wizards, floats in a sphere of pure white light overhead, casting bolts of radiance at Durhan.

But the power of the Shadow Belt proves too great. Durhan annihilates the dragons, smashes the walls, and turns every fish that touches him into a dry skeleton. Dyan's white light draws Durhan's special attention. Darts of ice fly at her from all sides, driving deep into the white light. Finally you hear her scream, and you know the ice darts have struck home. Dyan floats limply in space.

And now only you are left.

Durhan regards you with a twisted smile. His thought burns like acid: *You! You're nothing! Nothing at all! Die!*

You know that in this realm of the mind you could fight him with walls or fish or light or anything else you can think of. But though you think of many things, finally you feel comfortable with only one choice. Out of your imagination, your mind draws a picture of your sword, and instantly it appears magically in your hand.

When Durhan attacks, you recognize that the success of

your entire mission rests on your ability in this one last struggle. Against a wave of Durhan's insane thoughts—monsters, plagues, storms, wind, snakes, sharks, demons, fire, and a hundred more—you fight to remain calm, to triumph over his madness, and to conquer him through the sheer power of your mind.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **243**. If it is 17 or less, you fall prey to horrors best left undescribed, and your adventure ends here and now. ✘

127

The copper coin has given you much information about the dimensional plane of the Ruling Wizards.

The plane of Trann is in some ways a reverse image of your own Prime Material Plane. Where your world flies through the vast emptiness of outer space, the realm of the Ruling Wizards is almost filled with material. Quintillions of cubic miles of a weird, semisolid gray material fill the entire plane, which is called the *plenum*.

But in this vast waste, there are pockets of magic. Scattered thinly through the plenum, like bubbles of gas in soda water, are a few spherical habitats. Each sphere is a flyspeck by cosmic standards, but in human terms, each is gigantic, able to play host to whole civilizations.

Trann is a colossal hollow sphere, filled with breathable air and lit by a small central sun. Around the sun, thousands of large rocky islands orbit in concentric "shells," like electrons around the nucleus of an atom. Some of these islands are mere motes of dust, comparatively speaking, hardly a mile across. Others are as big as states or nations.

A typical island is usually rather flat, but bumpy here and there and curled up at the edges. The "inner" side of the island always faces the sun, so that the inhabitants of all islands live in perpetual noon, while the "under" side, miles beneath, is dark and lifeless.

There are three concentric shells of islands around Trann's tiny sun. The inner shell, hardly more than ten thousand miles distant from the sun, is too hot to support human life. Several thousand miles farther out are the warm agricultural islands. These grow food to feed the whole realm's inhabitants. The fields and vineyards are watered by vast permanent rainstorms that wander through the shell.

The outermost shell, about two thousand miles beyond the agricultural islands, contains the many island kingdoms of Trann. Most of the inhabitants live here, in a bewildering diversity of nations and cultures. Among these is the kingdom of the Ruling Wizards, also called Trann, and its beautiful capital city of Solius—or rather, the site where Solius used to be. You stand on that site now.

You are ready to examine the nearest structure that survived the disappearance of Solius. Where did you come from? Haunt Lake (**go to 224**)? The Cliffside Caves (**go to 235**)? Or did you arrive from the Dragon Hills, or from the site of your vanished city (**go to 49**)?

128

"We have to get the little beast over here so we can take the coin," you whisper to Theona. "You have that touch of seductive allure, old girl—more than I have, anyway. You give it a try, eh?"

"Certainly you plan no ill for that innocent cub, Redbeard?" says Theona, eyeing you suspiciously.

You hasten to reassure her, and soon she is gliding silently up to the cliff face beneath the cub. "Poodgie woodgie woo?" murmurs Theona of the Righteous Glory. "Nice sphinxsie-winxsie give nasty li'l coinie-poo to Mama Theona? Puss puss puss?"

The cub meows curiously and pads clumsily toward her, the gold coin in its jaws. Another foot, another two inches—Just then a shadow looms across Theona, the cub, and



you. At the mouth of the cave, two adult sphinxes—a very large male and a slightly smaller female—stare down at Theona. You rush to her side.

The male speaks in a deep baritone, filled with quiet power. “Get away from my cub!”

Will you do as he asks, leaving the cub and the coin (23)? Will you attack the two sphinxes, a courageous but unprovoked act (147)? Will you use the silver or platinum coin, if you have it (81)? Or will you try to grab the coin out of the cub’s jaws and make a run for it (60)?

129

Hardly knowing what to hope, you hoist the glass globe high. You hurl it, and the globe flies true. Durhan spots it and strikes it with a bolt of lightning. The glass shatters into splinters. Cross the globe off your list of possessions.

From the globe rises a cloud of coiling black smoke. Even from here, even in the rain, you can detect its deadly odor. “Black lotus!” you gasp. The globe was filled with the vapors of that tropical meat-eating plant, the plant that kills animals and men alike.

The vapors curl around Durhan like something alive. He coughs in surprise, and for a moment, you dare to hope. By rights, he should be dead soon.

But Durhan gestures frantically, and a gust of wind-blown rain carries the vapors off into the clouds. Durhan looks stunned, but nothing more.

Will you attack with your sword (175); use a coin, if you have one (65); try to rip away the Shadow Belt (28); or just watch and wait (188)?

130

You concentrate on the platinum coin in your hand, and immediately the vision of the Ruling Wizard Dyan appears in your mind. She raises a hand with casual grace. “Warrior, you choose quite a challenging subject for control,” she

says. "I cannot guarantee power over this creature for any length of time. Do what you will, but be quick about it!"

She vanishes, and the dragon's eyes open wide, then glaze over with silvery-white film, and you feel invisible bonds of control over the monster. But those bonds are stretched tight; you know that the dragon's magical resistance will soon snap them.

"Give me the coin!" you command, and the dragon passes it to you without a word. To learn of the silver coin's power, turn to **64**, but first make a note of this section, **130**, so you can return here after you are done there. Ignore the direction given at the end of that section.

Is the giant with you? If so, go to **194**. Otherwise, go to **46**.

131

The day is cloudy, the water calm. The only sign of movement is a slight shimmering just above the water, about ten feet from you. As you look more closely, the shimmering resolves into a ghostly image, having no reflection in the water beneath it. "Haunt," you murmur. "Get back, Theona."

You see a pale man, dripping wet, wearing nothing but a loincloth. He's wrapped in seaweed and bleeding from a dozen gashes in his flesh. Cradled in both arms, he bears a small wooden casket. His eyes are haunted, and his blue lips form the words, "All my wealth . . . for a breath of air."

Will you try talking to the ghost (**144**), leap out into the shallow water and attack it (**105**), or leave the area immediately (**229**)?

132

You fare well against the ogres, but you make the mistake of treating them as if they were honorable opponents. You are taken completely by surprise when one ogre kicks upward and strikes a foul blow, knocking the wind from you. Subtract 5 from your current hit point total.

You fall to the floor in pain. The ogres' shadows fall across you, and things look bad indeed.

Is Popiel with you? If so, go to **201**. If not, go to **61**.

133

"Ah—do you work here?" you ask the tea tray.

"Ew, yes, sir. At your service, sir," says the invisible voice. "We are Drivel, gentleman's gentleman to the noble Ruling Wizard Jacaine."

You learned about Jacaine from the copper coin. The gloomiest of the wizards, he is obsessed with human mortality. It certainly is in character for him to have a ghost as his servant.

"Tell me how to rescue your master."

"We must demur, sir, at this time. But we are authorized to offer information and services, for—" and here the voice coughs politely—"for a small consideration."

"'Consideration'! You mean money? What does a ghost want with money?"

"What does anyone want with money, sir? To smooth our path through life, or, if I may put it so, unlife; to acquire the niceties of existence, or, in our case, of nonexistence; to accumulate prestige among our fellows, however ethereal they may be."

You don't try to follow Drivel's logic. Ghosts use none. Even to save his own master, Drivel's ghost cannot overcome the greed that must have marked his life.

"What do you want?"

"Ew, any small piece of change you may have would be greatly appreciated, sir. You may merely place it on our tray."

If you choose not to offer a coin to Drivel, he sniffs and leaves and you are free to look around the room (**219**). If you decide to give Drivel a coin, choose which one you lay on the tea tray: the copper coin (**44**), the silver coin (**17**), the gold coin (**138**), or the platinum coin (**84**).



134

The cub sees you at the bottom of the path and arches its back. Hissing and sputtering, it bounds toward you, its wings flopping uncontrollably, throwing it off balance. The tiny youngster tumbles end over end down the path and collides with your boot.

“It reminds me of you in your younger days, Redbeard,” says Theona.

“Oh, really? And who was it that once tripped over her own shield when we—”

“Hisst!” interrupts Theona. You follow her gaze and see a large adult sphinx looking down on you from the cavern entrance. His tawny pelt gleams with perspiration in the warm sunlight, and his white-brown wings unfold slowly.

“Scipio, come here!” says the sphinx in a deep voice. The cub unrolls itself and scampers back up the path as a female sphinx joins the father at the cave entrance. “We apologize for our child’s forward behavior,” the male says to you. “We try to teach them to avoid strangers, but they have not yet learned the way of the world.”

The gold coin lies between the father’s paws. Will you attack the sphinxes (147), use the silver or platinum coin (81), or talk politely to them (168)? You can also flee (6) if you think this is a trap.

135

You try to conceal your fear by putting on a brave front. “Perhaps we can strike a bargain, friend dragon. You may

wish to trade your coin for something of mine. Get a start on a new horde, you might say, eh? What say, old sport?"

The dragon squints evilly. "I can kill you and take what I wish."

"Er—possibly," you gulp. "But why bother, when you can have it without a lot of bloodshed, eh? Now, I have here—" You list your possessions for the dragon.

The monster considers. "All of them," it says at last.

"What! All?"

In return for the silver coin, the dragon demands everything you own, except for your sword. If you have any magical coins, you must give those to the dragon as well. You try once again to bargain with the creature, but the loss of its treasure has made it completely unreasonable. It continues to demand all you own, or no silver coin.

"Don't do it, Redbeard!" hisses Theona.

It does seem like a drastic bargain. Will you give the dragon all you own? If so, turn to **107**. If you refuse, return to **8** and make another choice.

136

You slyly reach for your belt, which holds your scabbard and coin pouch. . . . What happened? You can't move! You struggle, but the paralysis grips you as tightly as though the Flame King had closed his great hand around you.

"Yooour little thoughts are toooo easilly read," says the king. "I leave little mennn tooo their little mennnaces."

Now his hand actually does close around you and Theona, and the light grows too bright to withstand. When it fades away, the sun hangs high overhead in a gray sky dotted with floating islands. You stand by the temple of Dyan the Ruling Wizard on the site of Solius.

"Don't say anything!" you say to Theona, blushing at your own amateurishness. To even think of attacking the Flame King was foolish. You cannot visit him again. Turn to **224**.

You realize that fighting the approaching haunt with physical weapons would be useless. You grasp the silver coin tightly, and in your mind, a tall, dapper young man appears. He wears a white tunic with billowing sleeves, an embroidered vest, and black leggings. His noble features mark him as the smiling man whose portrait adorns your coin. This is Saybrook, master of illusion.

“I have the very thing you need, my friend,” Saybrook says confidently. Then he vanishes from your mind, and you see the result of the coin’s magic.

Hordes of ghostly silver dragons are descending from the sky! Their wails of anguish drown out all other sound, and their scales, translucent as insect wings, reflect flashes of light from the sun. The ghost sees the approaching dragons and, for a moment, floats motionless. Suddenly it vanishes, letting the wooden chest plummet to the ground. At the same instant, the dragons vanish as well. Mark off one use of the silver coin on your Character Stats Card.

“It’s all right, Theona!” you call to the retreating cleric. “It was merely an illusion.”

She stops her headlong flight toward the mountains and returns slowly. “Oh,” she says weakly.

“There are still a few surprises in the old man yet, eh?”

She remains silent for a long time, but now and then you catch her glancing sidelong at you, through squinting eyes, and you smile in satisfaction.

Will you investigate the ghost’s wooden casket (157), enter the water to look for the platinum coin or the ghost’s body (37), or leave the area (198)?

You lay the gold coin on the tea tray, and it immediately vanishes. Cross it off your list of possessions.

“Ew, thank you, sir. Is there perhaps some tidbit of information I might pass along to you?”

You may ask the ghostly butler one question, and then he will vanish. Will you ask how Durhan conquered Trann (39)? Who guards the wizards in their prison (125)? What is the significance of the frescoes on the walls of the room (27)?

139

Clutching the silver coin in your hand, you hear and see with your mind the dapper form of Saybrook, chief of all the Ruling Wizards in the lore of illusion.

“Here’s a spot!” his voice says. “How to handle brutes like these? Wait, I have it—it’s obvious, really. Watch and enjoy.” He fades from your mind, and you see the illusion the coin has created.

While two of the ogres watch, horror in their lizardlike eyes, the third monster begins to transform. Hairy spider legs sprout from his head, silver moss grows across his barrel chest, and scales cover his legs. As surprised as the others, he howls in fear.

That is the cue for his former allies to attack this monstrosity. Their clubs strike his legs and midsection. He roars in pain and responds with a swing of his own club that almost takes off another ogre’s head. The surviving opponent bashes his transformed friend at the same time that the friend bashes him. Within moments, all three ogres lie unconscious or dead on the treasury floor. The transformed ogre returns to normal as the illusion vanishes.

Cross one use of the silver coin on your Character Stats Card.

You sigh in relief. “Well, that was entertaining,” you say as you free the wizards. Turn to 149.

140

After a long silence, Demosthenes leaps to his feet. “By Tanassalos, I’m stumped! For the first time in ninety-three

years, since that skullcracker about the elephant and the walnut butter, I'm stumped! Tell me your answer, human!"

You turn to Theona. "Um—if you please, milady?"

"The maiden is the moon, and the hillside is the night sky," she says. "The flowers are stars. The veil lifting and lowering indicates the phases of the moon."

Demosthenes growls in frustration. "Of course! It's obvious, really, in retrospect. But then, so are all the fine riddles. Good luck to you, manlings, in your quest to restore life to this area. I only hope you will, so that I can find someone to spring that riddle on!" So saying, Demosthenes flips you the gold coin.

If you want to learn about the coin and its powers, turn to 53. If you're ready to leave the area, go to 177.



141

"I think it's time we beat a hasty retreat, milady," you tell Theona, pulling her back into the passage. For once, she puts up no argument. You find your way back through the twisting tunnel, and everything is as you remember it. But what greets you at the cavern entrance is a surprise.

"It's blocked!" you cry. You push at the obstacle blocking the entrance, but you can't budge it.

"It's the giant," says Theona. "He must have died while we were in the dragon's chamber." She murmurs the brief valediction of her faith, while you weigh your choices. You can't get past the giant's body while it's blocking the passage exit. You must go back to the dragon's chamber (77) and choose again.

142

“Uh-oh! He’s changed!” says Popiel. “He used to look more normal. It’s that belt. It’s mangled him, turned him crazy!” She flies up from your shoulder. “You can’t fight him while he’s wearing the belt! Get away!”

Boldly the little dragonet flies up to Durhan to distract him while you escape, but he tracks her with his bloodshot eyes, then fires a bolt of blue-white energy from his fingertips. The lightning flies unerringly, striking Popiel and knocking her out of the sky. Charred and smoking, she flutters slowly back to the mountaintop. Theona catches her limp form.

“She’s still alive,” says Theona, “but just barely.”

“You . . . must leave,” says Popiel weakly, then loses consciousness.

“No,” you say. You will not try to escape. You will face Durhan, resolving to make him regret his attack on the helpless dragonet. You have already noticed that when Durhan casts a spell, the belt he wears grows brighter, adding to the flames surrounding him.

Will you leap up and try to rip away the Shadow Belt (57); attack with your sword (221); use a coin, if you have one (42); or throw the glass globe of vapors, if you have it (129)?

143

You can’t help holding your breath as you slip on the ring. You remember that time years ago, in the ruins of Banagor Castle, where you found a ring in a secret drawer, put it on, and began dancing furiously until a magic-user in your party could dispel the enchantment.

But this ring is far more healthful. When you put it on, it shrinks to fit your finger, and knowledge of its ability enters your mind. This is a Ring of Protection. It guards you from the effects of heat, extreme cold, and other natural conditions. However, the ring offers no protection from magical lightning bolts or any other form of attack.

This is a powerful item indeed. You nod to Theona, and she dons the other ring. Add the rings to your list of possessions. Then you can look around downstairs (153) or leave the dragon building (3).

144

From what you recall of your past encounters with ghosts, they are intelligent but extremely single-minded. Each wants to accomplish something that was important to it in life, so it can go to eternal rest.

You address the haunt in a loud voice. "What keeps you among us, spirit?"

"Air," it says mournfully. "Can't . . . breathe."

"What happened to you?"

"Swam below . . . sunken treasure. Evil fish. Trapped among them . . . pain, pain! Can't breathe! Give me air . . . give me rest!"

The copper coin tells you that the platinum coin is somewhere beneath the surface of the lake. If you decide to search for the coin or the diver's body, will you enter the lake with Theona (37), enter the lake alone, leaving Theona onshore (50), or leave the area (229)?

145

"Milady, I think now is the time to begin the true mission. It will be very dangerous, however. Are you sure I can't persuade you . . ."

"Redbeard, you insult me with these continued solicitations for my welfare. Make your magic, and let us be on our way!"

Fine, fine woman, you think. Following the directions you received from the copper coin, you set the coin on the ground in front of you. As you watch, it makes small movements—twisting a little this way, adjusting its position that way. Then suddenly it leaps straight into the air!

It spins around a central point, faster and faster. After

several seconds, it starts to give off sparks and make a high-pitched whining sound. In the center of its circle of flight, you begin to discern a light, which grows steadily brighter until it strains your eyes to stare at it.

"I believe that is our gateway, milady."

"Very well. Shall I go first?"

Instead of answering, you step into the ring of light, with Theona right behind you. You feel a brief queasy sensation in your stomach, and then—

You're standing in an empty field, much like the one you left back home. Theona appears in the light beside you. Then the light vanishes, and the coin falls to the ground. You pick it up.

You see long green grass waving in a cool breeze, and a bright sun shines directly overhead. It all seems ordinary enough, but as you keep looking around, something doesn't seem quite right. The sky is gray, and it appears to curve out from the horizon, then around overhead, as if you're standing inside a huge globe. The sun hangs in the middle of the globe, and now you notice hundreds of huge, flat chunks of rock floating in the sky. They're bright green on the sides facing the sun and dark on the far side, these strange islands floating in the sky.

The horizon seems unusually close and appears to end abruptly.

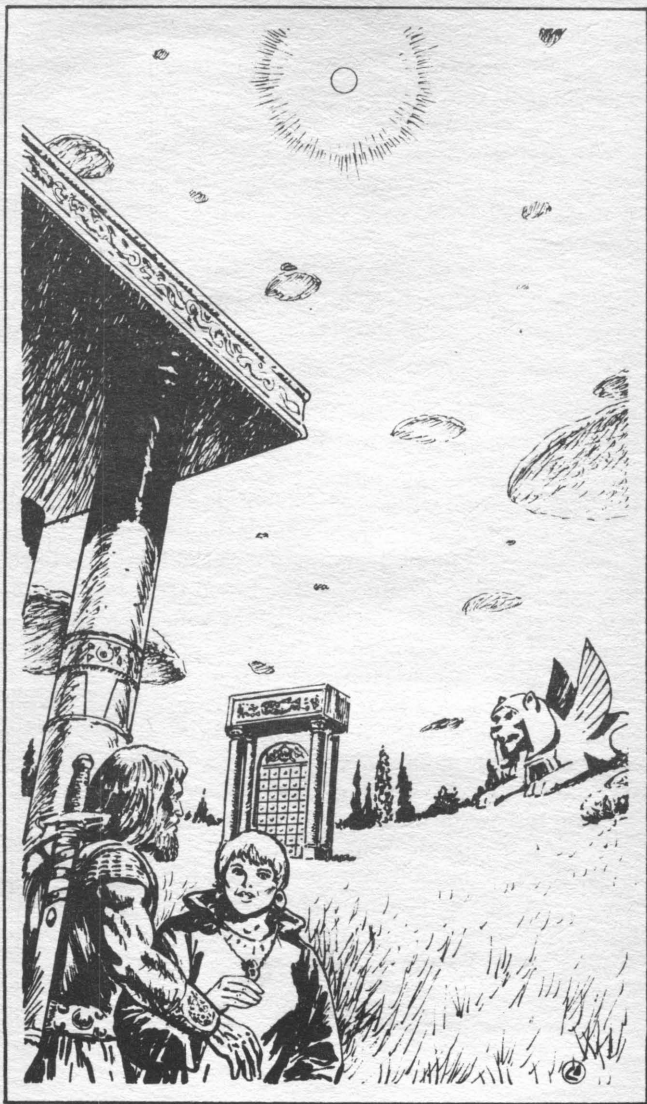
"Well, we have certainly left home," says Theona.

"Would you say we ourselves stand on a floating island, not unlike the ones we see overhead?"

"Only a dolt would conclude differently."

Around you are several large buildings, an open central area like a courtyard, and an outline around the yard that marks out what might be the pattern of castle walls. In fact, there's a stone gate with a portcullis standing just where a real castle gate might be—but there are no walls around it. It just stands there alone, out in the open.

You see no sign of life. Anywhere.



“That castle gate—do you think? . . .”

“Whatever was here has vanished as Lighthall vanished? That much seems clear,” says Theona. “But something protected these few remaining buildings from the enchantment that took everything in our city.”

“Because they are the wizards’ own buildings, perhaps?”

“We shall see.”

If you want to find out more about this strange dimension, go to **127**. Otherwise, you decide to examine the structure nearest you.

Where did you come from? Haunt Lake (go to **224**)? The Cliffside Caves (go to **235**)? Or did you arrive from the Dragon Hills, or from the site of your vanished city (go to **49**)?

146

You find yourselves in the center of a large, hollow sphere. The wall of the sphere is pure black, but it reflects the firelight from legions of elementals surrounding you!

You float a foot or so above what looks like the palm of a giant fingerless hand. Looming above the hand is a burning arm, as thick around as a redwood tree. Beyond the arm, extending high above and below you, is an immense humanoid form, wrapped in flames. Its face is a blank expanse of fire, staring down at you.

In your mind, you hear the Flame King’s voice: “What brinnngs youou from the realmm of collld?”

You open your mouth to reply, but no words come out. You try to think, but no thoughts appear.

“Yoou intruuude on this dommainnn. Whyyyy?”

“Ah. Ah, right, ah, Your M-majesty,” you stammer foolishly. You cannot hear your own voice, but you hear it in your mind, just as Theona and the king can. This must be his spell at work. “Your Majesty, we seek your assistance—we *humbly* seek your, ah, noble assistance—in defeating a rogue who—”

“Durrhan the Conquerorr,” says the Flame King. “I see it in yooour minnnd. I knowww of his connnquest of the Rulinng Wizarrs. Yet he cannot rrrreach mmme. What care I forrr the worrrld of collld?”

Enlisting the Flame King’s help looks as if it will be more difficult than you thought, but it’s senseless to back down now, after what you’ve been through. What approach will you use in persuading him? Will you attack him, or use a coin (170)? Will you appeal to his own interests (122)? Will you threaten him (59), or bribe him (193)?



147

The suddenness of your attack takes both sphinxes by surprise. Your broadsword bites deep into the female’s shoulder, and the creature falls back with a howl. The male is on you in an instant, his growl deafening, his breath hot against your cheek.

The sphinx’s sheer weight nearly bowls you over the ledge, but you twist aside and fall to the ground. The force of the male’s charge tumbles him over the precipice, but with a flap of powerful wings, he rights himself and glides in a wide circle back toward the cliff.

Meanwhile, the female, shrieking with rage, swipes at you repeatedly. Its speed is amazing for such a large creature, greater than most you’ve encountered in your long career. Your gauntleted hand grabs a fistful of the mother’s mane, and her agonized roar rises in fury.

But you’ve only delayed her long enough for her mate to rejoin the battle. He sails in low, claws outstretched, and you dodge out of his path. Now, with both of them after you, your fighting skills will be pushed to the limit.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, go to **75**. If it is 16 or less, turn to **154**.

148

"O great lady, please deliver us to the wizards, so that we may deliver them from their imprisonment!"

You hardly have time to admire your own speechmaking before a silvery-gray haze descends. You feel once more the same queasy sensation that you felt when you came to this dimension. *I never did go in much for teleportation, you think.*

The voice speaks again: *You are now in the treasury beneath the city. Fare thee well, adventurer!*

The mist swirls and clears. Turn to **83**.

149

You recognize the Ruling Wizards from their portraits on the stray coins remaining in the treasury room (and from the coins you carry, if you have any left). They have cast a magical spell of Comprehension so that you are able to understand their speech.

Warrick, the old wizard who assigned you your mission, is joined by the young and high-spirited Saybrook, master of illusion; Jacaine, portly, gloomy, gold-robed wizard of shape-changing magic; and the unofficial leader, Dyan. She is a tall, stately woman who appears about forty years old, just as she does on the platinum coins of Trann. Her robes are a matching platinum.

If Popiel the dragonet is with you, she greets Saybrook with lavish affection. He smiles back at her, then gestures, and she is teleported back to his headquarters inside the blue dragon.

All the wizards thank you profusely. Dyan finally calls a halt to their show of gratitude. "We congratulate you for surviving the extreme peril of this mission," she says in a

thin but commanding voice. "But the most difficult battle is still ahead. We have but a few moments to regain our bearings and hear of your adventures."

Is Theona with you? If she is, turn to **126**. If she's not, go to **113**.

150

Haunt Lake is as dismal as ever. Have you been into the water before? If you have, there is nothing new to be gained here, so you leave (**198**). If you haven't entered the water (and haven't been cursed to prevent you from entering it), you can enter the water (**37**) or leave (**198**).

151

You have met dragons in the past, but never one as huge, vicious, and powerful as this! Yet you fight on, taking courage from thoughts of your vanished city and of Theona. Who will save them if you fall before this evil creature?

You thrust and dodge, leap over the lashing tail, and duck the sweeping claws. The battle begins to blur in your mind. All you can think about is raising your sword and bringing it down again. Raise and strike, raise and strike . . .

"Sir Theobold! Sir Theobold!"

You awaken from your daze to find Theona shaking you. Before you lies the huge carcass of the dragon. Add 2 to your current experience point total for your victory.

You pick up the silver coin. To learn more about it, turn to **64**, but first make a note of this section number, **151**, so you can return here when you are through there. Ignore the directions at the end of that section.

Is the giant with you? If so, go immediately to **210**. Otherwise, it's time to leave the cave (**20**).

152

Now, while Durhan reels from his injuries, now is the time to use the platinum coin. You clutch it tightly, sum-

moning the power of Dyan, leader of the Ruling Wizards.

Durhan's eyes fly open, revealing a silver-white glow. You feel the bonds of control between you like reins, or like strings operating a marionette. Even now you feel his powerful mind struggling against your control. Had you not waited until he was vulnerable, you would surely have failed.

You have only a few moments to command him, but for that time he is in your power. "Take off the Shadow Belt!" you cry, exerting all your will to master his.

Durhan squirms, screams, resists, but your mind reaches out to guide his hands to the leather strap crossing his chest. The hands clutch and begin to pull.

Durhan screams agonizingly as part of the Shadow Belt detaches from his skin with a wet tearing sound, as though it were part of his flesh. You glimpse hundreds of tiny red filaments writhing on the strap's underside. The belt was growing into him!

"Remove it all the way!" you shout again, while the control still holds. Durhan pulls away the rest of the belt, shrieking in agony all the while. When the last of the belt parts from his skin, he trembles, moans, and goes limp.

In the next few minutes, Durhan's lifeless body shrinks to the size of a normal human. The storm clears, and the belt vanishes, probably recalled by the spirit Orcus to tempt unwary mortals in the future. But for now, you have won. Turn to 244.

153

As the ruler of Lighthall, you are accustomed to a certain luxury in your lifestyle, though you grumble at the extravagance. But this Saybrook fellow could teach your palace courtiers something about luxury. The cushions are satin, embroidered with delicate blue dragons. The bedsheets and hangings are of the finest silk, woven with silver thread. Every piece of furniture has tasteful silver fix-

tures, and you don't even recognize the carpet material.

"Dashed soft!" you mumble admiringly.

By the bed's headboard, Theona coos in surprise. "A compartment!" she says, showing the concealed compartment she has found.

"Well done, Theona! I recall you were always the one for finding those secret doors in the dungeons in our youth." You examine the contents of the small compartment and discover a parchment scroll and two pairs of trim leather boots. All radiate the distinctive aura of magic.

You can try on a pair of the boots (5), examine the scroll (206), go upstairs to the dragon's head (104), or leave (3).



154

Though you fight with every tactic you know, with every weapon and skill at your disposal, with the utmost courage you possess, the sphinxes fight with the pure fury of parents guarding their young. They claw at you, they bite and roar, and they strike with their massive wings.

When you are so weakened and battered that you can hardly stand, the female begins to chant in a strange language, and you realize that sphinxes can use magic. You're immediately surrounded by a whirlwind shape bearing hammers, clubs, and other blunt instruments, which begin to beat you mercilessly. Before you fall senseless, you hope that somehow Theona can carry on your mission. Your adventure is over. ✕

155

You hang suspended in utter emptiness, with nothing in sight. Enormous clouds of gas surround you, glowing like coals in a fire, but they look very far away. You and Theona crane your necks all the way back, looking straight up, but you can't tell where the clouds end overhead.

Far beneath you, and on all sides, is pure white light. You can see a distant yellow horizon beyond the gas plumes. The heat here must be incredible, but your rings keep you and Theona from being instantly blinded or vaporized.

Do you and Theona both wear Boots of Flying? (These are the only boots you might have found in this adventure.) If so, turn to 45. If not, go to 21.

156

You proceed up the tunnel to the left, and suddenly the walls vanish! Around your feet lie piles of skulls and bones. You trip over them and land with a horrible clatter.

Instantly an illusory wall to the right blinks away, and you stare at the entrance to the dragon's lair. Needless to say, the noise has alerted its occupant.

The huge blue dragon dwells in a large, dark, echoing stone cavern. The cave is hot and smells of ozone. You see an enormous sword, with a dulled and pitted steel blade almost eight feet long, stuck into the rock floor. You see no sign of treasure, except for the silver coin. . . .

The coin lies beyond the sword, right between the blue claws of the dragon. The huge creature stares at you balefully. Now and then, little yellow sparks flare from its snout. Its voice rasps like a sawblade: "What have you done with my treasure?"

Is the giant with you? If so, go to 184. If not, go to 87.

157

As you approach the casket, you see that the chest has rotted. "An old strongbox," you observe. Perhaps, long ago,

some fisherman or merchant sank the box in the lake to hide his secrets. But that is another story, one you have no time for now.

Touching the box, you feel the ghastly cold that marks the undead. But it fades quickly, and you pull off the rotten lid. Inside is a cruet of smoked glass, and in the small bottle, you can see liquid. Lake water, or perhaps—

“A potion!” exclaims Theona. “But why didn’t it vanish with the rest of the known world?”

“If the ghost is a guardian, perhaps the wizards’ spell prevented it.”

She grabs the cruet and opens it. Sniffing, she lifts her eyebrows. “It’s a Potion of Water-Breathing, if I’m not mistaken.” She raises the bottle for a taste.

“For pity’s sake, Theona, wait a moment! If you *are* mistaken, you might be turned into a purple toad!”

“Then I’ll make an ideal companion for you, Redbeard.” She sips the liquid, then slowly smiles. “Indeed! Water Breath! And enough for both of us, I think. What say, Redbeard? Shall we track down the platinum coin in the murky deep?”

Will you drink the potion with Theona and then enter the water (71)? Or will you drink it alone, leave Theona on shore, and enter the water alone (78)?

You may prefer to pocket the Potion of Water-Breathing and add it to your list of possessions. If you want to enter the water with Theona without drinking the potion, go to 43; if you’d rather go alone, turn to 234. You won’t be able to drink the potion while you’re in the water, because it takes time to take effect.

Whether or not you drink the potion, you may simply forget about the lake and leave the area (198).

158

Lunging desperately, you reach out and grab the sleeve of Theona’s robe. She slams against the side of the pit, and

you both grunt with the impact.

“Are—are you all right, milady?”

“Don’t stop to diagnose me, Redbeard! Pull me up!”

Her hand finds your other hand, and you let go of her robe and pull her up to the edge of the pit. Behind you, you hear the vault door opening. You glance over your shoulder to see three large, brutish ogres rushing at you, brandishing clubs. It’s a good thing your sword arm is free. . . .

Clutching Theona in one hand and your sword in the other, you must fight the three ogres one-handed, at the edge of the bottomless pit. To pull Theona to safety and then defeat your opponents will demand matchless fighting skill.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **106**. If it is 17 or less, go to **225**.

159

Popiel the dragonet flies around the room like an excited butterfly. “Oh, just look at the damage!” she frets. “I do hope that Jacaine is all right. He’s so upset about dying and all, and now he may actually have—well, we don’t need to think about that, but we really should *hurry!*”

With a flutter of her leathery wings, she flies to the wall painting of the moneylenders. Nosing a white spot in the middle of a pile of gold coins, she moves back—and the mural blinks out of existence! In its place is a blank wall with a short passageway. At the end of the passageway, a spiral staircase leads down.

“There! The treasury. I mean, this is the way down to the treasury. This is where you must go to rescue the wizards. Be sure to watch out for the pit trap at the bottom! Are you coming along or not?” She flutters nervously at the top of the staircase.

“The familiar seems to have leadership qualities,” says Theona dryly.

“A virtual fountain of eloquence. Shall we, milady?”

“Certainly, Redbeard. Having followed you for the bulk of this journey, I can hardly ask for a change of command now.”

Together you descend the stairs, Popiel following closely and flying ahead by turns. Go to 214.

160

Perhaps some kind of magical item will impress this Flame King. “Your Majesty, I am honored to present to you these amazing, and highly magical, Boots of Flying.” While removing them from your feet, you recount how you found them. It’s a good thing you wore your own boots under the magical ones. It would be bad form, besides being very uncomfortable, to go barefoot in the Flame King’s own sanctum.

You lay the boots in the Flame King’s awesome palm. They are practically lost amid the flames, but they don’t burn. He examines them closely.

“Whaaat do they doooo?”

“They allow the wearer to fly, Your Majesty.”

“Flyyy?”

“You know, rise from the ground, float around . . .” Seeing the king and his army of attendants floating in the hollow black sphere, weightless as candle flames, you suddenly feel a bit silly. The king looks around at his servants, and you hear in your mind a peculiar low sound, something like “Hoo-woo, hoo-woo!” Only after every fire elemental has taken up the sound do you realize that it’s laughter!

The king sends the boots floating back to you. “I thannnk yooou for yooour giffit,” he says gently. “Howeverrrr, I believe yooou will need these boots to make yooour waay through my domainnn.”

At least the monarch is amused. He seems willing to keep listening to you. Go back to 146 and try something else.



161

“Better to face the parents on our terms than on theirs,” you tell Theona as you climb toward the cave. Reluctantly she follows. The ledge before the entrance forms a short pathway leading upward. On the path, you wonder which type of entry is more foolish—with your sword drawn, or with it sheathed?

Deciding a show of harmlessness is vital, you keep the sword in its scabbard as you enter the cave. The sphinx cub yowls curiously and bounds in ahead of you, the coin in its jaws.

The lair inside smells of meat and damp straw, but it seems clean enough. In the small cave, two large adult sphinxes, tawny winged lions with human features, are playing with their two cubs. Toward the rear of the cave, a light-colored female teases one cub with a bone, while nearer you the male playfully dangles his paw for the other cub to snatch at.

The gold coin lies between the male’s paws. There is no other treasure in the cave, though you would have expected such monsters to hoard any coins, jewels, and magical items they might have found over the years. Perhaps their treasure vanished when the city vanished.

“Ahem,” you say tentatively.

Instantly the male looks up, then leaps toward you. A swipe of its paw sends one cub squalling toward the rear of the cave, near the mother. The male growls threateningly

and demands, "What do you want here?"

What indeed? Will you attack the sphinxes (147), talk to them politely (168), use the silver or platinum coin (81), or leave (6)?

162

"I say, good fellow, would you kindly move aside? We have business in the—well, I suppose it's a cavern behind you."

The giant stares at you in disbelief, then shakes his head. He rolls away from the cliffside depression with a groan. But behind him, there is no cavern entrance. There is only solid rock.

"Where to now, Redbeard?" Theona asks innocently.

"I'm sure I don't know. The coin says we must go into the cliff, but—"

"It's an illusion," says the giant wearily. "Dominagon the Blue is crafty that way. The dragon has other tricks as well. Walk straight through the cliff face, stranger, and may you have better luck with Dominagon than I did."

You consider his words, then walk toward the cliff face. Sure enough, your hand passes right through the rock! As you walk boldly into the depression, it vanishes, revealing a cavern entrance. You and Theona head down the tunnel. Turn to 228.

163

You leap to the pit's edge and grab frantically for Theona's sleeve, but you miss! Theona plummets down the bottomless pit, strikes against a wall, bounces, and tumbles head over heels into the light below, out the bottom of the island and into empty space, her shriek echoing through the shaft all the way down. Finally only distance stops it from reaching your ears.

For one long moment, you lie there, transfixed. The loss of this magnificent woman is more than you can stand. *Oh,*



my dear, dear lady, what we might have had!

Behind you, the vault door opens and three beastlike ogres, powerful brutes with clubs, look into the antechamber to find the source of the noise. "Here I am!" you announce loudly through your tears. "And if that noble lady deserved her fate, you will richly deserve yours!"

You charge them in a berserk fury. Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **196**. If it is 13 or less, turn to **48**.

164

You enter a large oval room with a rounded ceiling and walls with long, vertical bulges like ribs. Chandeliers hang at intervals along a bulge running lengthwise along the roof, like a spine. The simulation of a dragon's skeleton is disturbingly realistic.

"Redbeard, do you suppose—"

“Yes. The sorcerer who lived here has the power to petrify a dragon.” To yourself, you think, *Saybrook the high-spirited indeed! To turn a monster to stone, then hollow it out and make it your home—well, high spirits are one thing, but this is—you grope for the proper word—this is positively cheeky!* you think at last.

The furnishings include silk-covered divans with large pillows, wall tapestries woven into abstract designs, lamps with fringed shades, and a thick carpet. At the far end of the room is an enormous bed with thick wooden bedposts and a high headboard. It all looks very plush and exotic.

Near the doorway, leading up the dragon’s long neck, is a staircase of polished wood.

Make a perception check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **111**. Otherwise, you can either look around this room (**153**), go up the stairs (**104**), or leave the dragon (**3**).

165

When you enter the coral room, you pass too close to a coral formation at a turn in the passage. Your sword strikes against the coral column, and it rings like a church bell! The sound resonates through the water, alerting every devilfish in the lake. They promptly swarm around you. Turn to **187** to fight.

166

With the gold coin of gloomy Jacaine, you use his power of shape-shifting magic. Your eyes and nose begin to bulge, your head flattens, and your neck lengthens. Your arms spread into wings, and your feet grow claws. But where did that tail come from?

While Theona gasps behind you, you grow large and rise into the air. You see new colors you had never known existed, the colors of heat itself, and of sunshine. As a tremen-

dous golden dragon, you flap your wings and rear back, larger than Durhan and perhaps as powerful. Cross off one use of your gold coin.

Durhan is astonished at your transformation, and you feel bewildered as well. After slaying all those dragons in the past, here you have become one yourself! But at least in such a powerful form, you have some hope of defeating this fearsome enemy.

You are fully large enough to swallow Durhan, if you want to try (35). Or you can breathe a cloud of poison gas on him (204), or you can grapple with him hand-to-claw (76).

167

“O great lady, how may we rescue Dyan and the other Ruling Wizards?”

The voice sounds pleased. *They lie bound and helpless deep beneath the site of Solius, this very city. Find them through the passage within the sphinx. They are prevented from using their magic and guarded by fearsome guardians. I grant you the means to defeat those guardians.*

On the altar, a globe of clear, thin glass, about a foot in diameter, shimmers into sight. Inside it, a black vapor roils and twists like smoke. You ask, “How shall I use this to defeat them, O great lady?” but there is no reply.

“We thank you, O gracious lady, for your generous assistance!” says Theona from the floor.

“Um, yes,” you agree, nodding. After a while, you think it’s safe to stand up again. It’s time to leave the temple; turn to 209.

168

The male sphinx introduces himself as Demosthenes, and his mate, “my beautiful companion of many seasons,” is named Neria. Demosthenes listens to your account of the vanishing city with interest.

“Yes, yes, indeed. We, too, noted the peculiar events earli-

er today. Quite a show. We were amazed to see our own belongings vanish, but fortunately our needs are simple—fresh meat every day, a freshwater spring, pleasant weather.”

“Then you won’t be needing that coin, will you? I’ll be happy to relieve you of—”

“Yes, many’s the time I’ve seen you adventurers,” Demosthenes interrupts, “and all spoiling for a fight. I recall one instance. . . .”

You and Theona quickly discover that Demosthenes is quite a long-winded sort, given to recalling past adventures and offering lots of useless advice. You listen as long as it seems polite, and longer, too. You even consider drawing your broadsword just to put an end to the monologue, but finally Demosthenes returns to the subject of the coin.

“The vision that appeared above this coin told of a great hero who would arrive to take it,” says Demosthenes. “By strength of arms, or wealth, or quickness of intellect. Now, I have no reason to fight you, and I imagine you wish to avoid conflict as well, but I do intend to be the guardian of the coin, as the vision suggested. As it happens, however, I have a fondness for games, riddles, and intellectual pastimes. Would you perhaps be interested in a contest of riddles for this coin?”

“Well, honestly, old fellow, I’m really not—”

“He’ll be happy to take part in your contest, sir,” says Theona. Catching the glint in her eye, you nod weakly.

“Excellent! Now, should you win, you receive the coin. But if I should win, you will provide me with fresh meat for, oh, shall we say a year?”

“Now, see here, lion—!” you sputter.

“We agree,” says Theona, elbowing you.

“Your unanimity of consent warms my spirit,” says Demosthenes. “I shall begin. In this riddle, you are given that each of us—myself and my lovely wife, Neria—either always tells the truth or always lies.”

“Which of you tells the truth and which lies?” you ask.

“Ah, you don’t know that,” says Demosthenes. “Now listen to me: The sphinx with the coin always tells the truth.”

“He’s wrong,” says the other sphinx, Neria. “The sphinx with the coin always lies.”

The riddle is clear. You must decide which of the two sphinxes, Demosthenes or Neria, has the coin. You have a fifty-fifty chance if you guess, but it’s possible to discover the answer logically. Of course, if you answer wrong, you have no way to get the gold coin except through bribery or battle.

Will you try to answer the riddle (40); forget the riddle and offer a bribe (88); attack the sphinxes (147); use the silver or platinum coin, if you have it (81); or forget about the gold coin and leave (177)?



169

In your years as an adventurer, you have learned that it is wise to find out as much as you can about a foe. You shut out Durhan’s screams and examine him.

Durhan wears a gray leather belt around his bony waist. A shoulder strap from the belt stretches across his misshapen rib cage and spine. Though plain and without ornament, the belt flickers with orange flame. You can practically feel its heat from where you stand.

Theona gasps. “The Shadow Belt of Orcus!”

“The what?”

Her voice drops to a whisper. “My order knows of the artifacts of times past, though we never speak of them. This one was created by the evil spirit Orcus. It is said to give power to those who wish to reap destruction. But it distorts

the wearer's body, burns hot as pitch, and causes terrible agony. Oh, we are confronting the profoundest evil, Redbeard!"

You turn back to face the raving monster, finding it difficult to believe he was once a human being like yourself. It's a chilling sight—but now you know the source of his power.

You should try to remove that belt, but you know you can't possibly stand its heat without protection of some kind. If you have no device of magical protection, you may want to find one before facing Durhan. Will you call out a challenge to Durhan (200) or leave the sphinx (102)?

170

Before you attempt to attack the Flame King or use the magical powers of the coins against him, make a perception check. Roll two dice and add the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 7 or more, turn to 182. If it is 6 or less, turn to 136.

171

You throw the gold coin into the well, but you don't hear it hit water. Cross it off your list of possessions. What will you wish for? Information (119)? Strength (34)? The defeat of Durhan the Conqueror (212)?

172

You motion Theona out of the way, draw your sword, and brace yourself. The lock looks very strong. Marshalling your strength, you bring down your broadsword on the lock. You hit it squarely, the lock shatters, and as it does, the floor drops out from under you.

You've sprung a trapdoor! You glimpse daylight below. In an instant, you realize that the pit goes all the way through the island, opening on empty space below.

Are you wearing Boots of Flying? If so, you fall a short distance before you gain control of them, then you float

back up, catch your breath, and enter the vault. Turn to **83**.

If you aren't wearing Boots of Flying, you must make a dexterity check to try to grab the sides of the pit.

Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **103**. If it is 15 or less, you fall straight through the island and begin a thousand-mile drop to nowhere. Your adventure ends with your final, prolonged scream. ✘

173

You awaken on shore. Theona leans over you, her face unusually troubled. "Sir Theobold!" she's crying, over and over. "Please say something!"

Your ribs ache, your eyes water, your joints throb, you hurt in a hundred places, and your throat is sore. "Ouch," you say inadequately.

"Thank the goddess! When I dragged you out of the water, you didn't move for a terribly long time. I thought—" She lets the words trail off.

You try to sit up, but discover that it's a bad idea. "So," you whisper, "you pulled me out of the water, did you, old girl? Uncommonly civil of you, I say. My greatest thanks."

She leans back, disconcerted. "Well, after all, Redbeard, you're the one with the coin that can take us to Trann. If I didn't have you, I'd just have to go live in a cave, wouldn't I?"

You're in no shape to analyze this logic. The devilfish have wounded you almost, but not quite, fatally. Reduce your current hit point total to 1. If you have a healing potion, now is the time to use it!

In this condition, you cannot go back into the water. You must give up on the platinum coin and go elsewhere (**198**).

174

As Dominagon the Blue raises its claws to deal a death blow to Granite, you leap in its way. Your mind gropes for a

verbal challenge (“Kill a helpless victim, eh, monster? Well, let’s see how you fare against an opponent who is still fit to fight!”).

You have only enough time to say, “Kill—” before the dragon’s scaly paw sweeps down at you. Stunned and frightened, you bring your sword up to block the blow.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 12 or more, turn to **151**. If it is 11 or less, go to **238**.

175

While Durhan is groggy, you hack at him with your sword. He is so large that you can’t reach anything but his legs, yet your sword bites deep. Durhan cries in pain, snapping out of his stunned condition.

But for some reason, Durhan does not attack immediately. He simply stands there. As you watch, the wounds on his legs close up, seal, and vanish, and he stands whole and uninjured. You look up, and his wild laughter chills you to the bone. Turn to **188**.

176

When you touch it to the white spot on the painting of the treasure room, your coin disappears from your hand. Cross it off your list of possessions.

Immediately the fresco fades, revealing a kind of magical monitor of the Ruling Wizards’ real treasury. What you see is horrible to behold. Four robed figures are stretched on stone slabs, held down at their chests and ankles by thick iron bands. Suspended from a chain above them is a glass vat filled with pale green liquid. In the liquid hangs a mummified eyestalk, one that you recognize.

“That’s a beholder’s eye!” you cry out.

Theona knows about those horrible many-eyed monsters as well as you do. “Mummified, to cast its anti-magic ray on the wizards. They’ll never be able to escape that!”

Guarding the wizards are three large ogres, wearing loincloths and carrying huge wooden clubs. Their skin is covered with warts and coarse hair.

From behind you, the ghostly voice says, "Ew, this is terrible! Our mawster, Jacaine, is trapped among those beasts! Oh, sir, we beg your help!"

The spectral butler grapples you and Theona in invisible hands, as efficiently as a tavern bouncer. Then he propels you toward the fresco showing the moneylenders, and—if it hasn't already—the fresco vanishes. Behind it, you see a short tunnel leading to a staircase that spirals downward.

"Wait a bit, old ghost. Now, hold on. *Wait!*" you cry. Theona has a few choice instructions, too, in language that her goddess might not approve of. But nothing sways the ghostly servant.

"We saw our mawster taken from this very place by those ghastly beasts, but we never knew where he had been taken. It really was beastly, and all the while, we had this lovely key to the vault door!" In a flash of light, a heavy golden key appears, and an invisible hand presses it upon you. Add the key to your list of possessions.

"Fine! Now, wait just a minute here!" you protest. "No! Hold on, old boy, your mawster wouldn't want you to—I mean your master— Oh, dash it all!" The ghost pushes you and Theona down the spiral staircase, and you tumble almost halfway down before you can grab a railing. Above you, the ghost speaks one final time: "Ew, do be careful there. Be sure to watch out for the pit trap. And please do rescue the mawster! I cawn't tell you the remorse I feel!"

Then you hear a slam, as of steel doors shutting. You lie on the staircase and catch your breath. The only light comes from smoky, flickering torches in wall brackets.

"He cawn't tell us the remorse he feels," you say to Theona.

"Yet I notice he didn't come along with us," she replies.

You head back up the stairs. As you suspected, the way is

blocked. You can't budge the stone barrier. There seems no choice but to go on down the stairs and rescue the "master." Turn to **214**.

177

Where will you go? Haunt Lake (**85**)? The Dragon Hills (**179**)? Or will you teleport to Trann (**145**)?

178

You remember that in her adventuring days, before she took her holy vows, Theona was a skilled locksmith. Her lockpicking tools made many a venture profitable. "Can you deal with the lock, milady?"

"I'm not certain. Such valuable treasure requires an equally formidable lock, and formidable traps for the unwary. But if you wish, I will try."

You know you yourself could never pick such a lock, but you might be able to break it. Will you ask Theona to pick the lock (**89**), will you try to break the lock yourself (**172**), or will you simply knock on the door (**7**)?

179

"This looks like a battlefield! Redbeard, you haven't waged any wars recently, have you?"

This section of the Dragon Hills is an eroded cliffside, littered with rubble and huge boulders. The ground is scorched and gashed, and you can see splashes of blood. The trail of carnage leads to a shallow depression in the cliffside.

This part of the Dragon Hills is the location of the silver coin. If you have been here before in this adventure, go to **203**. If this is your first time here, turn to **92**.

180

When you hold the gold coin tightly, the Ruling Wizard shown on its face appears in your mind's eye. "Ah, the

vicissitudes of life," says the heavyset Jacaine, holding one robed arm to his forehead. "That the current tenants of this existence may be menaced by their predecessors! This circumstance affords much to meditate on, friend, though my spell will eliminate it."

As Jacaine withdraws from your mind, you suddenly feel yourself transforming. Armor gives way to scales and limbs to fins, as you turn into a giant, disklike fish. Your skin is black, though your eyes glint gold and your whip-like tail is set with gold spikes. You float in midair.

The ghost sees you and cries out wordlessly, then vanishes, leaving the wooden chest as the only proof of its appearance.

You assume your own form again and feel relief to find you can flex your arms and legs. Mark off one use of the gold coin on your Character Stats Card.

"That was a change for the better, however brief, Redbeard," says Theona when she recovers her composure. "What were you?"

"A devilfish, I'd say. Evidently the fish that poor fellow spoke of. Whatever they did to him down there in the lake, he didn't want to deal with it again."

Will you investigate the ghost's wooden casket (157), enter the water to look for the platinum coin or the ghost's body (37), or leave the area (198)?

181

"Thank you for your generous support, O great lady," you say into the open air. "I ask one more favor: the chance to defeat Durhan in honorable combat."

For a moment, nothing happens. Then, above the horizon, looms a huge orange and black lump. It rises in the sky, getting larger and larger. Then you see a bulging black eye, along with transparent fins and a long, streaming tail. What you see, and wonder at, is a living creature the size of a cloud. It looks like a gigantic Chinese goldfish.



The voice speaks in your mind once again: *An auratus—your steed.*

So it happens that within minutes, you, Theona, and the bronze golems are riding on the huge back of the giant creature.

The auratus is wide enough to carry a fleet of galleys, and its surface is rough enough to provide plenty of handholds. You find you can control the giant fish by standing just behind its eyes and kicking at a tiny sensitive patch on its head. You ride in stately fashion between the flying islands, with only a hot breeze to indicate your speed.

The sun is at your back, and before you, in a vast panorama, the islands orbit against the cold gray background of the plenum. They look like disks of light—some nearby and large, others mere motes in the distance. There must be thousands—more than you could possibly count.

The islands seem to be all sizes. Some are hunks of rock about the size of a city block, but others are as big as countries. The combined living area of these thousands of islands must be far greater than any mere planet.

The auratus carries you toward a gigantic thunderstorm hovering above one large island. The black clouds are lighted by frequent bolts of lightning, and the air feels damp and heavy. Looking at the clouds, the storm, the ravaged island beneath them, and the flight path of the auratus, you feel an ominous tingle. Somehow you know there is grave danger in that cloud.

Flapping its fins, the auratus sails toward the island and comes to a stop by a storm-drenched mountain. You leap onto the rocky peak, with Theona close behind, and look up into the storm. Go to 18.

182

The Flame King is bigger than a giant sequoia tree. His magic holds the weight of an entire star at bay. He is surrounded by loyal attendants, any one of whom would give

you a harrowing battle. You haven't got the tiniest chance of hurting, deceiving, or enchanting him. Go back to 146 and choose again.

183

You grab the cub and point your sword at its throat. "Now, nobody wants trouble here, my dear felicitous parents," you tell the sphinxes, "but I really must have that gold coin, you see. It's vital to the rescue of my city."

"We were appointed guardians of the coin," says the male sphinx in a deep, growling voice.

"Well, I'm un-appointing you right now. Let me leave with the coin, and you'll still have your little someone to listen to your nursery rhymes."

After a pause, the female speaks. "Take the coin and go!"

You pry the coin out of the cub's mouth. Then, swatting the youngster's rear end with the flat of your blade, you send it scurrying for the cave. You back up cautiously.

And then both parents leap at you, roaring mightily. With a gasp of fear, you leap back. *Curse these dishonorable beasts!* you think, trying not to think of your own dishonor. Subtract 2 experience points from your current total for your unchivalrous tactics.

Now you must dodge the sweeping claws of two enraged sphinxes. Make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 15 or more, go to 26. If it's 14 or less, go to 232.

184

There is a rush of air past you. Granite is running for the sword, directly in front of the dragon! Dominagon rears back, and sparks fly from its mouth. Then it breathes a bolt of pure white lightning. The bolt strikes the sword and crackles around it, lighting the center of the chamber with a storm of electricity.

The giant lunges for the sword, and lightning plays all



around him as he grabs it. Roaring with pain, his limbs twitching from the shock, Granite wrests the sword from the floor and leaps to attack the dragon! Even as the dragon's shiny blue claws reach out toward him, he swings, and both weapons strike home. The giant sags to the floor as Dominagon rears back to crush him.

"Redbeard, do something!" Theona cries.

Will you leap in to fight the dragon, hoping to distract it from Granite (174); use the gold or platinum coin, if you have either one (29); wait to see what happens (123); or take the chance now to flee now with Theona from this battle (230)?

185

You turn the golden key in the vault lock. Bolts slide back inside the thick iron door, and you enter the treasury room. Go to 83.

186

Make a perception check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 14 or more, go to 72. Otherwise, you fail your check and notice nothing. You can go back downstairs and look around (153) or leave the building (3).

187

You hurtle yourself into the swarm of devilfish, swinging your broadsword wildly. They're so densely packed that

you can scarcely miss. What appears to be the priestess of the ceremony, a vampire devilfish, stands out from the others because of her white skin, but she keeps out of your reach.

Suddenly she shouts a command, and around you the devilfish acolytes begin to drum their tails against the coral reef rhythmically. With every strike, the weird coral resounds like a huge gong! Echoes reverberate from all sides, growing louder by the second, distracting you. Subtract 2 from your fighting ability during the remainder of this combat.

You strike down several more of the acolytes, yet the noise seems louder than ever. The fish swarm all around you, thick enough to block your view. No sooner do you slay one than another takes its place. At least the very density of them keeps them from using their poisonous tail stingers, but they are overwhelming you with sheer numbers.

Make a fighting check. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **30**. If it is 14 or less, go to **19**.

188

Now Durhan raises his arms, gibbering all the while. In your mind you hear his tirade: *Enemies everywhere! I stand alone against you all! You all will die a thousand deaths! Death to everything that opposes me, everything! I shall string the islands of Trann together like beads and throw them into the burning fire, fire, fire!*

From his open palms stream twin storms of sand grains, grains that quickly grow to boulder size. They hurtle toward you like cannonballs.

Make a dexterity check to try to dodge the meteor swarm. Roll two dice and add the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 13 or more, you evade the meteor swarm and take no damage. If your total is 12 or less, you try to twist aside, but one meteor strikes home, and you

must subtract 10 from your current hit point total.

If you survive the meteor barrage, you see that the Shadow Belt around Durhan's waist glows brightly with every spell he casts. The flames around him seem to emanate from the belt. Tearing it away from him apparently would remove the source of his power, but you fear to touch that burning belt.

Will you leap up and try to rip away the Shadow Belt (57); attack with your sword (221); use a coin, if you have one (42); or throw the glass globe of vapors, if you have it (129)?

189

Once more the healing potion works its magic. Granite's wounds close up, his color returns, and he rises to his feet. Mark the potion off your list of possessions, and add 1 to your current experience point total for your generosity.

"You have saved me twice now, warrior," he tells you in his deep voice. "King Savast will be grateful for your help, when I deliver the monster's heart to him." He hesitates, and his stern expression softens. "And I thank you, too, twice over. I am not often called upon to show gratitude—"

"Give it no thought, friend," you say.

"—yet I show it as well as I know. You have given me potions; take this one of mine in return." He hands you a small flask of blue-green liquid. "It allows one to breathe in water as easily as in air."

"I sometimes think Redbeard breathes in alcohol as—" Theona begins.

"Thank you, Theona, that will do," you interrupt.

Record Granite's Potion of Water-Breathing on your list of possessions. There is enough for two people's needs. Then it's time to leave; turn to 20.

190

Do you possess the Boots of Flying? If so, put them on and turn to 231. Otherwise, go to 54.

The platinum coin vanishes as soon as it touches the altar. Mark it off your list of possessions. At once, the temple is suffused with light, and a sense of contentment floods your mind.

Floating over the altar, surrounded by a glowing halo, a beautiful woman in platinum robes appears. She speaks, and you hear her voice in your mind: *Welcome, children.*

An illusion? Perhaps, but you don't feel inclined to dispute it. Theona has already fallen prone before the altar, and you kneel beside her. The voice continues:

You stand in the temple built by Dyan, the Ruling Wizard, maker of the platinum coin. She has chosen well to enlist such brave and generous warriors in her cause. You have proven your worth by reaching me, and you have demonstrated your good heart by your offering. I shall aid you in your quest.

"Ah . . . ah, yes, we . . . um—"

"Please accept the profoundest thanks from these unworthy supplicants, O gracious lady!" says Theona, her barrel-like form trembling with fear. Well, at least she knows how to handle herself in these situations.

What aid will you choose? Strength of arms (94)? The chance to defeat Durhan (82)? Transportation to the Ruling Wizards' prison (148)? The restoration of your own city, Lighthall (109)?

You examine the heavy platinum coin. It's obviously very valuable. A woman, shown in profile on one side, bears a stately expression and looks like a queen or noble lady. She appears to be in her mid-forties. On the reverse is a simple stone block—some kind of altar, perhaps.

The platinum coin has the power of control. *Once*, during this adventure, you may use the coin's power to command any one creature. The creature controlled will do what you

wish. However, the more powerful the creature, the shorter the time you will be able to control it.

Time to leave; go to **198**.

193

What will you offer the Flame King? Choose from the following items; you must have the chosen item on your list of possessions: a coin (**13**), a glass globe filled with black vapors (**110**), or Boots of Flying (**160**). If you don't have any of these or don't think they would be useful, you can offer to serve the Flame King for the rest of your life (**31**). Or you can go back to **146** and try something else.

194

Granite climbs weakly to his feet. He watches, baffled, while the dragon obeys your commands. Then he looks at you, at Theona, and at his sword. Suddenly, without warning, he lops off the helpless dragon's head. The monster's body falls to the cavern floor in a shower of blood.

"By jasper, what was that for?" you cry. "I had that dragon doing whatever I wished!"

"And I wished to do the job King Savast hired me for," Granite replies simply. He picks up the giant reptile's head and walks wearily to the cavern exit. "I can't say that this was the bravest way to do it, but a mercenary learns to take his opportunities as they come up. Thanks for your help," he says and departs.

The platinum coin's magic is now exhausted, and it cannot be used again. It's time to leave (**20**).

195

You concentrate on the silver coin you hold in your hand, and suddenly the young-looking man on its face appears in your mind. Saybrook, tall and slender, most cheerful of the Ruling Wizards, smiles at you. He says nothing but merely gestures, then vanishes.

As he disappears, silvery flames surround the sphinxes! A ring of fire leaps up around the male, and another rises around his mate. Panicking, the two leap into the air, beating their great wings, but the flames rise with them, forming silver hoops around them. The sphinxes roar and twist in the air, but they cannot escape the illusory fires. Mark off one use of the silver coin on your Character Stats Card.

At last the two sphinxes fly off over the cliffs, leaving the gold coin behind. As soon as you touch it, you learn of its power. Turn to **53** to find out more about the coin, or to **177** if you're ready to leave the area.

196

You duck a swinging club, while another misses your head by inches. These ogres are faster than they look! And if they hit you, you're a goner.

Luckily, the ogres seem rather stupid. You try a chancy move, diving beneath one ogre's legs. It catches him by surprise. You roll to your feet and hamstring him from behind with your sword. He falls with a screech.

The other two ogres move to opposite sides of you. For long moments, you circle each other warily and watch for openings. With every sense alert, you hear the shuffling of bare feet on the cold stone and smell your own perspiration and the acrid blood of the downed ogre as you look for the tiniest movement that betrays an attack.

That movement comes, and you twist aside from one ogre's wild swing. You move inside his reach, and your sword makes quick work of him, even while the survivor rushes you. You can't pull your sword free in time, can't dodge. . . .

The ogre hits you full on, knocking you to the ground, but with an old wrestling trick, you roll and use his own momentum against him. The ogre goes flying over you and into a wall. While he lies there groaning, you retrieve your sword and put an end to his wretched life.

After you catch your breath, you go to free the wizards. *Too much work for an old man*, you think wearily. Turn to **149**.

197

Your question brings a long pause. You almost believe that the reference to Lighthall has confused the voice. Can a goddess fail to know of your city's fate?

At last you hear the voice again: *Your city is beyond this realm and therefore beyond my power*. And then the voice speaks no more. After a time, you help Theona to her feet. You know you cannot invoke the voice again, so there's no reason to remain here. To leave the temple, go to **209**.

198

Where will you go? The Cliffside Caves (**95**)? The Dragon Hills (**179**)? Or will you use the copper coin to teleport to Trann (**145**)?

199

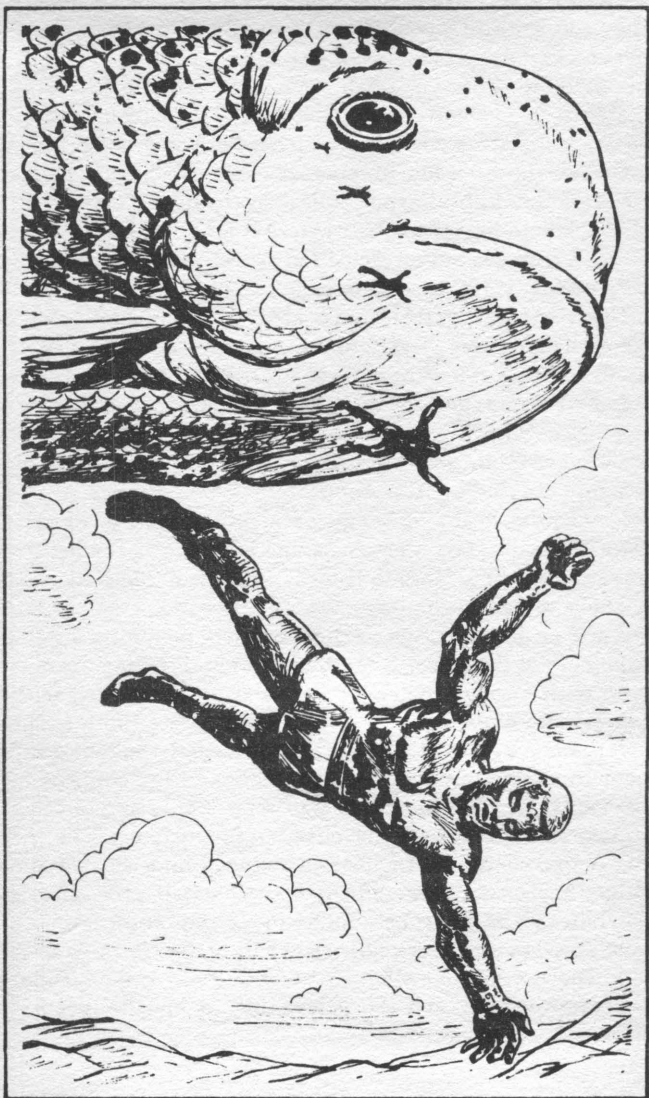
The golems, still on the back of the auratus, stand impassively overhead. You shout at them in frustration. "Well, you blasted bronze barnacles, are you going to stay on that overgrown goldfish all day? Attack!"

"We . . . obey," say the golems in unison. In two lines of five, they walk in close order to the side of their mount. Then, one by one, they march off into empty space, straight toward Durhan.

The mad conqueror has plenty of warning. He fires a rainbow-colored shower from each hand, turning the first two golems into a spray of metal flakes. The next is immediately changed into a harmless bronze butterfly, while the fourth is cut in half by a hail of whirling scimitars.

"Poor things!" says Theona.

"There, there, milady. Remember, they're mere constructs, no more alive than a chair or a wheelbarrow."



The fifth and sixth golems manage to get nearer before they, too, are destroyed. The fifth simply vanishes, perhaps shrunk to the size of an insect or teleported far away or simply disintegrated. The sixth comes almost within striking distance of Durhan's head before the monstrous villain casts up his arms and fries it with a lightning bolt.

By now the other four golems are nearly upon Durhan. He casts another lightning bolt to destroy the first. Another bolt shatters both legs of another before it lands on him.

"He's running out of breathing space!" says Theona.

"And ideas. He's using nothing but lightning now."

Now two intact golems and part of a third are on Durhan. Though enormous by your standards, they are only a third as tall as he. They hang from the belt, immune to its flames, raising their arms in slow, stolid fashion and bringing them down in crushing blows. Durhan cries out with each blow. They seem to disrupt his concentration as he attempts to cast another spell.

Finally he grabs at them, as a man might grab at a swarm of rats. Durhan moves quickly, catching the legless golem first, then flinging it away into the endless reaches of the thunderstorm.

Another golem clings to Durhan's leg, pounding single-mindedly at his knee. Both the golem and the leg are covered with blood. Durhan kicks viciously, screaming with every kick, and finally throws off the bronze fighter. The golem flies high into the air, then crashes to the mountain near you, shattering into several pieces. The enchantment that animated the construct is broken.

Only one golem remains, clinging to Durhan's back. As the conqueror twists to attempt to reach him, you see the golem trying to tear off the Shadow Belt that circles Durhan's waist and chest. Each time the golem pulls on the belt, Durhan screams loudly. The belt is clearly the source of his power.

Durhan can't reach the golem, but at last he musters

enough concentration to cast another spell. A brilliant cloud of gas forms behind him, and in it a dozen harpies appear. Huge birds with dirty feathers and the faces of hideous women, the harpies descend on the golem. Their shrieks sound like breaking glass.

It takes all twelve harpies to pry the golem away from Durhan's back. They carry the construct up into the air, while Durhan chants another spell. Suddenly the whole group, harpies and golem, vanish in a huge fireball. The smell of burnt feathers fills the air.

Durhan has drifted lower, within attacking distance. His wounds close even while you watch, but he looks stunned and exhausted. You have no other allies; now it's up to you. Will you attack Durhan with your sword (175); use a coin, if you have one (65); or leap onto him, risking the flames of the Shadow Belt, and try to tear the belt off of him (28)?

200

You decide that the only way to master your fear of this foe is to face up to him. "Conqueror!" you shout at the wall. "There remains one who is unconquered. You, hanging there in emptiness, are you prepared to face a foe who stands on solid ground against you?" Add 2 to your current experience point total for your courageous challenge.

The monstrous being speaks, and in your mind comes the reply: *You would face me on my ground, foolish one?* He gestures, and suddenly a gust of air races from the wall! You smell the scent of rain, of lightning-scorched air, and you realize Durhan has somehow dissolved the barrier between you.

Before you can react, you and Theona, along with any companion you may have with you, are pulled through the wall by force. The sphinx vanishes from around you, and you alight on a rocky mountaintop in the midst of a raging storm. You must face Durhan on his own terms!

Turn to 18.

201

“Getawaygetawaygetaway!” Popiel screams excitedly, launching herself at the nearest ogre’s eyes. Her claws flash, then come away red. The giant grabs at her, as futilely as at a housefly—or, more appropriately, a dragonfly.

Popiel bobs and swoops around the other ogres, dodging their swings with ease. Her forked tongue licks out playfully between her sharp teeth, and her wings make occasional swipes at their eyes. “Yaaa, team!” she cries delightedly.

Popiel’s propitious attack gives you the few seconds you need to wipe the blood from your eyes, stagger to your feet, and grip your sword more tightly. “Have at you, beasts!” you shout.

Make a second fighting check, this one for the final life-or-death struggle with the ogres. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 15 or less, your adventure ends here in your bloody defeat. But if the total is 16 or more, turn to **196**.

202

You drive your blade between the priestess’s fangs and down her throat. While she thrashes on the end of your blade, you raise it from the water into the sunlight, and the creature dissolves before your eyes!

You look down at the turbulent waters of Haunt Lake. It’s impossible now to go back down after the coin—the very idea makes your stomach recoil. If you survive this mission, you’ll lead an army down there to wipe out this foul presence in your kingdom.

Is Theona with you (**198**), or did you leave her on shore (**9**)?

203

Crows and vultures have descended on the site of the battle between the giant and the mighty dragon, Dominagon. But the giant is gone, there is no sign of the dragon any-

where, and the copper coin tells you that its silver companion is nowhere in the area. You have nothing to gain by staying here; go to **230**.

204

You draw a deep breath. That signals Durhan that you are about to use a breath attack, just as it always alerted you in your own combat against dragons, so when the cloud of milky yellow gas pours from your nostrils, your enemy is prepared.

With a sweep of his arm, Durhan conjures an egg-shaped field of flickering light around himself. The gas fails to penetrate it, and the cloud is quickly swept away by the storm.

You notice, if you haven't already, that the Shadow Belt of Orcus burns more brightly when Durhan casts a spell. Clearly it is the source of his power.

You can try to swallow Durhan (**35**), or you can grapple with him in your dragon form and try to tear off the belt (**76**). Or you can revert to human form, in which case you must return to **18** and try something else.

205

As you raise your sword, the cub looks up at you with wide eyes. Suddenly the awful, paralyzing roar of the adult sphinx, the roar that curdles strong men's blood, echoes from the mouth of the cave! From the cavern leap two fully grown sphinxes. They attack with the fury of parents protecting their young, and you must call upon all your skill to dodge their swiping blows.

Make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **26**. If it's 14 or less, go to **232**.

206

You see the unique characters of magical writing on the scroll and avert your eyes. Once you read those words, they

will vanish, and the scroll's magical spell will be cast.

At the top of the scroll is the customary description of the spell, written in harmless conventional writing. You recognize it as one of the common tongues of multidimensional civilizations, used by those who travel among the many planes of existence.

You have had one or two such adventures in your checkered past, and you recall a smattering of the tongue. All you can puzzle out on this scroll, though, is a reference to teleportation, plus a mention of someone called the Flame King. Apparently this spell will transport you to the Flame King's home.

You may read the scroll and use the spell now (80). Or you can add the scroll to your list of possessions and use it at any time during your adventure, except in combat. If you do this, make a note of that section, 80, and go to it when you decide to read the scroll.

Will you examine the boots (5), go upstairs to the dragon's head (104), or leave (3)?

207

With the platinum coin clutched in your hand, you summon to your mind's eye a vision of the Ruling Wizard Dyan, mistress of mental control. Her tall, stately figure appears confident. "One of these intellects is no challenge whatever," she says. "I trust you will use the enchantment to best advantage and not take too much time about it."

The image of Dyan fades as a platinum-gray glow appears in the little marblelike eyes of the nearest ogre. You hold the reins of mental control firmly. There is no danger that this stupid brute will break free of the spell.

You command the ogre to attack his two companions, and his unexpected swing with the huge wooden club catches his nearest victim off guard, knocking him cold.

The other ogre roars and brandishes his own club. The ensuing battle is an awesome contest of bull-like strength,

bruising strikes, and huge quantities of blood. At last both combatants face one another, bleeding from many gashes, unsteady on their feet, their eyes swollen almost shut. With hoarse cries, they swing at one another, and both land telling blows. They teeter for a moment, then fall to the floor with simultaneous thuds.

You shudder to think what any of those three ogres might have done to you, had it not been for the platinum coin. Its magic is now exhausted, and you cannot use it again in this adventure. To free the wizards, turn to 149.



208

Theona is chanting and showing mystic symbols in an attempt to turn the ghost away from her, but it's all to no avail. Though it seems hopeless, you must protect Theona! You hurl yourself between the ghost and the cleric. Add 2 experience points to your current total for your courage.

Sand grinds beneath your feet, and you pant heavily, but there is no other sound. The haunt is gray against the gray sky, almost invisible.

You raise your sword to fend off the spirit's attack, but its ectoplasmic hand passes through the blade and straight into your arm! Frigid cold races through the limb, and you drop the sword with a cry of pain. Subtract 6 hit points from your current total. The cold seems to grip your heart as well, and your spirit flags; you face death with a combination of terror and exhaustion.

As the spirit closes in, you use your own body to shield Theona. "Let me past, Redbeard!" she cries, struggling to move forward. "I'll die beside you, not behind you!"

"Ah, Theona, what we might have had!" you murmur as the ghost extends its deadly hand once more. But a flash of light from the lake freezes the undead creature. The sun! Full sunlight breaks through the cloud cover, reflecting brightly off the lake. With a moan, the ghost races away across the beach.

"Hah!" you cry, but you speak too soon. Turning in its flight, the ghost mouths words you cannot understand, the language of magic. It has cast some kind of spell, but you don't know what.

You only learn when you bend down to retrieve your blade. Nearing the edge of the water, you feel a sudden revulsion. You stumble back, and the feeling passes. Theona tries to enter the water as well, but she cannot. "The ghost has left its parting gift," she says. "I could not enter that water to save my high priestess."

You have to agree. There is no hope of getting the platinum coin now. Go to **198**.

209

You see two other structures as you leave the temple grounds. One is a large sandstone building shaped like a resting sphinx, and the other is a tall granite edifice that looks like a statue of a dragon. They, too, survived Durhan's enchantment, protected by the wizards' magic, and remained standing while the rest of the city of Solius disappeared.

Will you go to the sphinx (**235**) or to the dragon statue (**49**)?

210

Now that Dominagon is dead, Granite the giant brightens considerably, despite his wounds. "That blasted crea-

ture is gone at last," he says. "I'm thankful I lasted long enough to see that."

From Theona's expression as she examines the giant's wounds, you realize that Granite won't last much longer. If you have a healing potion, you can give it to him (189).

Otherwise, Granite dies there on the cavern floor, beside the body of the dragon he has hunted for so long. You have no time to bury such an enormous body, but you resolve that if you survive, you will return here and give Granite a hero's funeral. Turn to 20.

211

The Scroll of Teleportation has brought you and Theona to the home of the Flame King: the sun. The star of Trann's system is not as large as your own world's, but it is still thousands of times hotter than any blast furnace. And the star holds no more breathable air than your own world's sun. Needless to say, you must die of suffocation, even if you could somehow avoid being vaporized.

Your adventure comes to a sudden, tragic end a hundredth of a second after you arrive on the sun. But you have learned that you need Rings of Protection to survive this journey. When you play this adventure again, add 1 to your experience point total—and good luck! ✕

212

"I wish for the banishment of the monster who has stolen my city and your own: Durhan the Conqueror!"

For a moment, nothing happens. Then, outside the building, you hear the distant rumble of thunder. You and Theona rush outside, expecting to see Durhan plummet from the sky.

In a sense, you do. Over the well building, a hazy form appears, floating in midair. A grotesque human being, thirty feet high, distorted in every limb, stares down at you. He cries in a foreign language, pain and hatred in his voice,

but you are able to understand him through a psychic link he creates. The link grips your mind like a vise and fills you with terror.

Durhan will conquer all! raves the figure. Enemies everywhere, all of you! I put a Guard spell on this well to find my enemies. All my enemies will die! You will die!

He beckons to you with one malformed hand. Suddenly you and Theona are swept into the air like leaves, across the boundary of the vision. In an instant, you fall to the rocky ground of a mountain peak, none too gently, where you must face Durhan alone. Go to **18**.

213

You hand the magical item to Demosthenes. The sphinx gladly gives you the gold coin in return, along with ten or fifteen minutes' worth of advice on magic, dimensional travel, wizards, diplomacy, combat, and the changing of the seasons. At last you manage to pry yourself away.

If you want to examine the gold coin and learn about its powers, go to **53**. If you're ready to leave, go to **177**.

214

The spiral staircase winds tightly downward. At every turn, you come upon a fortified guardpost set into the wall. Though you treat each with the utmost caution, you're relieved that they are all unoccupied. Evidently the guards disappeared along with the rest of the city.

At the bottom of the staircase is a small antechamber lit with flickering torches. Their smoky light reveals a rectangular pattern on the floor, and a similar one on a vault door opposite the stairs. Unlike some of the doors you've come across in Solius, this one is shut tight.

"It looks like Durhan doesn't want anyone getting in here," Theona whispers as she examines the lock. "This is a tough one."

Do you have a key to the vault door? If so, turn to **185**. If

not, is anyone besides Theona with you? If so, go to 38. If you have no key and no one is with you other than Theona, turn to 178.

215

You clutch the gold coin tightly, and in your mind appears a gloomy, heavysset fellow in bulging ochre robes. His heavy-lidded eyes and pouchy cheeks reveal him to be Jacaine, the Ruling Wizard portrayed on the gold coin.

“Ah, me!” he says in your mind. “So fragile is one’s life, when naught but a simple Transformation spell separates one from perpetual oblivion. Mortal friend, value the supplementary time this spell may bestow!”

As the figure vanishes from your mind’s eye, your body suddenly changes. Your armor and possessions vanish, your arms pull in, your legs melt together like wax. Your body balloons and streamlines, your eyes push apart, your mouth widens and sprouts sharp teeth. As a huge golden



shark, you hear the sounds of the lake with piercing clarity, and you pinpoint the scent of devilfish precisely.

A few strokes of your powerful tail bring you into the devilfish lair. Panicking, the evil creatures dart away at your approach. Then you spy, hanging from the coral ceiling, the bloated body of a diver—the ghost who lives in torment until its body can be buried. You nose it down and onto your back, just in front of your dorsal fin.

You send the platinum coin floating up with a sweep of one fin and catch it in your mouth. Glorifying in the freedom of the water, you surge upward to the surface. When you reach the shore, you emerge in your own human form, carrying the diver's body. "By gad, an amazing way to spend a day at the seaside!" you cry. Mark off one use of the gold coin on your Character Stats Card.

Is Theona with you (239), or is she back on shore (9)?

216

You no longer need your copper coin. Laying it on a shallow indentation atop the platinum altar, you step back and turn to Theona. "I hope your goddess finds that as useful as we have," you begin, but a sudden crack of thunder over the horizon drowns out your words!

A chill wind rises from nowhere, pushing you toward the steps of the temple. "I don't think she wanted the copper coin, Redbeard!" Theona shouts over the gusts.

You give in to the inevitable and leave the temple. Once the two of you remove your feet from the bottom step, the wind dies down and the thunder stops.

The goddess of the temple was insulted at your meager offering. You know you cannot return here. Subtract 1 from your current experience point total and turn to 209.

217

Without a word, Granite rushes past you, straight for the sword! He reaches it in three strides, wrenches it from the



rock, and in two more steps, he's beside the sleeping dragon. A swing, another, and the dragon is bleeding from two deep cuts in its neck.

Almost by reflex, Dominagon lashes out with its tail and claws, and Granite staggers back. The dragon's tail trips him, and he falls heavily. Dominagon rears back to breathe its deadly lightning. Granite raises his sword as sparks appear around the monster's nostrils, but the giant hurls his sword straight into the dragon's mouth!

The huge blade sinks up to its hilt. Blue bolts of electricity crackle along the blade, and the ozone smell grows stronger. The lightning energy builds, then races around the dragon's head. The creature's eyes widen, and suddenly its head explodes in a shower of blood and bone. The gigantic body crumples to the cavern floor.

Theona runs over to Granite, while you make a brief detour to pick up the silver coin. If you want to know more about the silver coin, turn to **64**, but first make a note of this section, **217**, so you can return here when you're through there. Ignore the directions given at the end of that section.

Granite is drenched with blood, looking even worse than when you first met him. "I . . . gave him back what he gave me," he says to you, smiling weakly.

Theona looks up and shakes her head dubiously.

If you have another healing potion, you may give it to Granite (**189**). If you don't have one or won't give it to him, you must stand by and watch him die. You hardly have the time or strength to bury such an enormous body, so you must go on with your mission. But you will return, if you can, to see that this warrior receives a hero's funeral. To leave the cave, turn to **20**.

218

You climb quietly up onto the ledge, near the sphinx cub. A fast attack should do the trick, but you've seen many

traps that rely on innocent-looking bait like this cub to lure unsuspecting fighters to disaster. You draw your broadsword.

“Redbeard!” hisses Theona from below. “What do you intend to do to that harmless baby?”

“Hush, cleric!” you hiss softly. You creep closer, until you’re almost even with the cave entrance. The sphinx cub turns its head and sees you, and for a moment your blood freezes, but the cub merely purrs. You move still closer.

Make a perception check. Roll two dice and add the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 13 or more, go to **66**. If it is 12 or less, turn to **205**.

219

Looking around the room, you find no other exits. This single chamber apparently fills the entire building. Theona studies the wall murals intently.

“Art appreciation, milady?”

“These frescoes are incomplete,” she says. “Notice the treasure around the throne—the white circle in that pile of coins. And over here, where the moneylenders are counting their money—see that white circle on the table?”

“Why, you’re right. And the city view here has another one of those circles, right in the center of—”

You look at each other, and Theona finishes your thought: “—right in the center of this building!”

You try pressing the white circles, but nothing happens. Then an idea strikes you. “The coins!” you say. “They might have something to do with this. The circles are about the same size as the coins.” But neither of you can guess what putting a coin in the circles might accomplish, or why.

There is nothing else of interest in the room. If you want to leave the sphinx, go to **102**. But if you have a coin and would like to place it on one of the wall murals, decide which coin you will place (copper, silver, gold, or platinum)

and choose a wall painting: the moneylenders counting money (55), the ruler in his treasure room (176), or the monsters crouching on their heaps of loot (79).

220

You toss the copper coin into the well and get ready to make a wish. But in a moment, the copper coin flies back out to you, as though the well spit it out!

“Evidently such a miserly contribution is not appreciated,” says Theona. Return to 226 and pick something else.

221

As he drifts closer, Durhan stretches out one fiery hand. You ready your sword for the attack, then pause as a small point of light appears on each of your foe’s fingertips. In a moment, the lights are blindingly bright, and when he speaks a word, they leap off his fingers, grow to enormous size, and hurtle toward you. Fireballs!

“Down!” shouts Theona, falling flat.

Never have you seen such powerful magic! Make a dexterity check to dodge the fireballs by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 13 or more, you evade them and take no damage. If your total is 12 or less, one of the fireballs strikes home, and you must subtract 5 from your current hit point total.

You raise your sword to attack, but Durhan has not even begun to show the power of his magic. In a moment, you are surrounded by a fierce hailstorm, by a dozen illusory Durhans, by siren screams that daze your perceptions. Durhan appears to command every kind of magic you have ever heard of. Is he unbeatable? You begin to fear, very deeply fear, that he is. Turn to 188.

222

You charge toward the dragon with your sword drawn, fully expecting it to rear back and breathe its deadly light-

ning. It does, but you're surprised at the target.

The bolt of blue-white fire leaps out and strikes the large sword stuck into the rock floor of the cavern. Magical electricity crackles around the blade, and bright filaments flicker outward like tentacles straight toward you!

Make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 14 or more, you successfully avoid the deadly charges and take no damage. If your total is 13 or less, you are struck and receive 6 points of damage. Subtract it from your current hit point total. Either way, turn to **242**.

223

Twisting away from the tail's thrust, you grab the devilfish by the gills and pull it toward you. In such close quarters, with its belly facing away from you, it can't strike or bite. The fish thrashes desperately until you work your sword from its scabbard and finish it off.

Your lungs are heaving uncontrollably. You push back to the surface with red lights floating before your eyes. Surfacing far offshore, you inhale deeply, filling your lungs with gulps of sweet air. Then you head back down again.

Swimming farther down, you approach a multicolored coral reef. More devilfish flock around it, and in a hollowed interior, you can detect some kind of altar. On the altar, surrounded by fish, something glints—it looks like platinum!

You swim nearer, but your air is running out again. If you flounder back to the surface, you might alert the fish below! In this situation, only magic can help. If you have the silver coin and wish to use it, go to **124**. If you have the gold coin and wish to use it, go to **215**. If you have neither coin, or don't want to use one, turn to **98**.

224

You stand before low, wide steps leading up to a temple. Bronze pillars, more than fifteen feet tall, support a flat

roof. There are no walls. A narrow band of marble, elaborately carved, extends around the roof above the pillars. The stairs also surround the temple.

Through the pillars, you see a wide marble floor, polished so brightly that it reflects the roof overhead. At the far end is an altar made of white metal.

“Platinum!” says Theona, impressed.

“Rather more posh than the budget you had at the seminary, eh, milady?”

Make a perception check. Roll two dice and add the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 13 or more, turn to **90**. If it is 12 or less, go to **121**.

225

You are simply at too great a handicap. You try to pull Theona out of the shaft as the ogres circle you, but then a blind-side blow from a club sets stars flashing before your eyes and Theona plummeting through the shaft. Subtract 6 hit points, then turn to **48**.

226

You examine the small stone building with arched doorways in every wall. Through the doorway, you can see a circular stone well. It's a waist-high wall built around a hole six feet across. A simple wooden frame above the well holds a painted sign. The sign has a picture of the bearded man on your copper coin, plus some words in a language you don't know. There's a small wooden booth and a chair against the wall by the well, but the building is deserted.

“How can there be a well on a floating island?” Theona asks, walking around it. Then she says, “No bucket, no rope— Oh!”

You understand at the same moment she does. “A wishing well!”

“What about it, Redbeard? You have a coin. Do you care to make a wish?”

Will you throw a coin into the well? If so, choose which coin you will throw in: copper (220), silver (22), gold (171), or platinum (97). If you have no coin, or don't wish to throw one in the well, go back to 3 and make a different choice.



227

If you possess the silver coin and want to use it now, go to 117. If you want to use the gold coin, turn to 215 instead. If you have neither coin or don't want to use them, return to 78 and make another choice.

228

You improvise a torch from the wreckage you see around the tunnel entrance, then move inside. The tunnel is wide, winding, and scorched at every turn. Never branching, the rocky passage leads ever deeper into the mountain. The only sounds are your own footsteps and a sighing breeze. There must be an opening somewhere ahead.

After a sharp bend, the tunnel rises upward. The copper coin indicates you've almost reached its silver companion, which is somewhere off to the right. However, the tunnel bends to the left.

Make a perception check. Roll two dice and add the result to your perception skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to 69. If it is 13 or less, go to 156.

229

You turn to leave the pathetic spirit, but as you do, it floats onshore. Despite a break in the clouds, you note, it casts no shadow. "Air . . . air!" it repeats, then disappears

with a *poof*, only to reappear directly in front of you. "Will not rescue, will join me!" it cries, drifting toward you.

Now you have no choice but to fight. Turn to 105.

230

Where will you go? The Cliffside Caves (95)? Haunt Lake (85)? Or will you use the copper coin to teleport to Trann (145)?

231

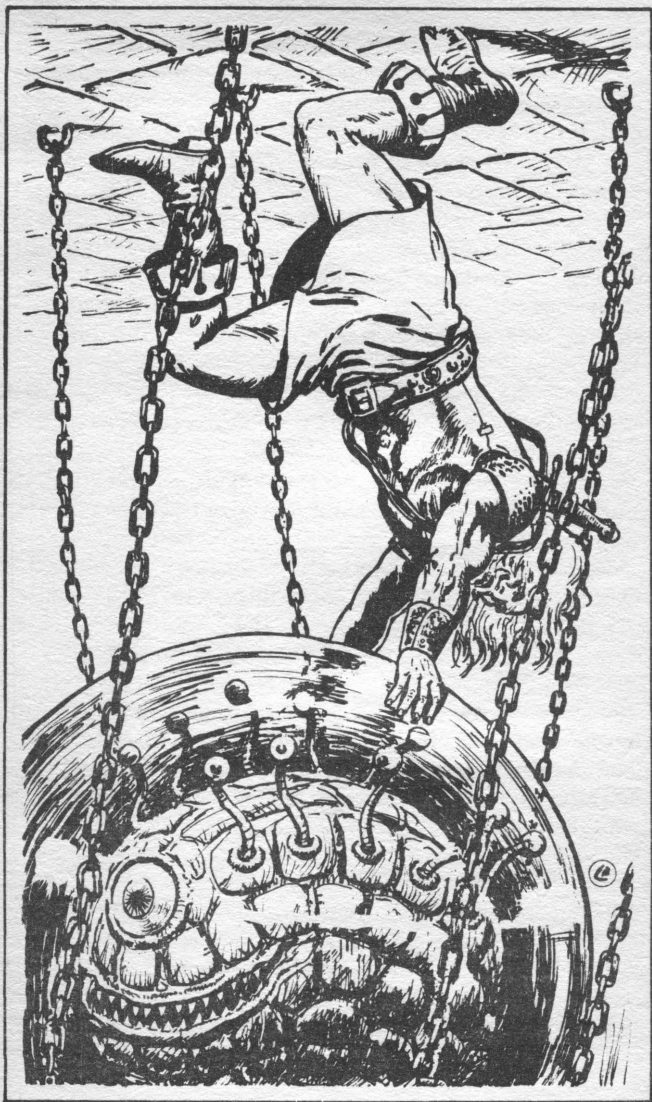
The magical boots provide the perfect diversion. Floating silently over the ogres' heads, you approach the glass vat that hangs from the ceiling. Inside the vat, suspended in foul-smelling green fluid, is a mummified eye of the fearsome monster called the beholder.

Taking a deep breath, you muster your strength. With a mighty heave, you brace your legs against the ceiling and push the vat out of the chains that suspend it. The vat, the eye, and the fluid all spill down over the ogres, and they let out a terrific roar. While the three brutes chase you around the room, Theona escapes out the doorway.

You flit lightly out of the monsters' reach, hoping you don't encounter the embarrassing balance problems you had with the boots earlier. But at the thought, you stumble over your own feet and plunge face downward, into the ogres' paws. The creatures' hands grab each of your limbs. They mean to tear you apart!

With a crash of thunder, a triple bolt of lightning strikes all three ogres, and three charred, smoking bodies fall to the stone. Behind them stand four noble figures, lately risen from their imprisoning slabs. "We are sorry we could not provide a more courteous welcome to you, adventurer," says Warrick.

When you broke the vat with the beholder eye, the wizards were free to use their magic again. They begin to explain everything, thanking you profusely. Turn to 149.



232

Your boot slips on the rocky ledge, and twin sets of iron-hard claws dig through your breastplate. You gasp as they bite deep. Subtract 10 points from your current hit point total. If this severe wound reduces your hit points to zero or less, your adventure is over. If you have any hit points remaining, keep reading.

Sucking air, you fall to the ground, stunned. *You're not as fast as you once were, old boy*, you think ruefully while waiting for the death blow, but it doesn't fall. You look up when your vision clears. Theona of the Righteous Glory, with no weapon but her powerful voice, is holding the sphinxes at bay!

"Shoo!" she cries. "Get back at once, or ~~I'll~~—I'll—" Her voice trails off, but fortunately the sphinxes look as baffled as Theona does.

Marvelous woman! you think yet again as you climb to your feet. Once you're certain you won't fall over again, you leap in front of her and continue the battle.

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 14 or more, turn to **75**. If it is 13 or less, go to **154**.

233

To approach the sleeping dragon without waking it will require your utmost stealth. As you creep across the rocky floor, make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 15 or more, go to **116**. If it's 14 or less, turn to **41**.

234

Taking a deep breath, you swim down into the murky depths. You see some wretched underwater plants, rocks, and lichen, but no fish are visible anywhere. They must have vanished along with everything else.

The trail to the coin leads you deeper, and the light from

above grows faint. Suddenly a flat, disklike shape glides toward you. It's jet-black, except for two dim red eyes at the front. It whips its long tail, and you see poisonous red spikes. A devilfish!

There's no time to turn and flee. You have to evade that lashing tail, or the infamous devilfish poison will soon work its way through your body.

Make a dexterity check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your dexterity skill score. If the total is 15 or more, turn to **223**. If it is 14 or less, go to **91** instead.

235

Before you is an enormous granite statue of a sphinx lying at rest. Between its outstretched front paws is the entrance to a tunnel that leads downward. The door has been blasted open, and it hangs by one hinge.

"Someone beat us to this place," you say.

"You have a gift for the obvious," Theona replies.

Inside the sphinx is a large, well-lighted, clean room. It looks like a museum. There are animal sculptures on high pedestals—a lion in bronze, swans made of glass, an iron statue of wild horses, and others. Most of the sculptures have been knocked off their bases and broken.

Three of the room's four high walls are painted with frescoes, enormous wall paintings on plaster. Over the doorway above you is a scene of a royal court, with a king sitting on a high golden throne. His crown is of the same golden color.

The next wall depicts a group of gruesome monsters seated atop a huge mound of treasure. Drooling freely, they pick up huge handfuls of treasure and let it trickle through their fingers.

The third wall shows a painting of some merchants conducting business. They're dressed in rich robes and are counting out a large number of gold coins.

The last wall is blank. Against the wall is a small, unob-

trusive bed. It has been slashed to ribbons.

“Someone lives here,” says Theona, and you think, *Now who is stating the obvious?* “Curious, living inside a sphinx,” she muses.

“Well, it impresses the visitors, no doubt.”

If there is someone (or something) with you besides Theona, turn to **159**. If Theona is your only companion, turn to **32**.

236

“If Neria is lying,” you say, “then the sphinx with the coin always tells the truth. This means that Demosthenes is telling the truth, and therefore he has the coin.”

“But what if Neria tells the truth?” Demosthenes asks.

“If Neria tells the truth,” you answer, “then she cannot have the coin, because the sphinx with the coin always lies. So Demosthenes is lying when he says the sphinx with the coin always tells the truth. So once again, Demosthenes has the coin.”

“Well reasoned!” exclaims Demosthenes. The sphinx appears to be enjoying himself immensely. “You have answered my riddle correctly. Now, to conclude the contest, you must ask me one. If I can solve it, it’s a tie, and we must have another round. If I cannot, you win the coin.”

You rack your memories for riddles, but you can’t recall any except old, easy ones. Suddenly Theona speaks up.

“A maiden walks on a hillside of white flowers,” she says. “She lifts a black veil to reveal her face, then lowers it again. Who is the maiden?”

“Hmmm,” says Demosthenes, looking at you. “Is this human your agent in the contest?”

“Um, yes, most certainly!” you say, trying not to stutter. You look over at Theona, who winks at you.

“Hmmm. A tasty conundrum. I must think about it. . . .”

You can think about the riddle, too, before you turn to **140**.

Your logic, the investment of mercy to reap the profit of loyalty, is lost on the Flame King. "Mmmercy? That is forrr humannns. Innn the sunnn, it is differennnt." He gestures, and one of the attendant fire elementals floats over. It stands obediently before the king, a fiery humanoid perhaps nine feet tall.

With a gesture of his free hand, the Flame King creates a ball of light. It nestles in his palm, and little swirls of light circle inside it. Then the king speaks a word, and the ball hurtles toward the elemental. Light and fire collide, and the elemental bursts into pieces.

Theona swears an oath from her old adventuring days, and you echo her sentiment. Murder! The Flame King has casually murdered one of his attendants, and no one around seems the least upset!

Then the pieces of the elemental jostle around, flatten, then reform. Before your eyes, each piece reforms, becoming a tiny new humanoid. The group of new elementals scurries off, and the Flame King turns back to you.

"Yooou seee?" he says pointedly. Mmmmercy mmmeannns nnothinng."

W-well! you think. Even your thoughts seem to stammer. *Well, he certainly got the better of me there!* You feel in no mood to continue this line of argument, but the Flame King seems disposed to keep listening, so go back to 146 and try something else.

Though the dragon is wounded from its earlier battles, it is still an overwhelming opponent. Buffeted by the creature's wings, knocked off balance by its spiked tail, you are thrown to the ground. The dragon rakes you with its claws, gouging long, ragged tears in your breastplate. The pain shoots through you.

Subtract 15 from your hit point total. If you are out of hit

points, your adventure is over and you must start again.

Your last sight, before a red curtain drops across your vision, is of the dragon, poised to strike again. Is the giant with you? If so, go to 74. Otherwise, the dragon's next blow ends your adventure once and for all. ✕

239

Some distance from the shore, out of sight of Haunt Lake, and with your bare hands, you and Theona dig a shallow grave in the marshy soil. Theona chants a funeral service over the diver's body, and you add a few words as well. "Sorry you were treated that way, old fellow. Bad work to have the rotten paths of life extend past its borderline to the, um, country beyond."

As you place the last handful of dirt on the grave, Theona cries out. There, above the grave, floats the diver's ghost. "Bad paths go past border," it says with a smile, "but good ones, too. Go along yours!" It spreads its hands and vanishes. Add 2 to your current experience point total and go to (198).

240

The giant is no threat to you, gravely wounded as he is. You approach slowly, showing your empty hands. Even lying down with his back against the cliff, the giant faces you eye to eye.

"Ho, warrior," he says weakly. "Have you come to finish the job begun by Dominagon the Blue?" He clenches his fists.

"I mean you no harm," you answer. "You speak of Dominagon, the dragon? Has it appeared in these lands?"

"It goes where it likes." The giant twitches, winces, and stifles a groan of pain. "I am Granite," he continues, "a mercenary hired by King Savast of the northern white-lands. Dominagon plundered his palace and stole his treasure horde. I tracked the dragon here to regain the

treasure. But—unnh!—the dragon had different ideas.”

So Dominagon, the ancient blue dragon, is here in your dominion! Truly, much has been going on in your land that you knew nothing about. Perhaps the gods have sent you this catastrophe so that you may learn of the evils that you thought were banished from the land.

If you have a healing potion, you may give it to the wounded giant. If you do, mark the potion off your list of possessions and turn to **100**. If you don't have a potion, or you don't want to give it to the giant, you can ask him to move aside from the depression so you can get past him (**162**), or you can leave the area (**230**).

241

“Redbeard, can you hear me? Sir Theobold!”

Theona's words drift down to you at the bottom of a deep well. *Now, how did I fall down here?* you think distractedly. It's as if all those dashed evil monsters that were lurking around your dominion all this while—devilfish and dragons and such—all came from here, at the bottom of Lighthall's well. Have other rulers had the same rude awakening you received—finding that their happy fantasy of a peaceful kingdom has vanished, exposing corruption in its midst? You will lie here and drowsily contemplate the problem.

“Sir Theobold!” the voice comes again, more insistently this time.

Corruption . . . Durhan! Yes, you fought Durhan, within the inner reaches of your own mind—and you drove him off! You awaken with a start to find Theona kneeling beside you.

“Theobold, you just stood there watching Durhan for so long, I thought you'd . . . you'd— Then you fell down and made sounds like battle cries, and then nothing at all, so that I thought—”

“Peace, milady. I'm all right now.” Now that you're

finally awake, all traces of Durhan's mind are driven from your consciousness like vapors before a fresh wind. You see your earlier thoughts for the distortions they were, distortions produced by Durhan's cunning.

He floats there before you. You wonder why he hasn't attacked, but then you recall that you gave as well as received in that mental battle. Durhan only now appears to be coming out of the same stunned condition you were in.

You are too tired for a physical attack. Will you use another coin (42); throw the glass globe, if you have it (129); or catch your breath and watch to see what Durhan does (188)?



242

The fiery sword's light casts weird, dancing shadows on the cavern walls. You leap aside from another bolt of lightning, land rolling, and come up next to the dragon's claws. Another ducking move, and you will be inside its powerful defenses. But the creature is infernally fast.

Can you get past the monster's swiping claws?

Make a fighting check by rolling two dice and adding the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, go to 151. If it is 16 or less, turn to 238.

243

Vipers coil around your legs, tornadoes wrench at your arms, screeches and roars from a thousand monsters deafen you. Durhan batters at your mind, at your sense of self.

But somehow you withstand his psychic assault. In your long career as adventurer, ruler, and seeker of justice, it

seems that every choice you have made has led you to exactly this point, to this meeting with oblivion. And though you have been somewhat weakened by oncoming age, you feel so confident in what you fight for, and in what you are, that Durhan's greatest strength cannot shatter your identity.

"I'll have my city back, by jasper!" you shout. With renewed energy, you strike at Durhan, slashing, dodging. Your agility surprises your foe and Durhan grows defensive, then panicky. His voice sounds in your mind: *No! How do you fight like this? No, no! Get back! You can't do this!* And at that moment, you spot an opening.

Like something alive, your sword flies forth and impales Durhan through the Shadow Belt. His eyes widen and his body begins to shrink as gurgling sounds come from his throat, and the Shadow Belt disappears, retrieved by the spirit Orcus to corrupt other would-be conquerors. After that, you remember nothing. . . .

You awaken on the floor of the treasury room, with the Ruling Wizards hovering over you. You lie in Theona's arms. "Sir Theobold! You've done it! You've won!" she cries through tears of joy.

You take a deep breath, checking to see whether you still feel all your limbs. "A near thing, by gad!" you say weakly. "A near thing indeed!"

The Ruling Wizards congratulate you warmly and usher you outside. As you and Theona watch, they link hands once again and begin to float upward. There they chant strange incantations, and suddenly the air feels warm. Noises of crowds and shouts come from nowhere.

Vague outlines shimmer into view: buildings, paved streets, towers on the horizon. The wizards chant more loudly overhead, and the outlines grow firm, then solid. Walls of buildings and carts emerge.

When the chants reach a climax, people appear—huge crowds of people, and animals, too. The people are frozen

like statues in midstep, or on a stairway, or climbing onto horses. Then, as if with the snap of fingers, they begin to move.

You stand in the middle of a crowded city of soaring towers and stately marble buildings and wide streets lined with plants. The people stare in surprise at you and the wizards.

Theona, too, stares with wide eyes. "Oh, it's wonderful!"

"Yes. And Lighthall is next," you say. "About Lighthall, my dear—I, ah, well, I know you like it. A crackerjack city, really, and I was, ah, wondering—"

"Yes, Sir Theobold?"

"Well, ah—would you like to be my queen?"

Before Theona of the Righteous Glory can answer, the wizards float back to the ground and approach you. "We shall declare a festival," says Dyan. "But first, I'm sure you will want your own city restored. We will cross to your dimension and repeat our enchantment, and then both cities may join the celebration."

"Celebration indeed," says Theona, smiling. "Enjoy it while you can, Redbeard, for when I sit beside you in the palace, you'll have to dispense of that wine cellar."

"What? By jasper, woman, be reasonable!"

Strange lights flicker, and a freezing wind surges up from the ground beneath you. A glowing haze wraps itself around you, and you vanish from the dimension. You are going home! ✕

244

"A fine job, Sir Theobold! Well, now what?"

You draw a ragged breath. "Now, milady, I bloody well hope I don't have to fight any more—"

"Language, Redbeard." Theona interrupts. "What I meant to say was, you've defeated Durhan, and it was his enchantment that made Lighthall disappear. So if we find some way to get home, the city may well have returned."

"Indeed," you say. "I am open to your suggestions."

"Perhaps if we can release those wizards he imprisoned, they can—"

"I believe that won't be necessary," you interrupt, staring upward into the clearing sky. Overhead, four robed figures appear in a flash of pure white light. You recognize Warrick, the elderly white-haired wizard in the copper-colored robes, from the vision that sent you on this adventure. The copper coin told you of the other three, the other Ruling Wizards of this dimension. You recognize them as they float downward to the mountaintop.

In the gathering sunshine, they seem no more than ordinary people, although the cold mountain wind fails in their presence, and their voices and manners are those of people accustomed to authority. These are rulers, without doubt: Jacaine, the gloomy mage in golden robes, stout and talkative; Saybrook, dapper illusionist, dressed in silver and black, looking around him with the eyes of a brilliant teenager; and the one to whom all three defer, Dyan of the platinum robes.

Dyan, the mistress of controlling magic, is a stately woman with a high forehead and a placid expression. "I believe we have you to thank for our rescue, warrior," she says. "When you defeated Durhan, his spell confining us to the treasury room beneath our city was broken. We restored the city, then found out what happened through retrocognition."

"Ah?"

"Of course you have our warmest gratitude," Dyan continues, ignoring the questioning tone in your voice. "You may name your reward, but first, I understand it will be necessary to perform another restoration on your own home city. Shall we adjourn to your Prime Material Plane?"

"That will be reward enough, I'm sure, milady," you say courteously. *That, and a really tall, really stiff drink.* In pre-

paring for the teleportation, the wizards heal any damage that you and Theona have received.

If Popiel the dragonet is with you, Saybrook heals her completely, and she seems no worse for her experience. "That was fun!" she chirps.

The wizards gather around you, then fall silent, and the air fills with lights of many colors. Once more your stomach feels queasy, as it did when you passed from your own dimension to this one. When the lights fade, there is only blackness—and you're floating!

"Wait! Where are we?" you ask.

Theona tugs at your arm. "Look down, Redbeard."

Below you is a gorgeous blue sky, dusted with lines of white clouds. You can make out land masses farther below, lands familiar to you from your studies of maps. "That's our world!" you cry.

"Yes," says Saybrook. "We hope you don't mind the detour. It's just that we seldom get to see your lovely dimension from any but a warped, planet-bound perspective."

"Ah, the immeasurable immensity of the void!" cries Jacaine, looking outward to the stars. "Our intellects relish life's evanescent furor above that inhuman tranquility, yet our spirits hasten toward it with every breath."

"We have no stars in our plane, you know," says Dyan. "Warrick, do you suppose we should make some?"

But Warrick does not answer. Instead, he gazes raptly on your world, on the stars, on the bright sun, and you and Theona do the same.

Eventually the wizards teleport you to the site of your city. Staggered by the sights you have seen, you and Theona rest on a large boulder while they prepare their enchantment.

"Redbeard, you've been acting gloomy ever since you defeated Durhan. It's not like you to be so silent in victory."

"Theona, my dear," you say, taking her hand and looking into her surprised eyes, "we have seen some things that

positively boil my blood, and other things that freeze it. With such evil around, in this world and others, we must cling to goodness wherever we find it. Theona, will you be my queen?"

Theona of the Righteous Glory is not often speechless, but this is one such instance. With the chanting of ancient magical languages around you, the sounds and sights and smells of Lighthall return. The citizens in the marketplace are amazed to see the wizards, but even more amazed to see their monarch embracing his new queen in public. ✘

245

Once he has decided to help you, the Flame King moves promptly. "Weee go tooo Durrrrhannn," he says simply. His hand closes around you and Theona, the familiar, queasy feel of teleportation washes through your stomach, and you appear beneath a stormy sky—and *above* a stormy sky as well, for you are floating in the midst of a colossal thunder-shower.

Lightning flickers around the Flame King, but the rain does not harm him. "Durrrrhannn, ceeeease yooour evill and freeee the Rulinnnng Wizarrrrds!" he bellows, his voice booming as loud as the thunder. The wind shrieks as if in reply.

You see, perhaps thirty yards away, an immense and grotesque figure suspended in midair. It's a man, but you can barely tell, with his twisted spine and limbs and tormented features. He wears a leather belt with a strap that crosses his chest and back. The workmanship is simple, but the belt is surrounded by flames. The man is Durhan the Conqueror, and the belt . . .

"The Shadow Belt of Orcus!" breathes Theona as you cling to one another behind the Flame King. "To think that I should see that evil artifact and live to tell of it!"

"Let's not make hasty assumptions, milady," you reply, watching Durhan. He screams incoherently and flails his

arms. Around him, raindrops whirl together, gathering into six large spheres of water. With a shout, Durhan sends the water balls flying straight at the Flame King.

The elemental monarch says nothing, but instantly pillars of flame rise from nowhere, reaching far overhead and below, forming an impenetrable barrier between king and conqueror. The watery globes crash against the pillars and instantly vaporize.

Durhan screams again—magical incantations, you finally realize. The Shadow Belt burns brighter with each spell, fueling the evil villain with greater power. Funnel clouds dance beside him now, tornadoes that skitter by starts and stops toward the flame barrier.

You and Theona are blown far away from the struggle by the force of the gale winds. Theona screams something at you, but her words are drowned out. You shiver to think of being in the midst of those twisters. Any one of them could level half a city, and there are many.

The spiraling winds strike the barrier. Flames rise up their length in spirals, making whooshing sounds one after another. The wind howls and the rain hits harder, but the barrier stands.

Durhan's chants have gathered clouds of colored gas around him. One cloud is gray-green, the color of rotted meat, and another is the poisonous yellow of toadstools. The third is pure bloodred. All three are driven toward the barrier by high winds.

The Flame King has done nothing since casting the barrier. Still he remains motionless. But now he speaks: "Durrrhann, yooou have onnne last channnce. Yooou are stronng, but yooou are onnnnly a mannn."

Durhan shrieks again, sending the clouds closer.

The Flame King raises his arms. Suddenly, without warning, the whole battlefield—barrier, tornadoes, gas, Flame King, and Durhan alike—vanishes in a fireball of titanic proportions. For one split second, you fear the

Flame King has brought the sun down here with him. Theona has time to start a scream.

Then the fireball dissipates, in the very breath that it appeared. The wind has stopped, and there is an awful silence, as in the moment after a door has slammed. Where is everyone?

Then you and Theona hear the king's voice in your minds. *Durrrrhannn is gone. I leeeave the rest tooo the Rulinng Wizarrrrds. Yooou have earrrrned theirrr thannnks, brave warriorrr!*

"And you mine, Your Majesty," you whisper in awe.

Around you, the storm begins to break up. Overhead, the Flame King's home shines brightly. For no real reason, you and Theona find yourselves weeping.

"Oh, milady, what we've been through!"

"Theobold, hold me, please."

This remarkable woman has seen you through more crises in one day than all your cabinet ministers have in a decade. Who else could you want to help you face the uncertain future? "Theona, my dear, after we have lived through all that together, can you part from me now? I love you deeply. Come back with me and be my queen."

After her tearful acceptance, the rest passes with dream-like speed. The Ruling Wizards, who were freed when Durhan perished, track you down and return you to Solius. After they reverse Durhan's enchantment and restore the city, they reward you with great riches and teleport with you back to the Prime Material Plane.

There they return your own vanished city. Lighthall slowly fades back into sight, a sense at a time—its smells and noises, its appearance, its solidity. Finally all is normal once more, and you stand with Theona in the marketplace where your adventure began. You feel as if your heart will burst with joy.

"Citizens!" you shout to all, amid the bustle of business. "The menace of the onrushing lights has ended! I have a

tale to tell you of our beloved city's rescue from oblivion!"

A boy nearby says, "What onrushing lights?"

A merchant respectfully asks, "Is this a story of our legendary past, sire?"

A night and a morning have passed since Lighthall vanished, but apparently no one has noticed any time difference, or in fact that anything amiss occurred!

"Why, it's the story of events that took place right here, not a day ago, that menaced all of you and— Why, floor me! Do none of you remember what happened?"

A crowd of subjects gathers around you. You see from their expressions—some puzzled, some smirking, and some just plain worried—that they think you are joking, or else daft. You're sure they are loyal to you, but they have no reason to mistrust their own memories.

"Where's your proof?" cries a voice from the back of the crowd, and the cry is met with general laughter.

"Why, blast me to ulcerated smithereens!" The curse is not yours but Theona's! "Redbeard, do you mean to say we went through that ghastly ordeal in that blasted goddess-forsaken dimension, and these scurrilous ingrates don't even *believe* us?" She says much more, words that make even you blush. The crowd merely laughs once more.

At that moment, there is a loud rumbling overhead. A storm? But the sky is clear. . . .

There, standing on empty air, eighty feet tall and burning as brightly as a new torch, stands the Flame King, ruler of the fire elementals of Trann. Immediately people scream and horses rear back and topple merchants' carts. It looks like panic in your city.

But the Flame King gestures, and tranquility rises in your mind as heat rises from pavement. He's cast a mass Charm spell on everyone in the city. It allows the Flame King to speak to an attentive audience, and when he speaks, his booming voice is heard all over town.

"Humannns," he thunders, "the storrry yooour rulerrr



tells you is true. Heed his words, and you will cherish his honor and bravery as you prize the warm sun itself. May you all follow his illustrious example!”

And with a final word, he is gone. With the charm dissipated, your subjects look at you with wide eyes. You smile in satisfaction. That sight alone would have been worth utter anonymity for the rest of time!

“Not a bad sort, that fellow,” says Theona. “You know?”

But the show is not over. You hear a high whistling in the distance, coming closer and closer. The sound is somehow familiar. . . . No, it can't be! But it is. Through the city and into the marketplace streaks a familiar white light. For an instant, you panic. *Oh, no! Are we going to go through all this all over again?*

The light plunges to earth and stops at your feet. There lie four shiny platinum coins. You pick them up. They're cool to the touch. On one side of each is a picture of you and Theona, and on the reverse, a group portrait of the four Ruling Wizards. Each coin bears a motto beneath your portrait:

COURAGE: THE GREATEST TREASURE!

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