

Ultima[®]

The Avatar[™] Adventures

With Introduction & Game Tips to **ULTIMA VII The Black Gate[™]** and **ULTIMA Underworld[™]**



ULTIMA IV Quest of the Avatar[™] • ULTIMA V Warriors of Destiny[™] • ULTIMA VI The False Prophet[™]

Complete Coverage of the Award-winning Computer Games

Rusel DeMaria and Caroline Spector

Forewords by
Richard Garriott and Lord British

A Lord British
Game Collection

ORIGIN

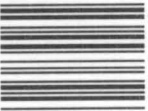
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UltimaTM

The Avatar Adventures

Rusel DeMaria

and

Caroline Spector

**(With Forewords by
Lord British and Richard Garriott)**

AN ORIGIN/PRIMA BOOK

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A NOTE FROM LORD BRITISH

Within these hallowed pages lie a series of tales that are most dear to mine heart. This is not merely because of the biographical nature of the stories, but because they represent a vital segment of Britannia's history and development.

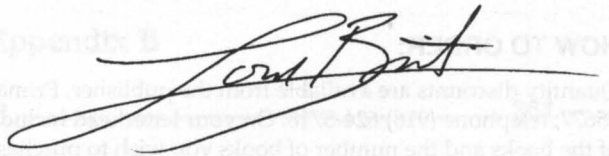
The Avatar, a close friend of mine, has become much more than a legendary figure in Britannia. He is now an icon of messianic proportions—an example for all to follow and a hero for all time.

The tales within chronicle what is known in Britannian history as “The Age of the Avatar,” being the documentation of three separate sojourns made by the Avatar into Britannia from his own world. The first occurred shortly after I united the separate kingdoms of ancient Sosaria to form modern Britannia. I was searching for one who could incarnate the beliefs and philosophies of Britannia—one who possessed the integrity and fortitude to embody the three great principles of Truth, Love, and Courage, the eight virtues, and the one pure axiom of life. It was the one who eventually became the Avatar who answered this call and succeeded.

The second tale chronicles a rather sinister period in Britannian history. After I had built the Shrine of the Codex on the Isle of the Avatar, the Underworld nurtured and began to breed new forms of evil. While leading an expedition into this uncharted territory, I was kidnapped by malevolent agents of the Underworld and imprisoned in Dungeon Doom. My trusted colleague, Lord Blackthorn, turned against me and became an interim ruler of questionable ethics, to say the least. Blackthorn instituted a martial law that radically enforced the eight virtues, such that they became tyrannical and oppressive. It was ultimately the Avatar who put things right and restored me to power.

The final tale illustrates what in reality was a gross misunderstanding between two races existing on Britannian soil. A war was raging between the humans and the Gargoyles—a war rooted in bigotry, mistrust, and ignorance. It took the Avatar's wisdom and tolerance to finally convince Britannia, and me, of the truth of the situation.

So, heed well the words within, fellow traveler. They have become more than just the foundation of Britannian society. These tales chronicle the beginnings of our destiny.





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INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD GARRIOTT
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thankyouthankyouthankyouthankyouthankyouthankyou . . .

So many people helped with this project it's hard to know where to begin. First of all, I'd like to thank Origin's Customer Service and Quality Assurance folks who helped with the playthroughs and clues for the book. I talked to everyone in these departments at least once during the writing of this book so thank you: Michelle Linder, Marie Williams, Michael Madwell, Chuck Zoch, Allan Davis, Rebecca Heidt.

Rudy Hovey assisted with the playthrough of *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar* and Mike Rundell helped on *Ultima VI: The False Prophet*. For help with the playthrough of *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss*, I'd like to thank Rob Hill and Scott Shelton from QA. I'd also like to thank Kay Gilmore, Origin's Customer Service Manager, for letting me take up the time of her team.

David Ladyman assisted with style and editorial comments, got together all kinds of maps, data, conversation files, and other minutia that we needed at the last minute. Grace Under Pressure should be David's middle name.

Wayne Baker got together screen shots on short notice.

Richard Garriott was tremendously generous with his time during the writing of this book. This was especially nice because he was in the middle of crunch time for *Ultima VII: The Black Gate*. Without the interviews and other conversations I had with him, I don't think Britannia would have come to life for me in the same way. If not for his vision of what computer games could be, this book wouldn't have been written at all.

Rusel DeMaria gets a big thank you for giving me a chance. Thanks to Walton "Bud" Simons for calling every day—even when I was incoherent. You're a pal. To the Usual Gang of Suspects (you know who you are) thanks for just being there.

And finally, thank you to Warren Spector. Without you, none of this would have happened. With you, everything is possible.

Dedication:

To Warren

I'll be your Stella Stevens if you'll be my Buddy Love

—C.

I have to thank an army. It's an army of dedicated people both at Prima and at Origin. At the top of the list is Richard Garriott, without whom there would be nothing to write about. Thanks Richard for giving me a chance to play in Britannia.

Second, I have to thank Caroline. I don't generally thank my own co-authors, but I have to acknowledge Caroline's dedication and talent. She made the project even more enjoyable. And thank you Warren for all your help and encouragement.

David Ladyman deserves a major credit for his steadfast efforts on our behalf. As our main contact at Origin, David had to field a lot of phone calls and solve a lot of dilemmas. I agree with Caroline. Thanks.

It's going to be hard to thank everyone who deserves it. Here are some of the people at Origin who helped. If I've left you off the list, please forgive me.

Robert Garriott, Fred Schmidt, Mike Harrison, Craig Miller, Galen Svanas, Donna Mehnert, Doug Church, Dr. Cat, Wayne Baker, Rudy Hovey!, Raymond Benson, Kay Gilmore, Mike Rundell!, Karen Conroe, Mark Vittek, Michelle Caddel, Norma Vargas, and anyone in the Map and QA rooms I forgot, thanks.

Caroline has her "Usual Gang of Suspects," and so do I. Everybody at Prima deserves thanks—Ben, Nancy, Nancy, Helen, Roger, Laurie, Laura, Debbie, Kim, Diane, and the rest. And special thanks to Zach Meston, Ocean Quigley, and Kathy Mejia—my special cohorts. To Shan Cutts, whose adventure is starting to pick up momentum. And to Max Ehrman, whose adventure is just beginning. Finally, to Marsha Ehrman; Sebbie and (big) Max Erman; Zoe, Justin, and Jeremy Miner; Alex Pappas—now you're immortalized.

—RDM

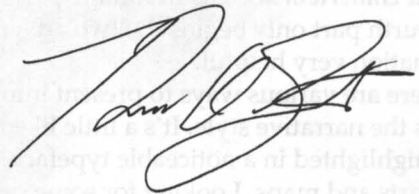
INTRODUCTION BY RICHARD GARRIOTT

There are many legends about the Avatar. They pass from person to person, from generation to generation. It has always been difficult to separate one story from another, and few people have known the entire truth. Many have followed false and misleading clues; others have known only part of the story.

Now, finally, the true story has been told. By painstaking research, Rusel DeMaria and Caroline Spector (along with their Britannian counterparts, Robert and Carlotta) have followed the Avatar's trail and produced the definitive chronicle of the Avatar. Much of the information written here has never been revealed before.

In *Ultima: The Avatar Adventures*, Rusel and Caroline have brought the Avatar's quests to life. They have done so for those who wish to participate in the quests themselves. They have also done so for those who want to get to know the world of Britannia better. In fact, anyone who really wants to know *Ultima* should have this book.

I want to thank Rusel and Caroline for their deep interest in bringing Britannia to life. I also want to thank all the many people who have joined the Avatar on his quests, time and again. It continues to be my pleasure to share the *Ultima* adventures with you.



A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

How can you improve on *Ultima*? The original *Ultima* was the first role-playing game I ever played. I've enjoyed many hours of *Ultimas* since then, and they just get better and better. What can I say? I'm a fan.

So I feel privileged that Lord British had the faith in me to let me write this book. Because *Ultima* isn't just about a game. It's about morality and ethics. It's about adventure, yes, but it's also about characters who have grown and evolved with the game. It's about a world that's as real as Oz or Arrakis or Middle Earth.

So our task as writers was to do our best to bring Britannia to life while guiding you, the *Ultima* player, through the Avatar's adventures. And we did it all under Lord British's watchful eye. We hope we've succeeded in making *Ultima* even more fun for you. If so, we've accomplished our goals.

—Rusel DeMaria

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is divided into four parts, each of which details a particular adventure of the Avatar in Britannia. These parts correspond to *Ultima IV*, *Ultima V*, *Ultima VI*, and *Ultima VII* (with *Ultima Underworld*). The first three parts are stories of the complete adventures they represent. The fourth part only begins the two adventures it chronicles, but you should find the information very helpful.

There are various ways to present information, and we've chosen several for each game. First, there's the narrative style. It's a little like reading a novel, but certain key words and ideas have been highlighted in a noticeable typeface. Second, there's the quick walkthrough. Third, there are charts and maps. Looking for some detailed information? If you look at the table of contents of this book, you'll immediately see where the charts or maps you need are located. Or check the index for specific references, say to Doom or the Three Part Key.

Most of all, enjoy this book. We hope you have as much fun reading it as we had putting it together for you.

IF YOU WANT EVEN MORE INFORMATION

There are a few very interesting ways to "cheat" at some of the *Ultima* games. After consulting with ORIGIN, we decided to leave some of them out of this book. For some readers, those methods might ruin their enjoyment of the games.

However, we recognize that many people would like to know the *ultimate* tricks that exist. Therefore, we want to make it possible for you to get them. If you send a stamped self-addressed envelope (SASE) to Prima Publishing and label it *Ultima Tips*, we will send you back a printout of some of the best tricks available.

Warning! ORIGIN does not recommend these shortcuts be used. They can destroy players' enjoyment of the game, and using them may crash your system, destroy your game, and even damage your hard disk.



Ultima IV

Quest of the Avatar

Part I

Introduction

Ultima IV Quest of the Avatar

Over 30 years ago, the first Ultima game was released. It was a simple, yet profound, story of the quest for the Avatar. The story of the Avatar's journey is a timeless tale of heroism, sacrifice, and the search for meaning. It is a story that has inspired generations of gamers and continues to captivate our imaginations. We have worked hard to bring you this new edition of the game, and we hope you will enjoy it as much as we enjoyed creating it. The story of the Avatar is a story that has stood the test of time, and we are proud to be a part of it. We have added new features and content to make the game even more enjoyable, but the heart of the game remains the same. We hope you will find it as compelling as we do. The story of the Avatar is a story that has inspired generations of gamers, and we are proud to be a part of it. We have added new features and content to make the game even more enjoyable, but the heart of the game remains the same. We hope you will find it as compelling as we do.

ULTIMA: The Avatar Adventures

A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

How do you improve on Ultima? The original Ultima was the first role-playing game I ever played. I've enjoyed many hours of Ultima adventures, and they just got better and better with each of the seven.

I'm a privileged few that have British Isles. I've read this book. Because Ultima isn't just about a game. It's about a world. It's about a world that's as real as your world is. It's about a world that's as real as your world is.

So my task as writer was to tell you what you need to know to get the most out of the game. I've done that through the book. I've done that through the book. I've done that through the book.

Paul DeMar

This book is written for you. It's written for you. It's written for you. It's written for you.

The fourth part of the book is the most important. It's the most important. It's the most important.

There are many things you need to know. There are many things you need to know. There are many things you need to know.

What do you enjoy this book? What do you enjoy this book? What do you enjoy this book?

... ..



Ultima IV

Quest of the Avatar

Introduction

Once again, evil stalks the land of Britannia. In the past, when Britannia needed a hero, the Avatar came to her aid. The following text claims to be the diary of the Avatar himself. We do not know whether this is true or not—all we know is that the people of Britannia need to remember the Avatar and what he stood for. It has been two hundred years since the Avatar's last appearance here and we need him now more than ever.

We have worked on this manuscript for many years, but when the Guardian came to Britannia, we were forced into secrecy. Fear for our own lives has prevented us from publishing our work until now. But we can no longer keep silent. We hope this book falls into the proper hands, that the deeds of the Avatar shall not be forgotten.

The search for the true nature of the universe is a constant theme in the Avatar stories. So, too, is the scholar's search for the truth of history. Is this document a clever hoax or a genuine description of the Avatar's journeys in Britannia? We have debated this issue back and forth for some time. Dr. DeMain contends that these tomes are probably fakes, perhaps created to swindle one of the Seekers. I am not so sure.

"What if the tale recounted here is true?" I argue. "Though many Britannians have lost faith in the truth of the Avatar's quests, this could restore their belief."

When it became apparent that neither of us could convince the other, we decided to present the tale to the world. What you now hold in your hands, faithful reader, purports to be the Avatar's diary and personal notes.

We know you are skeptical. Please remain so as you read on. You will come to see what we have seen—that there are startling parallels between this story and myths once popular in Britannia. And whether this is the priceless tome I believe it is, or a remarkably cunning counterfeit, as Dr. DeMain contends, the one sure fact is that this text is of ancient origin. At the very least, it tells a compelling tale, one which may assist you in your own Quest for Avatarhood.

*The manuscript covers the entire period of the Age of the Avatar which began after the First Age of Darkness. Readers may wish to consult the following texts for further information: *The History of Britannia as told by Kyle the Younger*, and *The Book of Mystic Wisdom as told by**

Philpop the Weary, Magician to the Court of his Most Sovereign Lord British.

Our remarks on the text are found in sidebars. Readers will glean valuable information from these notes.

*Dr. Carlotta Stein, Editor,
Historian of Britannia*

Though Dr. Stein is willing to believe the most fantastic tales at the drop of a cap, I am leery of such unfounded rumors. Do not be as quick as Dr. Stein to accept this tale, for there are many today who would deceive the Faithful with their lies.

I agree that you should ponder this document and judge for yourself whether it is the true account of the Avatar. Decide the worth of this story by the instruction it gives.

*Dr. Robert DeMain, Editor
Historian of Britannia*



Entry 1

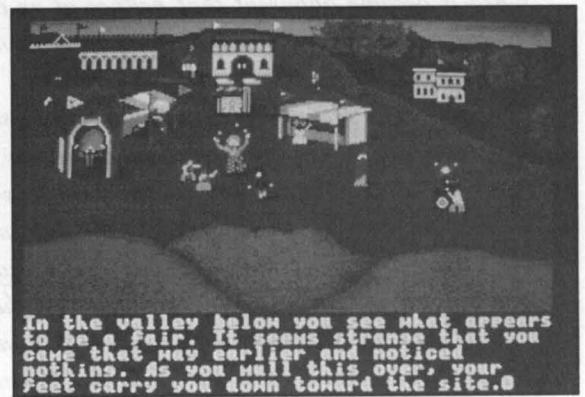
heard music playing—strange, yet familiar—something from a half-remembered dream. I had to find its source. It pulled me toward it—a siren's song, dangerous yet compelling.

I pushed my way through a pathless thicket of low trees, unconcerned with such niceties as direction or even my own physical well-being. Soon the ground began to slope upward and the trees thinned. I climbed until I reached the crest of a small hill. The music swelled to a crescendo. I was getting closer, but to what?

The trees ended suddenly, and a small valley spread out below me. The valley floor glowed as if its grass were caught in a shaft of late afternoon sunlight, and I subconsciously struggled with the incongruity of this effect (it still being near noon by the sun) even as my attention was drawn to a group of wildly colorful wagons and tents, partially nestled in a small grove of oaks and willows. Jugglers in gaudy costumes strolled among crowds of people in medieval dress. The aroma of roast turkey and meat pies filled the air. The music never stopped.

As I continued my journey down the hillside, toward the source of the music, I wondered. *What was a fair doing here in the middle of nowhere?* For there was no doubt that this was a fair. Even more importantly, how did I get here? I tried to recall, but the memory hovered at the edge of my mind, like some ghost of thought, always sensed, never quite seen.

As I came to the fair's entrance, a ticket-taker approached me. He was a man of average height, perhaps a few inches shorter than me, dressed in what looked like a homespun tweed outfit. A floppy



In the valley below you see what appears to be a fair. It seems strange that you came that way earlier and noticed nothing. As you walk this over, your feet carry you down toward the site.

hat, with a peacock feather stuck jauntily in the brim, adorned his head. He looked as if he hadn't shaved for days.

"Have ye a ticket, sir?" he asked extending his hand with a slight bow.

I searched my pockets reflexively. I don't know what I expected to find, but as I pulled out my wallet, a chain shifted around my neck and an ankh swung forward and caught the light. I reached up and touched the ankh. The metal was warm. I was momentarily taken aback, having no memory of this particular item of jewelry, but it seemed to have an even more profound effect on the ticket-taker who examined the ankh momentarily, then waved my money away.

"Welcome, friend," he said. He motioned me into the fair with another bow. "Enter in peace and find thy path."

Strange. I thought. *Nobody gives you something for nothing.* I tried to press money into the ticket-taker's hand, but he motioned it away. The ankh, there was something important about it, but I couldn't remember what. Maybe it would come to me.

"Here," I said. "Take the money."

But the man just smiled and motioned me through the gate. I shrugged and slipped my wallet back into my pocket. His loss.

The music grew louder; its source had to be nearby. I walked along makeshift pathways, past rows of booths painted in garish colors. People, all of them in medieval garb, wandered the paths, exclaiming over the wares hidden in the dark recesses of the booths. They paid me no mind, though in my jeans and button-down shirt I must have seemed out of place in this anachronistic little enclave.

Or was I the anachronism? I was certainly the only thing out of place in this little pocket of history.

As I pushed my way through the crowd, I caught glimpses of the shadowed treasures they sought in the booths and tents that lined the way. I made a mental note to return and investigate these strange shops more carefully after . . . after what?

The faces in the crowd were unusual. They glowed with an inner light, as remarkable in its way as the strange color of the valley itself. Snatches of

conversation floated to me in a language as archaic as their costumes. Thees, thous, and thys spilled from their tongues as easily as slang slipped off mine. How had I come here? I tried again to remember.



A car. Mine. The vision of a blue convertible with its hood up and steam pouring from the radiator . . . The memory was solid now. My car had overheated and I'd pulled over to the side of the road to let it cool down. I'd taken a walk in the forest on the side of the road to pass the time. Then . . .

The next memory wouldn't come.

Still, the music drove me forward until I reached the edge of the fair. Off in a secluded grove was a brightly painted wagon. With its rounded top, it reminded me of a gypsy wagon I'd seen as a child. The music came from inside. As I stood in the odd gloom that seemed to emanate from the trees, a woman's voice floated out to me, harmonically enmeshed in the music.

"You may approach," she said.

I hesitated for a moment, then went to the door of the wagon and stepped inside. Fragrant incense assaulted my senses. I sneezed.

"Excuse me," I said. There was no reply.

I looked around. A round table, covered in green velvet, took up part of the room. Fringed shawls with ornate embroideries hung from the wooden walls, but the dominant feature of the room was the old gypsy woman who sat behind the table. Around her neck hung a large ankh, similar to the one I wore. Her eyes were black, not just dark brown, but pure black and penetrating. They seemed to pierce me, leaving me somehow exposed. She smiled, dispelling some of the tension, and pointed to my ankh.

"I see that thou art a Seeker," she said. "Be careful. Do not part with this symbol." Her voiced sounded as if it had traveled through some dark,



empty space before it reached me. My stomach clenched and gooseflesh raced across the backs of my arms when I heard it.

She gestured to a small chair opposite her.

"We have been waiting such a long time," she began, "but at last thou hast come. Sit here and I shall read the path of thy future."

It sure sounded as if she had been waiting for me. But that's what fortune tellers do—make you believe they have a mystic "second-sight." She had a great setup all right, and I was impressed. What future would she try to sell me? True love? Money? A long trip?

Meanwhile, the music continued to play from somewhere in the wagon and the incense grew thicker. I felt woozy.

The gypsy placed a wooden abacus-like object on the table. Cards appeared in her hands. They just appeared with a small puff of smoke. A close-up magician's sleight-of-hand trick. The cards were larger than normal playing cards. She fanned eight of them out on the table with a quick flick of her wrist.

"Let us begin the casting," she said.

I sat in the chair opposite her, wary and ill at ease.

She placed two cards on the table. The first depicted a knight in silver armor astride a horse. The knight's sword was drawn and held out in front of him. A red sash was tied around his waist. Written in ornate black letters at the bottom of the card was the word **Valor**.

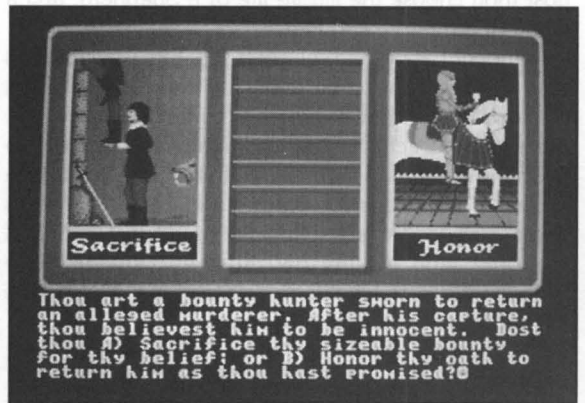
The second card showed two men being threatened by a wild beast. One of the men was helping his companion escape over a wall while he himself remained in peril. This card was ringed in orange. The word at the bottom was **Sacrifice**.

"Consider this," the gypsy began. "A mighty knight accosts thee and demands thy food. Dost thou valiantly refuse the knight and battle him, or sacrifice thy food unto the hungry knight?"

The cards lay on the green velvet, but I didn't see them. Memories washed over me, blotting out the present. *I walked into a small clearing. A willow tree dipped its graceful limbs toward a small brook that cut through the clearing. At the edge of the stream was a circle of white stone. Stonehenge in miniature.*

Then I was back in the gypsy's wagon. The woman sat patiently across from me, waiting for my answer. Maybe the rest of my memory would return if I stopped thinking about it so hard. The cards were mute, refusing to give up their secrets. I frowned. This wasn't like any fortune-telling I'd seen.

I considered the choices. On one hand, there was the issue of Valor. It wouldn't be very courageous to let anyone take food away from you without some sort of fight. But the knight was hungry, and maybe even desperate to eat. Why shouldn't I sacrifice some of my food for another knight?



I thought about the question some more. There didn't seem to be a right answer. I looked up at the gypsy, but she just sat there like a statue.

Maybe this was a remarkably vivid hallucination. Or maybe someone was playing a joke on me. I felt strangely detached from the whole experience, as though it were happening to someone else.

The gypsy gave me an impatient glance, then tapped her index finger on the table where the two cards rested. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders.

I decided that, in this situation, Valor seemed more important than Sacrifice. I touched the **Valor** card. The gypsy placed a white and a black bead on the abacus and picked up the two cards.

"Was that the right answer?" I asked.

The gypsy smiled.

"There are no right answers here," she said, "only what is right for thee."

Under different circumstances her answer would have bothered me, but I was still trying to think. To remember.

The gypsy laid two more cards face up on the table. To the left was the **Honor** card. It portrayed a knight in silver armor astride a white charger. In his outstretched hand was a chalice. Around his waist was tied a purple sash. The card on the right was **Humility**. The person in the picture wore the black and gray robes of a shepherd.

"Consider this," the gypsy said. "Thou art at a crossroads in thy life. Dost thou choose the **honorable** life of a Paladin, striving for Truth and Courage, or dost thou choose the **humble** life of a Shepherd, and a world of Simplicity and Peace?"

I thought about the question. My first reaction was that I didn't want to be either of these things. Both sounded boring. But the more I thought about my life, the more attractive being a Shepherd seemed. No problems, peace, simplicity, there was a certain appeal. Then I considered being a Paladin. There was something noble about the search for Truth and Courage, and my life had little enough of these virtues. What the heck. In fantasy it's easy to be heroic. I pointed to the **Honor** card.

The gypsy once again placed a white and black bead on the abacus and turned over two more cards.

Honesty and **Spirituality**.

Honesty was a beautiful red-haired woman standing behind a blue podium. Her right hand was raised in the traditional gesture of someone taking an oath. **Spirituality** depicted a man dressed in white robes, kneeling at an altar with his head bowed.

"Consider this," the gypsy said. "Thy friend seeks admittance to thy spiritual order. Thou art asked to vouch for his purity of spirit, of which thou art unsure. Dost thou **honestly** express thy doubt, or vouch for him, hoping for his **spiritual** improvement?"

Another flash of memory. Blue light. A sound—wind chimes. The scent of rain. A package falling to the ground. I picked it up. It was warm to the touch and strange. What was it? The thought slipped out of my mind and I stared once again at the cards. The question . . .

This question was easy. To be true to my vows, I had to tell the truth when I was questioned. On the

other hand, part of being spiritual was understanding others and helping them attain that spirituality—right? Was it fair to deny my friend the chance at spiritual fulfillment?

Okay, maybe the question wasn't as easy as I'd thought. I considered the question again, then slowly pointed to the **Honesty** card. There could be no real spirituality without truth, I decided.

Two more beads were placed on the abacus, two more cards on the table. **Compassion** and **Justice**.

"Consider this," the gypsy said. "After twenty years, thou hast found the slayer of thy best friends. The villain proves to be a man who is the sole support of a young girl. Dost thou spare him out of **compassion** for the girl, or slay him in the name of **justice**?"

I stared at the two cards on the table. **Compassion** showed a woman dressed in yellow, giving food to a starving man. Her face was gentle.

Justice showed a king on his throne. His face was stern, yet there was kindness in his eyes. His robes appeared to flow around him and his crown was set with emeralds.

A man on a throne . . . a kingdom . . . history . . . books . . . the package contained books. A history book and a book written in some strange runic language. The books were bound together in a cloth map. The ankh I wore had come in that package.

The memory faded again and I was back in the present.

The cards. What to do? I knew the spirits of my dead friends cried out for justice, but I felt torn. Wouldn't depriving the girl of her support make me as bad as the man I sought to kill? What about the families of my friends? How would they feel knowing I let this murderer go free?

And what was wrong with me anyway? I shook my head. I was getting far too involved with this fortune-telling. My **Justice**, my liege . . . My God, this was getting out of hand. I folded my arms over my chest and leaned back in the chair. The gypsy stared at me, a slight frown crossing her face, her black eyes boring through me, reading me, judging me.

Tough, I thought. I don't feel like playing any more.

She shook her head as though I'd disappointed her. I could hear her murmur something under her breath in a language I didn't understand. And I started feeling a little guilty. I didn't usually quit in the middle of something—even something as ludicrous as fortune-telling.

I leaned forward and thought about the question posed to me. In the end, I sighed and pointed to *Compassion*.

The gypsy nodded and placed two more beads on the abacus. The rack was half full of beads. My head was beginning to ache. The incense was potent and made me feel sleepy. I had to recapture what was missing from my memory.

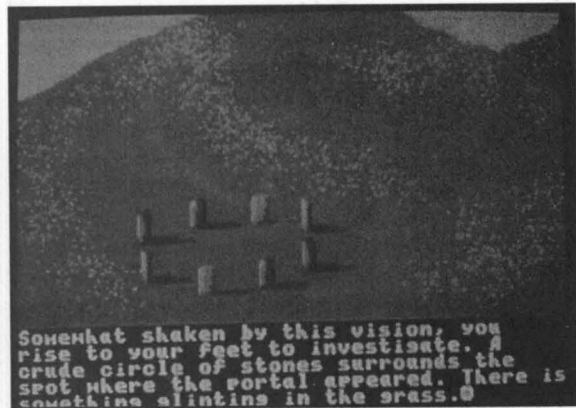
The gypsy laid two more cards out. *Compassion* and *Honor*.

"Consider this," she said. "Thou art sworn to uphold a Lord who participates in the forbidden torture of prisoners. Each night their cries of pain reach thee. Dost thou show *compassion* by reporting these unlawful deeds, or *honor* thy oath and ignore them?"

I didn't even have to consider. I pointed to the *Compassion* card.

Once again the beads were placed and the cards laid. *Honesty* and *Valor*.

"Consider this," she said. "Thou hast been prohibited by thy absent Lord from joining thy friends in a close-pitched battle. Dost thou refrain, so thou may *honestly* claim obedience, or show *valor*, and aid thy comrades, knowing thou mayest deny it later?"



Somewhat shaken by this vision, you rise to your feet to investigate. A crude circle of stones surrounds the spot where the portal appeared. There is something glinting in the grass. ©

And then I had it. Memory flooded back. *The car breaking down. A flash from within the forest. Walking through the woods to the small clearing. The circle of white stones. The shimmering blue doorway. The package appearing from thin air containing the books, the map, and the ankh. And what the books said.*

One book contained the story of Britannia, its history and lore. But where in the world was Britannia? This wasn't the history of Britain. I didn't see any mention of Cromwell, or Henry the Eighth, or even Winston Churchill. And the other book.

The other was a book about magic—"Mystic Wisdom," it was called. I had read both books before I noticed the music. The music I followed to this fair and to the gypsy's wagon.

My eyes narrowed suspiciously. Maybe this really was some sort of elaborate hoax. I wondered what the gypsy could want from me and what the purpose of this whole setup was.

Glancing up, I saw that the gypsy's expression hadn't changed. I couldn't read her face at all. If I wanted to find out what was going on, I would have to stick around.

I looked back at the cards. Maybe the explanation for what was happening had to do with the questions she was asking.

Valor and Honesty.

I knew that valor was important and I would have a difficult time not helping my friends, but the idea of lying about what I'd done bothered me. I chose *Honesty*.

The gypsy placed two more beads on the abacus. It was almost full. Just one bar on the rack was empty. Two more cards were placed on the table.

Honesty and Compassion.

"Consider this," said the gypsy. Her voice sounded tired. "Entrusted with the delivery of an uncounted purse of gold, thou art accosted by a poor beggar. Dost thou deliver the gold, proving thy *honesty*, or show *compassion*, giving the beggar a coin, knowing it will not be missed?"

I could almost see the poor beggar reaching out to me. Then there was the trust of my liege. My liege? Again I had fallen under the hypnotic spell of

the gypsy and her questions. I decided to take another tack. I would ask her some questions of my own.

"Couldn't I give him a coin from my own purse?" I asked.

"That was not the question," the gypsy said.

"But I don't want to get it wrong."

"There is no right or wrong here, only thy choice."

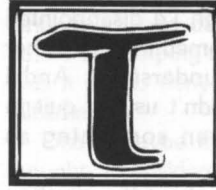
I rubbed my eyes. I wanted to get up and walk away from the table, but my curiosity held me there. Honesty. Compassion. I reached forward, my hand hovering above the cards. I touched one. Incense billowed up, clouding my sight. I heard the gypsy speak, she sounded far away.

"So be it," she said. "Thy path is chosen!"

I felt a moment of intense, wrenching vertigo. I squeezed my eyes shut. When I opened them, I was standing in the middle of a grove of trees. The sun was just coming up. The valley was deserted. There was no sign of the gypsy or the fair.

One of the more interesting aspects of the Avatar mythos is the appearance of the Avatar in many different guises. The legends say that, should the Avatar choose Honesty over all other virtues, he will appear as a Mage. If he chooses Compassion, he will be a Bard. Valor will yield a Fighter; Justice, a Druid; Sacrifice, a Tinker; Honor, a Paladin; Spirituality, a Ranger; and Humility, a Shepherd.

Of course, the message of the legends is that it is most important for the Avatar to be true to himself. When he answers the gypsy's questions, he must choose the answers he believes to be correct.



Entry 2— Lord British's Castle

he fair seemed like a dream until I noticed the indentations left in the grass by the booths and wagons.

What had happened?

Where was I and what the hell was I doing here? I could see nothing familiar, only the large grassy meadow where I stood and the surrounding hills. No building or other landmark violated this bucolic scene. There were no high-tension wires, no aircraft flying overhead. Only the indentations in the grass gave me any assurance that the world didn't both begin and end here in this little valley.

I looked down at myself, checking to make sure I was still in one piece. My jeans and shirt were gone and I was wearing a loose tunic, lace-up boots, and what felt like homespun trousers. Around the tunic, a wide leather belt was fastened by a heavy buckle made of a metal I couldn't identify. It was silver-colored and featured engravings that meant nothing to me. This sort of garb was found only in museums—and then in pitiful tatters. Or maybe on the set of a period movie. Not in pristine condition on the back of a dazed modern man.

I started to walk, but something banging against my thigh brought me up short. A leather drawstring bag or purse hung from my belt, and it was quite heavy. Pulling the bag open, I poured the contents out. Golden coins, each embossed with a silver serpent, fell onto my palm. I had never seen anything like them, and neither, I suspected, had any of my numismatic friends.

I returned the coins to the purse and simultaneously discovered another satchel on my belt. In it I found several herbs I couldn't identify, though I did recognize some garlic. I was prepared for vampires, anyway. Then the thought came to me that these were reagents for mixing spells. *Spells? Reagents?* I knew perfectly well that there was no such thing as magic. Then I remembered *The Book of Mystic Wisdom*. How odd that I would make

such an association between a bunch of old dry weeds and a supposed book of magic. But then, it was no odder than this whole experience.

The attention to detail in this fantasy impressed me. If I was hallucinating, I hoped I was locked away somewhere with a really good psychiatrist. If this was a joke, I was going to give them a round of enthusiastic applause. Then I was going to kill them.

The map and books I'd found were also in the satchel. Then I remembered the ankh. I had a moment of panic, thinking I'd lost it, but when I put my hand to my neck the chain was still there. I pulled the ankh out from under my tunic and let it hang outside. I still didn't know why this ankh was important, but I had formed some kind of attachment to it. It was like a part of me, like a finger or a toe, and I wasn't about to lose track of it. I headed for the top of the nearest hill, hoping to get my bearings.

From the hill, I looked down at a castle. What was a castle doing here? Surely I would have known about a castle in the area. I turned to search for the highway, my car, and my life. I wanted out of this dream.

The highway was nowhere to be seen. There was no road, no car, nothing but a broad expanse of clear blue water whose waves gently lapped at the shore. Wherever I was, it wasn't home. I was nowhere near where I'd left my car. I turned and looked again at the castle. Feeling dejected, I sat down on the damp grass and tried to figure out what was happening to me.

Either I was insane, the victim of an elaborate hoax, or this was real and I was in another universe. The options stunk.

Still, sitting on my duff wouldn't help me figure out what was happening. I studied the castle more closely and noticed a small town nearby. Where to go first—town or castle? I chose the castle.

As I approached the castle, I found myself walking along a rough road, something suitable for horses and wagons, perhaps, or a four-wheel drive RV. Not being an Indian scout, I couldn't be sure, but I thought I saw some horse tracks here and there in the dust. Not to mention the other, more obvious, evidence left by horses.

The castle was smaller than I'd expected, only two stories of roughly cut stones fitted together with

mortar. As I approached it, even this small castle looked pretty massive. Oh, well. Feeling like I had nothing to lose, I marched up to the front entrance. Actually, there was a flutter in the pit of my stomach, but I kept telling myself this had to be the result of a mental state, or bad mushrooms, or something. The one thing this couldn't be was real.

Two guards stood at the entrance. They were armored and carried large pikes. Broadswords hung from their belts and heavy metal helmets protected their heads. I wouldn't want to rile them up. But, like the guards at Buckingham Palace, they didn't acknowledge my presence even though I stood in front of them for several minutes.

I directed my attention to one of them.

"Hello," I said, figuring he wasn't going to start the conversation.

"Greetings," replied the guard. He didn't exactly smile, but neither did he sneer. I began to breathe again.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"Thou art in the Kingdom of Britannia."

The book. *The History of Britannia*. I'd remembered it first when the gypsy was casting my fortune. Now I was suspicious—this was too convenient. Obviously, somebody was trying to make me believe I was in a place called Britannia. But why?

"Is this the castle of Lord British?" I asked. He was the only person I remembered from the book. Playing along with whatever was happening looked like my best option.

"Aye, 'tis the castle of my liege. Dost thou seek him?"

I was getting a little nervous about this. Were guards supposed to be this friendly? Maybe it was a trap.

"Uh, yes. Where is he?"

"He is in the throne room on the second floor."

The guard turned back to his post.

This was going so well that I strolled over to the other guard. He was a big burly fellow who looked a little dim.

"Where am I?" I asked.

"I cannot help thee with that," said the guard.

"What about Lord British?"

"This is the castle of my liege. Dost thou seek him?"
I'd been through this before.

"No, thank you," I said. "Bye."

"Good day to you."

I passed through the arched doorway and walked into the entry hall. I glanced back at the guards once,

but they hadn't moved. Torches set in holders along the wall, cast flickering shadows and sent smoke toward the ceiling. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the dim light. Eight massive pillars ran the length of the hall, four on each side. Smooth marble stones paved the floor, and the walls were draped with tapestries and weavings depicting a menagerie of



strange creatures in mortal conflict with knights and other medieval types. The place was alive with people, all in fine medieval garb. Courtiers walked slowly through the room in small groups. A juggler dressed in rainbow hues performed amazing feats for a small group off to one side.

I stood for moment, watching. The courtiers nodded and smiled at me as though my presence were the most natural thing in the world. I walked up to one of them, hoping to find out why I'd been brought here.

"Hello, lady," I said. I did a slight bow. She put her hand over her mouth and giggled.

"Greetings," she said. "Art thou new to Britannia?"

"Yes," I said. "How did you know?"

"Thy bow. I am not royalty, sir. Thou shouldst not bow to me."

Great, I thought, made an idiot of myself right off the bat.

"Uh, we bow to all women in my country," I said.

"Indeed," she said. I could tell by her tone that she didn't believe me for an instant. I started to say something else to her, but she had already slipped away into the crowd. That's what I got for lying.

I looked around for someone else to talk to, but everywhere I turned, the courtiers smiled then looked the other way. Finally, I marched up to the one person in the room I hadn't tried to talk to—the jester.

"Hello," I said.

"I'm Chuckles," he said. Then he pirouetted, finishing with a flourish. The bells on his cap and shoes jingled. His smile was crooked and a bit eerie. "Welcome to Castle Britannia."

I took a small step backward. "Thanks," I said. "Do you know why I'm here?"

He tossed what appeared to be a beanbag high into the air and caught it deftly behind his back. "Hast thou an Ankh?"

This question threw me off a little, not that it took much.

"Uh, Yes."

Suddenly he was standing on his hands. "Then enter in peace."

"Thanks, but can you . . ."

I didn't get to finish my sentence because he'd already cartwheeled off. Most people seemed a little flighty here in Britannia, or wherever I was, but the jester was in a world of his own.

There wasn't much more for me to do in the hall, so I decided to find Lord British. Maybe he could explain what was going on. The only exit was through an arched doorway north of the main entrance. That's where I headed.

The sound of running water surprised me. A small stream ran parallel to the walkway. The air in here was clean and fragrant and a peaceful sensation washed over me. A huge ankh stood in the center of the stream. It was becoming obvious that these ankhs were the key to something.

I headed west and searched through the corridors of the bottom level of the castle until I found a ladder leading up. A guard at the bottom of the ladder made no move to stop me as I climbed. Either Lord British was very secure, or things were pretty darned peaceful in Britannia.

Snap out of it, I thought. This isn't reality. There's no such place as Britannia and no one called Lord British. Either this is a figment of your feverish mind, or you're part of some bizarre new medical experiment.

There was another guard on the second floor at the top of the ladder. I made some small talk with him as I climbed up, but he didn't answer. The smells of roasted meat and baking bread hung heavy in the air. My stomach growled in appreciation. As I walked down the corridor, I passed a large open-hearth kitchen. Cooks and scullery boys were working frantically on what looked like preparations for a feast. I was tempted to filch a morsel, but realized that it wouldn't be the best way to make an impression on the king.

I turned east. At the end of the tapestry-draped corridor was a large, open doorway. Music floated out mixed with laughter and the buzz of conversation. I stopped on the threshold of the room and looked in. Four massive support pillars flanked each side of a room dominated by a high-backed throne. Quickly I noticed more tapestries hanging from the walls and

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several high windows that allowed shafts of sunlight to pierce the smoky atmosphere and shine like yellow jewels beneath the cavernous ceiling. Brightly dressed courtiers were gathered around the throne while jesters entertained. But it was the man on the throne who commanded my attention.

As I walked slowly closer to the throne, I tried to assess this man, who could only be the King himself. I couldn't tell how old he was. His face was lined, but his blue eyes were still bright and clear. He wore a fur-lined robe and a heavy crown, and his hand gripped a staff topped by an ankh. Blond hair streaked with white hung to his shoulders; his full beard, similarly streaked, was neatly trimmed. Beneath the royal robe, he wore a tunic made of white linen, embroidered with heavy silk thread. I was nervous about just marching up and talking to him, but in the end, that's what I did.

"Uh, hello," I said.

The King inclined his head ever so slightly in my direction. "Greetings, Seeker," he replied.

He didn't have the same accent as the other people I'd talked to so far. It sounded familiar, but I couldn't quite place it. I didn't have a chance to think about it because he continued speaking.

"A new age is upon Britannia. The great evil lords are gone, but our people lack direction and purpose in their lives. A champion of Virtue is called for."

All the while, he had been waving his staff to punctuate his words, but suddenly he pounded it on

the floor, causing a new surge of adrenalin to course through my veins. If there was such a thing as adrenalin overload, I was probably close to it. Then his voice dropped to a quiet, but even more compelling, tone. His gaze seemed to lock onto mine.

"Thou may be this champion, but only time will tell. I will aid thee in any way I can. How may I help thee?"

Whoa, I thought. *Me? A champion?* I wasn't really cut out for that sort of thing. I mean, I'm not a wimp, but I'm not the most athletic guy in the world either. Besides, this wasn't real.

"Right," I said. "Who put you up to this?"

He hesitated a moment as if sizing me up, but his gaze never wavered. Then he said, "Up? To what?"

"This hoax, or whatever it is. I'm really impressed, but I've had as much fun as I can stand. Okay?"

Now I saw the first inkling of concern in the King's face. It occurred to me that I wasn't following the script or something. Then he was back in command again.

"Thy language is strange. Wilt thou not accept the Quest of the Avatar?"

I don't know why, but it was that moment, however brief, of hesitation and genuine concern on his part that convinced me to keep playing along. I mean, he had really looked confused when I'd mentioned a hoax. Either he was a great actor, or this was . . . Well, anyway, I hadn't figured out what was going on yet, but I suspected that this Lord British had some of the answers.

"Okay. Have it your way," I said, trying to look nonchalant. "Tell me about this Quest of the Avatar."

"To be an Avatar is to embody the eight Virtues. It is a life lived constantly and forever in the quest to better thyself and the world in which we live."

"Eight Virtues?" I asked. I might as well pump him for as much information as he was willing to give.

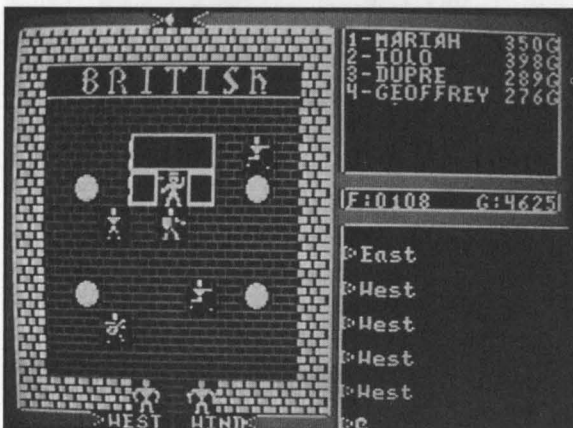
"The Virtues of the Avatar are Honesty, Compassion, Valor, Justice, Sacrifice, Honor, Spirituality, and Humility."

"Tell me about the Quest," I said.

"Conquering the Stygian Abyss and viewing the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom."

Stygian Abyss. Codex. This was beginning to sound seriously dangerous. I tried to change the subject.

"Tell me more about these Virtues."



In response, the King intoned the following liturgy in a slightly dramatic sing-song while gesturing in different directions, presumably toward the towns he mentioned. I found the recitation odd, but the way it was delivered caused the information to stay in my memory, whereas normally I would have forgotten the whole thing five minutes later.

"The fair town of Moonglow, on Verity Isle, is where the virtue of Honesty thrives. Bards in the town of Britain are well versed in the virtue of Compassion.

"Many valiant fighters comes from Jhelom, in the Valorian Isles. In the city of Yew, in the Deep Forest, Justice is served.

"Minoc, town of Self-Sacrifice, lies on the eastern shore of Lost Hope Bay.

"Paladins who strive for Honor are oft seen in Trinsic, north of the Cape of Heroes.

"In Skara Brae, the Spiritual path is taught. Find it on an Isle near Spiritwood.

"The ruins of proud Magincia are a testament to the virtue of Humility.

"Humility is the foundation of Virtue! Find the ruins of Magincia, far off the shore of Britannia, on a small isle in the vast ocean."

He paused a moment, then continued, looking me in the eye again. "Stay close to the towns during the early part of thy adventure. Is there anything else thou wouldst ask of me?"

"Uh, no," I said. That was enough. Lord British hadn't revealed anything except about the Quest and the Virtues of the Avatar. Feeling dazed, I wandered off and found a bench along one wall. Nobody bothered me and I sat down to think.

Maybe I had slipped into some sort of psychosis and this journey was what my rational mind was doing to try to get me out of it. That made as much sense as anything else that had happened so far.

The dreamlike quality of this experience returned. That sometimes fuzzy, sometimes hyper-real perception that occurred only in dreams. This was clearly a case of the hyper-real variety of fugue states. At least that's what my rational mind said.

Oh, I know what you're thinking. We've all read the fantasy novels about the guy who finds himself mystically transported into another time or into a

foreign land. He always questions the reality of the situation, but eventually finds out it's real after all. I figured my subconscious was replaying the scenario I'd read so often. But there was one difference. In the novels, the situation turned out to be real. This time it was about me and no way it was real.

I could smell the perfume and sweat of the courtiers. The floor was hard, smooth, and cool beneath my feet. Running my hand over my tunic, I felt the nubby texture of the fabric. In an impulsive move I put my hand to my mouth and bit down hard.

Damn! My hand throbbed, and toothmarks were clearly outlined on my palm. I shook my hand vigorously to keep it from smarting. Okay, so maybe this wasn't a dream. Dreams didn't usually have pain and toothmarks in them. Or maybe I'd bitten my hand during my dream and just incorporated it in into the fantasy somehow. I could go round and round with this uncertainty. Dream or not, crazy or not, I didn't have any choice but to continue. Come to think of it, that's what the protagonists in the novels always did, too. Hmm.

One clue about what was happening might be in the information Lord British had just given me. How was I going to remember everything he'd said? I stood there stupefied for a moment, then got a grip. I'd a small notebook in my pocket when I'd left—wherever it was I'd left. I hoped it had made the trip with me.

I rummaged around in the bags on my belt. Luck was on my side. Down at the bottom of one of the bags I found the book. Like everything else I'd brought, it had changed into a Britannian analog of itself. My smallish wire-bound notebook was now a small hand-bound book made of heavy linen paper. A quill was tucked into the spine. I searched some more and came up with a small metal bottle filled with ink. Now I could keep track of everything that was happening to me.

I sat down on the floor with my back resting against one of the pillars and made notes about everything that had happened since this "adventure" had started. I surprised myself by being quite handy with the quill. In fact, I suppose I should have preferred a ballpoint, but it never even occurred to me.

As I wrote, a pretty young woman walked up to me. This surprised me, since most of the courtiers seemed uninterested in talking to me.

"Hello," she said.

"Hi," I replied. I stood up hurriedly, almost spilling the ink.

"I'm Juliet," she said.

"So, what do you do here? I mean, what's your job?" I asked, proving once again what a brilliant conversationalist I was. Even in my own fantasy I was less than swift with strange, beautiful women.

"I am one of Lord British's subjects. Wilt thou accept the Quest?"

"I don't know. I'm not the most virtuous guy in the world, and I don't have any training in fighting."

"Thou wilt find thyself more able than thou wouldst think. Seek to learn how the three Principles form the eight Virtues."

"Three Principles? I thought there were just eight Virtues."

"Seek to know the one thing into which the three Principles of Virtue combine."

"One thing? What?" Now I was confused.

She just smiled and placed her fingertips on my lips. I could smell the faint fragrance of her perfume. Roses.

"Shh," she said. "Listen and pay attention to our people carefully, for they will help thee on thy Quest."

Then she turned and walked away from me. Just once, I wished people would stick around until I was ready to say goodbye. I was starting to feel lonely. And I would have been more than willing to spend time with Juliet.

I decided to investigate the castle before I went anywhere else. Maybe I could get more information from the other courtiers. I finished making notes of my conversations with Lord British and Juliet. I searched the rest of the top floor of the castle and found the kitchen and a prison. The prison was locked, but the kitchen staff was friendly enough. The soup they gave me was great, but they had little in the way of information about my Quest.

My Quest. Right.

I went back down to the first floor and the

great hall where I'd entered the castle. The jesters were still entertaining, but there weren't as many people here as before.

I headed east, past the great hall to where a stout wooden door blocked my way. It wasn't locked. The door opened into a long, thin corridor. As I entered the corridor, the door shut behind me with a heavy thud. The passageway was silent. I could hear only faint murmuring from the courtiers in the main hall. I wandered about the hallway, but it proved to be a dead end.

Strange, I thought. What's the point of this?

I wandered back to the door and stood there for a moment, trying to puzzle everything out. I leaned against the wall to the left of the door—and it opened. My hands scraped as they slid along the stone walls and my knees slammed into the cold stone floor.

I knelt there for a moment, cursing the architect of this castle and my own dumb luck. My hands stung and my knees ached. Some great adventurer. Looking around, I discovered I was in another corridor, the mirror image of the one I'd just so painfully departed. I looked around to see if anyone had observed my pratfall, but I was alone. There was light at the end of the new corridor and I made my way toward it. That's when the secret door slammed shut. I spun around and looked at the featureless wall.

"Dammit," I said. I smacked the wall in front of me. It swung open.

Secret door, I thought. Hidden latch. I looked carefully at the door. It appeared to be made of solid grey rock, but on closer inspection, I discovered that one rock was lighter than the others, almost white. I stepped through the door and it closed again. Touching the white rock caused the door to open.

I tried this a few times, just to be sure it really worked. If there's one secret passage, I thought, there are probably others.

I became more careful about my inspection of the castle. My care was quickly rewarded—another secret door in this hidden hallway led to the outside of the castle.

As I reached the end of the corridor, I discovered a small room to my left. Water flowed through this room, as it did in the room in the main corridor. Sitting on the stone floor in front of the water was a pretty young



woman, dressed in simple grey robes. Her posture suggested she was deep in thought. I entered the room quietly, unsure whether I should disturb her. She must have heard, for she looked up as I entered. Her face was young and unlined, but her eyes were old and haunted.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," she replied. She looked at me expectantly.

"What's your Name?" I asked.

"Shawn," she said.

"So, what do you do?" That tired line again.

Maybe I needed a new scriptwriter.

"I watch the water. I come from a proud city. It was destroyed for its pride."

"Pride? Destroyed for pride?"

But she didn't answer me. She had already turned away and was staring blankly at the water. There was an air of great sadness about her. I couldn't think of anything else to say and I didn't know her well enough to offer any sympathetic comments. Feeling awkward and clumsy, I slipped from the room.

A little farther up from the room where I'd met Shawn, the corridor ended in a small chamber. There were windows in two of the walls, and a ladder led up to the second floor through an opening in the center of the ceiling. A guard stood next to the ladder. I talked to him, but he didn't have much to say. I asked him if it was okay to climb to the next level, but he just shrugged his shoulders. Obviously Lord British chose these guys for their brawn and not their brains.

I reached the top of the ladder and found myself once again in a long narrow corridor. It led to a small prison. The doors to the prison were locked and I couldn't get in. Peering through the bars in the door, I saw several holding cells. I made a mental note to come back here later, but not as an inmate.

Returning to the first floor of the castle, I found another place of interest. It was in the west wing, just south of the main corridor.

I opened the door to a room on the eastern side of the western wing of the castle and entered a room bathed in pale blue light. Smoky trails of incense floated in the air, pungent and overwhelming. As I started toward the shadowy figure on the far side of the room, I felt my eyes grow heavy. Then I slipped into darkness.

When I awoke, I was on the far side of the room. Standing in front of me was a wizened man wearing what I imagined to be wizard's robes. Not that I've known a lot of wizards in my life, but I knew this was what one looked like.

"Welcome. I am Hawkwind, Seer of Souls. I see that which is within thee and drives thee to deeds of good or evil. For what path dost thou seek enlightenment?"

"Uh, just a second," I said. I fumbled in my satchel for the notes I'd made after talking to Lord British. Perhaps Hawkwind could give me a clue about what I was looking for. Better yet, maybe he could tell me if I was dreaming, crazy, or both.

"Tell me about this Quest," I said as I pulled my notes out.

"That is not a subject for enlightenment," he replied.

"Okay, so how do I become an Avatar?"

"That is not a subject for enlightenment."

Darn, I thought.

"Explain about Honesty," I said.

"Thou dost seem to be an honest soul. Seek ye to become more so."

"But how?"

"Do not take that which is not thine."

That, at least, made sense. "Okay, what about Compassion?"

"Compassion is in thy nature. Seek ye to become more so."

"How?"

"Thou must find the way. It will become clear to thee. Develop a generosity of character. Give to the needy."

"What about Valor?"

"Thou hast not shown thyself to be valorous."

"Well, I haven't exactly had the opportunity. But what do I do?"

"What else?" he asked, ignoring my question.

I looked at my notes.

"The Virtue of Justice."

"Thou hast not yet shown thyself to be just."

"Yeah, but how do I do that?"

He glared at me, then tossed some more incense on the brazier in front of him. The smoke puffed up and hid him from my view for a moment. I coughed and waved the smoke away. He was still standing in front of me with that disgusted expression on his face.

"Okay, never mind. Tell me about Sacrifice."

"Thou hast not yet made sacrifices."

"What about Honor?"

"Thou art honorable in some ways." Which implies what? I'm not honorable in others?

"Spirituality?" I asked.

"Thou hast begun to show thy spirituality. Seek now more ways."

"Humility?"

"Thou art not yet a humble soul."

I was feeling just a little put down, and a little steam was building up within me. "Well, why have I been picked to go on this Quest if I don't have any of the attributes of an Avatar?"

"Perhaps thou hast the ability to become one."

The steam escaped suddenly and my indignation

was deflated. "Oh," I said. That hadn't occurred to me. I couldn't even figure out a way to get home.

"So where do you suggest I start?" I asked.

"Try the town of Britain, next to the castle. Thou wilt learn much about Compassion there."

I felt intuitively that the interview, or whatever it had been, was about over. "Thanks for the help."

"Remember to see me when thou visitest our liege."

"Sure, thanks again."

"Fare thee well," he said.

I backed away from him and turned toward the

door. Once again, I passed through the blue light encasing the door and part of the room. And, as before, the overwhelming need to sleep assailed me.

When I awoke, I was shutting the door to Hawkwind's room. Something about the encounter with him had made me feel strange. I wandered aimlessly about the corridor outside Hawkwind's room. That's how I found Lord British's treasure room.

I opened a door north of Hawkwind's room. There were many guards here, some playing cards, some sitting around talking and playing a dice



game, some sleeping. I wandered through the barracks exchanging greetings with them. I never would have noticed the secret door in the northeastern corner if I hadn't seen one of the guards disappear through it.

I followed him into a hidden room filled with chests. Afraid that the guard would ask me what I was doing here, I ducked behind a trunk. As soon as he left the room, I opened one of the chests. It was filled with gold coins that shone dully under the flickering torches. I ran my hands through the coins, tempted. The guards were so indifferent, they probably wouldn't notice. I was about to put a handful of coins in my pocket when my foot bumped something and sent it skittering across the floor.

I dropped the coins and bent to pick the object up. It was a smooth flat rock with a mark carved on its face. Somehow I knew that this was the Rune of Spirituality and that it was important to my Quest. *How did I know that?* I wondered. It's a creepy feeling, knowing something you shouldn't know.

Slipping the rune into my pouch, I decided to borrow some of Lord British's treasure. After all, he was the one who wanted me to go on this Quest. I would need money for provisions and weapons—certainly a better weapon than the slingshot I'd found in my satchel. Besides, from the look of the treasure room, Lord British was loaded. Hadn't he said he would assist me any way he could?

I slipped out of the treasure room and into the guards' room. They waved at me, but didn't stop playing their game. Quickly, I left the room, feeling a guilty blush creeping up my neck onto my face.

It was late afternoon when I stepped out of Lord British's castle. The light cast long shadows and bathed everything in a soft golden glow. Sometime during my visit to the castle, I had decided to accept the Quest. If this was insanity, the Quest might be a way out. If it was a prank, I would win by beating the prankster at his own game. And if it was something more sinister, everything was beyond my control anyway.

Lord British had told me to investigate all the towns and villages in Britannia. What better place to start than the neighboring town of Britain?



Entry 3—Britain

short walk across a grassy field took me to the road into Britain. Crude huts stood side by side with solidly constructed wood and stone buildings. Two men sat under a tree by the

side of the cobblestone path leading into town. They were dressed in coarsely woven breeches and jerkins. Straw hats lay on the ground beside them.

"Hello," I said.

"Greetings, friend," said one of the men. He grinned at me as if I were his long-lost brother. Two of his teeth were missing.

"Nice day," I said, for lack of anything better. "What's going on?"

"Why, we're guarding the town entrance, of course. Canst thou not see that? Why else would we be sitting beside the road?"

"And what is the name of this town?"

"This is the fair town of Britain. The place where thou hast come to learn Compassion."

"What makes you think I've come to learn Compassion?"

His smile became even broader, if that was possible. "That is what we ponder here in Britain. The nature of Compassion. If thou listeneth carefully to the people of our town, thou wilt be well on thy way to learning much about Compassion. Besides, art thou not a bard? Thou shouldst have an affinity for the practice of Compassion."

"Okay, if you say so."

"Mayest thou enjoy thy stay in Britain."

I waved at them and followed a well-worn path into the center of town. People hurried about nodding to me as they passed by. Soon I came to a grassy field bisected by a small clear stream. A wooden footbridge crossed the stream and on the far side a tall man played the lute for a group of children. He wore a beard and had long flowing yellow hair. Something about him compelled me to talk to him.

I crossed the bridge and stood at the edge of the circle of children. The man played one song after another, one funny, another so sad it threatened to bring tears to my eyes, another recounting the history

of Britannia. All the while, the children sat and listened to him intently (except during the ballads, when they giggled over the romantic parts).

The bard paused in his playing and gestured for me to come sit by him. I eased my way through the crowd of children and sat on the grass next to him.

"I am Iolo," he said, placing his lute butt-first upon one knee. "Art thou on a Quest for Lord British?"

"I guess so," I said. "It wasn't something I planned . . . it just sort of happened that way. The story is pretty complicated and I have a feeling you wouldn't understand the part about the car. And now I'm here, wherever that is, and I'm supposed to be going on some Quest. Of course I'm not even sure what this Quest involves except that it has something to do with a Codex and eight Virtues and three Principles. I'm beginning to feel like I'm in Oz and I want to go home."

"Thou hast been given a great opportunity. Thou wouldst not have been chosen if thou wert not able to complete the Quest. Do not dwell on thy problems; seek solutions."

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this. What do you do, anyway?"

While I was speaking, one of the children ran up and stroked the lute, causing a dissonant chord to ring in the air. Iolo patted her on the head and gestured for her to try again. As she brushed her fingers across the strings, he moved his fingers on the frets, and a harmonious sound emerged from the instrument. The girl ran back to her friends, giggling. Meanwhile, Iolo never interrupted his conversation with me.

"I seek the way of Compassion. I am a bard," he said.

I noticed a fine bow and a quiver of arrows nearby. I suspected that this bard was handy at more than just singing, and I acted on impulse. "Well, why don't you come with me? I mean, two heads are better than one and I sure could use help."

With a sad grin, he told me, "To my sorrow, I cannot join thee. Like the Principles, thy companions must also be balanced." He took up his instrument again and began to play. "For now, 'twould be better if I stayed here and sang to these

children. They need my guidance more than thou."

Disappointment shot through me. Iolo would have been a good companion. I wasn't looking forward to exploring Britannia by myself. The fact that I'd given in to this whole fantasy so quickly was weighing on me, too. Part of me wanted to believe it was real. A companion would help me believe. But another part of me knew it was only a dream.

I stayed and listened to him sing a while longer. The beauty of his playing caused me to lose all track of time. Hunger pangs finally reminded me that I hadn't eaten since before my arrival in Britannia, and I went looking for a place to eat and perhaps to rest.

As I searched for a food vendor, a small child ran across the grass and bumped into me. I grabbed his shoulders as I steadied myself.

"Whoa, watch where you're going," I said. The child stared up at me with solemn dark eyes.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"A child," he said.

"What are you doing here?"

"I study Compassion."

"Compassion?"

"Do you know the Mantra of Compassion?" he asked. His face was alive and curious.

"No," I said.

"Ask Cricket," he said, breaking away from me and running toward Iolo.

Shrugging my shoulders, I headed on my way, wondering who Cricket might be. I stopped and gave a coin to a young girl who was begging at the corner of one of the shops. Britannia wasn't perfect after all.

Eventually I found a tavern in the center of town. Low and squat, the tavern had a thatched roof and small multi-paned windows. The door was open and I walked in cautiously. There were several rowdy drunks inside. The air was heavy with smoke from an open hearth and from the pipes that many of the men puffed on.

I tried to talk to some of the less inebriated patrons, but they weren't any help. They just belched in my face and started singing randy sailor songs. I moved over to one corner and tried to think. A man sat in the corner playing a lute. He was clothed in yellow and green and his voice was pure and clear as



a summer stream. When he paused between songs, I leaned over to talk to him.

"Nice music," I said.

He nodded at me and picked up his lute again.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Cricket," he said.

"What's the Mantra for Compassion?" I asked.

"Shh," he said. "I'm singing."

Damn performers. I waited until he stopped playing and asked him again.

"The Mantra for the Shrine of Compassion is MU," he said. Then he took a swig from a mug of ale and started playing again. It was time for me to leave. The smoke in the tavern was getting to me. And it looked as if a brawl was about to start. I wanted to be somewhere else when the punches started flying.

So I had the Mantra for Compassion. I figured there had to be a rune for Compassion like the rune I'd found for Spirituality. I just knew it, though I couldn't explain why. Hawkwind had said something about shrines; there had to be a Shrine of Compassion somewhere, too, I supposed.

It was dark out. The sky was filled with strange constellations. I looked up at them for a while, trying to find something familiar. The moon was bright and obscured many of the stars. Then another moon rose from the west. This was too much. Two moons? Going west to east? I felt uneasy and decided that what I needed was to go to sleep and wake up in my own bed. I started searching for a place to sleep. Surely there would be a hotel, or would they call it an inn?

Light spilled from the doorways of the huts and shops that lined the streets. But between the shops, the alleys looked dark and sinister, and I decided it would be smart for me to stick to the better-lit areas.

I'd noticed that there were lots of children in Britain. They were easy to talk to and eager to tell what they were learning about Compassion. I guess I was learning something about it as well.

Lost in my thoughts, I nearly bumped into a little girl. I was surprised to see her out after dark.

"Hello," I said, trying my best not to scare her.

"Hello. I'm Sprite," she replied, without a hint of fear or distrust. She giggled and tugged at her tunic.

"Are you learning about Compassion too?" I asked.

"Oh, yes."

"Do you know anything about the Rune?"

"Pepper knows of the Rune."

"What about the shrine?"

"I cannot help thee with that."

I smiled at her and she smiled back. A woman leaned out of a rough hut and called to Sprite. The little girl waved at me, then turned and ran toward the woman.

Suddenly I was wide awake. I was on to it. All I needed to do was find Pepper. I went from person to person until I tracked her down between a pair of shops. She looked at me expectantly, as though she had been waiting for me.

"The rune," I said. "Where's the Rune?" I didn't care that this was some crazy dream, or nightmare, or hoax . . . or whatever. I wanted to find that rune.

"The Rune of Compassion lies at the end of a hall somewhere in this town."

"That's it . . . at the end of a hall?" I groaned. There were any number of hallways in town. Was I going to have to search every one of them?

I was looking for the rune in the healer's shop when I met Shapero. He was dressed in what I had learned were the clothes of a druid: a loose ankle-length robe belted at the waist, worn under a long cloak.

"Hello," I said.

"Greetings," he replied. "May I help thee?"

"No, I'm looking for something. What are you doing here?"

"I am searching for Julio. Art thou on the Quest of the Avatar?"

"Kinda hard to keep a secret around here, isn't it? But yes, I am."

"You will find the Shrine of Compassion east across two bridges."

Just like that, these people would blurt out information. I thought I might be getting the hang of it. "Hey, thanks," I said. I tried to think of

something else to say, but he nodded and strolled off. I was also getting used to the short attention span these Britannians exhibited.

I watched him for a minute, then went back to looking for the rune. There were small curtained alcoves along the east wall of the shop. Pulling one of the curtains aside, I found a young man lying on a pallet on the floor. He was injured, and held his side as if it pained him.

"What happened to you?" I asked looking down at him.

"I know a terrible secret," he said. His eyes rolled into the back of his head and a spasm shook his body.

"A Secret?"

"Mondain's influence has not yet left the world. An artifact remains! I heard about it in the Buccaneer's Den."

"Mondain?" The mention of the name and the expression on the young man's face sent a chill down my spine.

"Ask at the Pub there about the Skull." His eyes focused on me for a moment, then he slumped back onto his pallet.

I started to leave the healer's, but I noticed something on the wall. It was a pale white stone, just like the ones in Lord British's castle. I walked over to it and gently pushed against it. The secret door swung back.

Inside the room was a bard sitting at a small desk. He glanced at me, then continued his writing.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Julio," he said.

"You know that Shapero is looking for you."

He nodded but didn't seem interested.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I seek the true nature of things. Dost thou know the true nature of things?"

"No."

"No man can."

"Shapero said I should ask you about Compassion." I said.

"Compassion derives itself from unending love."

He turned away from me and continued his writing.

I was tired and wanted to rest and write some notes of my own. Quietly, I let myself out of the

hidden room. I still hadn't found the Rune of Compassion, but I decided that searching for it any more tonight would be useless.

There was an inn in the center of town. A rotund balding man took my money and sent me to a room at the back of the inn. The hallway leading to my room was dark except for a ray of light shining under a door near the end of the corridor. Curious about who else would be up at this hour, I went to the door and knocked softly. The door swung open and I saw a shepherd sitting on the edge of a plain bed.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I thought this was my room."

I felt distinctly uncomfortable with this lie. White lies had never bothered me much before, but every time I told one in Britannia, I had a bad feeling. It was almost as bad as when I'd taken the gold from Lord British.

"Come in," the shepherd said. "I welcome the company. I am Mentor."

"Nice to meet you. What do you do?"

"I escaped Magincia."

"Magincia?"

"Pride was too great in Magincia."

"There's a girl in Lord British's castle who says the same thing," I said. "Too much Pride."

"The city was destroyed by daemons for its pride. Pride exists without Truth, Love, or Courage."

"Sounds like a bad place to live. I wouldn't want to go there."

"Hmm, perhaps a wise choice, perhaps not."

"Well, I'll let you get some sleep now." I backed out of the door into the hallway. Hallway. I hadn't searched here yet. I went to the end of the corridor, just a few steps beyond Mentor's room. There was a left turn into a dead end. Sitting in the corner was the Rune of Compassion. I picked it up and tucked it into my satchel. This called for a celebration! Even though I was tired, I decided to walk next door and sample the local ale.

The tavern was still crowded, and even smokier than before. I had to elbow my way through the crowd to get a mug. I was leaning against the bar waiting when one of the drunks flopped against me.

"Hey, watch it," I said.

"I am Joe," he said. "Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum."

"Looks like you've already had your bottle of rum. Why don't you give it a rest? What do you do besides drink? Don't you have a Job?"

"I know about the stone."

"Stone?" I hadn't heard anything about stones.

"The yellow Stone is in the dungeon Despire."

"Dungeon. Like small underground places where prisoners are kept and tortured? That kind of dungeon?"

But Joe had already turned away and was staggering off toward some of his rowdy friends. The bartender slapped the mug of ale onto the bar. I took it and downed it in one long swig. This Quest was beginning to look worse and worse. The ale was good, though.

Several tankards later I made my way back to the inn. This time I really was going to get to sleep. That's when I bumped into Thevel.

"Watch it," I snarled. The thought of dungeons (and several ales) had made me surly.

He laughed.

"I see that thou hast spent too much time at the tavern. Thy manners have left thee."

"Yeah, well, you're right. I'm just upset about all this Avatar business. Dungeons, I don't think so. And who are you, anyway?"

"I am Thevel. I search for the mysteries of the magic orbs."

"Magic Orbs?" What next?

"A one-handed beggar knows their secrets. Hast thou seen him?"

What was this, a Dashiell Hammett mystery? One-handed beggar, indeed. "No, all I've seen are some drunken fighters at the tavern."

"Find him at the Serpent's Castle, for he knows of the orbs."

"Well, if you knew where he was, why did you ask me?"

"Thou seem'st like one who hath a need to know."

"Uh, thanks." I felt bad for snapping at him before. "Have a good night."

"Good night. And good luck with your Quest."

It seemed like everyone knew about this Quest. As I made my way to my room, my head was full of mantras, runes, stones, orbs . . . and dungeons. I couldn't help thinking about dungeons. I had a funny feeling that sooner or later I was going to end up in one. That was my last thought as my head hit the pillow.



Entry 4—Decisions

woke the next morning with a headache and a taste in my mouth like an army had marched through it while I slept. I decided that I would go back to Lord British and tell

him, "Thanks, but no thanks." I wasn't about to get caught up in his lunatic Quest.

I hurried through the main square. It was busy this morning—lots of trading going on. I left the city and started across the field to Lord British's castle.

That's when two orcs appeared out of nowhere and jumped me. I found out they were orcs later on—all I knew at the time was that two very ugly green guys were beating up on me. And using axes to do it.

I ran and hunkered down behind a rock. Frantically, with the sound of their approaching footsteps in my ears, I searched through my satchel. The slingshot had to be in here somewhere. Finally I found it. A bow or sword would have been better, but the folks responsible for this nightmare hadn't seen fit to provide one. The sling would have to do.

I stood up and started firing. My first shot went wide and I could swear I saw a grin on the face of one of the orcs. That made me mad. The anger took hold of me and my shots began hitting their mark. The orcs turned tail and started to run. I was so angry and frightened I couldn't stop hurling stones at them.

They dropped about 75 feet away from me. Only then did I notice that my hands were trembling and I was bathed in sweat. I jammed the slingshot into the waistband of my trousers and stood up. My knees were made of water and my stomach was doing flip-flops. I put the back of my



hand to my lips to keep from throwing up. I'd never killed anything other than bugs before.

It took a little while for the nausea to subside. After it passed, I walked over to the two downed orcs. Their eyes stared blindly up at me, their pupils dilated, nearly obscuring the whites of their eyes. Their mouths were pulled into rictus grins. Even dead they smelled foul beyond imagining, nearly prompting a new bout of nausea. I could only guess at the diet that caused such an odor, and I didn't want to think about it. A few feet away from the bodies I noticed a small chest. I went over to it and tripped the latch. A noxious green cloud of vapor escaped from the chest—poison of some kind. I began to feel sick again, but that didn't stop me. I'd beaten these orcs and I deserved some sort of reward. It was in the chest—81 pieces of gold. It didn't seem like enough.

Depressed and sick, I staggered toward Lord British's castle. The courtiers made a path for me as I entered the throne room. Maybe it was the smell from the dead orcs, or maybe the poison gas. I went up to Lord British.

"This Avatar business isn't what I expected," I began, panting. "I appreciate the thought, but I'm just not up for it."

"Thou hast proven thyself in combat. Dost thou deny thy Valor?" asked Lord British.

"Really, it was just dumb luck. Killing those orcs was harder than I thought it would be. I mean, they were really dead. *Dead* dead. I've never killed anyone before."

I swayed. The poison was making me dizzy. Remembering the look on the orcs' faces wasn't helping the sick feeling I had, either.

"Killing should never be easy. Even killing evil things."

"Do you have any way to *Heal* me? Um, I think I'm going to faint now," I said. The room tilted and I fell to the floor.

Through half-closed eyes, I saw Lord British gesture with his staff. There was a blinding flash of light and I felt electricity pass through my body. Oh, it wasn't really electricity, not like plugging my finger into an outlet or anything, but it vibrated me

from the tips of the hair on my head to the very last nerve ending on my toes. When it was over I was about to protest this treatment when I realized that I was fine, as though I'd never been injured or poisoned. Amazing. I had asked to be healed, and apparently the King had done as I'd asked.

"Thanks," I said. I was about to tell him that I wasn't going on the Quest, but I couldn't do it. He'd just healed me, after all, and was looking at me like I was some kind of great guy. Embarrassment I could live with, but not guilt. And I was guilty of something.

For starters, I'd stolen his gold. Also, I'd agreed to go on this Quest, and at the first sign of danger, I was ready to chicken out. These were not the actions of the kind of person who would go on a Quest. I left the throne room and went to find a place to think.

I wandered around the castle, trying to decide what to do, poking my head into rooms I hadn't investigated before. There was a healer on the first floor of the castle. When I went in, I found an injured fighter lying on a pallet.

"Hello," I said. "What's your *Name*?"

"Hello," he said. "My name is Sheesa. Dost thou know of the Mystic Arms?"

"No."

"Seek out the smith named Zircon in Minoc, for he makes the Mystic Arms and only they will save thee from the Abyss."

"Oh great, more dire warnings," I muttered, but the man ignored my outburst.

Leaving the healer's, I went to what would become my favorite room in the castle. It was on the second floor, in the southwest corner. There was a window that faced toward the sea. I leaned against the windowsill and stared out at the tide. The fishy-salt smell of the sea floated up to me.

The castle was interesting, but I knew I had to come to a decision about the Quest. Clearly, Lord British and the people of Britannia took it seriously. Was it fair for me to accept the Quest and feel otherwise? Could I measure up to the standards set by the Virtues?

I decided.

For better or worse, I'd said I would go on the Quest. There were people counting on me, and even

if this ended up being some delusional fantasy, I was going to make the best of it. This felt like *déjà vu*. I'd made this decision once before, but being close to death has a way of making you reassess things. Okay. I was going to do it. Besides, the orcs had attacked me first!

I pulled out the map of Britannia and spread it out on the floor. Castles and towns were marked on the map. My heart sank when I saw how far away they were. And there was the problem of getting to the towns on the islands. When I'd first talked to him, Lord British had told me to stick close to civilization, but, except for a handful of cities, there was no civilization as far as I could tell. Then I noticed the bridges scattered across the map. I knew one thing about bridges—there had to be people nearby to build them.

To the south and west of Britain were two bridges. The terrain looked fairly smooth, no mountains, only grassland and forest. I would rest tonight and start on my way to wherever the bridges took me to in the morning.

Whatever this was, delusion or some alternate reality, I was itchy to get moving, to get to someplace where I hadn't already shown myself to be a stranger and a whiner. Maybe I'd enjoyed my encounter with the orcs after all. I was actually fantasizing about how I would fight against the next creatures who dared attack me. It wasn't like me. I had never gone in for barroom brawls or fighting for its own sake. But when I thought of these slaving monsters who attacked innocent people, I danced to a different tune. Did I have the makings of a hero after all?



Entry 5—Paws

The sun was just up as I left Britain. The grass was still sprinkled with dew and a hazy mist hung low over the ground. Colors were more vivid in Britannia. I had noticed that

from the first. The leaves on the trees were greener. The sky was a clear azure, punctuated by clouds so

white it hurt to look at them. Small wildflowers, in delicate pastel shades, dotted the fields I passed.

Entering the forest was another revelation. The trees rose high overhead, blocking out the light and casting long shadows on the ground. The smells were different, too. Pine, cedar, and a mossy fragrance permeated the air. Sometimes I caught glimpses of the wildlife that lived in the forest. But more often than not I was alone except for the gentle swaying of tree limbs and ferns that grew close to the ground.

The bucolic nature of the trip didn't last. At the end of the day, I was attacked by an orc. He must have been following me from the time I'd entered the forest. The ambush was just like the one I'd experienced outside Lord British's castle. One minute he wasn't there; the next, he was.

I decided that the orcs in Britannia must be related because they all looked the same. Their faces were grey-green, broad and flat, with ugly, pushed-up, piggy noses. Dark circles underscored small, deep-set eyes. Thick rubbery lips framed darkened teeth and receding gums. The sloping forehead and shaggy hair didn't help matters. No, these were some sorry looking creatures!

The orc threw an axe at me. I tried to duck, but his aim was above average. The blade sliced through my tunic and cut into the flesh covering my ribs. I felt something warm and sticky on my side. Surprisingly, it didn't hurt much, but I was worried about tetanus. The shot I fired back went wide, but the next one hit its target. Gradually, small wounds peppered the orc's skin and blackish-red blood ran from them. He threw an axe and I responded in kind. We stood there taking shots at each other, and I didn't even realize I was screaming until the battle was over.

It took a few hours for me to pull myself together. Binding up my wounds took a while, and I needed to rest and stop shaking. I had read in *The Book of Mystic Wisdom* about magic spells. One of them was a *Heal* spell, and I thought, *What the heck, I'll try it*. I had to look it up again and mix the proper herbs (reagents, they were called in the book). So I pulled out ginseng and spider silk, mixed them, and said, "Heal!" feeling slightly foolish. But damned if the throbbing in my side didn't suddenly disappear.

Hardly daring to believe, I peeked under the bloody bandage—and there was no wound. My side was as smooth and whole as it had been before the orc had sliced me with the axe! Now I became interested in *The Book of Mystic Wisdom* for real. There were powerful-sounding spells in that volume.

Unfortunately, not all the magic words were filled in. I must have had an early edition of the book, or so I surmised.

Finally, after getting over my shock at the discovery of magic that worked, I turned my attention to the dead orc. I searched him, holding my breath as I rummaged through his belongings. He had several rusty axes, a packet of food, and a small chest of gold. I took the gold and examined the food packet. It smelled pretty bad. It shouldn't have surprised me that orcs would eat some pretty grisly meals, but this was disgusting. I knew I would need to stock up on supplies soon.

The battle made me more cautious, jumpy, actually, and with good reason. The hills and forests in this part of Britannia turned out to be lousy with orcs. I must have fought ten or fifteen of them before I reached the first of the two crude, wooden bridges I'd seen on the map of the southwest of Britain. Three days had passed since I'd left the relative safety of Britain, and I was ready for some decent food and some sleep. And the gold I'd scavenged from the dead orcs was really weighing me down. I decided I'd have to find a bank somewhere, or else I'd have to spend some of it. Didn't Britannia have any paper money?

As I crossed the second bridge, I spotted a small town to the northeast. Civilization at last. I'd reached Paws, a small village on the eastern coast of Britannia. Surrounded by a high stone wall, it held rough huts and shops. All in all, Paws looked much smaller and more primitive than Britain.

The streets here weren't covered with straw (let alone cobblestones, like the main road leading into Britain), but were simply hard-packed dirt, and a rainstorm the night before my arrival had turned the streets to mud. A cart was stuck in the mire and I helped push it free. Children played in the muck, laughing at each other as they slipped and fell. The

townspeople made their way gingerly across the streets. The women held their skirts up, showing their ankles and the wooden clogs on their feet. In a few places, stones and split tree limbs had been placed to provide slightly cleaner passage.

Hopping from stone to stone, I made my way toward a small building on the south side of town. Bins of fruits and vegetables lined the walls. Hams, onions, sausages, and dried herbs hung from the ceiling. The smell of fresh-baked bread lingered in the air. A tall, thin, jovial man in a white apron stood behind a counter in the center of the store.

"Greetings, friend," he said. "Can I interest thee in rations?"

I picked up an apple and sniffed at it. The aroma was crisp and sweet. I examined it for worm holes, but found none.

"Yes," I said. "I'll need supplies for a long journey overland. Do you have dried provisions?"

"Aye," he said. "The best in Britannia, and at a good price."

I bit into the apple. It was slightly tart and crunchy, just the way I like them. The proprietor began moving through the shop, picking and choosing provisions for my trip. In a few moments food was piled high in the center of the counter. I paid him and stuffed the food into the cloth sack he'd thrown in with the order.

"Thanks for your help," I said.

"Good luck on thy journey," he replied.

I stepped back into the sunshine. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the brightness. An armory stood across the street and I was about to head toward it when I heard a horse. Turning, I saw a stable to my right, bordered by a corral. The stable was made of split logs fitted together. Mud mixed with straw was packed into the gaps between the logs.

I walked to the edge of the corral and looked at the horses. These were working horses, stout and heavy-boned. They looked sturdy and solid. A tall, heavy-set man walked out of the stable.

"They are beautiful," he said. "And they run like the wind."

"They seem very nice," I said, "but I don't know anything about horses."

"I could assist thee. See that roan pony over

there?" He pointed at a reddish-brown horse with a sprinkling of white on his flanks.

"Yes."

"That is Mysterious Moe. He is a gentle horse and well broken. Wouldst thou be interested in buying him?"

I hadn't considered riding across country, but I liked the idea. A horse would be faster and maybe I could outrun some of those orcs. There was just one problem—I didn't know how to ride.

"I don't know how to ride." I'd decided honesty was the best policy here.

The man shrugged as if it made no difference. "He is a very forgiving animal."

"I mean, I've never been on a horse before."

"It matters not. Thou wilt be able."

"Says you."

He wrapped his huge arm around my shoulder—his hand felt like a Christmas ham—guiding me gently in the direction of Mysterious Moe. "That I do! He is a gentle animal and will not throw thee." I could swear the horse was studying me as intently as I was studying it.

"How much?" I asked, after an interval in which my impetuous side got the better of my good sense.

"One hundred gold pieces. 'Tis a bargain for so fine a steed."

After buying rations, I was feeling a little broke, but the idea of riding across Britannia was beginning to grow on me.

"Okay, but if he throws me, I want my money back."

I didn't hear his answer because he was climbing over the fence and walking toward Mysterious Moe. Moe just stood there while the man tied a short rope around his neck and led him to the gate. Shoving the gate open, he pulled Moe through.

"One hundred gold pieces," he said.

I counted out the gold and dropped it into his outstretched hands. Thrusting the rope into my hand, the man nodded at me, then turned and walked back to the stable.

Moe looked at me and I looked at him. Both of us seemed nervous. Okay, so I was nervous and Moe was cool as a cucumber. It was going to be a long Quest.

The crossing to the armory was muddy. By the time we reached it, Moe was covered up to his knees in muck. He looked at me balefully as I tied him up outside. The armory wasn't as elaborate as the one in Britain. There was no forge for making chain mail and plate armor, only two long tables covered with cloth and leather goods. Two men sat at the table piecing together a leather vest.

"May I interest thee in some armor?" asked one of the men. He didn't look up from his sewing. The round needle punched a hole in the leather and the man pulled a thick length of cord through.

"How much?" I asked.

He quoted me a price I couldn't afford. Maybe I could buy some after I acquired more gold. I was about to leave the armory when I heard a strange noise coming from the east side of the shop. The men acted as if they hadn't heard anything, but I saw one of them pause ever so slightly in his sewing.

Something was behind the east wall and I wanted to find out what it was. Hidden doors were the norm in Britannia and I searched for one now. It took a few minutes, but I found it.

The door swung open.

The room was bathed in red, green, and blue light. Incense floated and swirled in random patterns around the jars and bottles lining the shelves on the walls. A wizened old woman sat on a low stool in one corner. I walked toward her. She raised her head and I realized with a start that she was blind.

Her milky white eyes gazed at me unseeing, but I felt she was looking into my soul. Then the moment passed and she was just an old woman in a small smoky room.

"May I interest thee in reagents?" she asked.

There was little money left after buying the horse and supplies, but I'd discovered that traveling in Britannia was dangerous without spells to cure and heal. One thing I had done on my trip to Paws was to study up a little each night in *The Book of Mystic Wisdom*. I figured that as long as I was on this Quest I might as well play by the ground rules, one of which was that magic worked.

After purchasing what reagents I could afford, I went to one corner of the shop and mixed together a

number of spell-casting combinations. It took a few tries to get the mixtures just right, but after I had the hang of it, none of my spells fizzled. I didn't want to be caught outside without having some spells prepared.

The remainder of the day I spent getting to know many of the townspeople. Zair the Wise told me more about the Codex and something called the Three-Part Key. I found out about Mystic Armor from Lady Tessa. And Barren told me where to find the Rune of Humility: in the southeastern corner of town, in the small hills.

The rune was where Barren had said it would be.

With a small part of my Quest completed, I decided to go back to Britannia to see Lord British. The castle had become my touchstone—I knew I would always be safe and protected there.



Entry 6—The Shrine of Compassion and the Quest Begins

Riding back to Britain took about half the time it had when I was on foot. I did outrun some orcs, but others were able to ambush me and I had to fight. Though I was wounded during these fights, none of my injuries were serious enough to prevent me from riding on to Lord British's castle. I trusted that he would heal my wounds when I saw him, so I saved my reagents for real emergencies.

The court was interested in news from other towns, so when I arrived I was the center of attention for several days. I was relieved when the interest finally died down and I could spend some time alone. Lord British listened intently to what I had learned in Paws, but he offered little more information about my Quest. Resting at his castle was pleasant, but I quickly grew restless. The time soon came for me to resume my explorations.

• • •

I rode east from Lord British's castle as the sun was reaching its peak. It was a beautiful fall day; the air was crisp and took the heat out of the sunshine. I

was heading for the first of the two bridges that would lead me to the Shrine of Compassion. During my stay in Britain I'd learned the location of the shrine from Shapero and I intended to go there and learn its secrets.

Of course, if I had paid any attention to the book I'd read about the history of Britannia, I would have realized that this journey would be dangerous.

I passed a circle of stones like the ones I'd found near my car, before I came to Britannia. (Odd how that felt like years ago, in another life.) I dismounted and ate some rations. While I was there, a blue shimmering doorway appeared in the center of the circle of stones. The hair on the back of my neck stood up and the air smelled like rain. Mysterious Moe whinnied and pulled at his tether. Then the doorway disappeared again. I wondered what would happen if I stepped through the doorway, but I didn't want to try. Not just now. Another memory came flooding back—the last time I'd stepped through one of those doors, I'd ended up here in Britannia.

The doors must be some sort of teleportation device, a link between dimensions. The thought crossed my mind that one of these doors could take me home, but I filed the thought away for later—I had a Quest to complete. I had even gotten more accustomed to killing . . . orcs, at least. I didn't have violent reactions any more. I'd found that my trusty slingshot rarely let me down. Funny. I'd never thought I'd enjoy this kind of life—fighting, sleeping outdoors, no cars, no fast food, no MTV—but I did.

I stood and brushed the crumbs from my lunch off my pants, then untied Moe and pulled myself onto his back. I leaned forward and patted his neck. He shook his mane and tugged at his bridle. The decision to buy Moe had been a good one. He was proving to be more than just transportation; I'd become attached to him.

The first of the two bridges leading to the Shrine of Compassion was in front of me. When I started to cross it I was attacked again. This time there were two orcs and an even meaner-looking troll. Ugly as sin, all three of them. I didn't waste any time talking, I just started shooting. Perhaps I was a little nervous. I don't

know. At any rate, my aim was off, and they seemed to be better at hitting me with their axes than I had come to expect. I had cuts and bruises all over my body by the time I finally killed them. A couple of nasty gashes criss-crossed my upper arms and chest, but other than that I seemed to be fine. They hadn't hit me solidly, just a lot of glancing blows. Once again I searched the bodies of my slain foes and found chests filled with gold. Then I bandaged my injuries and rode on toward the shrine.

After crossing the bridge, I found myself at the edge of a forest. There didn't seem to be any way to pass around it. So, after a moment of hesitation, I plunged in among the thick foliage, finding it cooler under the trees, and darker. I guided Moe northeast and we cleared a path as we went.

I was beginning to enjoy this part of the Quest. Riding through a cool forest on a crisp fall day didn't seem like a bad way to spend some time. The stable master had been right. I already felt as if I'd always been a rider. And Moe seemed to be in high spirits. He pranced through the woods, his hooves making thudding noises in the leaves that carpeted the forest floor. Then I noticed the birds had stopped singing. All the usual sounds of the forest had died away, too. The only sound was Moe's hooves. Even the wind seemed to have stopped.

And then the mage attacked.

His first attack knocked me off Mysterious Moe and sent me tumbling end over end. For a moment, I lay on my back, the breath knocked out of me, then I started to pull out my slingshot. But he had already cast another spell. I felt as if my muscles were being ripped out. I fired off a shot at him, wishing I had the ingredients for an offensive spell, but he dodged the rock from my slingshot easily. He gestured at me and I ducked behind a tree in time to feel something hot pass by my head.

Moe's high-pitched whinny pierced the air and I knew he'd been hit. Anger surged through me. It was one thing to attack me, but to attack a defenseless animal really made my blood boil.

I knew I didn't have a lot of time. The mage was obviously more powerful and dangerous than I was. All I had was a stupid slingshot. I made a mental

note to pick up something more deadly as soon as possible.

I fired another volley of stones at him and his eye collapsed into a small hole of black. Blood ran down the front of his face. It was a lucky shot; he crumpled like a rag doll. I didn't feel the surge of nausea this time. It was getting easier for me to kill, but I didn't like the other feeling I had—that I'd enjoyed it. There was no question that he'd deserved what he got, though. It had been him or me.

I found myself over. My clothes were a mess, burned and singed from the fireball I'd dodged. Some of my hair had also been scorched away and the skin underneath felt swollen and tender. I had more contusions than before and these were ugly and raw, as if they'd been made by a rough-edged instrument. I knew I had to rest up, otherwise I wouldn't be able to heal.

Then I examined Moe. A long, jagged wound ran across his left rear flank. The muscles under his skin twitched when I touched the area, but he didn't move. He craned his neck around and nuzzled me as though for comfort. I reached out and stroked his velvet nose. There was pain in his soft brown eyes.

I didn't want to make camp here, so close to a dead body. It was sure to attract wild animals and other scavengers. And I really didn't want to be around in case the mage had buddies. I took Moe's bridle and together we staggered through the trees a suitable distance until we found a small clearing. Exhausted, I flopped down onto the forest floor and covered myself with my cloak. It didn't matter that the ground was hard and rocky—I was asleep instantly.

I floated in darkness, dreaming of smog, and of telephones that became slingshots, and of beautiful women who became fortune-telling hags. Then someone was shaking me. I woke to find Moe pushing at me with his nose, trying to rouse me. He pawed at the ground, then shook his head.

"I suppose you're ready to go," I said aloud.

Moe nodded.

"Like you can understand me, right," I said. Moe cocked his head to one side and waited.

"All right. I'm coming."

I sat up and winced. I was sore and stiff, but to my

amazement, my wounds had somehow healed during the night. There were scars criss-crossing my torso and arms where I'd been wounded, but they had the pink color of freshly healed skin. I didn't know what was in the air in Britannia, but it was pretty incredible stuff.

I decided we would make our way as quickly as possible to the Shrine of Compassion. If my dead reckoning was correct, it was nearby.

It took us all morning to slog through the forest. At the eastern edge, I saw the second bridge leading to the shrine. It was surrounded by marshes.

I rode into the marsh. The goo sucked at Moe's hooves and as he lifted them noxious gas oozed from the ground. A sudden wave of dizziness hit me and the world swam before my eyes. Poison! It hit me instantly.

I had to get out of the marsh, but I couldn't go back to the forest in the shape I was in. Somehow I managed to stagger across the bridge and out of the swamp, but I was still in bad shape.

There had to be a cure for this swamp sickness. I didn't want to die out here alone. I sank to my knees.

Okay, I thought. Let's try magic. This is a magical world and magic should be able to fix me up.

Sweat rolled into my eyes and my hands were shaking as I pulled out *The Book of Mystic Wisdom*. I flipped through the pages quickly, looking for the instructions for the *Cure* spell. Naturally, I'd forgotten the procedure to cast the spell. My head was beginning to throb and burn. The text blurred and the edges of the pages grew dark. I struggled to hang on long enough—then I found it.

I said my name aloud, as prescribed in the book. I pulled a ginseng-and-garlic mixture from the bag and smoothed it over my body. A light appeared at my feet and slowly started to move up. As it rose, I felt the strength flow back into my limbs. My mottled skin regained its normal color and my breathing grew easier. The queasiness faded and a sense of well-being permeated me. By the time the light had passed over my head and dissipated, I was free of the poison. I was cured, but not healed. It would take some rest for me to regain

my full strength. But I knew I was close to the shrine and I wasn't going to rest until I reached it.

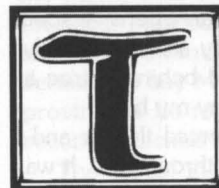
I walked over to Moe to see if he needed any help, but he seemed okay. Pulling myself into the saddle, I turned south.

A small ridge of mountains rose up before me. I started toward them and soon found a path worn into the rock. I followed it south, then east, then around a turn to the north. And there was the Shrine of Compassion.

I rested that night outside the shrine, and entered it the next morning. A large stone ankh dominated the center of the shrine. It was surrounded by a circle of white quartz-like rocks like the ones that surrounded the strange blue doorways.

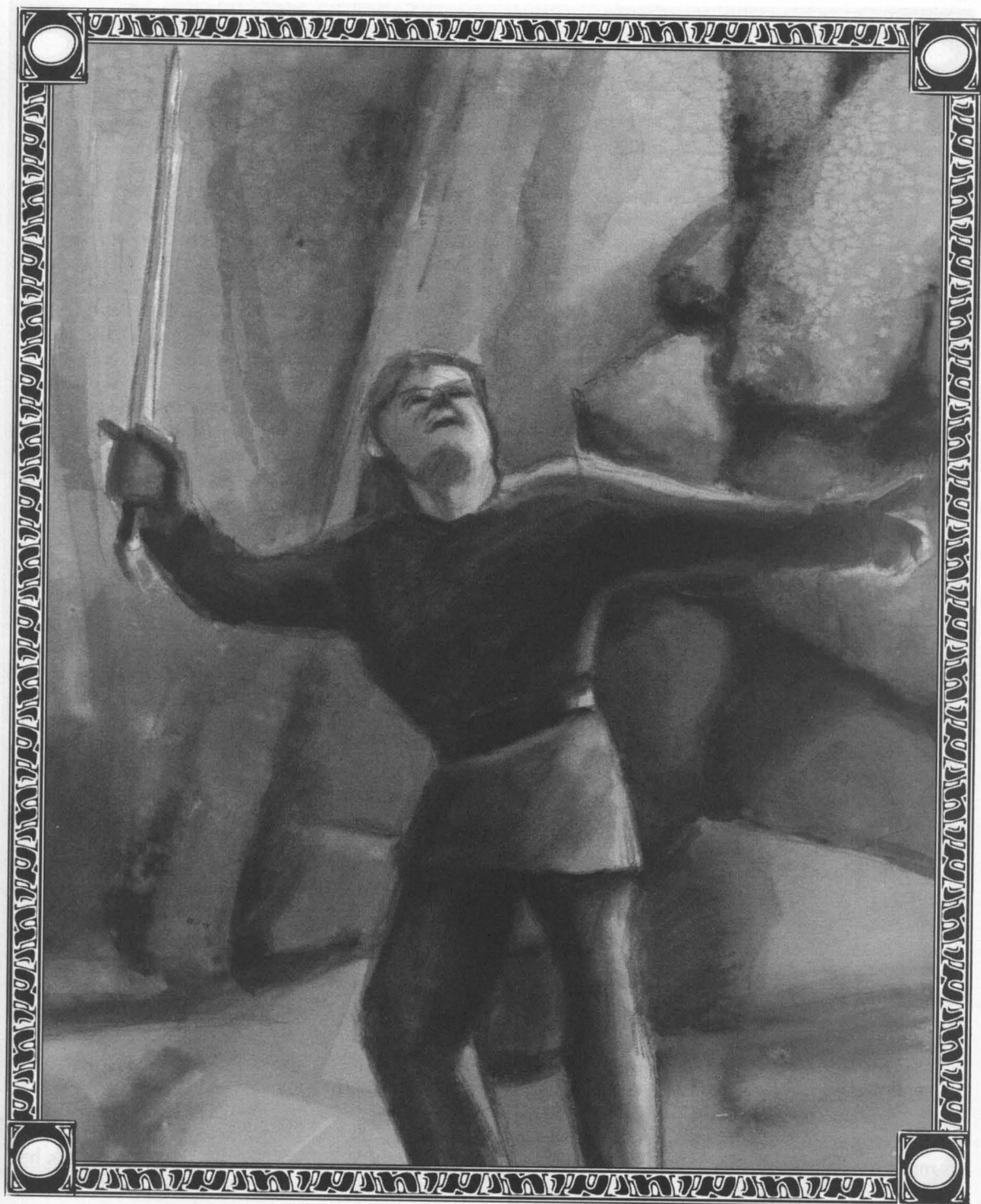
I don't remember what happened to me in the shrine, only that I was granted a vision. I came away from my meditations with a sense of peace and the feeling that I must return to the shrine again.

I camped outside of the shrine for the rest of the day. The next morning I packed up my gear and rode east. Only a short time later, an impassable mountain range blocked my progress. And when I finally found a way through the terrain, there was water I couldn't cross. After several hours of searching the area, I came to the conclusion that I wasn't going to go any farther in this direction. I couldn't find a passage through the mountains, and I didn't have a boat to carry me and Moe across the water. Frustrated and tired, I turned around and headed back toward the shrine. It was the only landmark I had in the area and I needed it to find my way back to Britain.



Entry 7-In the Wilds

he way back to the Shrine of Compassion was an endless procession of orcs, trolls, and all kinds of foul creatures. The mountains and forests were crawling with trolls and orcs. I discovered the joys of fighting ettins (nasty two-headed guys with a bad attitude and great aim with a boulder). Distinctly less joyful were battles with headless creatures endowed with huge torsos and



burly arms that ended in talon-like fingers. Naked and dumb, they never stopped fighting until they were dead.

Occasionally, Moe and I were able to outrun a group of monsters. But often that seemed to drive us into the arms of something worse.

The Quest was going to be tough to complete in one piece. Maybe if I died, I would wake up back home. The idea appealed to me, but I didn't really want to die trying to find out. Besides, I didn't want to leave Moe out here by himself.

We headed north from the bridges leading to the Shrine of Compassion. We were about three days away from Britain, to the east. The map showed that we might be able to go around the large inland sea, through the deep forest, and toward the range of mountains to the east. As always, I had to fight my way through trolls, headlesses, orcs, rogues, and renegade mages. Each battle brought me closer to death, but I always managed to hang on. Moe was getting good at hiding during battles. When the battle was won, I'd whistle and he'd come running.

The gold I had accumulated was going to buy me a bow. Maybe even a crossbow. We needed better protection.

I was already wounded from a battle with an evil wizard. A review of the history of Britannia told me that renegade mages used the magic of Britannia for evil purposes, so I felt just a little virtuous when I managed to defeat one in battle. Unfortunately, the fight left me weak and badly wounded, but I pushed on instead of resting and healing. I was getting pretty cocky until I came up against my first balron.

He swooped down from the sky, his leathery wings blowing gales of wind at me. Horns grew from his head and his eyes glowed yellow. Six-inch-long fangs protruded from his mouth and his smile revealed rows of razor-sharp teeth. That smile sent chills down my spine.

Moe let out a noise that sounded like a scream. He reared up on his back legs and I tightened my knees to keep from sliding off. When he came back onto his forelegs, I jumped off his back and smacked his rump to make him run away. But there was no place for him to go. We were in a small mountain pass with

sheer mountain faces all around us. The only way out was through the balron.

The balron threw back his head and laughed—I guess it was laughter, but it was like no sound I'd heard before. I was tired, injured, no match for him—and he knew it. He circled around me lazily, toying with me. I wanted to run, but I realized that he would just hunt me down. Besides, there was something about him that got my back up. I'd be damned if I'd let him see that I was afraid. And I had to protect Moe.

I stood my ground and readied my slingshot wishing for the millionth time that I had a better weapon. He gestured at me and I felt my body catch fire. I screamed and beat at my clothes, but it didn't do any good. With the last bit of strength I had, I fired off a volley. It hit him, but didn't have any effect. He gestured at me again and the world went black.



Entry 8—Back at Lord British's Castle

Everything was dark. I heard a voice calling my name. Then there was a rushing sensation as though I were flying or swimming up from the bottom

of a very deep pool. I opened my eyes and found myself in Lord British's castle.

"Wha . . . What happened?" My tongue felt thick and clumsy.

"I have brought thee back from the brink," said Lord British. "Thou shouldst be more careful on thy adventures. I was able to salvage some of thy belongings, but not all. Good luck on thy Quest."

"The Quest," I began. "I've failed. I've failed you. I don't think I'm the one for this Quest. I almost get myself killed and I've only been on the Quest for a couple of weeks. Maybe someone else should go on the Quest."

Lord British didn't say anything. He just looked at me with an understanding expression that made me nervous.

"I think thou wilt find that thy experiences have tempered thee."



I felt like a failure. "I don't know."

"Good luck on thy Quest. Remember to come to me shouldst thou need assistance."

"But . . ."

Of course it was too late. He had already turned to another courtier and was deep in conversation. There wasn't any other choice but to continue. And though I didn't want to admit it, I wanted to go on.

My legs were wobbly as I left the throne room and went to the room I'd begun to think of as my own. I checked my supplies. The runes were still there, along with my sling and clothes. I was missing all the gold I'd accumulated from my battles and some of my food. Except for the knowledge I'd gained during my battles, I was pretty much back to square one.

Then I realized I was missing something else—Mysterious Moe. I ran down the hall and burst into the throne room. Courtiers looked up from their conversations and a hush fell over the room. Even the jugglers dropped their clubs.

"Mysterious Moe," I gasped.

"Who?" asked Lord British.

"My horse. Mysterious Moe."

Lord British got a pained expression on his face.

"I am sorry. I could not save thy horse."

I had suspected as much but didn't want to face the truth. Mysterious Moe, with his soft brown eyes and uneven canter, was dead. My eyes stung and the lump in my throat was choking me. There was nothing left to do but go rest up and start again tomorrow. I walked from the room on stiff legs, my body painfully held erect. I didn't want to dwell on my loss; instead I chose to push the pain aside and concentrate on the Quest.

I thought about what I'd learned so far. One thing I knew was that I'd need better weapons if I hoped to survive the wilds of Britannia. A bow, or even a crossbow, would be a good choice, but that cost money, which meant killing more monsters. Killing monsters wasn't particularly repugnant to me now, especially if the monsters were balrons. How I would kill a balron wasn't clear to me, but the very thought of it made me smile. I was still smiling when I fell asleep.



Entry 9—The Shrine of Sacrifice

The next day I set out on the Quest again. I made my way east, then north, back to the range of mountains where I'd lost Moe. It was cold in the mountains. Though it was still early fall, here in the mountains it felt more like the dead of winter. I pulled my cloak tight and tucked my chin into my neck, but it didn't help much. Errant gusts of wind still blew down my back, making me shiver. It had been a difficult journey so far, but I was getting used to battling my way cross-country.

I discovered that Lord British had been right—I was changing, becoming stronger and more adept at the use of weapons and magic. There were limits to what I could do, of course, but I was stronger than before.

I pushed on through the mountains hoping I would meet the balron again. I wanted him dead, or as dead as something that unnatural could get. But I didn't get the chance. As I traveled east, the mountains gradually sloped down into hills, then into smooth grassland dotted with trees.

Wandering aimlessly about was not a good idea and I wanted to find a village or town to rest in. I knew that towns were often located near water, so I started south, toward the sea. Also, I wanted to get as far away from the cold as I could. Sometimes when you're not looking for something you find it, which was how I discovered the Shrine of Sacrifice.

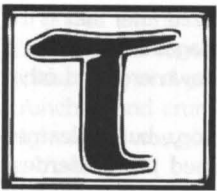
The Shrine of Sacrifice sat serenely across a small footbridge in a grove of trees. The fact that the site was so peaceful should have made me wary, but it didn't. I started across the bridge and was ambushed by a couple of orcs. You could hardly cross a bridge in Britannia without fighting a pack of orcs or trolls (or both). I don't know why I didn't think of it before I started across. I won that battle, but I was getting tired of killing orcs.

The Shrine of Sacrifice was just like the Shrine of Compassion—a large ankh in the center of a ring of white stones. I discovered I couldn't enter the shrine

without the appropriate rune and Mantra, so I drew a small map to guide me back here later. I knew I'd have to come back.

A small grove of trees just north of the shrine looked like a nice place to camp, so I settled down for a short rest. Both moons were dark that night and I had just lain down to rest when a strange phenomenon occurred. Small mushrooms began sprouting up all over the forest floor. I remembered reading in *The Book of Mystic Wisdom* about nightshade, a reagent so deadly and potent that it could only be harvested when the moons were dark. I grabbed as many of these small mushrooms as I could. Though I had no idea how to use them yet, I planned to make a careful study of the spells in *The Book of Mystic Wisdom* to see what nightshade could do.

The next morning I made my way south again. Eventually I came to a small town.



Entry 10—Vesper

his town was about the size of Paws, and was also ringed by a high stone wall. As in Britain and Paws, the guards at the front gates didn't interfere with me.

I went north on the well-worn path that cut through the grass. There weren't regular streets here, just paths worn by constant use. At the northernmost point in town I found a double throne. Seated on the throne were two mages. As mages go, they were fairly typical. Robes, great staff, book of lore, long beard. They eyed me impassively as I approached.

"Hello," I said.

"Greetings," one of them replied. "I am Twin Gates."

"Where am I?" I asked. "This town isn't on my map."

Inclining his head, the mage acknowledged my comment. The other looked amused. "Thou art in Vesper. Hast thou come a great way?"

"Yes, I have." Little did he know.

"We are honored by the visit of the one on the Quest," he stated with some formality.

I was beginning to wonder if I had "Quest" written across my forehead.

"Do you know anything about the Quest?"

"I am afraid I cannot help thee," replied the other mage.

"Well, thanks anyway." I would have expected these two to know something, but I struck out with them.

I turned and walked into the center of town. Vesper consisted of some small huts and a central marketplace. Several shepherds were gathered together in a corner of the courtyard. They smiled at me and gestured for me to join them.

"I am Plain," said the smallest man in the group. "This is Simple, Gem, Joseph, and Randal."

"Hello," I said, acknowledging them all and squatting on the grass with them. "Why are you here?"

"I am on a pilgrimage," said Joseph. "Dost thou know that there is no Shrine of Pride?"

"No."

"Pride is not a Virtue of the Avatar."

"Pride has no virtue," Plain said. "That is why Magincia was destroyed. Humility is the virtue that remains."

"But what about the Shrine," I asked. I knew I would need to know later.

"The Shrine of Humility lies on the north bank of the Isle of the Abyss and is guarded by endless hordes of daemons. It is off the coast southeast of Britannia," said Simple.

"Endless hordes of Daemons?" I asked.

"Beware."

"What about the Mantra?" I asked.

"Since Humility is the opposite of Pride, so it is with its Mantra," said Gem.

"But I don't know the Mantra for Pride."

"When you do, reverse it." Riddles, I hate riddles. Oh, well. I decided it was better than being bored.

I thanked them for their help and got to my feet. Brushing the grass off my pants I walked toward the arms shop ahead of me. I asked about crossbows, but they didn't have any. I bought a bow instead, thanked

the man for his time, and exited the shop. There were narrow corridors on either side of the arms shop. Down one was a small inn; down the other, a tavern and the shop that really made my trip to Vesper worthwhile.

Behind the armorer's shop was a Guild shop. Though what guild I wasn't certain. They didn't say.

Compasses, rope, bells, and various pieces of nautical equipment were piled on shelves or hung from the ceiling on the left side of the room. A long glass-topped case ran along the right side of the room. Under the glass, multi-faceted jewels glowed in the dim lamp light. Next to the jewels were keys on oversized round key rings. Row upon row of torches lined the walls like soldiers at attention. The man who slouched behind the counter was anything but soldierly.

"Avast ye, mate! Sure ye wish to **B**uy from Ol' Long John Leary?"

The speaker had several days' growth of beard. He sported an eye patch and a peg leg. I thought I'd been dropped into *Treasure Island* for a moment. Every time he opened his mouth I caught the distinct aroma of rum.

"Welcome to the Guild shop. Like to see me goods?"

I stood for a moment with my mouth working, but no sounds came out.

"C'mon, mate. What'll it be? Ye look like a fish gaspin' fer water. Like to see me goods?" he repeated.

"Yes," I managed to get out.

"Good, mate. Here's what I got: torches, magic keys, magic gems. Wanna buy?"

"What does a magic key do?" I asked.

"Opens any locked door ye might encounter, mate. A handy tool depending on yer occupation."

"And the gems?"

"Ah, that's a secret, mate. Ye don't want Long John to give everything away."

I looked over the tray he put in front of me. If I ended up in the dungeons, the torches would probably come in handy. And if I didn't know what the gems did, I figured I'd rather have some than find out I needed one at a bad time. The keys I

knew would come in handy—I'd already run across locked doors.

"What about something to help me figure out where I am?"

Asking for item 'D' at any of the Guild shops will allow you to buy a sextant—if you have enough gold.

"Ah, ye mean a sextant. Aye, I have one of those. It'll cost ye 900 gold pieces."

"Nine hundred gold pieces!"

"That's the price, mate. Take it or leave it."

This was a great shop. Lots of new items, and they mostly looked handy. But I didn't have enough gold for all that stuff, especially the sextant. I didn't even consider stealing from the townsfolk, who were, for the most part, trusting. I'd realized after taking the King's gold that I couldn't do that again. So I spent a few days around Vesper hunting down orcs and other nasties and getting their gold.

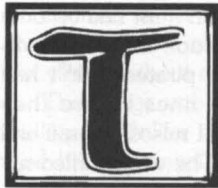
I know it sounds a little predatory, but I'd learned that the evil creatures that roamed the wilderness were a danger not only to me but to the innocent citizens of the land. By ridding Britannia of these monsters, I was helping the good folk. No doubt Hawkwind would say my Valor had increased, and perhaps some of my other attributes as well. Chalk one up to enlightened self-interest.

Finally I returned to the Guild Shop and purchased the sextant and as many of the other items as I could afford. This little shopping spree took me down to my last gold piece, but I had decided to return to Britain. I wasn't thrilled about it, but somehow I knew I needed to see Lord British again and tell him what I'd learned about the Quest. I knew there would be battles—and treasure—along the way.

I stayed for a few more days in Vesper before returning to Britain. The shepherd Serville was very helpful, even though I had to promise not to reveal his hidden location.

Editor's Note

Once he acquired a sextant, the Avatar kept a record of the latitude and longitude of each place he visited. The latitudes and longitudes of the places of importance in Britannia can be found in the back of this volume.



Entry 11—Locke Lake and Cove

he people in Vesper treated me well, but my wounds were healed and I was getting restless again. Since I'd agreed to undertake this Quest I'd found myself unable to stay

too long in any one place. The need to reach the Quest's conclusion drove me onward.

It was late fall when I left Vesper. The leaves on the trees had turned and the forest was on fire with golds, reds, and yellows. Underfoot the fallen leaves crunched and crumbled to dust. The air was cold at night and I was glad I'd thought to buy a wool cloak in Vesper.

I stopped and gathered more nightshade near the Shrine of Sacrifice before I made my way into the mountains. The thought of getting snowbound in the mountains terrified me. Visions of the Donner party wandered through my dreams and I hurried to get through the higher elevations before first snowfall.

It was bitter cold in the mountains. My breath formed little clouds in front of my face and after a few hours my feet and hands were numb. But I kept pushing forward. It wasn't just the cold that drove me on—it was the thought of meeting another balron. With my stiff hands and feet I would be an even easier target than before. I'd gotten over some of my anger at Moe's death and my more rational side knew that looking for an encounter with a balron was stupid.

I reached the edge of the mountains after three days without rest. The air grew progressively warmer as I made my way through the hills. By the time I

reached level ground, I was exhausted. Making camp at the foot of the mountains may not have been the wisest thing to do, but I wasn't feeling wise, just tired. The night passed uneventfully and I awoke the next morning feeling much more like myself. The magical properties of Britannia helped me grow stronger every day.

To the west of the mountains was Locke Lake. I had managed to decipher enough of the runes to make out the names of most of the places on the map. Locke Lake was ringed with poisonous swamps, so I skirted the lake and made my way around the northern edge. Orcs lived in these woods and I knew they'd be after me if I didn't move quickly.

As I made my way south along the western shore, I caught a glimpse of something moving on the waves of the lake. At first I thought it was a figment of my imagination, but then it moved again. Finally it came close enough that I could see that it was a small ship. The sail was puffed out and the ship moved quickly



over the water. At the top of the mast a small flag whipped about in the breeze. The flag was black with a white skull and crossbones centered in the middle. The Jolly Roger. It was a pirate ship.

I had just realized this when the ship's cannon fired. A cannonball landed in front of me, sending up a huge plume of dirt and knocking me on my back. The force of my fall onto the cold ground knocked the

breath out of me. Lying there gasping for air, I wondered what I'd done to provoke them. Then I realized it didn't matter. They were going to kill me if I didn't get up and defend myself.

I rolled over and pushed myself up. Lungs burning and legs weak, I struggled to my feet. Another cannonball landed. Dirt flew, tufts of grass jumped into the air, the earth rocked. A small crater appeared in the ground and my ears rang from the sound. I fell forward and began crawling. Silver dots swam before my eyes. I waited for another explosion, but the cannons fell silent.

Why hadn't they killed me? I rolled over and looked in the direction of the pirate ship. The boat had pulled even with the shore and a gangplank was being lowered. They were going to come ashore and finish me off.

I crawled forward and crouched behind a tree. It was time to analyze my options. I wasn't dead, but I was pretty beat up. If I waited and let them come at me, I would lose the element of surprise and any hope I had of surviving. Gathering my courage, I leapt out from behind the tree and charged the boat.

The pirates turned and looked at me, their mouths open in surprise. I'd expected a whole crew to come charging at me, but only two men were visible on board. Charging up the gangplank, I fired one arrow after another from my bow, but the pirates proved to be a lot tougher than most of the people and creatures I'd encountered in Britannia.

I had little time to think about pirate durability; all my thoughts were instantly centered on dodging pirate attacks. They were better armed than I and had no interest in taking prisoners. Our blood splattered the deck, making it slick. My arrows continued to find their mark. My bow arm grew tired, but by this time the pirates were in worse shape. I tried to keep my distance from them and keep the arrows flying. One particularly macho pirate slipped in his own blood, but just laughed and applied his weapon more fiercely than before.

I was getting weaker by the minute and needed to end this battle quickly. In a frenzied spurt, I launched arrow after arrow. My blind panic lasted long enough for me to defeat the pirates, but I found myself

wounded and in need of rest. I made sure the pirates' boat was firmly anchored then collapsed gratefully into slumber without even bothering to light a fire. My last thought was that I would have been dead if I'd tried to fight the pirates with the slingshot.

• • •

The next morning was overcast and grey. My muscles were stiff, but otherwise I felt fine. After a quick breakfast, I boarded my new boat and looked around.

She was a tidy vessel. The pirates had taken good care of her. The rigging on the main mast had become tangled during the night and it took me a while to straighten it out. Apparently the pirates hadn't had enough time to secure all the lines before they attacked. Casting off from shore, I raised the sail and let it catch the morning breeze. The wind ruffled my hair and my cloak billowed behind me. It was just like with the horse. Somehow I found myself knowing just what to do, and I was sailing like a bloody pirate myself. I began to search for a tributary that would take me out to sea. Now that I had a boat, I could reach the islands off the mainland and pursue more information about the Quest.

I soon discovered that orcs and rogues who lived along the water's edge could do an astonishing amount of damage to me, even from the shore. Careful sailing kept me from getting too close. Sailing clockwise, I made my way around the lake.

Marsh and woodlands dominated the northern edge of the lake. To the east, steep cliffs rose out of the water. I rounded the eastern shore and headed southwest. Soon I saw the Shrine of Compassion nestled among the high cliffs. It glowed softly in the grey light. It was possible to reach the shrine from the lake, and I filed that information away for future reference.

An estuary on the southern edge of the lake flowed south; I swung the boat around and steered it carefully into the small opening.

Navigating this passage was tricky and I feared losing the bottom of the hull in the shallow water. I hoped this was my way out of the lake. I wanted to get to open sea and make my way to the islands offshore. Following the stream, I turned south, then

east, before stopping abruptly at a small inlet. Sheer-faced mountains surrounded the inlet on three sides. Huddled against the cliffs was a tiny village.

The village wasn't marked on my map, and none of the people I'd talked to so far had mentioned its existence. I dropped the anchor and tied the lead line to an iron post I found sticking out of the ground. When I jumped ashore, the earth seemed to move. I was concerned until I realized that my time at sea had left me unused to walking on solid ground.

Cautiously I approached the village. I was getting accustomed to being jumped by all kinds of Britannian monsters. To my relief, I made it to the path leading into the village without encountering anyone or anything.

The village was small. There were only two stone buildings. Unlike every other Britannian town, this one had no surrounding walls. I guess the residents figured they were well protected between the lake and the cliffs. A footpath led into the village. The grass was barely worn, as though there were little traffic to flatten it out.

A grove of trees grew off to the south of the path. To the north, a small pond glistened in the slanting afternoon sun. In front of me a small druid stood on a wooden bridge which passed over a fast-running stream. All this was pretty much in keeping with the usual Britannian style of things, except for the seahorse that bobbed lazily in the stream. The short druid was leaning over the bridge talking to the seahorse. Talking to a seahorse? What next?

The conversation must have been pretty amusing because as I walked up, both threw their heads back and laughed. Or rather the druid laughed; the seahorse produced something between a whinny and a nicker that sounded remarkably like a guffaw.

"Mind if I interrupt?" I asked. I was trying to be nonchalant about the talking-seahorse business.

"Not at all," said the druid. "I am Frontis. It is my duty to welcome thee to Cove, the hidden city of Wisdom."

"Hidden is right. If I hadn't run across that pirate ship I might never have gotten here."

"Oh, there are other ways to reach us," Frontis said. "Thou couldst have come through the whirlpool."

"Whirlpool? Never mind, I don't think I want to know. Who's your friend?" I gestured to the seahorse.

"That is Blissful," replied Frontis.

"Nice to meet you, Blissful," I said.

"And thou. Art thou on the Quest?" asked the seahorse.

"Yes. Does everyone in Britannia know about this Quest?"

"The shrine ankh knows how to enter the Chamber of the Codex."

"Shrine ankh?" I asked.

"We have a shrine here in Cove. Perhaps he speaks of that," said Frontis.

"Meditate at the Shrines of Honesty, Compassion, and Valor for three cycles to learn how to enter," said Blissful.

With that, the seahorse plunged back into the water, sending up a spray that splashed Frontis and me. I wiped futilely at my clothes, but they were pretty well soaked.

Frontis laughed and shook his wet hair.

"'Tis the way of seahorses. Wilt thou be staying with us for a while?"

"At least until I dry out and have a look around. I've discovered that a lot of people in Britannia have information about my Quest."

"Thou art welcome to stay as long as thou desirest."

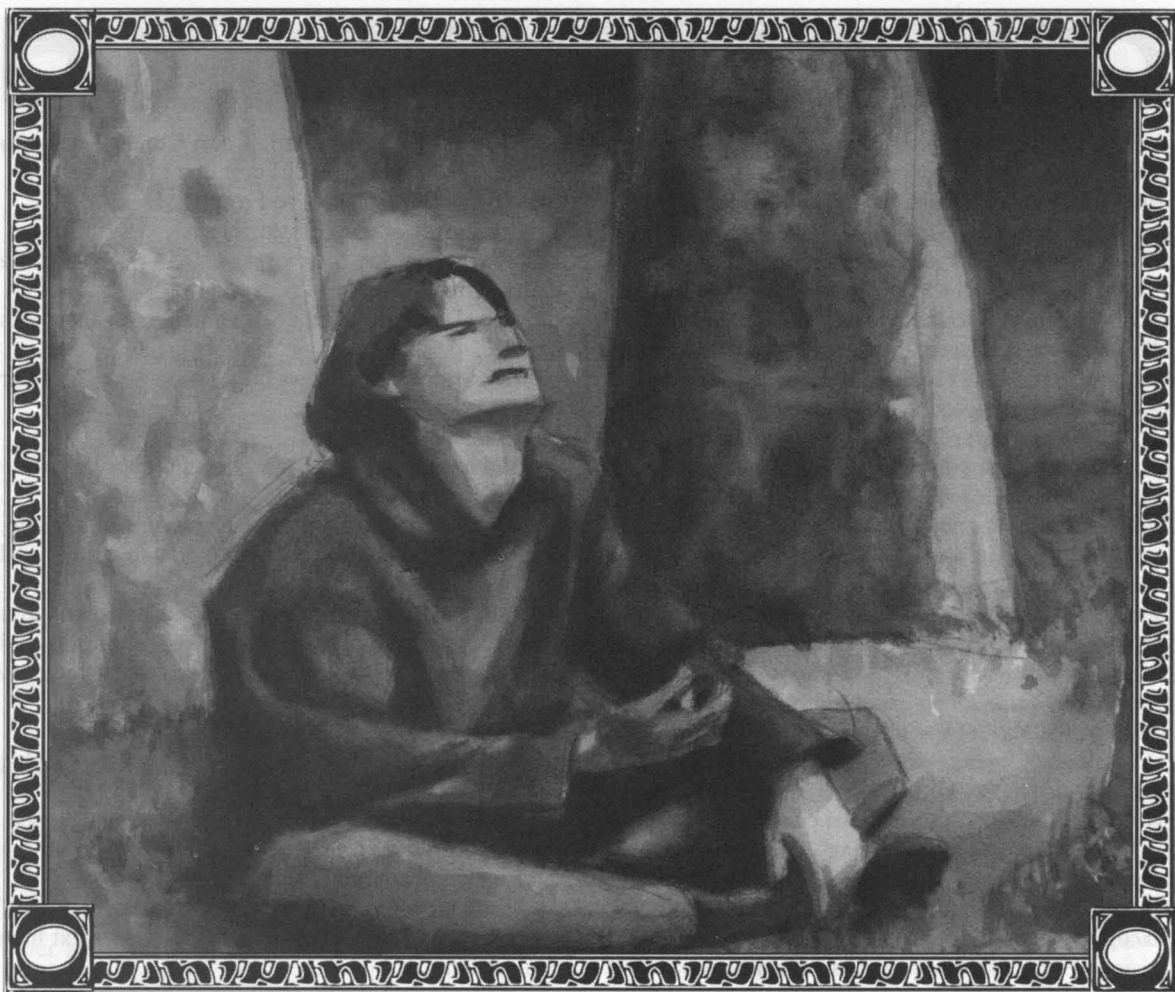
"Thanks. And thank Blissful for the bath next time you see him."

Frontis chuckled and walked away from me.

I walked over the bridge and turned north into the shrine.

The shrine was a building made of white marble. Red light pulsated, casting an eerie glow in the room. The light was coming from a series of force fields that protected alcoves running the length of the walls. Don't ask me how I knew they were force fields. Maybe from watching *Star Trek* reruns. Or perhaps it was part of the mysterious knowledge that I kept dredging up from nowhere. And then I began to wonder why there were force fields here. Was someone trying to protect something?

A large stone ankh stood at one end of the shrine. As I approached, I was overcome by a sense of peace and well-being. The desire to meditate at the shrine



washed over me. I concentrated and freed my mind of all thoughts. The ankh reached out and connected with me. I know we communicated, but I am unable to recall the conversation. The only thing I remembered was that something was said about the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom.

Eventually this connection was broken and I went back to exploring the shrine.

To the left of the ankh was one of the six force fields in the room. It glowed red and ominous. I stuck my hand into the field. A roaring sound thundered in my ears. My hand burned as if it were on fire. I opened my mouth to scream, but no sound came. Cursing, I tried to pull my hand out of the field.

Though it took only a moment to wrench my hand free, the pain made it seem longer.

Somebody wanted to keep me from finding what was behind this field—which gave me a powerful itch to discover those secrets. I had a sudden thought. Reaching into my satchel, I pulled out *The Book of Mystic Wisdom*. I remembered seeing a spell for removing force fields. I found it, mixed together the necessary reagents and cast the spell.

The field flickered, then shattered into a million pieces with a crackling sound and fell to the floor. A moment later, the pieces faded and disappeared, making a muted popping sound. It was eerie. Cautiously, I stepped forward and found myself in a small alcove.

Why would a force field be protecting an empty alcove? I thought. Unless, of course, everything here isn't what it seems.

I ran my hands along the wall. The stone was smooth and even under my fingertips. Then I studied the face of the wall. On the western wall I discovered what I had been looking for—the latch to the hidden door.

The wall swung away from me into the room beyond. A gust of stale air blew out. Poking my head into the room, I discovered a candle. It was made of golden-white beeswax and rested on a filigreed stand embedded with cabochon rubies and sapphires. A crystal dome covered the candle and fit neatly into the base on which it rested. A small engraved plate on the base said: *Candle of Love*.

An overwhelming urge to take the candle flowed through me.

Should I take this? I wondered. Would it be honest?

Then another thought occurred to me—that this was an item of importance to the Quest. I had no rational reason to think this, just a strong sense of the rightness of the notion.

Gently, almost reverently, I wrapped the candle up and slipped it into my knapsack. I left the shrine and continued my investigation of Cove.

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In the grove of trees, I found a group of mages. They were sitting around a small fire discussing Virtue, the Axiom, and the One True Principle. Their names were Spellbind, Shaman, Charm, and Circe.

"The One Pure Axiom encompasses all things," said Charm, a pretty woman with black eyes and dark hair.

"Yes, but one must know the combination of the three Principles of Virtue," said Spellbind, a tall mage with long brown hair.

"The One Pure Axiom is more endless than the changing tides, more eternal than day and night," replied Shaman, who wore a serious expression. He interrupted as though Spellbind hadn't said anything.

Circe sat apart from the rest. A mysterious smile

spread across her face as she listened to her companions. I asked what her opinion of the Principles was and she whispered it in my ear. Later, after we had eaten, I thanked them for their hospitality and continued looking around.

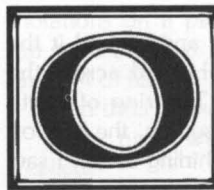
My search through Cove introduced me to many interesting people. Merlin told me where to find the black Stone. Sloven knew of another Stone and told me who might reveal its location. Mentorian told me the Gate spell with the understanding that I would not reveal its ingredients. I have kept that promise.

Brother Zair had information on how I might discover the Word of Passage needed to enter the last chamber of the Stygian Abyss. He told me to see the Kings of the castles that represent the three Principles. Each King only knew one of the three syllables. Allen, a small boy I had to search the town diligently to find, told me I needed a ship to reach the Abyss.

The inhabitants of Cove had much to tell me about my Quest and I was glad I had found the village. As I sailed away, I thought I saw Blissful, the seahorse, following my ship, but it must have been a trick of the light. Or maybe of the mind.

Through much arcane research, we were able to discover the reagents needed to perform the Gate spell the Avatar mentions. Mix together one part each: ash, black pearl, and mandrake root. Then the caster must invoke the phase of the moongate he wishes to travel to. The Gate spell is very debilitating and may only be performed by experienced mages.

The Editors



Entry 12—The Moongate and Yew

One of the advantages of having the boat was that I was able to sail straight to the western shore of Locke Lake without going through the swamps. I came ashore just north of the bridge leading to the Shrine of Compassion.



Making my way toward Britain seemed like the next logical thing to do. I skirted the foothills to the west and started southward. More orcs, trolls, rogues, and undead skeletons attacked me, but I easily dispatched them.

In front of me I saw a bridge, and beyond it the spires of Lord British's castle. I hurried across the bridge, my destination in sight. The ring of white stones was on my right. As I passed by, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. Whirling about, I saw that the blue doorway had appeared in the center of the ring of stones.

The air was filled with the smell of rain. The doorway pulsed and glowed. Though I had avoided using it before, something pulled me forward. I was at the edge of the circle of stones. The doorway beckoned. I leaned forward, took a deep breath, then jumped.

I remember that for a split second, self-doubt hit me just as I entered the strange light/door/gateway . . . whatever it was. I'd been doing a lot of irrational things lately, but this was pure insanity. I'll never know what made me do it, but I counted it as further proof that I was delusional, probably drooling

somewhere in a padded room while concerned doctors and orderlies clucked their tongues and shook their heads. But I had no time to deliberate the matter. I had jumped from the frying pan into . . .

Light exploded around me. I screamed but no sound left my mouth. In a split second it was over. A sense of vertigo, then I landed on the ground. The place I'd been standing in was gone. There were trees around me as far as the eye could see. I breathed again.

Instant teleportation. At least I assumed it was instant. I squinted up at the sky. The sun seemed to be in the same position as when I'd entered the doorway. Then I had a thought. Maybe I had teleported home. Maybe I was in the forest by the side of the road where my car had broken down. I began to run. Soon I burst into a small clearing, in the middle of the forest. To the west there was nothing but more forest. I turned east and crossed the clearing, venturing into the woods on the other side. Soon a town came into view and bitter disappointment filled me. Another Britannian village. Not home.

I wallowed in my frustration for a moment, then put it aside. There was still a Quest to be completed. And, though I could hardly admit it at the time, I think another part of me was relieved. I pretended to go about my Quest duties with a sort of resignation, but part of me was anxious to see it to its conclusion. Going home now would be tantamount to giving up.

A moat, spanned by a wooden bridge, circled the village. Like Cove, this town didn't have any protecting walls, but the moat looked deep and dangerous. I suspected it was stocked with the monster *du jour*, and I didn't want to sample the daily special. Tall trees grew up against the sides of the stone buildings in the town. It took me a moment, but I managed to make out smaller wooden huts hidden deep in the trees.

I crossed the moat and walked toward the center of town. A short man dressed in druid's clothing stood on the grassy path, right in my way. He wore a loose sage-green tunic, belted at the waist. In his hand he held a staff carved out of wood. The staff looked like a snake, its body wavy, its head triangular.

"Greetings, traveler," he said. "Welcome to Yew, the city of Justice."

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?" I chuckled at my unintentional pun, but he didn't seem to notice.

"I am Dwp," he said. "How may I help thee?"

Dwp? Hadn't he ever heard of vowels? "Tell me about Justice," I said, judiciously keeping my other thoughts to myself.

"Love no one more than the truth, for Justice seeks no favors. Temper truth with understanding."

That's what he said. It didn't really make sense to me at the time, so I passed over it and asked, "Are there any places of interest in Yew?"

"If thou needest provisions, the dry goods store hath all thou wilt require. 'Twas the first building thou passed in town. The healer resides in the next building.

"Criminals in Britannia who are captured are brought to the jail here for justice. If thou wishest to observe Britannian fairness and right, seek thou there."

"Thanks for thy help," I said.

Knowing I was low on provisions, I walked toward the dry goods store, but I stopped dead in my tracks before I'd taken a dozen steps.

Thanks for thy help? Had I really said that? I grinned sheepishly and shook my head as I walked into the dry goods store.

After I stocked up on food, I went to the healer. Even though I was feeling fine, I wanted to see if there was anyone there who might have information about my Quest.

The healer's shop was cool and dimly lit. Two wounded men lay on cots against one of the walls. Their eyes were closed and their faces pale. Sitting behind a desk in the middle of the room was a druid. He was bent over with a quill in one hand, writing notations on a piece of parchment paper. Glancing up at me, he laid the quill aside and folded his hands in front of him.

"Art thou in need of healing?" he asked.

"Uh, no. I was just looking for someone," I replied.

"One of these men?" he asked.

"No, I don't know either of them."

"Then perhaps thou mightst give blood to help. Wilt thou donate some of thine?"

I wasn't thrilled with the idea of opening a vein. But when I looked back at the pale faces of the wounded men and heard their shallow, labored breathing, I found myself saying yes. The healer was well practiced, and in a moment the deed was done. Except for a little light-headedness, which the healer said would pass soon, I was fine. The feeling that I had done something good and of value was overwhelming. The healer's gratitude when I agreed to donate blood told me that he and his fellows were always in need of blood and I vowed that I would donate more, as often as I was able. It wasn't as if I hadn't been donating blood to the local forests lately, what with all the orcs and their cronies. I might as well shed some of my precious plasma for a good cause.

From the healer, I crossed to the jail. This was a somber building. I couldn't imagine children running through the halls here as they had so freely in Britain. Flagstone covered the hallway. Two pairs of pillars supported massive beams running the length of the ceiling. A throne stood at the far end of the hall. On the throne sat a regal man, his face set in a neutral expression. No thought or feeling flickered across his features as I approached.

"Greetings," he said. "Welcome to Yew, city of Justice. I am Talford."

"Hello," I said. "I have come on the Quest of the Avatar."

"Then thou needest to learn about justice. Thy stay in Yew shall teach thee well."

"I'm looking for the Rune."

"It is hidden well." He paused for a moment and looked me over, as though considering my worthiness to receive this information. Then he spoke again. "Hast thou never committed a crime?"

I was taken aback by the Question. It didn't follow from his first statement, but still I thought about it for a minute. Though I wasn't a criminal, I had done some things that might be considered illegal—petty stuff, admittedly—when I was a kid.

"Nv," I replied. (I conveniently forgot the gold I had stolen from the King. Honestly. It just didn't come to mind.)

"Then do thy penance well, and with the felon search ye well."

I stared at him for a minute. Penance? Felon? What was this riddle and what the hell did it have to do with the Quest? I decided he meant I should spend some time in the jail and mull over my nefarious past, such as it was. Two guards stood watch over two small cells in a room off to one side of the throne room.

"Hello," I said to one of the guards.

"Greetings," he replied. "Art thou a criminal?"

"Uh, no. Uh, kinda. Look I'm supposed to do penance for my crimes. Where do I go?"

"Art thou a felon or not?"

"Not."

"Then the first cell is where thou belongest. The second cell is for felons."

Felons. "With the felon search ye well" was what the judge had said. I would have to investigate this further. What difference did it make where I did my penance?

Instead of going to the first cell, I walked to the second cell, opened the door, and stepped inside.

"Hello," I said. "What are you in for?"

The felon sneered at me and rolled over, turning his back to me.

"You're a real friendly guy, aren't you?"

The felon looked over his shoulder at me. If looks could kill I would have been maimed.

I started to sit down on one edge of his cot, but he stretched out on the bunk so there was no room. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do, or how long I should wait in this cell to perform my penance.

The "crimes" I'd committed were pretty minor—a couple of petty thefts when I was a kid. But the more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I guess I'd never really considered what I'd done in the past. Before, I'd always written it off as a youthful prank. But even as a kid I'd known that it was wrong. I did it because I'd been dared. There was nothing right about it and, for the first time, I felt real remorse for my crimes. I vowed I would find a way to make restitution, when—if—I got back home.

It felt as though a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I got up and looked around the cell. Had

Talford meant I should search the felon himself? I looked at the man on the bunk. He sneered at me. Getting him to let me search him was going to be a neat trick.

Then he got up from the cot. Right where he'd been lying was the Rune of Justice. I waited until he was looking out through the bars and retrieved it.

As I write this account, I'm struck with the sense that I'm undergoing a transformation. Not only am I getting stronger and more adept at traveling through the land and fighting the monsters, but my thoughts and emotions are becoming clear and even. I can only see my former life as one of strife, stress, and emotional chaos. Here, little by little, the yo-yo of my emotions has begun to slow down. This is the first time I've set such thoughts on paper, but not the first time I've had them.

The felon sat back down on his rough bunk and sneered at me again, and I decided it was time to leave. As charming as his company had been, I was ready to get out of this jail. With a jaunty wave at the guards, I left the prison.

There was no inn in Yew, so I decided to make camp outside of town. Beside the moat on the outer edges of Yew I spoke to a druid named Calumny. He told me where to look for mandrake root, an important reagent, and his information about the *Quickness* spell was interesting.

Calumny's Quickness spell requires the following reagents: ash, ginseng, and blood moss.

The Editors

The next morning I continued my search for clues about the Quest. In a small grove of trees north of the entrance to the town, I found a group of druids sitting around a small fire. Two of them had their eyes closed and the soft murmur of their voices floated to me. Over and over they chanted, "Beh, beh, beh." I went up to one who wasn't chanting. She was small, with an athletic body and long golden hair braided into one long plait.

"Hello," I said. "What are your companions doing?"

"Chanting," she replied.

"I can see that. Why aren't you doing it?"

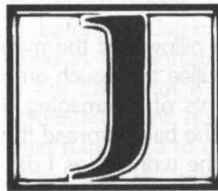
"I'm seeking Justice," she said. "May I join thee on thy Quest?"

Nobody had asked to join me before. I was surprised by her question, but my gut feeling told me it was right to take her with me.

"Sure," I said. "You can come along. I could use the company. By the way, what's your name?"

"Jaana," she said.

I remained calm on the outside, but inside I rejoiced.



Entry 13— Empath Abbey

Jaana and I made camp outside Yew later that day. She knew a lot about the woods and spent much of the time before nightfall pointing out various

aspects of the forest to me.

I'd been traveling alone for so long that I'd almost forgotten what it was like to have a companion. We talked about Britannia and Jaana told me a little about herself and her lifestyle. I found myself listening silently to her for long stretches of time. Not just because she was interesting, but because I was so unaccustomed to conversation.

What could I talk about? Cars, computers, television? These things were beyond Jaana's comprehension and, in light of the Quest, their significance in my life had diminished too. I told her about the Quest and what I'd learned about it so far—which wasn't much. She was always encouraging, though. The night wore on and we built up the fire as we talked.

"How long have you lived in Yew?" I asked her.

"Several years," she said. "It was the first place I went in my search for Justice. And thou? Hast thou been in the service of Lord British long?"

"No," I replied. "I've only just recently come to Britannia."

"Art thou from one of the islands?"

"No," I sighed. I ran my hand through my hair. How was I going to answer this question? "I come

from a different world altogether. It's called Earth, and I'm not sure exactly how I came to be in Britannia. I think it has something to do with those strange doorways."

"The Moongates?"

"Is that what you call them—Moongates?"

"Aye. 'Tis their nature. They are aligned to the phases of the twin sister orbs—Trammel and Felucca."

"There are phases of the moons on my map. Does that have anything to do with the Moongates?"

"Aye," replied Jaana. "The gate is activated by the phases of Trammel. Retrieve thy map and I shall show thee."

I'd been using my satchel as a pillow and the map was inside the sack. I sat up and pulled the pouch onto my lap. After a couple of moments of rummaging, I found the map on the bottom of the bag. I spread the map next to the fire, smoothing the wrinkles as I did. Jaana and I squatted next to it.

"See, here," Jaana said, pointing to the moon painted on the map next to Lord British's castle. "This is called the crescent waxing moon. When Trammel is in the crescent waxing phase, the Moongate will appear near Lord British's castle. If you are at another Moongate and the other moon, Felucca, is crescent waxing, then you will be transported to the Moongate near Lord British's castle."

"Uh huh," I said, trying to act as though I understood.

Jaana turned and looked at me. Her eyes were bright cornflower blue. A very distracting blue, I thought. And her hair shone like spun gold. Only I knew this gold would be soft and warm to the touch.

"Thou dost not understand?" she asked.

I shook my head, trying to clear it of these distracting thoughts. I turned my attention back to the map.

"No, I'm still confused," I admitted. "Let me see if I get it. The moon phase on the map indicates both the phase when the Moongate will appear as well as the phase that will take you to that location?"

"Aye. 'Tis correct. For instance, see up here near Yew?" She pointed to the upper left-hand corner of the map. The moon depicted was almost full.

"That is called the gibbous waxing phase. How wouldst thou travel to Yew from the Moongate near Lord British's castle?"

I gazed at the map for a moment, trying to piece together all she had told me about how the Moongates worked.

"The Moongate near the castle should appear when Trammel is crescent waxing," I said.

"Thou art correct. And how wouldst thou know when to enter the gate to travel to Yew?"

"When Felucca is gibbous waxing, the gate should take me to Yew."

"Aye. See, thou dost understand."

"Which moon is Trammel and which is Felucca?" I asked.

Jaana pointed up to the night sky. Two orbs hung low and large.

"The moon on thy left is Trammel; the one on the right, Felucca."

"So if I wanted to go there," I pointed at a small island off the western coast of Spiritwood, where a half-moon was depicted on the map. "I would pass through the Moongate when Felucca was half full."

Jaana nodded. She pointed at the half-full moon I'd indicated.

"That is called the last quarter. It depends on which Moongate thou art near. The Moongates are not all connected together. Thou mayest only travel to three phases from one gate."

"Sounds complicated."

"Aye, 'tis most complicated until one hath learned. Then 'tis most simple—like most things," she smiled.

"Then how did I get here if the gates only go to three places?"

"I know not, but then the gates are a mystery. No one in Britannia really comprehends their workings. Perhaps thy appearance is part of the gates' magic—to bring forth one from far away who will help Britannia in her time of need. It has happened before, but such tales have long been considered the stuff of myth and legend. Mayhap there was more of truth in those tales than we knew."

I lay back on the ground. My knees cracked from crouching over the map for so long. Jaana banked the fire, then stretched out on the other side of the fire from me.

"Good night," she said. "Tomorrow I shall take thee to the Shrine of Justice. 'Tis not far from here."

"Why do you want to go there?" I asked.

"'Tis not for me but for thee," she replied. "Didst thou not say that part of thy Quest was to visit the shrines and meditate therein?"

"Yes, you're right."

"Aye," she said. "'Tis true."

• • •

The next morning we started for the shrine. By midday I was confused and lost, but Jaana kept trudging through the forest. She pointed out that she knew the location of the shrine and that with my sextant, it would be easy enough to find, forest or no.

I discovered that Jaana was a good companion. She knew more about the forest than anyone I'd met before and she had an empathetic quality that I found comforting. Not that she couldn't be stern, but even then everything she said and did was tempered with kindness.

The other thing I discovered was that she was a good fighter. As usual, we were attacked by orcs during our trip to the shrine. I thought I was going to have to protect Jaana. With all sorts of brave, manly determination I rushed forward to cover her.

She shoved me aside.

"How can I hit the orc if thou art in my way?" she asked.

"Uh, I just thought . . . because you're a girl."

"Dost thou think I would imperil thy life by not knowing how to defend myself? Thou needest companions on thy journey, not burdens."

"Oh, well." And then we didn't have any more time to talk, only time to fight.

Jaana may have been able to defend herself, but she still tired more easily than I did. We had to fight lots of monsters before we could rest. I could tell she was grateful for the respite, even though she never complained. It felt good to have someone to talk to. She told me more about Yew and how Lord British had encouraged each of the different towns in Britannia to develop into a unique cultural center.

I took out the Candle of Love and showed it to

her. It was like a beacon in the darkness of the night. Even unlit, it shone with a purity and beauty that took my breath away.

"Thou shouldst visit Empath Abbey," Jaana said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Thou hast the Candle of Love. Those at Empath Abbey might be able to tell thee more about it. It is a castle not too far from here. Wouldst thou like me to take thee there?"

I thought about it. Someone, somewhere, had suggested I visit the Kings of various castles and ask them about the Word of Passage.

"Okay," I said. "After we visit the shrine, we'll go to Empath Abbey."

Later that day we reached the Shrine of Justice. It stood at the northern shore where the woods ended in the middle of a swamp. I entered the shrine and meditated. I will not tell of my time at the shrine or what happened to me there. That experience was too sacred and profound for mere words.

• • •

Empath Abbey stood on the northwest shore of Britannia, just west of the Deep Forest. It wasn't as big as Lord British's castle, but was impressive nonetheless. A stream ran in front of the castle, spanned by a bridge. We crossed the bridge and entered.

In the center of the broad entryway stood a small child. His hair was black and his eyes were obsidian. He exuded an air of stateliness.

"Greetings," he said. "I am Chinup. Welcome to Empath Abbey, the castle of Love. Hast thou come to learn about Love?"

A vision of Jaana's hair shining in the firelight flashed through my mind. I'd wanted to reach out and touch it, touch her, but something had restrained me. I glanced at Jaana. She looked at me expectantly.

"Yes. We've come to learn about Love."

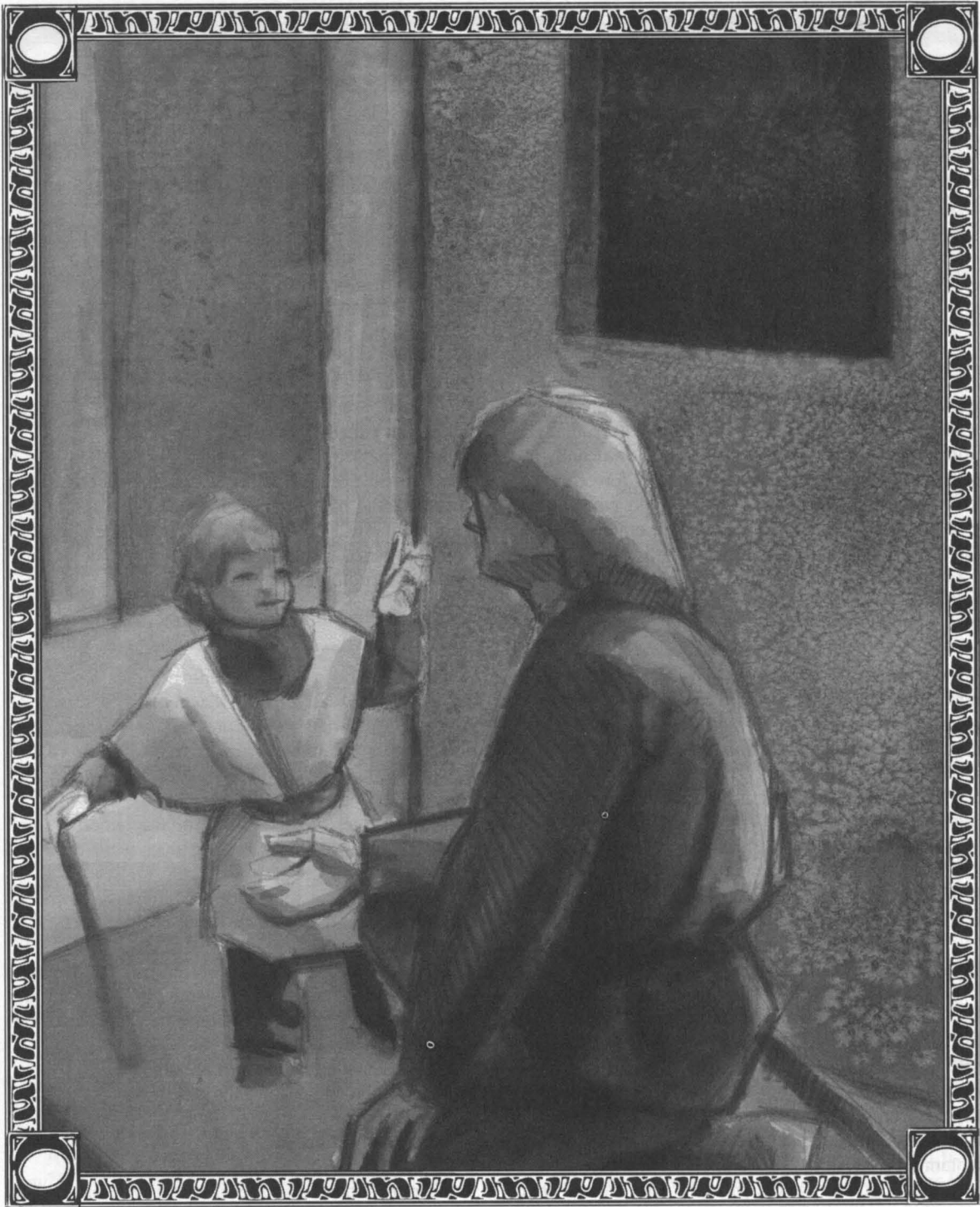
"Then thou shouldst try the oak grove."

"Oak Grove?"

"Behind the Abbey."

"Well, thanks for the help. We'll look there."

Chinup nodded and stared at me with his ancient



eyes. I had the creepy feeling that he knew my innermost thoughts. Taking our leave, we wandered through the castle, marveling at its beauty.

In the northwest corner of the abbey, a small double throne stood at the far end of a large room. Thick, embroidered yellow velvet drapes flanked the ornate chairs framing the man and woman who sat there. The man was older than Lord British by a few years. His face was careworn, but shone with a kindness of spirit. Grey hair framed his face, but far from making him look elderly, it simply added a measure of dignity to his features. He reminded me of someone, but I couldn't say who.

"Greetings," he said. "I am Lord Robert. I am the ruler of this province."

He had the same strange accent as Lord British. Then it came to me who he reminded me of—Lord British himself.

"Greetings," I said. "I am on the Quest of the Avatar. This is my companion, Jaana." Jaana made an awkward bob in the direction of the throne. I was getting the hang of the Britannian style of introductions.

"Greetings, Jaana. Welcome to Empath Abbey," Lord Robert said.

"I'm interested in finding out more about this Province," I said.

"Thou shouldst ask my lady Marcy," replied Lord Robert. He turned his head to the woman sitting on his left, his face filled with love and affection. I bowed toward Lady Marcy and made the same introductions.

"Welcome," she said. Her voice was soft, but held a thread of iron in it that caught my attention. I studied her for a moment. I could tell she was tall, even though she was seated. Her hair was brown and cut short. A thin gold crown circled her head, threading through her curls.

She told us about the abbey and how it had come to be built. And about the efforts she and Lord Robert had made to settle this part of the Deep Forest. Unfortunately, she didn't have any information about my Quest. Jaana and I were about to leave the throne room when I remembered about the Word of Passage. I recalled that in Cove, someone had told me that the Kings of the castles knew the Word of

Passage to enter the Stygian Abyss.

"Excuse me, Lord Robert," I began, "but I understand you know the Word of Passage."

"I know but one syllable of the Word of Passage," he said. "It is AMO. Seek thou now the other parts."

"Thank you," I said. Lord Robert and Lady Marcy turned back to the private conversation Jaana and I had interrupted. We left them and strolled through the peaceful halls of the Abbey.

We felt bathed in love as we wandered the halls. Eventually, we came upon a small shrine with a stone ankh set into a recess in the wall. I don't recall exactly what transpired at the shrine. The ankh revealed something about the Candle of Love, but the details escape me for the moment. Somehow I feel that I'll know what to do when the time comes. Ominous words, but true.

The time we spent at the shrine tired us, but left us full of joy. We didn't talk about it, but it seemed to bring us closer together. A companionable silence had settled over Jaana and me and neither of us was willing to break it. We sat in silence for a time, looking out through a window in one of the abbey rooms. Then a brawny paladin entered.

"Greetings," he said.

Jaana and I jumped, startled at the sound of his voice.

"Greetings," I replied. "Who are you?"

"I am Malchor," he said. "I go on Quests."

That got my attention.

"Quests? What kind of Quests?"

"My last Quest took me near Spiritwood. Art thou on a Quest?"

"Yes, I am. Do you know anything that might help me on my Quest?"

"Perhaps."

"Care to share it with me?"

"Some say the Silver Horn is buried on a small isle off the tip of Spiritwood."

I hadn't heard anything about this horn, but like most things about this Quest, I had a feeling it would be important later on. I made a note in my book and thanked him for his time.

With our moment of reverie interrupted, Jaana and I discussed what we should do next. She wanted to go to

Skara Brae, but I wanted to go and look in the Oak Grove. We agreed to investigate the Oak Grove immediately and leave for Skara Brae the next morning.

The entrance to the grove was through a door off the throne room. The door was locked. I jiggled the knob. Jaana jiggled the knob. It wouldn't budge.

"I have some keys," I said.

"Keys?" Jaana asked.

"Well, magic keys. I got them from a Guild shop in Vesper."

"Thou hast been to Vesper?" she said. "Thou truly art a great traveler."

"Yeah, well, uh, do you think it would be a bad thing to use one of them? I mean, the door is locked."

"Did not Chinup instruct thee to come here?"

"Well, yeah, but . . ."

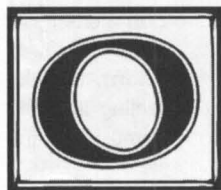
"Then use thy key."

I shrugged my shoulders and extracted a key from my pouch. It slipped into the lock and glowed for a moment, then the door swung open.

Beyond the door was a shady oak grove. As we stepped into the grove, a sense of well-being swept over us. Jaana looked at me and smiled. I was overcome with a surge of love for her. Not romantic love, although there was a twinge of that, but rather the deep abiding love you have for your dearest friend, your boon companion.

I looked around the grove. Here and there among the trees people sat or reclined. They were dressed according to their professions: tinker, ranger, paladin, druid. We spoke with them all and they told us much about Truth, Love, and Courage.

It was with great regret that we left Empath Abbey the next morning.



Entry 14—Skara Brae

n the shore, a few minutes west of Empath Abbey, Jaana and I sat looking out at the sea.

"Why exactly are we here?" I asked. I pulled up a blade of grass and pinched off a four-

inch piece of it.

"We are waiting," she said.

"Waiting for what?" I asked as I fitted the length of grass between my thumbs.

"A ship." Jaana glanced over at me and watched what I was doing.

"A ship?" I blew into my enclosed hands. A hollow tone sounded.

"Yes."

"Right. Like a ship is going to magically appear and take us to Skara Brae."

"Thou hast no faith," she said. Then she pulled up a piece of grass and broke off a short length too.

"I have faith in my feet. Let's start walking south. There's bound to be a ferry or something to get to the island."

"No. There is no ferry and the trip south is fraught with dangers. There are many evil monsters in the mountains and woods." She fitted the grass between her thumbs, as I had, and blew into her cupped hands. No sound came out.

"So what else is new? Britannia is crawling with monsters. You can't poke your head out of town without getting smacked by one."

"Thou art cynical."

"No, just realistic."

"Very well. As thou wishest. How did thou do that?"

"It's a guy thing," I said.

Jaana rolled her eyes. "Thou speakest strange words." Then she turned her gaze back to the sea, forestalling my reflexive comment about her own strange vernacular. A flock of gulls circled overhead, swooping and diving for fish. The sea smell was in the air, pungent and fishy.

I lay back and looked up at the sky. We'd been sitting here for a couple of hours without any sign of a ship. I was beginning to think Jaana had gone nuts when I felt her stiffen beside me.

I sat up.

"What is it?" I asked.

She touched my arm and pointed. Off in the distance I could see a sail.

She had been right. I jumped to my feet and started waving my arms over my head.

"Hey!" I yelled. "Over here."

"Get down!" Jaana grabbed my arm and pulled me down beside her. "Dost thou wish them to see us?"

"But it's our ship. The one we've been waiting for."

Jaana shook her head.

"No. 'Tis a pirate ship. They will come ashore and then we will fight them for their ship."

"Are you kidding?"

"No. 'Tis the only way."

"We've been sitting here all day so we can fight pirates and take their ship? Are you crazy?"

Jaana looked at me with a perplexed expression.

"Thou knowest I am not insane. Why art thou upset?"

"Upset. Upset! I fought some pirates at Locke Lake. They weren't exactly pushovers. These guys are probably worse."

"But thou art on the Quest of the Avatar. Surely thou wilt prevail. Thou art on the side of right."

I groaned.

"Just because I'm on this Quest doesn't mean I can't die. I've already done that once. Or close to it, anyway. Besides, I have no idea what would happen to you if I died."

"Thou frettest too much."

"Well, we don't have any more time to argue about it. Look, they're here."

The pirate boat dropped anchor. She was a fine vessel, trim and neat. She had two masts and looked to be about 25 feet long. I could see the pirates on deck. There were five of them and they were a scurvy lot. The anchor dropped and they started climbing over the railing, dropping into the water to wade ashore.

Jaana started edging forward.

"What are you doing?" I hissed.

"I am trying to get into position to fight these brigands."

"With your bare hands?"

"Thou didst not object to my hands when we were in the forest fighting orcs."

"That was different. These guys are tough."

She shrugged and crawled forward.

"Here," I said. Jaana stopped and looked over her shoulder. I pulled my sling out of my waistband and

tossed it to her. She smiled, took it, and began inching forward again. Then I started sneaking ahead too.

The pirates came ashore. They shouted that we should come out of hiding and fight them like men. Then they promised that they wouldn't kill us, just take us as prisoners. I glanced over at Jaana. She rolled her eyes. Neither of us believed them. One of the pirates took a bow and fired a shot into the bushes where we were hiding. That was enough provocation for me.

I leapt to my feet and fired an arrow. It sank into the shoulder of one of the pirates. He yelped and grabbed his wound. Blood ran between his fingers. The other pirates shouted and rushed us, cutlasses drawn, arrows flying. In seconds we were in the middle of a melee.

Perhaps it was the Britannian air, or maybe it was fear for Jaana, but my aim had never been better. My arrows found their mark unerringly. Jaana finished many of them off, the stones from her sling flying. The wounded pirates fled back toward their ship, but we pursued them.

The cold salt water stung my wounds as I splashed toward the fleeing pirates. The water slowed us all down as we plunged through the surf. Water sprayed in plumes off the pirates' cutlasses as they swung wildly. The feathers on my arrows were wet and my aim suffered. Jaana slipped and fell. She came up gasping for air, her hair in stringy ribbons covering her face. One of the pirates slid beneath the waves and didn't resurface. The last pirate looked around and saw that he was alone. He gave a blood-curdling yell and with his cutlass raised high over his head, he ylogged through the water toward Jaana.

She turned to run, but her heavy cloak was soaked and kept her from moving quickly enough. The cutlass arced downward. Jaana screamed. I drew my bow and fired. He stiffened as the arrow found its mark. The cutlass dropped from his hand and sank below the surface of the water. The pirate spun and looked at me, his eyes wide with surprise. Then he crumpled into the surf.

Jaana gathered up her cloak and waded through the surf toward me. She sank to her knees as soon as she touched the beach.

"Are you all right?" I asked. My breath was coming out in short gasps and I was shivering in the cool autumn air.

"Y-y-yes, I th-th-thank thee. 'T-t-tis only the cold that is affecting me." She shivered and clenched her teeth together to keep them from chattering.

I pushed her wet, stringy hair away from her face and gently stroked her cold cheek. Our eyes met and I found myself leaning toward her, closing the short distance between us. Then she sneezed. The mood was broken and I realized I'd almost kissed her.

Taking advantage of Jaana's distress was not the action of someone on a Quest. Straightening up, I shoved my hands in my pockets and felt my cheeks grow warm and flushed. I spun around, then spoke more gruffly than I felt.

"Let's build a fire and rest tonight. We'll leave for Skara Brae tomorrow."

I thought I heard her sigh, but it must have been the wind.

• • •

The boat cut neatly through the waves. Jaana and I stood on deck enjoying the sunshine and the sea air. We were making good time and according to Jaana we would be in Skara Brae the next day.

Jaana was looking fit. I'd cast a *Heal* spell on her the night before. Her wounds vanished magically, then she returned the favor. It was a good thing we both had magical abilities. Jaana told me most of the professions in Britannia included some training in magic. All, that is except, for fighting.

We'd been sailing for several hours and I was beginning to think the sea was the only way to travel around Britannia. I was turning to tell Jaana this when I saw something on the horizon.

"Did you see that?" I asked. I pointed off the starboard deck.

"What?" she asked looking in the direction I was pointing.

"It looked like a big red tree trunk."

The blood drained from Jaana's face.

"Big? Red?"

"Yes, why? What's the matter?"

But she didn't answer. She ran to the cannon and began pushing it into place. Before I could react, the ship was rocked by a loud explosion. The boat bobbed up and down wildly, while part of the deck began to smolder. I grabbed hold of the mast to keep from being knocked off my feet.

"What was that?" I shouted.

"Sea serpent," she replied. Her breath was coming in short gasps as she strove to shove the cannon into position. I ran over and helped her push.

"Is this going to do any good?" I asked.

"I know not. It can do no harm." She pulled a flint from her satchel and struck it. It sparked and caught the cannon's wick.

There was a blast from the mouth of the cannon that caused it to roll backward across the deck. Then we heard a faint plop as the cannonball fell into the water. The sea was silent for a moment.

"Did we kill it?" I asked in a whisper.

Everything was still. Too still.

The water in front of us erupted upward. Out of the ocean burst the sea serpent. For an eternity it thundered upward, sending torrents of water over the ship's deck. The water drenched us, making the deck slippery. We lost our footing and started to slide toward the creature's gaping maw. Its tapered head was crowned by a ridge of spiny fins. Black beady eyes on either side of its head riveted me and a flickering red tongue darted out of its wide mouth. Its iridescent red scales, tipped in ebony, glistened in the sunlight.

The creature bellowed in pain and anger. The sound shook the boat and caused the sails to whip around.

"What do we do now?" I shouted over the din.

"Fight!" Jaana yelled back.

And we did.

The serpent opened its mouth and a burst of fire shot from the depths of its belly. The fireball landed on deck and smoldered, despite the small lake that had formed. Clouds of steam rose from it. With all the strength I could muster, I fired an arrow, but it bounced pathetically off the beast's scaly hide and fell into the water below.

Jaana rushed toward the creature. Her hands worked in frantic motion. She threw something into

the air at the horror and spoke a name so vile it made me sick. The monster opened its mouth to roar, but a whirling vortex surrounded him. Silver-blue swirling light spiraled up from below the water, encasing the serpent, consuming him in its brightness. I put my hands over my eyes, but I could still see the light. An unearthly note sounded then all was silent except for the ringing in my ears. I looked up and the sea serpent was gone. Twinkling motes hovered over the waves where the creature had been, then they too disappeared.

"What did you do?" I asked Jaana, staring at her in horror. What terrible power had she unleashed? Could she control it?

"I cast a spell to *Kill* it," Jaana said. "I did not wish to, but 'twas the only way. We could not survive a prolonged battle with one of those creatures." She wobbled a little and made an attempt to grab the railing.

"You'd better sit down," I said.

Jaana nodded and sank to the deck. I looked over the ship. There were scorch marks across the deck and one of the sails had been singed pretty badly, but the ship was still seaworthy.

I pulled the rigging taut and checked over the lines. After I secured the lines, I made sure Jaana was all right. Her smile was tremulous and she looked pale, but she waved me away. I decided that leaving her alone for a while was the best thing.

During the battle, the boat had been blown off course. I turned the bow back southward and we continued on in what I hoped was the direction of Skara Brae.

• • •

Skara Brae was on a small island off the western coast of Britannia. We dropped anchor close to land and waded to shore.

The town sat in the middle of an open field. Water-filled trenches bordered small stone huts. Rocks edged the wide grassy paths. In the center of town, four men sat around a stone ankh. They seemed lost in thought and Jaana and I agreed it would be wrong to disturb them.

Jaana wanted to visit the herb shop. We had accumulated some gold pieces during our trip through the Deep Forest and Jaana said she needed more reagents. My supply was running low too, so we wandered from shop to shop until we found an herbalist.

The herb shop looked a lot like the one I'd discovered in Paws. Herbs hung from the ceiling and bottles of unnamed stuff sat on shelves around the walls. A blind woman sold the reagents. I noticed that the prices were better here than they had been in Paws.

After we bought our reagents, we went to Food for Thought, a shop that carried rations. We took advantage of its very low prices to stock up. Unfortunately, there wasn't a weapons shop in Skara Brae. I decided we would have to visit Jhelom or Trinsic if we were to acquire more and better weapons. I'd learned that both Jhelom and Trinsic catered to people who lived by the sword, and were certain to have a variety of weapons available.

By the time we left the herbalist's shop, the sun had set. We could have stayed outside the town and saved money, but I wanted a bath and one night's sleep without being awakened, so we decided to find an inn.

We entered the front door of a small hostelry. A portly man appeared.

"Greetings," he said. "Welcome to the Inn of the Spirits. Dost thou wish a room for the night?"

"Yes," I replied.

"I only have one small room and, worse yet, it's haunted. Wilt thou accept it?"

"As long as the ghost doesn't bother us, it'll be fine." With all that had happened, I suppose I should have taken him seriously, but a lifetime of not believing in ghosts prevailed.

He started down the short hall and motioned us to follow. At the end of the hall he paused and said something, but I didn't quite catch it.

"What did he say?" I asked Jaana.

"He said, 'Do not mind the noise, it is only rats.'"

"Great," I said as the proprietor hurried off. He looked scared, which did nothing for my peace of mind. All of a sudden the forest looked a lot better, but we were here now, so . . .

We settled into the room and, to my surprise, the night passed uneventfully. I twisted and turned, trying to work out the kinks in my back. The lumpy beds in the inn were little better than the forest floor.

When I awoke, the room was bathed in the pale grey light of dawn. Everything was still. From the window I could see the red-purple streaks of morning in the sky.

Jaana was still asleep. There was a small bowl of water on a stand in the corner and I used it to wash the sleep out of my eyes.

When I turned back toward the center of the room, I saw the ghost. He materialized slowly, until his form was not quite transparent. I jumped back and put my hand on my bow.

"Fear not," the apparition said. The sound didn't come from the spirit, but was more like a voice speaking in my head.

"I take it you're the ghost," I said, lowering my weapon a bit. I wasn't frightened—which surprised me—just concerned about being attacked. He didn't look like a threat, though, so I let my guard down a little more.

"Yes," he replied. "I am Isaac."

"You haunt this inn, right?"

This was strange. Carrying on a conversation with the dearly departed before breakfast wasn't normal. But then, nothing much that had happened to me over the last few weeks could be called normal.

"Yes. The Quest is not complete. Art thou on a Quest?"

"Yes, I am. Do you know anything about it?"

"The white Stone sits atop the Serpent's Spine. It can only be reached by one who floats within the clouds."

"Floats within the clouds? What floats within the clouds?" I imagined Isaac's discorporeal form drifting in the wind above the mountain range, but my own, more solid flesh I could not imagine there.

Isaac never did answer me. He just faded from sight like a dream. I heard Jaana stir and turn over. The day was about to begin.

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"What dost thou wish to do today?" asked Jaana. We'd just eaten breakfast and were sitting in the

sunshine outside the inn. Around us, the inhabitants of Skara Brae went about their business.

"I think we need to search the town some more. I found out about the white Stone this morning from the ghost at the inn, but I think there might be more I can learn here about the Quest. I need to learn the Mantra of Spirituality and find out where the shrine is. Luckily, I found the Rune of Spirituality in Lord British's treasure chamber."

"What wert thou doing in the treasure chamber of our Lord British?" asked Jaana.

I blushed. I didn't want to lie to her, but I didn't want to lose her respect now either.

"It's a long story and I prefer not to go into it just now." I said. That was the truth, even if it didn't answer her question. I hoped she wouldn't pursue the matter and she didn't, but for the rest of the day I felt guilt hanging over me like a cloud.

We left the inn and headed west through town. The sweet smell of drying herbs mixed with the pungent odor of roasting meat. The townspeople nodded and waved at us, but didn't interrupt their errands to talk.

Near the herb shop, we saw a beggar.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"I am Ambule," he replied.

He looked as though he hadn't eaten in days. He was gaunt and his clothes hung off him in tatters. I reached in my bag and pulled out a few gold pieces. I gave him the money.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I am ever so grateful."

"We are on the Quest of the Avatar. Do you know anything about it? Perhaps the location of the Shrine, or maybe the Mantra?"

"Ask the child named Barren."

I thanked him and pressed more coins into his hand.

We found Barren behind the inn, playing.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," he replied.

"Ambule said you knew the Mantra."

"I know it well," he replied. "It is OM."

We thanked him and left. There was only one place in town we hadn't visited, the group of men standing around the ankh in the center of town.

The four men we'd seen the previous day were still clustered around the ankh. Only one seemed approachable. He was standing west of the ankh. His garments were the sort I associated with Britannia's rangers—high leather boots, loose pants and jerkin, and a long hooded cape. A sword hung from his side.

He glanced at us. His face was smooth and clean-shaven. I would have described him as baby-faced, except for his piercing blue eyes. His hair was blond, but not as pale as Jaana's.

"Greetings," he said.

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?"

"Shamino," he replied. "I am seeking inner light."

"And what is that?"

"The one great truth. That which lies within the Codex."

Most people who said such things to me seemed a little ridiculous, even here in Britannia. But from Shamino, the words carried a purity and truth that seemed very much in place. "We're interested in the Codex ourselves," I told him. "We're on a Quest."

He studied me seriously, then Jaana. Then he squared his shoulders, looking all the more impressive to me, and said in his direct way, "A Quest? I would join thee."

I looked over at Jaana. We had grown pretty close over the last few days and part of me didn't want to jeopardize that, but I remembered lolo's words. The party must be balanced. We didn't have a ranger, and Shamino looked more than competent. Jaana's eyes met mine. For a moment I thought I saw something bittersweet in them, but then it was gone. She nodded at me.

"All right, you may join us," I said. "We're leaving in the morning."

"What is thy destination?"

"We haven't decided—Trinsic or Jhelom. We need to get a better weapon for Jaana."

"Then Jhelom would be thy best choice. The fighters there have a good selection of weapons. It is also due south and should be a short voyage."

"Thanks for the help. We'll meet at the boat at dawn. We're docked on the south shore. By the way, do you know anything about the Shrine of Spirituality?"

"Nay, but thou mightest meditate here by the ankh to discover its secrets."

I looked up at the ankh skeptically.

"Whatever you say," I said.

He stared at me for a moment, his eyes unreadable. Then he shrugged and walked away.

"Well," I said to Jaana, "do you want to meditate?"

She nodded and sat in front of the ankh. I sank down beside her and looked at it. It was carved from a block of marble. The surface was polished smooth. I felt myself becoming relaxed. My muscles loosened and my mind grew clear.

Slowly, just under my breath, I formed the mantra. The 'OM' passed like a hum from my lips.

"What dost thou seek?" asked the ankh. The words weren't spoken aloud, but reverberated in my mind. It was beginning to seem almost natural—hearing voices in my mind, that is.

"The Shrine of Spirituality."

"Enter the gate of the full moons."

"What does that mean?"

But the connection was broken. I snapped out of my trance and looked around me. The sun had set. Hours had passed since I had first sat in front of the ankh and begun chanting. I struggled to my feet, stamping my foot on the ground. My leg had fallen asleep. Jaana still sat beside me, her eyes closed, her mouth in the shape of an 'o.' I shook her. Her eyes snapped open.

"We need to get some rest. Tomorrow's a big day." I stamped my foot some more. I felt as if pins and needles were stabbing me as the blood began to flow back into my leg.

"I hate it when that happens," she said.

"Me, too."

We walked back to the Inn of the Spirits. Our rest was peaceful and uninterrupted by ghosts.



Entry 15—Jhelom

We met at the boat the next morning. The sky was dark and mist shrouded everything in a grey haze. Jaana and I stood on the shore, shivering in our cloaks. A hint of winter in the breeze from the north chilled us to the bone.

"Shamino's late," I said with annoyance.

"He is not. Thou art impatient," replied Jaana. Her face composed and serene.

"You're right," I said, tucking my chin further into my cloak.

As we spoke, Shamino appeared out of the fog like some silent specter.

"Hast thou awaited me long?" he asked. He didn't sound particularly concerned.

"No," Jaana said. I shot her an annoyed glance, but she smiled at me and shrugged her shoulders.

The ship was anchored a short distance offshore, so we pulled off our boots, rolled up our pants, and waded out to it. The water was cold; I heard Jaana gasping behind me. The trip lasted a few moments, but we were thoroughly chilled by the time we reached the boat. I climbed up the rope we'd left dangling over the side, then reached to help the other two aboard. They ignored my proffered hand and scrambled onto the deck almost effortlessly.

The dawn was almost too beautiful to describe. Streaks of plum and peach stretched across the sky. The sun was a brilliant yellow-orange. The mist diffused the light and gave everything a soft, muted appearance.

The rigging took only moments to secure and with the sky still pale rose, we caught the morning breeze and sailed south. The early morning waves slapped quietly on the bows and all else was silent except for the occasional groaning of the mast.

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Eventually we came upon three islands located a few days' journey south of the tip of Spiritwood. The three islands were lined up neatly in a row. According to Shamino, Jhelom housed the greatest fighters in all Britannia. The barren and inhospitable island was dominated by mountain ranges and swampland.

We swung the ship through a small strait between two of the islands and landed south of the city. With its four tall stone towers and high walls, Jhelom looked to be impregnable once its gates were closed.

Guards stood on either side of the entry into town. As usual, they made no move to stop us from entering.



We passed through the gates and found ourselves in the main square. Trees crowded up against the stone walls, providing shade, and clean cobblestone paths stretched away from our location. Under the trees, shops crowded together near the walls of the city, punctuated here and there by cottages.

"We need to buy some weapons. Do you know if there's a shop nearby?" I asked Shamino.

Shamino nodded. "There is a weapons maker over there," he said, pointing toward a small shop to the northwest.

Following Shamino's directions, we found ourselves in a combined weapons and armor shop. Fine chain and plate mail hung from hooks across one wall. Swords, hauberks, bows, and axes were displayed on the opposite wall. Workbenches took up much of the floor space. We squeezed into the shop and looked around.

"Welcome," said the shop owner. "May I help thee?" He was a tall, thin man with an impish grin.

"We're looking for some weapons. What do you have for sale?"

"I have swords, axes, hauberks, and crossbows. What dost thou wish?"

"One of those crossbows would do," I said.

"Good choice. The bard Iolo's favorite weapon."

"How much?" I asked.

He quoted me a price that made my teeth hurt, but I paid it. Jaana refused the crossbow, saying I should take it and she would use my bow. I wanted

her to have a more powerful weapon but she insisted. I felt better knowing all of us were well-armed.

"We need to find some things here before we leave," I said to Shamino. "Items for the Quest."

"What dost thou seek?" he asked.

"We need the Rune of Valor, the Mantra, and the location of the shrine. Oh, and sometimes people know about the Stones. We need that information, too."

We spent the rest of the day talking to everyone in Jhelom. No one knew anything about the rune, but we learned about the red Stone from a strange person called X and a wounded fighter called Gravnor. Bengrog knew about the dungeon Destard. And Aesop told us that RA was the Mantra for Valor.

We agreed to spend the night at the inn and search for the rune the next day. The night passed quietly and the next morning my companions and I paced our small room as we tried to figure out why we hadn't found the rune.

"We've looked all over town," I said.

"I too find it strange that no one knows of the rune," replied Jaana.

"We have not explored this inn thoroughly," said Shamino.

"You're right," I said. "Maybe one of the guests knows where it is."

We left our room and went to the room across the hall. The door was locked. We knocked, but no one answered.

"I'm going to try one of the magic keys I bought in Vesper," I said. Withdrawing one of the keys, I slipped it into the lock. It glowed, then turned. The door swung open.

A fighter sat in one corner of the room. He stood as we entered. He was well over six feet tall and dwarfed everything else in the room. His hair was brown and clumsily cut. A fierceness emanated from him and his hand dropped to the sword at his side as if in a reflex action.

"What dost thou wish?" he asked frowning at us.

"Uh, we're looking for information about the Rune of Valor. Do you know of it?" I said.

"Nay," he replied. "I am a fighter. I wish to battle again."

"Then why are you locked in this room?" I asked, curious about him despite his fierce demeanor.

"'Tis a long story," he sighed.

"Yes, well, I know all about those. We're on the Quest of the Avatar. Would you like to join us?" I had no idea what prompted me to ask him, but it felt right.

"Aye," he replied, smiling suddenly. "I would be honored to join thee."

"By the way," I said, "what's your name?"

"Geoffrey."

"Glad to have you along, Geoffrey. This is Jaana and Shamino."

The others nodded at him. Shamino's expression was unreadable. Jaana smiled briefly, but her face remained closed. I'd discovered she didn't warm up to people quickly. I felt forces coming together. A sense of mission spread through me.

Geoffrey gathered up his belongings and we went into the hall. At the end of the hall was one more door. I tried this door, but it was locked too. Using another magic key, I opened it.

A fighter lay on a low bunk as if asleep. His eyes slowly opened and he gazed at us.

"Welcome," he said. His voice was dry as autumn leaves and sent shivers down my spine.

"Hello," I replied, pulling myself together. "Who are you?"

"Lord Robert," he said, swinging his legs off the bed into a sitting position.

"I'm sorry for barging in on you, but we're looking for a Rune."

"A rune?" he asked, looking at us with new interest.

"Yes. A small, flat rock with a symbol carved on it," I said in a peevish tone. We'd been searching for this rune with no luck and now Lord Robert wanted to play "twenty questions." I had a Quest to complete and he was wasting my time.

"Hmmm. Art thou on the Quest of the Avatar?" His blue eyes searched our faces intently.

"Yes. Yes, we are," I said. Suddenly, I had the feeling that Lord Robert knew about the rune and was testing us.

"Then thou dost deserve the rune," he said abruptly. He nodded as if he'd made up his mind about something. "Ask Nostro."

"And where would we find him?" I asked, hopeful for the first time that we might find the rune.

"I know not."

"Well, thanks for the help," I said, unable to keep the disappointment out of my voice.

I turned to the others.

"Great. All we need to do is find Nostro," I said. "Do you remember talking to anyone by that name?"

Jaana shook her head, a small frown pulling at her mouth. Shamino was looking at a spot to the south of Lord Robert's bed, his face as unreadable as ever.

"What are you staring at?" I asked, curious.

"I believe this is a secret door," he replied, pointing at a spot on the wall.

I walked over to where he stood. Sure enough, there was a pale stone sunk into the wall.

"Dost thou always search through other people's rooms?" asked Lord Robert dryly.

I blushed.

"I never did before I came to Britannia," I said weakly. "But since I started this Quest, it's become something of a habit."

Lord Robert looked at me with skeptical eyes.

"Indeed," he said. "Thou shouldst ask permission before rummaging through other people's lodgings."

"My apologies, Lord Robert. May we investigate your room for clues pertaining to the Quest of the Avatar?" I asked humbly.

Lord Robert nodded approvingly.

"Aye. Thou mayest seek clues in my room, but do not take anything that is not thine."

"Never," I said, slightly offended. Maybe I'd done some things wrong in the past, but I was on the Quest now. I didn't do stuff like that anymore.

Lord Robert gave me one last long look, then shrugged his shoulders and lay back down on his cot. He closed his eyes and in a moment appeared to be asleep again.

"How did he do that?" I whispered to Jaana.

"I know not," she said softly. "Be grateful that he allowed thee to explore his room."

I turned and looked again at the spot Shamino had discovered. It did seem to be the latch to a secret door.

"What dost thou wish to do?" asked Shamino, his voice neutral.

"Find out what's behind the door. And there's only one way to do that," I said. I pushed the stone. A portion of the wall swung away to reveal a passageway beyond. Dank air rushed out at us. I stepped through the doorway and found myself in a small room filled with treasure chests. On the north wall was another white stone.

"I think there's another passage through here. Come on."

The others crowded into the room behind me. I pressed the white stone and the second hidden door opened into a passageway, so well-lit we didn't need to light any of our torches.

I stepped into a hall just barely wide enough for one person to pass at a time. We filed in and the door swung shut behind us. To our right was a flickering blue field. *Why was it here?* I wondered. Then I remembered the red fields at the shrine in Cove that protected the Candle of Love. Maybe these fields were protecting something too. I stared at the field for a moment. I could see the backs of guards positioned beyond. One of the guards glanced over his shoulder for a moment, but then he ignored us.

To our left was another blue field, but there was no one beyond it, at least not that I could see.

"What kind of field is that?" I whispered to the others.

"'Tis an energy field of some sort," said Jaana. "I believe it is a field to block passage."

"How do you know that?" I asked. Jaana knew all sorts of interesting things.

"Well, 'tis only a guess," she began, warming to the topic. "But the poisonous fields are a noxious green. A field of flames is orange-red. I recall that a violet field will cause anyone passing through it to sleep. That leaves only the blue field. And since the guards seem unconcerned by our presence, I surmise they are accustomed to being protected by the fields against threats from this direction."

"'Tis a great deal of supposition," said Shamino dryly.

Jaana glared at him.

"I did not say 'twas so, only that it might be," she said, an irritated tone creeping into her voice.

I thought I caught a shadow of a smile on Shamino's face, but it passed so quickly I couldn't be sure.

"Enough of this," I interjected. "What do we do about them?"

"I could try to remove the field," said Jaana as she pulled out her bag of spells.

"Very well," I said. "Let me move out so you have a clear shot."

I ducked down and Jaana motioned with her arms. The field to the south vanished. We stepped into a small room with a large central pillar. A beautiful mage stood in one corner.

"What's she doing here?" I wondered, aloud. The others looked at me as if I'd just committed a *faux pas*.

"The lady can hear thee. Hast thou no manners?" hissed Jaana.

"Sorry," I said contritely. "I didn't mean anything by it." My face grew hot and I knew a blush was creeping up my neck onto my face. The last thing I wanted was to look like a boob in front of the others. I turned back toward the mage. She wore a long blue tunic under a darker blue robe. Runes were embroidered in white on the cuffs. Her long black hair was pulled back into a single braid. In her hand she carried a wavy staff.

"Hello," I said. "Sorry about being so rude. Who are you?"

"My Name is Senora," she said. "I am being punished for my crimes."

"Your Crimes?" I tried to think of what she might have done to be locked up like this.

She blushed and looked at the floor.

"They are not important. Hast thou a boat?" she asked, trying to change the subject.

"Yes," I answered.

"Then thou wilt need a sextant. Ask the barkeep, for he knows more."

"Thanks, but we already have one. Are you sure you don't need any help?" I asked. But she had already turned away from me.

Jaana tugged my sleeve.

"If one is imprisoned here," she said, "so might there be others."

"What's your point?" I asked.

"Perhaps Nostro hath suffered a fate similar to

that of Lady Senora."

"How will we find him?" I asked.

"We must search these passages," she replied. "Art thou willing?"

"I guess so, but where do we go next? There are guards to the north. The only other way to go is east."

"I suggest we go east," interrupted Shamino. "'Tis the only direction we know not of."

"Okay," I said. "Let's go."

Since Jaana, Shamino, and I could all cast spells, we took turns removing the fields that blocked the ends of the hallways. As we explored, it dawned on me that we were probably inside the walls surrounding Jhelom. Eventually, we found Nostro in the northeast corner of the wall.

He was frail and withered and looked as if the slightest breeze would blow him over. His face lit up with joy when we entered the room.

"Greetings, friends," he said. The instant the words left his lips he collapsed in a fit of coughing.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am Nostro, builder of these walls," he said, gasping for air. He drew a shaky breath and exclaimed, "They sealed me in!"

"You've been trapped here?"

"Aye. I thank thee for rescuing me."

Shamino and Jaana helped him to his feet. He leaned heavily on them as he took a few tremulous steps.

"We'll get you out of here as fast as possible," I said, trying to figure out the quickest way out of the wall. "By the way," I tossed over my shoulder, "Lord Robert says you know about the Rune."

"Aye," he said, with a funny little smile. "'Tis buried in a tower. 'Twas buried in here with me. I imagine they've been wondering where it is."

"Well, we'll look for it on our way out." I started out of the room and Nostro followed me. Jaana stayed behind and looked for the rune, but it wasn't in that tower. We later found it in a corner of the southeast tower.

Nostro followed us out of the secret passageway and all the way to the edge of town. He thanked us over and over for releasing him from the tower. We didn't want to admit it, but it was with some relief that we left him behind.



Entry 16—The Shrine of Valor, the Silver Horn, and Serpent's Castle

Across the bay from Jhelom was the Shrine of Valor. I felt myself drawn there as if some powerful magnet were pulling me. The others encouraged me to meditate at the shrine, saying my instincts were telling me something. Britannians seemed to be very big on omens and feelings.

The trip across the bay was short, and we docked next to the shrine. I wanted Geoffrey to come with me to meditate. After all, fighters were surely the most valorous folk. He declined, though, so I went alone.

The shrine stood flush against the mountains. To reach the entrance I had to cross a broad flat plain. With each step, a sense of peace and well-being grew within me. Kneeling before the ankh, I pulled the Rune of Valor out of my pouch and concentrated on the Mantra. I don't know how long I remained like that, kneeling and meditating, but at some point, a voice spoke to me and told me I'd achieved partial Avatarhood in the Virtue of Valor. I felt a thrill, a sense of accomplishment like nothing I'd ever experienced before. Then the presence revealed a sign to me. I carefully copied the sign in my book. This broke my concentration and I found myself standing outside the shrine, a little weak in the knees but, other than that, feeling wonderful.

"Thou art changed," Jaana said looking at me intently.

"Not so much," I replied, making light of my experience. "There's still more to be discovered on this Quest."

I walked back to the boat with a renewed sense of purpose. The change in me must have been more profound than I realized, because Geoffrey began treating me with a touch more deference—something that was definitely out of character. I had earned his respect.

"Where dost thou wish to go next?" asked Shamino. His demeanor, at least, had changed very little.

I unfolded the map of Britannia.

"If I'm deciphering this right," I began, "this is Spiritwood here." I pointed to a large wooded area on the mainland east of Skara Brae. "When Jaana and I were at Empath Abbey, a man called Malchor told us that the Silver Horn was on one of the islands off the tip of Spiritwood. The horn must be important, but I don't know why yet. The map shows seven small islands directly north of here. They aren't very large. It shouldn't take us long to search them."

Shamino nodded, his face still closed to my scrutiny.

"Aye," he said. "May I suggest we sail from there around the Isle of Deeds to the Serpent's Castle. I hear there is much information there for one on the Quest."

"Good," I said. "And then it's north and a little west to Trinsic. We should be able to stock up on food and weapons there."

"'Tis a sound plan," said Geoffrey, cracking his knuckles.

"Jaana? Do you agree?" I asked.

"Aye," she replied. She wasn't looking at me, she was glaring at Geoffrey. "Stop that!"

"Stop what?" he asked, confused.

"Cracking thy knuckles. 'Tis a horrible sound and I cannot abide it."

Geoffrey gave his hands one last hard crunch. Jaana winced and covered her ears.

"My apologies, Lady," said Geoffrey. "I did not know thy temperament was so delicate."

"'Tis not my temperament thou shouldst fear, but my fist," Jaana said, holding her clenched hand in front of her.

Geoffrey looked down at her, then burst out laughing.

I stepped between them, hoping to defuse the situation. Jaana and Geoffrey were very different types. Sometimes they rubbed each other the wrong way.

"Stop it, both of you," I said. "You're companions on this Quest, not enemies."

"He is a great lummoX," said Jaana. "All brawn and no brains."

"And she is too puny to be of use in a battle," snarled Geoffrey.

"Okay, that's it," I interrupted. "Jaana, Geoffrey may not be a great wit, but he is a valiant fighter and I know he'll make a difference in battle."

I turned around to Geoffrey.

"Geoffrey," I began, "Jaana may be small, but she has proven herself to be fearless in combat and knowledgeable in the mystic arts. The two of you may not see eye to eye, but you will try to get along for the good of the Quest. I need you united, not bickering."

Jaana and Geoffrey looked chagrined. Geoffrey stepped forward and held out his hand.

"My apologies, Lady," he began, "I pray we may become good company on this Quest."

Jaana took Geoffrey's proffered hand and shook it briefly.

"'Tis I who should ask thy forgiveness, sir," she said. "I judged thee too quickly. Clearly, I let pride cloud my good sense."

"There," I said, feeling full of myself. "See how easy that was?"

Feeling smug, I turned away from them. Shamino leaned against the railing of the ship, looking at me. For the first time I was able to read his expression and I didn't like what I saw there—an indulgent amusement and a hint of cynicism. *Who cares what Shamino thinks*, I thought. But it did make me uneasy and I couldn't shake the feeling for the rest of the morning.

• • •

We set sail for Spiritwood, using the northern tip of Jhelom as our guide. The wind was with us and gradually we began to relax and enjoy the voyage. It was warmer here in the southern part of Britannia. I wondered what the weather was like back at Lord British's castle. It had been a long time since I'd been able to see him and tell him what I'd discovered on the Quest. Maybe we would go to Britain after Trinsic.

Shamino took the helm first, leaving the rest of us with a bit of free time. Jaana sat in the front of the boat, watching the waves break against the prow. Geoffrey did situps with his legs hooked under the siderailing. I pulled out my book and studied the notes I'd taken.

I knew that for each of the eight Virtues there was a rune. There was also a shrine, and a Stone. The Stones were colored according to the Virtues. So far I knew that the color for Valor was red. And I knew there was a black Stone and a white Stone out there. That left a rather wide array of colors to choose from, and no clue about what they might be or what Virtue they related to. One thing that had become clear—to get the Stones, we would have to go into the dungeons. The thought made my skin crawl.

"Land ho!" yelled Shamino.

I looked up from my notebook. Off the starboard side of the boat were the first of the seven small islands. No buildings were visible; the islands looked deserted. I wasn't surprised. These were among the rockiest, most godforsaken plots of land I'd ever seen.

We set ashore on the westernmost island and started looking for the Silver Horn. We found it on the second island, just off the tip of Spiritwood, buried in the rocky dirt. The horn clapper was wrapped in a piece of velvet cloth. The horn was dull from being in the ground, but a quick wipe revealed it to be silver, carved with runes and abstract designs. Embedded around its bell were precious stones. I found myself wondering how such obviously precious and important items could be found discarded in such out-of-the-way places.

Shamino polished the horn with a cloth and soon it caught the sun and shone with blinding brightness. The ranger found that the wrapping was actually a bag just big enough to hold the horn. He slipped horn into bag and pulled the drawstring closure tight. Walking around behind me, he tucked the package into my knapsack.

"For safekeeping," he said.

"Shouldn't we blow it to see what it does?" I asked.

"'Tis a magic horn," replied Shamino. "Who knows what the result might be? Nay, 'tis better to wait and see if we may learn its use from one more wise in such matters."

I nodded.

"Let's rest here tonight, then head for the Serpent's Castle in the morning," I said.

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Serpent's Castle sat serene and secure on the bay of the Isle of Deeds. At each corner of the castle stood a round tower topped by colorful flags. Rounded roofs and ornate arches indicated a different architecture from that of the northern keeps.

We entered through the south gate. To my surprise, a beautiful paladin stood in the center of the main hallway.

"Welcome to Serpent's Castle," she said with a dazzling smile.

"Thanks," I said, trying to concentrate on my mission and not be flummoxed by this gorgeous woman. "We're on the Quest of the Avatar. Do you know of anyone here who can help us?"

"There are many in the castle who might help thee. Thou needst but to ask."

"Any suggestions on who they might be?" I asked, more in control of myself now.

"I am sorry, I cannot help thee with that." She turned and walked away. I watched for a moment drinking in her loveliness. Then I turned toward the others.

"Well, any suggestions?"

"Let us first find the lord of this castle. Perhaps he will help us," said Geoffrey.

"Good idea."

The main hallway led straight into the throne room. The architecture of the Serpent's Hold was somewhat more organic than what I'd seen before. Its walls and ceilings were curved and many arches overhung the halls. The throne itself was ornate, and in appearance much like a living thing. We approached the man seated on the throne.

"Greetings," I said. "We have come on the Quest of the Avatar."

"Thou art welcome," he replied. "I am Senti, the lord of this province."

"Thank you for your hospitality," I said. "These are my companions—Jaana, Geoffrey, and Shamino. We have traveled long and hard to reach this place."

"'Tis much courage thee and thy companions show to undertake the Quest. How may I help you?"

"If you are the king of this province, then you should know the ~~word~~ ^{word} of Passage to enter the Stygian Abyss."

"I have but one of the three syllables: COR. Dost thou know the four cities of Courage?"

"No," I said.

"They are Jhelom, Minoc, Trinsic, and Skara Brae."

"Who should we talk to about the Quest?"

"There are many who may assist thee on thy Quest."

"Well, thanks."

I walked over to the others.

"Not a lot of help," I said.

"But now thou hast two of the three syllables of the word of passage. Surely 'tis something," said Jaana.

"You're right," I said. "I just get tired of everyone talking in riddles."

"That is why 'tis a Quest," remarked Shamino. "Remark well the four cities of Courage. Methinks there is meaning hidden there."

"I think thou shouldst check the Academy we passed," offered Geoffrey.

"Academy? What Academy?" I asked.

"The one we passed by to get here. Hast thou no eyes? The Serpent's Castle is well known for training fighters."

"I guess not," I replied. "I've had other things on my mind. What will we do at the Academy, besides letting you trounce a few recruits?"

"Aye, 'tis a pleasant idea. But thou knowest how gossip passes through a school. Mayhap there will be a tale there for us."

We walked to the Academy.

It was little more than a large room with padded mats on the floor. On the west wall was a mural depicting scenes of battle. Weapons hung from the north wall; towels were draped over hooks nearby. Several sweaty, tired students sat on a bench. By them stood an imposing woman, obviously the teacher. She was commenting on the bout that was taking place in front of her. She was oblivious to our presence and I didn't want to bother her, so we sat down on the bench to wait.

"Greetings," said one of the students.

"Greetings," I replied. "Shouldn't you be paying attention to the instructor?"

"Aye," he replied. "But 'tis a lesson I already know well. I do so want to be a fighter."

"So you want to be a *Fighter*," I said. "It's a hard job."

"I plan to conquer the secrets of the altar room," he said. His eyes were bright. "Ask our teacher about the rooms, for she knows much."

Altar rooms? What altar rooms? Then I remembered different conversations I'd had since the Quest began. A guard at Empath Abbey had mentioned the altars. And there had been references to them in Cove and at Lord British's castle, too. I made a mental note to review my journal when we bedded down for the evening.

I stayed and watched the rest of the bout, then rose and approached the teacher when she called for a break.

"Greetings," I said. "We are on the Quest of the Avatar. The students tell me you're a good teacher."

"I thank thee. My name is Shyra. Hast thou come to learn to fight?"

"Any help you could give would be appreciated."

"Good," she said. "Thy companion looks familiar." She pointed to Geoffrey.

"I hooked up with him in Jhelom. His name is Geoffrey. Maybe he trained here. By the way, one of your students says you know about the *Altar Rooms*."

"In the altar room of Courage, use the red, orange, purple, and white Stones."

"The orange and purple Stones? Where would I find them?"

"I know not. Thou shalt have to ask someone else."

"Thank you for your help," I said.

Geoffrey wanted to stay and spar with some of the students, but we convinced him that the Quest was more important than pounding on amateurs.

Across the hall from the Academy was another large room. Shoved into cubbyholes along the east wall were hundreds of scrolls. A large book lay open on a stand to one side of a table that ran down along the south end of the room. A glance at the scrolls and book revealed that this was the healer's room.

There was only one room for the sick and in it we found a patient—an emaciated sailor lying on a thin cot. His face was badly sunburned as though

he had spent many days in the sun.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," I began, but the sailor cut me off.

"Enter, strangers," he said weakly. "'Tis a long time since I've had visitors."

"What happened to you?" I asked, unable to tear my eyes away from his ravaged face. I ached for his pain.

"I alone survived the shipwreck of the H.M.S. *Cape*. Hast thou heard of her?"

I remembered that someone in Cove had mentioned the H.M.S. *Cape*, but, at the time, I didn't think it of consequence. Mentally, I chastised myself for not writing that information down.

"Yes."

"She went down in the deep waters of the bay in the Cape of Heroes."

The Cape of Heroes was the body of water just to the south of Britannia and northwest of Serpent's Castle. I had noticed it on the map.

Even this brief conversation exhausted the sailor. He closed his eyes and soon I heard the shallow sound of his breathing. He was asleep. I slipped away quietly. The others were waiting for me outside the healer's.

We searched the castle and discovered that there were secret doors leading off the throne room. These led into treasure chambers. The treasure chambers also had secret doors, which led outside. In a pool behind the castle lived a nixie, named Noxum. He told us about the magic wheel from the H.M.S. *Cape*.

Brother Antos helped us find the person who knew where the Bell of Courage lay. And Durham helped us with information about the Three-Part Key.

We decided not to stay at the castle. We were impatient to be on our way.

As we passed through the castle gate, I noticed a beggar leaning against the wall of the castle.

"Greetings," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Roderick," he said.

"Why are you here?"

"I used to fight in the dungeons. Aye, those were glorious days, but I lost a hand to a zorn. See?" He thrust out the bloody, putrefied stump where his hand used to be. "Wilt thou give me gold?"

"Sure," I said quickly, reaching into my satchel. "You were really in the Dungeons?"

"Aye," he said. "And dangerous it is too, but there are rewards."

"Rewards?"

"Aye. Gold. And other things."

"Be more specific."

"The orbs."

"The Orbs?"

"An orb of blue light will make thee stronger, quicker, or smarter, but thou shalt pay a price."

"What price?"

He smiled, showing gaping black holes where his teeth had been.

"Find out for thyself. If thou art brave enough."

Geoffrey grabbed my arm.

"We must go now. The tide is with us." He pulled me away from the beggar. That night I dreamed of blue orbs, the gaping maws of the unspeakable zorn, and the darkness and horrors of the dungeons.



Entry 17—The Cape of Heroes and Trinsic

e sailed north to the Cape of Heroes. According to Lessom, the sailor we'd met in Serpent's Castle, it was there that we'd find a sunken vessel,

the H.M.S. Cape. Aboard it when it went down was a magical wheel that had strengthened the hull of the ship. I hoped to retrieve the wheel and see if it would do the same for our boat.

Jaana took the helm. She astonished and embarrassed the rest of us by singing a bawdy sea chantey. When she finished, she burst out laughing at our shocked expressions. Geoffrey looked like a fish gasping for air. Shamino crossed his arms over his chest and turned away; I could only stand there and gape.

"If only you could see the expressions on your faces," she laughed. "Have you never heard a simple song before?"

"That's quite a, uh, vocabulary you have," I said weakly.

"'Tis nothing," she said demurely. "Just a ditty I learned from a sailor. Besides, 'tis a girl thing." She looked pointedly at me. I blushed—hoist on my own petard.

Luckily, at that moment we sailed into the Cape of Heroes. Forests and low hills bordered the shoreline. The water was crystal clear. I thought we'd run into the shallows, but when we dropped a depth tester, we discovered we were still in deep water.

"This is amazing," I said. "The water must be hundreds of feet deep."

"Thou exaggeratest," said Shamino. "'Tis more like tens of feet, but deep nonetheless."

"What's that?" I pointed to a dark shadow on the bottom.

"'Tis the shadow of our ship, I believe," said Geoffrey.

Jaana swung the boat around and we slowed to a stop. I lowered the anchor over the side.

"Well," I said, "what do we do now?"

The others looked at me expectantly. I got the idea that they wanted me to tell them. I looked over the side of the boat, then back at the others.

"Okay. We need to get the wheel out of the water," I said. "That's the first thing. The question is: how?"

"'Tis simple," began Jaana. "Hook a rope around the wheel and pull it from the water."

"And how do we hook it?" I asked. "Do any of you know how to swim?"

They shook their heads.

"Ah. Well, looks like I'm elected," I said.

I pulled off my shirt and boots, then walked to the side of the ship. Taking a deep breath, I climbed onto the railing. The water looked far away. I never was much of a diver.

"Hand me a rope," I said. Shamino passed me the end of one of the lines.

"Here goes nothing," I said, and jumped. Two seconds of free fall and then I hit. The water was icy cold. I bobbed to the surface, gasping for air. If I didn't drown, I'd freeze to death if I didn't get a move on. Taking several deep breaths, I plunged beneath the surface and opened my eyes to get my bearings. The ship was directly below me. Clenching the rope

between my teeth, I made my way down until at last I reached the ship. Bubbles of precious air escaped my mouth, but I held on to what remained with grim determination.

The H.M.S. Cape had seen better days. Algae and ribbons of seaweed covered her. Bloated, dead sailors bobbed with the current, arms and legs tangled in the seaweed and the wreckage. I shuddered at the sight of their watery grave, but did not hesitate.

The wheel was lashed to the main mast of the ship. I swam over to it and tied my end of the rope around one of the spokes. I grabbed hold of two of the spokes and pulled. The wheel wouldn't come loose. With a silent groan I released the wheel and frantically looked around. My lungs started to burn, but I still wasn't ready to admit defeat. In the back of my mind I realized that I would never have accomplished even this meager feat in my former life. Britannia again.

Meanwhile I was seeking something to cut the lashings. A dead sailor bobbed in front of me; tucked into his belt was a knife. With desperate fingers, I grabbed it.

The knife was rusty, but still serviceable. I shoved the blade up under the ropes and worked it back and forth. Nothing happened for a moment, then with a muffled groan the bindings split. My lungs were on fire now, and my head pounded. I knew my air would not last much longer. My fingers were numb from the cold as I worked the knife under the other pieces of rope. Fortunately these were rotted almost all the way through and gave way more easily. In seconds, the wheel was free. The knife fell from my hand and tumbled to the bottom of the ocean.

I tugged on the line, the signal to Jaana and the others. The wheel fell slowly toward the deck of the Cape, but then the line grew taut and pulled it upward. I grabbed hold of the wheel, hoping my breath would hold. The ascent seemed to last forever.

Finally I burst to the surface, gasping for air. Shamino and Geoffrey pulled me and the wheel onto the ship. I sat down, dripping water and laboring for breath.

"They had it lashed to their mast," I gasped. "Let's try securing it to ours."

Geoffrey held the wheel while Shamino tied it securely to the mast. A moment passed, then a blue light spread from the top of the mast down the length of the boat, bathing the whole ship in a beautiful radiance.

I lay back on the deck and stared at the wheel, letting the ocean breeze dry my skin.

• • •

We put in at Trinsic the next day. The wheel from the H.M.S. Cape had done its job, protecting our boat from the attacks of various sea creatures. Sailing on Britannian oceans was as dangerous as walking through Britannian woods.

Trinsic lay close to the shore on a bluff overlooking the sea. Surrounded by high stone walls, it was a stronghold in a dangerous part of the world.

To the east, as we entered town, was a shop that sold dueling weapons. Next door there was an armory. To the west we saw an inn and a pub called The Tap.

"Let's spend the night at the inn," I said. "After my dip in the ocean, I'm ready to rinse off with some fresh water."

"The pub next to the inn is well known for its brew," said Geoffrey. He smiled broadly. "Sea travel gives me a powerful thirst."

"Aye," added Shamino, nodding enthusiastically. "T'would be a shame not to sample what might be the finest ale in Britannia."

"We seem to have a consensus here," I said. "What about you, Jaana? Are you parched too?"

"Being a bard, thou knowest that singing is dry work. Since I entertained thee with my songs onboard ship, the least thou couldst do is to quench my thirst."

"I know when I'm outvoted. The pub—then a bath."

The tavern was smoky, but not too crowded. Jaana, Geoffrey, and Shamino sat down at a table while I got the ale. When I returned to the table a handsome paladin had joined the others.

"Hello," I said. "Who's this?"

"This is Dupré," said Jaana, gesturing to the man across from her. "He's a town leader."

"How do you do?" I asked.

"I am well," he replied rising out of his chair slightly. "Thy friends tell me thou art on the Quest of the Avatar."

"Yes," I said. "Do you know anything about the Quest?"

"No, I cannot assist thee."

"Isn't Trinsic the town of Honor?"

"Aye," he said. "Honor is my constant quest. Honor is like finely polished armor. Without constant care it is soon tarnished."

"Would you excuse us for a minute?" I asked. "Private business."

"Certainly," he replied. "My mug is empty and I would refill it." He rose and walked over to the bar.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Shamino.

"No," I replied, looking around the table at the others. "I just wanted to check and see if you would mind if I asked him to join us."

The others looked startled.

"I know it's short notice, but I have a feeling about him. Besides, for the Quest to be balanced, our party must be balanced as well. We need a paladin."

"Aye," said Jaana. "Thou art right, but will he do?"

"Well, we're going to find out."

Dupré came back to the table and sat down. "Have you finished your business?" he asked.

"Yes, but we have a question for you."

"Aye, what would you ask of me?"

"As you know, we're on a Quest and to complete it, we need a paladin. We were wondering if you would join us?"

"I would be honored to join you," he said.

We raised our mugs and drank a toast to the newest member of our party.

• • •

The next morning I woke with a pounding in my head like the anvils of a thousand angry blacksmiths. Great ale or not, I wasn't going to drink like that again. I dimly recalled the fifth toast, something about Jaana's eyes being brighter than all the stars in heaven. Which one of us had made that up escaped me and it took too much energy to think about it.

At this point I realized the pounding I had assumed was in my head was actually coming from the door.

"Stop that!" I yelled, or tried to yell. It came out more like a weak croak. The door swung open and Dupré bounded into the room. He looked hale and hearty and ready for bear. Or orc. I wanted to kill him.

"Good morning, friend!" he bellowed.

"Keep it down, will you? Do you want to wake the whole inn?"

He peered at me closely.

"What is wrong with thee?" he asked. "Hast thou caught the plague? If so, we must send thee from this place, for surely we cannot endanger the lives of others."

"A noble sentiment, Dupré. But what ails me is too much of your fine ale."

"Thou shouldst not drink beyond thy limits. Thou art old enough to have learned this lesson before."

"Once or twice," I said. "I don't make this a habit, if that's what you mean."

"Even so, 'tis a fool who gets drunk."

"Call me a complete idiot."

"Thou art an idiot."

I tried to glare at him, but it came across as more of a squint. Then I burst out laughing. The worst part was Dupré's expression. He wasn't mad, just disappointed in me and perhaps a bit confused. After all, I had told him to call me an idiot, and he'd simply obliged me. Now I told him to go get the others and meet me in a few minutes. He shrugged, turned, and left.

I pulled on my clothes and went to face the music.

• • •

A man stood in the main room of the inn as I walked in.

"Hello," I said. "Have you see three men and a woman waiting around here?"

"Nay," he said. "Thy friends?"

"Yes," I replied. "We're on a Quest together."

"Aye, I know much about quests." He looked me over as if he doubted that I could be on a Quest. "Dost thou know what is needed to enter the shrines?"

"Yes. The *flautra* and the rune."

I think my answer impressed him. Anyway, he appeared to be satisfied with my answer. "Aye," he agreed. "The Mantra for Honor is SUMM."

That was helpful. "Know anything about the Rune of Honor?" I asked hopefully.

"A man named Winthrope knows of the rune."

"Thanks. I appreciate the help."

The others were waiting outside the inn. As I stepped out, I bumped into a scruffy merchant.

"Excuse me," I said.

"Tis no great matter," he replied, waving his hand slightly. "I see thou art a traveler also."

"Yes," I said. "I am on a Quest."

"I am Winthrope. I trade in rumors."

"What kind of Rumors?" I asked cautiously. This Winthrope looked pretty disreputable to me.

"Ask me."

I thought for minute. I needed to know about the shrine, the Rune, the Stone, and the Codex. There was a lot of ground to cover.

"What about the Shrine of Honor?" I asked.

"I cannot help thee with that," he said.

"The Rune?"

"Which rune?"

"The Rune of Honor."

"Hmm." He stroked his chin. "There was a small child who knew. Terrin was his name, I believe."

"Anything else? Maybe the Stone, the Codex, the shrine?"

He shook his head.

"No, I cannot help thee." Then he turned and went into the inn.

"Well," I said to the others, "now all we have to do is find Terrin."

We wandered around the town for the rest of the morning. We found out about nightshade from Virgil. Quix told us the names of people who could tell us about the purple Stone of Honor and its uses.

We found the child Terrin hiding in a grove of trees behind the weapons shop.

"What's wrong?" I asked him.

"I am hiding," he replied. His voice was unsteady.

"From whom?" I asked.

"The bull. It chased me. Is it gone?"

I looked around, but didn't see a bull. "I think it's gone now."

He stood up, braver now. "Good. I was very afraid."

"A man named Winthrope said you know where the Rune is."

He brightened then. I think he was happy to be useful. "Aye. 'Tis buried in the southwest corner of town."

"Thank you for your help," I said. "And watch out for that bull."

"I will," he replied.

• • •

It was a short walk to the southwest corner of town, but we had to push our way through the trees and bushes. I blundered out of the woods into a magical field. The air around me turned a sickly lime-green. Then, suddenly, I was through the field and in a small open area. A young mage stood in one corner. He had a nasty, superior expression on his face.

"Hello," I said.

"Greetings," he replied in a whiny, nasal voice.

"Who are you? And what are you doing here?"

"I am Sendrick," he said. "I practice great magics."

"Oh, really?"

"Aye, really," he replied. He sounded put out that I wasn't impressed. "Dost thou know the ingredient for all great magics?"

I thought for a minute, then said, "Mandrake." It was a shot in the dark, an educated guess based on my readings.

"Aye," he said, his voice peevish. "Ask at the Folley Tavern about mandrake."

Then Geoffrey, Jaana, Shamino, and Dupré stumbled through the force fields into the clearing.

"Hast thou discovered the rune?" asked Jaana.

"No," I said. "I haven't looked yet."

We spread out and searched the small clearing. The rune lay under some loose dirt near Sendrick. I tucked it into my satchel and was about to pass back through the force field when Shamino grabbed my arm.

"Thou shouldst dispel this field," he said.

"Why? It didn't do us any harm coming through."

"'Tis a poison field. Better not to try thy luck."

I shrugged and cast the spell. The field collapsed and fell apart. I let the others go back first and glanced over my shoulder at Sendrick as we left. He stood in his corner with a petulant expression on his face, as though we'd spoiled his fun.

I told the others I needed to visit the Shrine of Honor. We set sail the next day. After visiting the shrine, we sailed back around the Cape of Heroes and made our way back to Lord British's castle.

Entry 18—Hythloth and the Lighter-than-Air-Device

The first snow of winter had just fallen when we docked at Lord British's castle. I'd been away so long that I'd almost forgotten

how beautiful this part of Britannia was. A white frosting of snow covered the turrets; dripping icicles gleamed on the ramparts and eaves. Our boots crunched in the drifts. Smoke wafted up from the chimneys rising above the castle's roof. It felt like home.

"Why have we come back here?" asked Geoffrey as we walked toward the castle.

"To rest and regroup," I replied. "Lord British likes to get information from other parts of Britannia and I need to talk to Hawkwind to see how I'm doing on the Quest.

"Also, we need the white Stone. Isaac, the ghost at the Skara Brae inn, told me that it could be reached only by a lighter-than-air device. I've heard stories that two men in the Buccaneer's Den know of the lighter-than-air device. According to the rumors, these men claim that the lighter-than-air device may be found in the dungeon outside the great castle.

"If I'm figuring things right, the great castle is Lord British's castle. There were a couple of doors I couldn't get through last time I was here because I didn't have keys. Well, I've got keys now and I want to see if they take us into the dungeon."

"The dungeons are dangerous. Only those who are very brave, or very foolish, dare them," said Shamino.

"I know, but we need the white Stone and this is

the only way I know to get it. Besides, if the flying object is outside the dungeon, all we need to do is go into the dungeon, then cast a spell to get out—an *Exit* spell. If my calculations are correct, we'll be outside the dungeon in a matter of minutes, and find this lighter-than-air device."

"And if thou art wrong?" asked Jaana.

"The, we've got problems."

We entered the main hall of the castle. I stopped in the main hall's archway, amazed by the transformation wrought there. Garlands of evergreen hung from the ceilings and wrapped around the columns down the center of the room. Red, blue, and yellow bows adorned the greenery. Soft woven carpets covered the floor. Each depicted a different Virtue, they looked like oversized versions of the gypsy's tarot cards.

The courtiers wore their finest clothes. Deep velvets, trimmed with fur, rubbed against heavy embroidered silk. Our rough, travel- and battle-tainted outfits set us apart and called attention to us.

"Do you know what's going on here?" I asked.

"It looks like a celebration of some kind," said Jaana.

Geoffrey, Shamino, Dupré, and I turned and gave her an annoyed look.

"Thou hast a fine grasp of the obvious," said Shamino dryly.

Jaana blushed.

"There's one way to find out what's going on," I said. "Let's go see Lord British."

The great monarch sat on his throne. He waved an arm and gestured for us to join him. Around the room the celebrants gawked at our appearance. If any of them had recognized me, which I doubted, they would no doubt have been amazed by my transformation from the pale, otherworldly slug I had been to the hardened Britannian warrior I had become.

"Greetings," said Lord British. "We have been expecting thee."

"How did you know we were coming?" I asked, suspecting something arcane.

"Thy boat was sighted yesterday. We have been making preparations to welcome thee back."

"Lord British, these are the companions who have joined me on my Quest: Jaana, a druid from the city of Yew."

"Welcome, Jaana," said Lord British.

"This is Shamino, a ranger from Skara Brae. This is Geoffrey. We found him in Jhelom. He's a fighter. And this is the paladin Duprè. We met him in Trinsic just before we came back here."

"Welcome to all thy friends. I see thou hast made much progress on thy Quest. I have a gift for thee." He gestured with his staff and there was a flash of light. Strength surged through my body and mind. Jaana gasped. Shamino and Geoffrey let out cries of surprise. When I turned and looked at them I saw that they had changed. They all looked stronger, more muscular. I touched my bicep and felt hard, corded muscle. And I felt sharper, more intelligent and alive.

"This is my reward for thy journeys. Only after thou hast experienced many trials over a long period of time may I reward thee thus," said Lord British. "Now, we have prepared a feast for thee."

The rest of the day was spent enjoying the food, wine, and entertainment Lord British provided. The court listened intently as we told about our Quest. Lord British asked about the towns we'd visited, the people we'd met, the foes we'd fought. I thought of what I could do to a baron with my new physique.

The revelry lasted all night and into the morning. The grey streaks of dawn colored the sky as we finally made our way to bed.

• • •

We stayed another day at the castle, making a short trip to Britain to buy supplies and visit with Iolo. As I'd expected, Iolo and my companions became friends quickly. Jaana, Shamino, and I discussed the spells we would need in the dungeon. I made sure we each prepared an *Exit* spell. Jaana insisted on as many *Cure* and *Heal* spells as we could make. Shamino suggested we take along a spell of *Quickness*.

"I don't think we're going to need these spells," I said.

"'Tis better to be prepared," replied Shamino. He mixed some reagents, and smiled as they bound together.

When the spells were ready, we started looking for the secret entrance to the dungeon. We began in the prison because it was one of the places in the castle I hadn't investigated thoroughly.

Guards stood at the entrance to the prison, but didn't stop us from coming and going at will. The prison was a large room divided into cells containing a variety of captives. On the western wall were two cells holding a collection of motley looking men. In a cell to our south was a monster of some sort.

"What's that?" I asked Shamino as I pointed at the creature.

"I believe it is a reaper," he replied. "I have not seen one before, but it fits the description—a trunk-like body with tentacles. 'Tis said they cast fearsome magic to destroy their foes."

I peered through the bars at the captured reaper.

"Doesn't look so bad to me," I said. "But then, it's behind bars and we're out here. It's easy to be brave under these circumstances."

"A true enough sentiment," agreed Geoffrey. "But why do we waste time discussing a conquered foe? 'Tis time for action—not talk. There is a dungeon to find and monsters to fight."

"Thou wilt have plenty of foul creatures to beat upon soon enough," said Jaana. "Why must thou borrow trouble?"

"'Tis the warrior's way, milady. Thou knowest. Why dost thou chastise me?"

"Me chastise thee? Why, thou overgrown..."

"Enough, already," I interrupted. "We need to investigate these cells, not argue among ourselves."

I used a magic key on the lock on the cell in the western corner. We slipped into the cell. The miserable wretch chained in the corner raised his head, then sank back into a stupor. We searched the cell and discovered a secret door in one corner. The secret door swung open with a touch. In the room beyond the door, we found a mage named Zorin. He told us to find a man named Anthros in each of the three castles and to ask about the Bell, Book, and Candle.

Leading out of the secret room was a passage. Following this passage west, we discovered another secret door leading into the cell holding the reaper.

The reaper smiled wickedly at us and its tentacles twitched, but it made no move to attack. It told us of an object of great power and said to ask about it at the Buccaneer's Den. Enough people had mentioned the Buccaneer's Den that I knew it should be our next destination.

We continued to search the corridor, but found no other doors or passageways. The entrance to the dungeon was not here, and we went back the way we'd come.

"Maybe thy information is tainted," said Shamino. "Not everyone is as honest as thee. Maybe there is no entrance to a dungeon near this castle."

"Aye," said Jaana. "Perhaps 'tis another castle that holds the dungeon."

"Nay. Why would someone lie about such a thing?" said Dupré.

Jaana, Geoffrey, and Shamino looked at Dupré with astonishment.

"Why do you stare?" Dupré asked. "I cannot imagine such a thing."

"Paladins," grunted Geoffrey, shrugging his shoulders.

"Never mind all that," I said. "There's one more place I haven't searched. Follow me."

I led the way back downstairs and through the first secret doorway I'd found in the castle. It was in the eastern wing. Two secret doors led to the outside and I went to the northern one. We made our way along the side of the castle to a small wooden door. The door was locked, but I had several magic keys. I pulled one of them out of my satchel.

"Here goes nothing," I said, inserting the key into the lock. The key glowed and turned. The door swung open. We stepped forward.

• • •

It was dark. Not the dark of night, but an inky blackness utterly devoid of light. It felt like the blackness was pushing into my eyes, a solid mass.

"Someone light a torch," I said. I felt the darkness pushing against me, suffocating me. I couldn't breathe. I . . .

Light.

I blinked a few times to get used to the sudden brightness and looked around me. We were in a dungeon. Only a dungeon could be so malodorous. Slime and moss clung to the stone walls. A trickle of fetid water oozed from between the stones and puddled on the flagstone walk. The air was stale and smelled of decay and death. Suddenly I was very afraid of whatever could live in such an environment.

I'd thought we might investigate the dungeon a little before we went and got the lighter-than-air device, but now that I was here, I realized how perilous our situation was. I wanted to spend as little time here as possible. Not normally prone to claustrophobia, I was suddenly initiated into its unpleasant sensations.

"I'm going to cast the spell to get us out of here," I said. I managed to keep the nervousness out of my voice. The others didn't object. I glanced at their faces and saw my fear mirrored there.

I gathered a ball of blood moss and spider silk in my hand and added a pinch of sulfurous ash. The sulfurous ash flashed and a bright light filled the dungeon. In an instant, we stood outside the dungeon. Except it wasn't where we'd come in.

"I guess I didn't concentrate hard enough," I said.

"Fear not," said Shamino. "'Tis just as well we are gone from that foul place. Dost thou now comprehend why the dungeons are the most dangerous places in all Britannia?"

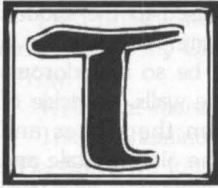
"Yes, because only something horrible and foul could possibly live in a dungeon. But we'll have to return, won't we?"

"Aye. But when we are better prepared and better armed."

"No argument there."

As we talked, we made our way down the rocky path leading from the mouth of the dungeon. Rounding a large outcropping and heading east, we saw the balloon. It waved gently in the morning breeze. The balloon itself was pink, yellow, and blue, laid out in a geometric pattern. The basket was wicker with a wood floor, and was large enough to hold at least ten people.

"Let's go get the white Stone," I said and climbed aboard. I had no idea how to work the thing, but I think I assumed it would be like the horse and the ship. I would figure it out when the time came.



Entry 19—The White Stone, Moonglow, and the Lycaeum

The balloon soared high above the Britannian landscape. For a while, we were content just to watch the ground pass far

below. Through wisps of clouds, I watched the snow-capped peaks and spiny ridges of the Serpent's Spine, the mountains north of Lord British's castle, as they passed below us.

"Look," Dupré said, pointing toward the ground as we crossed the mountains. "Down there."

We moved to Dupré's side of the basket. It tilted dangerously and I felt my stomach lurch. Dupré pointed at a small gap between two of the peaks. A large stone ankh stood in a small patch of grass.

"That must be where the white Stone is," I said. "Land the balloon."

Jaana and Shamino rushed to the damper, dousing the flame that kept the balloon aloft. We began to sink, but not fast enough. A strong easterly wind blew us over the ridge and we landed on a grassy plain to the west of the shrine.

"Can we walk back to the shrine? I asked.

Geoffrey shook his head. "Nay. There are no trails and only sheer cliffs. To reach the shrine, we must use the balloon."

This was not good news. The balloon was difficult to control, blowing about at the whim of every breeze.

"A *Blink* spell might get us there," I said.

"Nay," said Shamino. "'Tis difficult to control the landing. If we could control the winds for a few moments we might be able to land the balloon on the small grassy patch of land near the ankh."

I'd considered using *Wind* spells, but it seemed risky. We could run out of spells, run out of strength to cast them, or even run out of the reagents to create the spells, and then we'd be in real trouble. But there didn't seem to be any other choice. I told my companions to heat the air for an ascent. As the balloon began to inflate, I readied a spell to control the winds. We needed to go east, so I had to make the winds come from the west. Mixing together sulphurous ash and blood moss, I called out to the

patron of winds and whispered the direction I needed the breeze to take. The winds changed and we loosened the lines on the balloon.

The balloon floated up and over the mountains. We saw the shrine below, but we were too far south to land. I soon discovered how difficult it was to land the balloon in just the right spot.

After several unsuccessful tries, I took a sextant reading as we passed futilely above the place where we wanted to land. The ankh was at F'A' F'A'. We landed the balloon west of the mountains again, then went aloft and floated north until our longitude read F'A'.

Then we cast a spell to change the winds to the west. We floated east and made a perfect landing on the small grassy area! I clambered out of the basket and dropped to the ground. After all the time it had taken to get to this spot, the moment it took to find the white Stone seemed anticlimactic. I put the Stone in my satchel and climbed back into the carriage.

"Dost thou wish to stay here and rest?" asked Jaana. "It seems like the safest place we will find in our wanderings."

"Aye, 'tis a good idea," interjected Shamino.

"Okay," I said. "We'll spend the night here, but in the morning I want to head back to Lord British's castle and drop off the balloon. Then I think it's time we visited Moonglow."

"But why?" asked Geoffrey.

"We need a mage," I replied, "and I've heard we may find one in Moonglow."

• • •

A few days later, after a nearly uneventful voyage, we sailed into the harbor outside Moonglow. We had fought off some attacks by sea serpents and other creatures of the deep ocean, but our new strength and greater numbers proved more than equal to the task. We arrived safely, not much the worse for wear.

We docked the ship and walked to the edge of town, where a footbridge over a puddle led into the city. The streets were hard-packed dirt, lined with bushes and other small plants. A tall mage stood by the bridge and waved at us.

"Greetings," he said. "Welcome to Moonglow."

"Hello," I replied. "We've come a long way."

He smiled amiably. "All travelers come a long way to Moonglow. Dost thou seek a healer or an inn?"

"We don't need either," I said.

"Perhaps the shrine which lies to the north?"

"Yes," I said. "We are looking for the shrine."

"There are many in Moonglow who may help thee on thy quest."

"Thank you," I said. Then we passed into town.

I stopped at the healer's to donate some blood. In the shop, the wounded mage called Shazom told me about the *Recall* spell. Two children, Christen and William, led us to the Rune of Honesty. I learned about the Mantra from a paladin named Cromwell. He asked me if I strove for Honesty and I said yes. Then he told me that the Mantra of Honesty was AHM.

In a small field north of the path into town we encountered a young mage. She was sitting on a chest of gold with her chin cupped in her hands and her elbows resting on her knees. Long blond hair flowed down her back, and her bright green eyes sized us up with a quick glance.

She stood as we approached. The top of her head came just to my chin.

"Greetings," she said. "My name is Mariah."

A sense of *deja vu* swept over me. I knew I'd never seen her before, but there was something familiar about her, something that fit into a puzzle I hadn't even known existed.

"Hello," I said. "What are you doing here?"

"Just now I'm taking care of this chest, but I really wish to seek adventure." Her eyes twinkled as she said that.

"So you're interested in adventure," I said. "Be careful what you wish for—you might get it."

"Aye. I hope to go on a Quest. Art thou on a Quest?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I am. These are my companions: Dupré, Jaana, Shamino, and the big guy is Geoffrey."

"I wish I could join thee," she said, looking longingly at us.

"Why don't you?"

"I would be glad to," she said.

"What about your chest?" I asked.

"'Tis safe for now," she said. "I have set a Poison spell on it that will deter any who might try to steal it. Where wilt thou go next?"

I thought for a moment.

"I need to go to the Moongate and retrieve the black Stone. Merlin in Cove told me I should search the Moongate when both moons go dark. According to my calculations, the Moongate for Moonglow appears when both moons are dark. I know we also need to go to the Lycaenum and the Shrine of Honesty."

"Then thou shouldst go to the herb shop and get reagents and stock up on rations at the Sage Deli—Dagger Isle, where the shrine lies, is a dangerous place. I am told the mouth of the dungeon Deceit is on that isle, too," said Mariah.

"The maid hath a good head on her shoulders," said Dupré. "We should heed her advice."

"Very well," I said. "Supplies, the black Stone, the Lycaenum, and on to Dagger Isle. Any objections?"

The others shook their heads.

"Then it's settled."

• • •

On the shore west of Moonglow, the Moongate appeared when both of Britannia's moons were dark. I stepped into the gate and felt that familiar sense of vertigo, but when I emerged from the gate I found myself right where I had entered it. Unlike the other Moongates, this one hadn't teleported me anywhere. Still, something felt different. I looked down at the ground and there, between my feet, was the black Stone.

Quickly I picked it up and stepped away from the Moongate. I didn't want to risk being transported anywhere else by accident.

"Now we go to the Lycaenum," I said.

• • •

A stately wizard stood inside the entrance to the Lycaenum. His robes were blue, embroidered with green and purple designs. In his hand he held a staff of black hardwood.

"Welcome to the Lycaenum," he said. "I am Tymus."

"Hello," I answered. "These are my companions: Mariah, Geoffrey, Shamino, Jaana, and Dupré. We are on a Quest."

"Then you must visit here for a while. There is information within for those on the Quest."

"Do you know anything about the Quest?" I asked.

His eyebrows shifted subtly. He placed both hands on top of his staff and rested his chin upon them. "What dost thou wish to know?"

"Can you tell us about the Dungeons?"

"Aye. In the dungeon there are altar rooms. To use the altars, you must have the Stones."

"Which Stones?" I inquired.

"I cannot help thee with that."

"Which dungeons?"

"I cannot help thee with that."

"Where in the dungeon are the altars?"

"I cannot help thee with that."

This was futile. "Thanks anyway," I said. "If you think of anything else, let me know."

The mage simply smiled.

We made our way over the two small bridges just inside the entrance and crossed into the throne room.

A handsome man and woman sat on a double throne in the center of the room. The curtains that hung on either side of the throne were dark blue velvet embroidered with a red and yellow design.

"Welcome," began the man on the throne. "I am Robert Frasier. How may I help thee?"

"Hello," I replied. "We are on the Quest of the Avatar. We were told to ask each of the lords of the castles about the Word of Passage. Do you know the word?"

"I know but one of the three syllables. Dost thou wish to know it now?"

"Yes," I said.

"It is VER. Seek ye to know the other parts."

"We already have them. They are: AMO and COR."

"Very well. Good luck on thy journey."

I bowed to him and then to his lady, and we made our way out of the throne room. In the corner of the hall stood a druid who looked familiar to me. He was

the spitting image of his twin, Brother Antos, who lived at Empath Abbey. Brother Antos had mentioned that his twin lived at the Lycaenum.

"Excuse me," I said. "Aren't you Father Antos?"

"Aye, I am," he said. "I have much knowledge. What dost thou seek?"

"The Book of Truth."

"It lies with the other books."

"Thank you," I said. I was about to continue our conversation, but he wandered away.

"Where dost thou think the book is?" asked Geoffrey.

"I'm not sure. Where are books usually kept?"

"In a library, of course," said Mariah.

"Is there one here?"

"Aye, 'tis beyond this door," Mariah said pointing west to a small door leading off the corridor we stood in. "The Lycaenum is the main library of Britannia."

I tried the door Mariah had indicated, but it was locked. One of my magic keys took care of that. The door swung open and the musty odor of books floated out. I sneezed.

"Bless thee," came a voice from inside.

"Who's there?" I asked as I entered.

"'Tis I, Lord Terence," said the voice. A tall, agile man stood and walked out from behind a desk.

"Hello," I said. "May we use the library?"

"Aye. Art thou looking for a particular book?"

"Yes. The Book of Truth."

"Look under T."

"Thank you."

We made our way along the library stacks. I kept sneezing.

"Wilt thou stop that?" hissed Shamino with some annoyance.

"I cabn't," I said. "I'mb allerbgic to dubst"

"I found it," said Jaana. She stood in the section marked R at my end of the shelves. She held a leather-bound book. The pages were heavy vellum gilded at the edges. *The Book of Truth* was stamped in gold runes on the cover.

"'Tis heavy," Jaana said. "Here. Feel."

She passed the book to me. She was right. It was heavy. But the weight had a comfort to it, a sense of solidity that made me feel secure. I pulled off my

backpack and was about to take the book when I hesitated.

"What is wrong?" asked Mariah.

"I don't know if we should take it. I mean, isn't that stealing?"

"Nay," Mariah said. "Lord British hath instructed thee to find what is needed for thy Quest. Is not the *Book of Truth* part of thy Quest?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then 'tis thine for the taking."

"If you say so," I said, and opened my backpack. I tucked the *Book of Truth* in next to the *Candle of Love*.

"What is left for us to do?" I asked as I shrugged into my backpack.

"We need to finish exploring this place," said Geoffrey.

"Aye. But we still lack six of the Stones. For that I fear we need to go into the dungeons," remarked Shamino.

"How do you know we're missing six of the Stones?" I asked Shamino.

"Thou hast recovered the black and white Stones," Shamino said. "Thou searchest for the eight runes representing the eight Virtues. 'Tis a simple matter to see that there must be eight stones, each representing one of the virtues. Since thou hast discovered two of the Stones, that leaves six more Stones to be found."

"You have a point," I said. "But how do you figure that the Stones are in the dungeons?"

"In Jhelom we met Gravnor. Dost thou remember him?" Shamino asked.

"Yes," I said. "A fighter we met in the pub."

"He told us we would find the red Stone in the *Dungeon Destard*. I am assuming that the other Stones also lie in the dungeons."

"That's a lot of assuming," I said.

"Aye," said Shamino. "But hast thou a better guess?"

"No. Any suggestions on where we should go next?" I asked in general.

"There are still two cities of Virtue, Minoc and Magincia, that we have not seen," said Jaana. "And the *Rune of Sacrifice* has not yet been found."

"And I haven't even elevated in many of the

Virtues. That requires trips to the shrines. And we still need the *Bell of Courage*."

"There is much we have yet to do. And waiting at the end of our journey is the great *Stygian Abyss*," added Dupré. His voice filled me with dread.

I sighed. It did seem like a lot to do. Would I ever complete this Quest?

"Do not despair," said Mariah. "The *Shrine of Honesty* is on the next isle. We can stop there."

I unrolled my map and looked at it. *Dagger Isle* lay to the east, just off the coast of *Britannia*. We could go to the shrine and then try the *dungeon*. If we managed to get the Stone, we could sail from *Dagger Isle* to *Minoc*. I pushed my exhaustion aside and rolled the map up.

"Let's finish here, then go to *Dagger Isle*. From there we'll go to *Minoc*."

The others nodded and we resumed our search of the *Lycaenum*. We met Nigel there, and he instructed us as to the mixture for the *Recall* spell. A wounded fighter at the healer's gave us information about the altar rooms in the dungeons. Scatu suggested we talk to Zircon in *Minoc* about the *Mystic Weapons and Armor*.

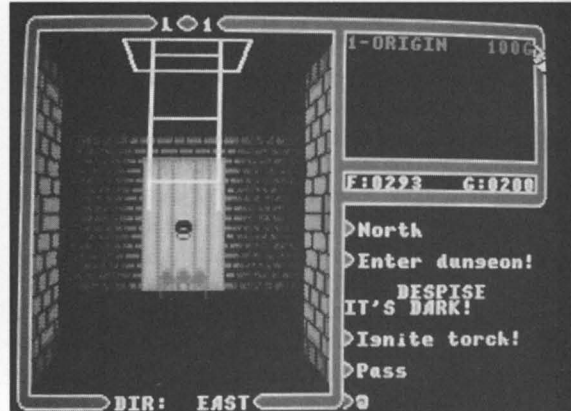
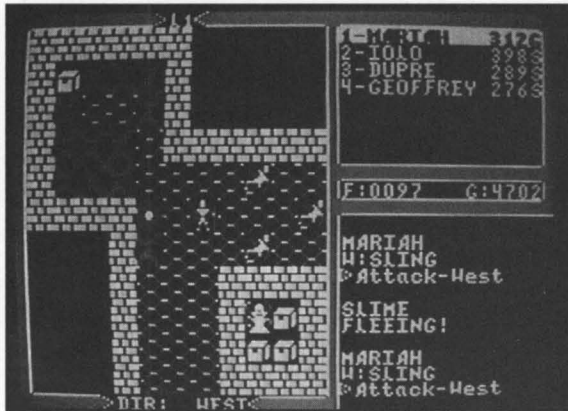
The most interesting aspect of our visit to the *Lycaenum* was the telescope in the central tower. Looking through it, I was able to see a map of all the towns and castles in *Britannia*, including the locations of the hidden rooms.

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Editors' Notes:

The Avatar's notes about his trip into the dungeons were torn from this volume. Whether the Avatar or another party destroyed them is unknown. The only information about his descent into the depths comes from crude maps found tucked into the spine of the book. We have reproduced these at the end of this volume in the hope that they may assist the unwary traveler who, through foolishness or bad luck, finds himself in the same situation. We cannot verify that these maps are accurate; however, we were able to discover the locations of the entrances to the dungeons. These are included at the end of this volume, along with the Avatar's notes on the sextant positions of other places of interest.

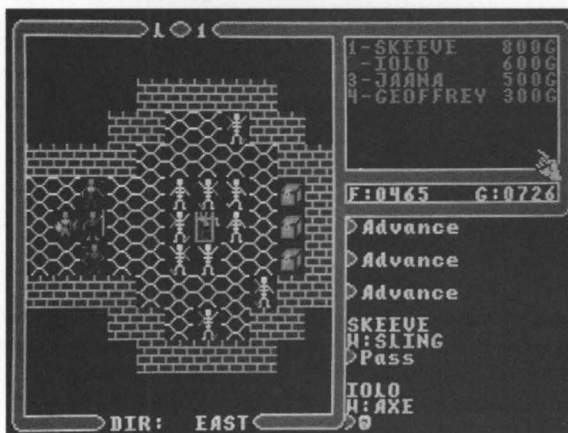
ULTIMA: The Avatar Adventures



Of interest to some scholars is the manner in which the Avatar claimed the Three-Part Key needed to enter the Chamber of the Codex. According to various authorities, the Avatar obtained the Three-Part Key by using the Stones from the dungeons in the Altar Rooms of Truth, Love, and Courage.

In the Altar Room of Truth, the Avatar stood on the altar and Used the blue, green, purple, and white Stones. In the Altar Room of Courage he repeated this process only using the red, orange, purple, and white Stones. In the Altar Room of Love, he used the yellow, green, orange, and white Stones.

The Avatar's tale resumes in Minoc.



Entry 27—Minoc

Shentis the Tinker stood by the edge of the road leading into Minoc. His fat belly hung over his pants and bobbed up and down as he talked.

"Welcome, travelers," he said, walking toward us. "Welcome to Minoc, the city of Sacrifice."

"Hello," I replied. "We have come a great distance to get here."

"Aye, I can see that from thy clothes."

We all looked down at ourselves. Our clothes were a mess, stained and faded from the time we'd spent at sea.

"Do not trouble yourselves," said Shentis. "We are simple folk here. Remember, self-Sacrifice is a needful Virtue."

"That's what we're here to learn."

"The Avatar must strive to be virtuous. Dost thou strive for Virtue?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then perhaps thou shalt become an Avatar."

"I hope you're right," I said.

We said our goodbyes and went into town.

Built on the rocky foothills of a small group of mountains bordering the shore, Minoc was more a village than a town. Still, the inn was large, probably because there were so few safe places to stay outdoors in this area. Zircon the Smith had his forge opposite the inn and his display case held weapons of rare beauty and magical power. The glass display case was the only one of its kind I'd seen in the weapons shops.

Next to the inn was a poorhouse, where the indigent of Britannia ended up. We gave as much as we could to those souls who would accept our charity, but some were too proud or too ill to make any use of our gold. It was here that we met the seventh member of our party: Julia.

She was tending a beggar when we walked in. Her hands moved with assurance over the bandages on the beggar's leg. A butterfly knot finished off her neat wrapping, then she stood and faced us, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Welcome," she said. Her voice was low and musical. Clouds of red hair floated around a face dominated by the greenest eyes I'd ever seen. They were a true green, not the muddy shade of hazel that sometimes passes for green—a rich, vibrant jade color. My stomach felt as if I'd just gone up in a fast elevator; Jaana pinched my arm.

"Thou art staring," she said. I glanced over at her, rubbing my arm. Jealousy wasn't what I expected, but I saw Jaana was grinning at me with amusement. So were Geoffrey, Dupré, and Shamino.

"Sorry," I whispered, and turned back to the woman. She had moved on to the next beggar and was examining his wounds now.

"Greetings," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Julia," she replied. "I care for the poor. Within this house are many poor and destitute souls. Wilt thou help?"

I looked around the room more closely. It was filled with suffering. My heart went out to these people who weren't as fortunate as me and I realized I'd do anything I could to help.

"Yes," I said, surprised at the fervor in my voice.

"Then I would join thee," said Julia.

"Join me?"

"Aye, on thy Quest. Thou shalt need my skills, for the way ahead of thee is dangerous. But first let's finish here."

The rest of the day was spent tending to the sick and wounded and distributing food and money. I was tired but oddly elated when we finally headed to the inn.

We sat in the taproom while the innkeeper made up our room. At one of the tables sat a petite tinker. We invited her to join us at the table.

"I am Azure," she said as she sat down.

"This is Jaana, Julia, Geoffrey, Shamino, and Dupré," I said. "We're on a Quest. What do you do?"

"I carve runes," she replied.

"Runes! We're looking for the Rune of Sacrifice. It's the last one we need," I said.

"Ask my sister, Mischief," said Azure.

The innkeeper came back then and signaled that our room was ready. We said goodnight to Azure and thanked her for her help.

• • •

The next morning dawned bright and cold. Winter had definitely arrived in this part of Britannia, and snow and ice crunched underfoot as we made our way around town. We found Azure's sister, Mischief, on the west side of Zircon's Iron Works.

"Hello," I said. "Are you Mischief?"

"Aye," she said. "'Tis my name. What dost thou wish?"

"Your sister Azure says you know the location of the Rune of Sacrifice."

"Aye, 'tis difficult to get. It lies within the fires of the Forge."

"You mean in Zircon's forge?"

"Aye. Art thou on a Quest?"

"Aye," I said.

"Then ask Alkerion about the Stone."

Alkerion. The name sounded familiar. Then I remembered that he was one of the people in the poorhouse.

"Thank you," I said.

• • •

Zircon's Iron Works was a warm haven. My hands tingled as the blood flowed back into them. A bard sat in a corner of the main room singing a song. It went like this:

The raven sings,
The raven saw
And in the corn
He sayeth 'CAH'

The rest of the song consisted of more nonsense rhymes. Zircon was in the forge room, working on a sword. In the flames of the forge I saw the Rune of Sacrifice. It glowed white against the red-hot coals.

"Greetings," I said to Zircon.

He turned away from his forge and nodded at me. "Greetings. How may I help thee?"

"We need to get the rune that's in your forge," I said.

"'Tis thine if thou canst retrieve it. Anything else?"

I remembered a conversation I'd had some time ago.

"I was told to ask you about the Mystics."

"Ah, yes, the Mystic Weapons and Armor, my greatest work! Those I gave unto Sir Simon and Lady Tessa."

"Thank you," I said. I had already talked to them, but this confirmed what they'd said.

"Well," I said, "here goes nothing." And then I plunged into the forge like a madman.

Heat swallowed me up and I couldn't breathe. My eyes watered and my eyelashes and brows were seared off. It was like swimming through lava; my movements were slow and laborious. At last I stood by the rune. I bent over and my hand closed around it. A moment of burning pain, then the rune was cool and hard in my palm.

Staggering back to the mouth of the forge took a horrible toll. I collapsed onto the cool floor and lay there for a long time, taking gulps of cool air the way a man lost in the desert might drink water at an oasis. This was the last rune we needed, and it had been the most difficult to claim. Giddiness at completing this part of the Quest surged through my body and I started to chuckle. Zircon and the rest stared at me as though I'd lost my mind, but still I couldn't stop. I laughed until the tears came and my breath was gone.

• • •

We were on our way back to the poorhouse to talk to Alkerion when we met Merida. Merida's long black hair was caught in a band and pulled back from her face. Her dress indicated that she was a tinker but she looked restless, not as rooted as the other tinkers we'd met.

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Merida," she replied. "I seek wisdom at the Shrine of Sacrifice."

"The Shrine of Sacrifice? Isn't that far away from here?"

"Aye, 'tis on a lake to the east. But I'll need the Mantra. I am told a hidden shepherd knows it."

"Good luck finding him," I said.

"I thank thee," she replied.

In the poorhouse we found Alkerion, who told us about the orange Stone. We also spoke with a man named Jude, who told us something about the horrible artifact known as Mondain's Skull. I decided then that we would retrieve and destroy it.

We were ready to leave Minoc, but we still needed to find the Mantra of Sacrifice. We finally found a

shepherd who told us the Mantra had been under our noses all along—it was in the song the bard had sung at Zircon's Iron Works.

Entry 28—The Shrine of Justice and Magincia

From Minoc we sailed to the Shrine of Justice. During my last visit with Hawkwind, he'd told me I was ready for elevation

in the Virtue of Justice. That was the good news. But I knew I would have to visit all of the shrines to become elevated in each Virtue. Moreover, I could only discover the Mystic Weapons and Armor after I was uplifted in all of the eight Virtues. Then I would gain full Avatarhood when I conquered the Stygian Abyss and viewed the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom.

Once again, I have no memories of my time at the Shrine of Justice. From there we sailed to the Shrine of Sacrifice. This period of the Quest is hazy; the battles we fought run together in my mind. Perhaps I had become jaded with the constant violence. Or



perhaps the addition of my companions made each battle seem less urgent than those first few desperate fights had been.

We agreed to sail back to Lord British's castle and rest, but the time we spent there was brief. I felt as if a large part of the Quest was nearing its end. I had gained elevation in all but three of the Virtues, and when I visited Hawkwind he told me I was ready for elevation in the other five Virtues. This didn't excite me the way I'd thought it would, because I knew we had yet to enter the Stygian Abyss. It didn't seem to excite Hawkwind either. His stern visage did not show much animation, though he did congratulate me on my attainments.

We needed to go back into the dungeons and get the Three-Part Key, which would help us conquer the Stygian Abyss, though I still didn't know how it worked. We needed to go to Magincia, a place I would have preferred to avoid because it was reputed to be plagued by ghosts and other vile creatures.

We went to get the Bell of Courage and the Skull of Mondain. I won't recount our adventures while acquiring these two items here. Suffice it to say that our way was perilous and hard. Both items were to be found on the wide ocean: the Bell at N'A' L'A' and the Skull at P'F' M'F'. After we retrieved the Bell and Skull, we sailed to Lord British's castle.

• • •

I stood outside Lord British's castle with the others. It was cold and windy. Our cloaks flapped and whipped around in the breeze. Jaana's nose was red and her eyes watered. I suspected I looked much the same.

"I need to go to Magincia," I began, "but I'm not sure how to get there from here. It's not on the map. Mariah, Jaana, and I have been discussing the *Gate* spell we learned. We can call up a Moongate any time we want. We don't have to wait for the appropriate phase of the moon—we can invoke the correct phase and call up the Moongate that can transport us to Magincia."

"And if thou invokest the wrong gate?" asked Shamino.

"We end up at the wrong place and we'll have to recalculate. The point is, if this makes anyone too nervous, we'll understand. You can stay behind."

"Nay," said Geoffrey. "I'll not stay behind."

"Nor shall I," chimed in Dupré.

"'Tis not even worth discussing," said Shamino.

Inwardly, I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Very well," I said. "Here we go."

I mixed sulphurous ash, black pearl, and mandrake root together and invoked the crescent waxing phase. Suddenly the sun disappeared and the familiar vertigo induced by gate travel swept over me. I shut my eyes tight.

Someone shook my arm.

"Look," said Jaana. "Oh, look!"

I opened my eyes. We stood on a tiny, barren island in the middle of the ocean. A small range of mountains rose to the north. Before us was Magincia, or rather what was left of it.

Bits and pieces of a bridge spanned a small patch of swampland. The air was foul and fetid.

"'Tis a bad piece of business," said Shamino.

"Yes," I said. "We'll do what needs to be done quickly, then leave this accursed place."

I started across the bridge and the others followed. Halfway across, I heard a muffled curse. Turning, I saw Geoffrey holding his leg.

"What is wrong?" I asked.

"'Tis nothing," he said. "Only some mild poison from this swamp."

"I will heal you when we get across," I said, making my way across as fast as I could. We weren't quick enough. Jaana and Mariah were also injured by the swamp gas. This was proving to be a dangerous place to visit.

I mixed together the proper reagents and cast a *Cure* spell. Their color returned almost immediately, but I still wanted to be gone from this place as soon as possible.

A daemon appeared at the edge of the bridge. My hand went to my bow and mentally I debated how long it would take me to kill it. The daemon smiled at me. Its long, yellowed teeth glistened in the light.

"I am Virtuebane," it said. Its voice was ground glass scratching against a blackboard. "I welcome thee to Magincia, proud city on the high seas." Was there a hint of sarcasm in its voice? Or sadness? Or whimsy?

"So this is the legendary Magincia," I said.

"Aye. Magincia fell unto the realm of darkness because the foundation of its virtue was ill-placed in Pride. Art thou proud?" it asked, leaning forward with anticipation. I caught a whiff of its hot breath.

"No," I said firmly.

"Ah," said the daemon, its voice doubtful.

"We're going in now," I said. I wasn't going to let this daemon scare me.

"Very well," said Virtuebane. "If that is thy wish."

The daemon took out a small bone and began picking its teeth as we passed. It didn't follow us. We passed out of the swamp into the field that surrounded the town.

Magincia was ruined. The walls of the shops had tumbled to the ground and lay in sloppy heaps of rubble. Swamp encroached on all the buildings, making walking hazardous. A high, keening wind blew mournfully through the empty shops and deserted cottages.

"This is terrible," I whispered. The atmosphere encouraged soft voices.

"Aye. 'Tis a terrible thing, Pride," said Shamino.

Only then did I notice the ghosts. They wandered through the town aimlessly, trying to go about the daily routines they remembered from life.

"Come," I said. "Let's search the town. The quicker we get started, the quicker it will be over."

The others nodded, but I could tell they were uncomfortable.

I walked up to the first ghost that came near.

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Ruskin," he replied. His form was watery and insubstantial. While we talked he flickered in and out of existence.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I haunt Magincia. The Pride was too much."

"Tell me about Pride."

"Art thou proud?"

"No."

"Then ask the snake of the rune before it strikes."

He floated away and passed through the wall of what had once been an inn. I'd already found the Rune of Humility in Paws, but I wanted to learn what had happened to Magincia because of its pride. There were many in Magincia who helped us learn about the tragedy that had befallen this once-proud city. I spoke with many ghosts there. Several of them had questions of their own—questions designed to trick or mislead. I answered carefully and was glad of it. In the northwest corner of town, I learned the Mantra for Pride, MUL, from a skeleton named Faultless. I knew that by reversing this, I would discover the Mantra for Humility.

When we left Magincia, I glanced to the south and was stopped short by what I saw there.

A young shepherdess stood on a smooth patch of land by the edge of the swamp. She wasn't a ghost but a real, live person.

Realizing she was alive jarred me into action. I ran to her across the short patch of grass. "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I am a survivor," she replied. Her eyes were haunted. She stood erect, but I could see her spirit was bowed by the disaster that surrounded her. She must have been a woman of exceptional strength to have avoided the fate of the others.

"A survivor?" I asked, slightly awed. "Of this? Of Magincia?" I swept the scene of desolation with a broad gesture.

"Aye. Magincia was destroyed by its Pride. Pride flourishes in the absence of Truth, Love, and Courage. Humility is the Virtue that must overcome Pride."

She was wise. Perhaps that was why she had been spared. "How long have you been here?" I asked.

She shrugged.

"You should not stay here," I said. "Join us on our Quest."

She looked all of us over with her solemn, quiet eyes.

"I would be glad to join thee," she said.

"By the way, what is your name?"

"I am Katrina."

And that was how we got our final party member.

Editors' Note:

There are missing portions of the diary between the next entry and the previous one. All sections referring to the Avatar's trips into the dungeons have been lost (except for maps of the dungeons). The account of his discovery of the Mystic Arms and Weapons is also gone.

Legends from this time period claim that in order to retrieve the Mystic Armor and Weapons, one must gain elevation in all eight Virtues. Only then may one recover these items. Through scrying, we were able to determine that the Mystic Armor was located in the Oak Grove at the Lycaenum and the Mystic Weapons were located in the Training Room at the Serpent's Castle.

There is some disagreement among scholars about the Avatar's statements regarding the attainment of his Avatarhood. According to legend, the Avatar's Quest was to gain Avatarhood—this was the task given him by Lord British. Until he viewed the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom, he was merely on the path to enlightenment.

We did discover a remnant of text that appears to be part of this journal. It recounts the Avatar's use of the Silver Horn to ward off daemons outside the Shrine of Humility. Many had tried to approach the Shrine without sounding the Horn and had been overrun by endless hordes of daemons. The Avatar, in his infinite wisdom, realized that only by continuously sounding the Horn could he approach the Shrine unmolested.



Entry 29 (?) —The Stygian Abyss

I've completed all of the Quest except the descent into the Stygian Abyss. In my travels I had become elevated in all eight Virtues and recovered the Mystic Armor and Weapons. We went into the dungeons and recovered the stones—though the less said about our time in the Underworld, the better. I

still have nightmares about the dungeons. I'd feared the Stygian Abyss would prove to be even more horrendous than all the other dungeons put together.

I was right.

We gathered as many supplies as we could for the journey into the Abyss. All our money was spent on food and reagents. We travelled from Britain to Paws to ready ourselves for the journey. There were reagents and cheap rations in Paws—everything we might need for the trip. Those of us with magical abilities mixed spells together so they might be ready at a moment's notice.

Then came the day we were to set sail.

A small crowd gathered at the shore. The women in the crowd waved bright handkerchiefs while the men raised their arms. We fixed our magical wheel to the mast and pushed away from shore. In a few days we reached the Pirate's Bay, which led us to the entrance of the Abyss.

• • •

Winter winds blew cold as we sailed toward our destiny, but we huddled together on the deck as much for companionship as for warmth. The closer we got to the Pirate's Bay, the less we spoke. It was as though the importance of the task before us was too monumental to talk about.

The faces of my companions reflected the hardships of our adventures. Jaana was still beautiful, but the time we'd spent on the Quest had matured her, drawing the fine lines of her face into something beyond pretty. Her face now had a wisdom and dignity all its own.

I looked over at Shamino and finally realized who he reminded me of—Lord British. Shamino was much younger, to be sure, but the similarity was still there. I wondered how his new-found strength would change his life.

Geoffrey's face was grim. His usual jovial manner was tempered by the seriousness of the task before us. Dupré's code of honor had never failed once during our wanderings. And now as I looked at him, his steadfastness gave me hope that we might succeed in the perilous place ahead.

Mariah pulled her cloak tighter around her neck. She disliked the cold and I knew she wanted to get

back to Moonglow. Her expertise in magical matters had proved to be invaluable. It was at her recommendation that we'd built up as large a store of spells as we could make. Even then she'd insisted we have extra reagents on hand.

Julia and Katrina were sitting close together, their heads bent in conversation. They'd been the last to join, yet I found myself as concerned about their welfare as I was about the other members of the party. They didn't have as much experience as the others and I found myself frightened at the possibility of losing one or both of them.

But then I ran out of time for regret or reminiscence. The mouth of the Bay of Pirates loomed before us. We had reached our destination.

We sailed slowly into the bay. Twilight cast long shadows across the water and colored the boats in shades of grey. As we approached, phantom pirate ships materialized across the bay. Tattered sails hung from rotting beams. Ghostly crews floated across the decks—spirit crews, forced to sail forever.

The spirit pirate crews hustled about on deck, performing the actions of a past life: shoving cannons into position, loading artillery, and aiming weapons.

That first shot was a shock. The missile flew silently toward our ship. I didn't expect it to do anything. After all, these were ghosts—not corporeal beings. How could they have any effect on us?

The first cannonball exploded on deck, sending splinters flying. Our ship rocked and bounced, throwing us off balance. As the ship seasawed, water splashed over the railing, making our footing on deck treacherous. Smoke filled the air and I waved my hand in front of my face to try to clear it away. A couple of seconds later I got a glimpse of the damage: an enormous hole in the center of the deck. I rushed to the edge of the hole and looked down. The ball had passed through the deck below and come to rest inside of the hull. The boards of the hull were dented and water was seeping into the boat.

"How bad is the damage?" asked Dupré.

"Real bad," I replied. "We can't afford to take many of these hits. Even with the magic wheel, the damage is severe. Try the cannon and see if that slows them down."

Jaana and Shamino rushed to the cannon and fired a shot at the phantom ship. We quickly found that the cannon was no match for these ghost ships. To save our boat we were forced to close with and board each pirate ship.

Our ship limped to the far side of the bay. The magical wheel we'd recovered from the H.M.S. Cape had saved us, but just barely. I wondered how we'd be able to return to Britain if we survived the Abyss.

We dropped anchor.

"Swamp," I said looking at the shore. "I hate swamps."

"Aye," replied Shamino. "'Tis a nuisance to be sure. But we have come prepared. We have plenty of spells to cure the damage inflicted by the swamp."

"Are we ready?" I asked. The others nodded their heads. "Well, here goes nothing." I jumped over the railing of the ship. A noxious cloud of poison gas floated up from the swamp, making me dizzy. The others landed one by one behind me. From their coughing, I knew they were suffering too.

We staggered north until we reached the edge of the swamp and found ourselves on dry land. Mariah, Jaana, and I cast spells to reverse the effects of the poison. After pausing to catch our breath, we began searching for the entrance to the Abyss, but we were surrounded by mountains on either side and the search proved to be fruitless.

"The entrance to the Abyss must be somewhere around here. I was told that the entrance to the Abyss was on the other side of the Bay of Pirates," I said. "Spread out and search."

Several hours passed with no luck. Finally, Geoffrey yelled for the rest of us, his voice barely audible in the distance. He had found a passage through the mountains to the northeast. We made our way through the pass into an open but rocky area. The cold of winter didn't permeate here. Fires burned across the ground.

"Look, there in the fires," said Jaana.

I squinted at the place she pointed. In the center of the flames was a dark spot. It looked like some sort of opening but I couldn't be sure.

"That could be it," I said, "but there's only one way to find out."

I edged around and came as close to the spot as I could and then stepped into the fire. It occurred to me briefly that I had, indeed, achieved a level of valor that I would never have considered on that long-ago day when my car had overheated. But I had no time to consider the past. Waves of heat rose up around me. The soles of my feet were burning. It was like swimming through flame, but I reached the opening.

I tried to enter, but something blocked my way. Then I remembered the instructions I'd been given on how to enter the Abyss.

I pulled the Bell of Courage out of my satchel and rang it. The note sounded, ringing on and on with a purity that made my ears hurt. Next I retrieved the Book of Truth and opened it. A voice rose and spoke the words printed there. The Candle of Love was next. Its flame shone like the sun; the fires surrounding us paled by comparison. I started to step into the Abyss, then remembered the Skull of Mondain.

It had settled into the bottom of my satchel. I shuddered as my hand closed around the smooth bone. Pulling it forth, I looked at it one last time.

The skull was incomplete, just the upper half of a man's head. The dome of the skull was oversized, as though the brain that had been housed here was larger than normal. Long, sharp incisors protruded from the upper portion of the mouth. They reminded me of a vampire's fangs. Power radiated from the skull—power over life and death. Omnipotence. For a moment I hesitated. The temptation of such power was almost irresistible. Then I thought of the Quest. With no remorse, I flung the skull into the Abyss. A cry rose from the blackness below, like the wail of a tormented soul. Then silence.

I stood for a moment then turned to the others.
"Let's go."

• • •

Blackness surrounded us. We were in the Stygian Abyss. Someone lit a torch, and the walls of the dungeon leapt into view. The long, narrow corridor was covered with slime and mold. The dank and

malodorous aroma of rot and decay I'd learned to associate with the dungeons was even worse here. Above us the ladder to the surface dangled, but I knew we couldn't turn back. The corridor led east and we followed it.

A stout wooden door stood at the end of the corridor.

"Ready your weapons," I said, and opened the door.

Lava lizards roamed the room. Pools of fire covered half the floor. We fought our way through this room and out, moving east, only to find ourselves in another one with more lava lizards and other creatures. With all due haste we rushed from this room east into yet another room. This room contained more monsters and we fought them until we could exit to the south.

The corridor led south, then east, then south again. We found ourselves outside another door. I turned to the others. They were looking a little worse for wear.

"Can you make it?" I asked them.

They all nodded, grim, silent, and determined.

"All right."

I opened the door. Again we were assailed by monsters and again we fought. We left this room and the next by going south. The third room we came to, we left by going east, and we found ourselves in a large open area.

An altar stood in the center of the room. I approached the altar and tried to think of what I should do. The last time I'd been in the dungeons, I'd used the Stones on the altars. I pulled a Stone from my satchel and started to place it on the altar. A voice rang out and asked the question:

"What dost thou possess if all may rely on thy every word?"

That was easy. "Honesty," I answered.

"Use thy Stone," said the voice.

I looked in my hand. The Stone I'd pulled out was white—the color of Spirituality. I put it back into my satchel and retrieved the blue stone. Placing the blue Stone on the altar, I stepped away. The altar disappeared and in its place was a ladder leading down.

We climbed down the ladder to the second floor where we rested and regained our strength.

We fought our way through the next level of the dungeon. I'm making a map of the Abyss to give to Lord British if I complete the Quest. Perhaps this will help others if they dare this foul place.

Eventually, we reached the altar room on the second level. As I approached the altar a voice cried out, "What quality compels one to share the journeys of others?"

I thought for a moment about what I'd learned on the Quest, then I answered, "Compassion." I placed the yellow Stone on the altar, which changed before my eyes into a ladder. We climbed down the ladder to the third level of the dungeon.

I mapped out the path we'd taken on the second level, then we started to make our way through the dungeon once more. One thing I discovered about the dungeons was the presence of gremlins. These horrible monsters were small, hard to kill, and terrible thieves. If they got close enough to us, they would take our food.

We reached the third altar and responded to the question: "What answers when great deeds are called for?"

The correct reply was Valor. I placed the red Stone on the altar and was not surprised when the altar changed into a ladder leading to the next level.

Level four was less dangerous than the previous three levels. We reached the altar room in a short time and I answered the question, "What should be the same for lord and serf alike?"

I replied, "Justice." Then I placed the green Stone on the altar. Again it changed into a ladder and we climbed to the next level.

We rested then. Making camp in the dungeon wasn't my idea of a comfortable way to spend the night.

I will not chronicle all of our battles in the Abyss. Suffice it to say that at each level the monsters confronting us were more and more dangerous. It was lucky we'd taken Mariah's suggestion that we prepare several *Negate* spells. Many of the monsters in the Abyss used magical spells to do battle and tried to incapacitate us. We were equally grateful for her

foresight in bringing *Resurrect*, *Cure*, *Heal*, and *Awake* spells.

At one point in our battles in the Abyss we thought we'd lost Katrina. Though great in humility and in her willingness to fight for her companions, Katrina wasn't as much of a fighter as the other members of the party. After one devastating melee with a group of balrons (how I hate balrons!), Katrina lay lifeless on the ground. Unable to revive Katrina with *Cure* or *Heal* spells, Mariah declared that she must be brought back with a *Resurrect* spell. Performing such a great magic took a terrible toll on Mariah, but she managed to bring Katrina back to us.

Our joy was tempered with caution. Those in the party who were able to perform magic healed Katrina. Then we all rested to regain our strength.

I will, however, tell of our encounters with the altars, because the questions presented by the altars were related to the Virtues of the Avatar.

The altar on the fifth level asked this question: "What is loath to place the self above aught else?"

"Sacrifice," I replied and used the orange Stone.

The altar question on the sixth level was: "What shirks no duty?"

"Honor," I said. And I used the purple Stone.

"What, in knowing the true self, knows all?" asked the altar on the seventh level.

"Spirituality," I said. Then I placed the white Stone on the altar.

On the eighth level the altar asked, "What is that which serfs are born with, but nobles must strive to attain?"

Pulling the black Stone from my satchel, I said, "Humility."

• • •

It is here that the Avatar's journal ends, faithful reader. Though I was loath to finish his tale myself, I feel compelled by our adventures together, and the friendship we formed, to tell you the end of our adventure in the Abyss.

The ground began to shake and rumble. A voice asked for the Word of Passage. The Avatar was ready for this question. From the Kings at the Serpent's Castle, the

Lycaenum, and Empath Abbey, he'd received the three syllables of the word: Ver, Amo, Cor.

"Veramocor," he said. This was the combination of the three syllables the kings had given him.

He used the Three-Part Key he'd gain from the altar rooms of Truth, Love, and Courage in the other six dungeons. Passage was granted to the Chamber of the Codex. And the disembodied voice once again asked questions about the Virtues of the Avatar.

"What dost thou possess if all may rely on thy word?"

"Honesty," the Avatar said.

"What quality compels one to share in the journeys of others?"

"Compassion."

"What answers when great deeds are called for?"

"Valor."

"What should be the same for lord and serf alike?"

"Justice."

"What is loath to place the self above all else?"

"Sacrifice."

"What shirks no duty?"

"Honor."

"What, in knowing the true self, knows all?"

"Spirituality."

"What is that which serfs are born with but nobles must strive to obtain?"

"Humility."

"If all else is imaginary then this is real."

"Truth."

"What plunges to the depths while soaring on the heights?"

"Love."

"What turns not away from any peril?"

"Courage."

"If all eight Virtues of the Avatar are combined into and are derived from the three Principles of Truth, Love, and Courage, then what is the one thing which encompasses and is the whole of all undeniable truth, unending love, and unyielding courage?"

The Avatar was silent. I glanced over to Dupré, but his face was calm. Obviously he had more faith in the Avatar than I. The Avatar closed his eyes, his head cocked to the side as though listening to something we couldn't hear.

His eyes flew open.

"Infinity," he said.

There was more rumbling and suddenly, the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom was revealed. I can't recount what happened next, partly because words are not adequate.

There was blackness. When the light finally came again, the Avatar was gone, and only this diary remained. One by one, my companions began to vanish. I stepped forward and took hold of the Avatar's diary. Then I felt a tugging sensation and I too was transported away from that place.

I found myself in the throne room of Lord British's castle. Our monarch looked at me and said, "Behold, the home world of the Avatar." He waved his hand and an image appeared in front of me. It was like peering into a looking glass where you cast no image.

I saw the Avatar in a forest of strange, yet beautiful trees. Branches scratched his face as he pushed through the trees. He came to the edge of the forest and there was a road leading down to a strange chariot. How odd was the Avatar's world.

"What happened? Was it all a dream?" he said. Then he turned and made his way back to a circle of stones. They looked like the Moongates of Britannia.

And then, as though we shared the same thoughts, I saw in his mind's eye:

Memories of us passing through his mind. Jaana laughing at a joke. Geoffrey rushing into a melee. Dupré throwing himself in front of a drake to save Katrina. Julia and Mariah discussing the best way to pick nightshade. He missed us. He missed Britannia and everything about his world paled by comparison.

Then the image faded and I stood in front of Lord British.

"Thank you, my liege," I said.

The king looked at me and I felt a kinship with him. He waved his arm and I was swept away once more. When I regained my bearings I found myself in Skara Brae, where the Avatar had found me. I hope that one day I may return this volume to its rightful owner.

—Shamino

Ultima IV

Quick Solution and Maps

Playing Ultima: Some General Tips

Some important things to remember when you're playing the Ultima games.

First: Save your game often. This is important because you never know what might happen from encounter to encounter. If you save often, you can always warm boot the computer and put yourself back before any unfortunate incident. You'll find that saving after any encounter or series of events (like visiting a town, acquiring boats, finding items) is the best approach.

Second: Keep notes. Ultima IV, V, and VI are big games with lots of information. One source may send you to another source which, in turn, will send you to a third party. Careful note taking will allow you to keep track of who said what. It will also help you keep track of important pieces of information that you might otherwise forget.

Third: Have fun. Remember, this is a game. You're supposed to enjoy playing it, not beat yourself up if you don't do everything right the first time. The Ultima games are big and are designed to be played over a long period of time. So don't worry if you don't finish them overnight—or even over a long period of time.

The answers you give to the gypsy's questions in the introduction of Ultima IV determines what type character you'll be running in the game. The character type also determines where you'll start the game. Because each character type relates to a Virtue, this is one of the clues about how to play the game and the importance of the eight Virtues in the game.

For example, if you want to run a Mage character, you must pick Honesty above all the other Virtues. If there is a choice between Honesty and another Virtue, no matter what, pick Honesty. Your final question

should be a choice between Honesty and another Virtue. Pick Honesty and you'll end up outside of Moonglow, running a Mage character. But, if you want to run another type of character, you'll have to choose the Virtue that character type holds as most important.

Here's a breakdown of the Virtues and their representations in Britannia:

Honesty	Mage	Moonglow
Compassion	Bard	Britain
Valor	Fighter	Jhelom
Justice	Druid	Yew
Sacrifice	Tinker	Minoc
Honor	Paladin	Trinsic
Spirituality	Ranger	Skara Brae
Humility	Shepherd	Magincia

When you visit the towns, you will get information on how to personify these Virtues. For example, when you are in Moonglow, everyone there will give you information on Honesty. How to behave in an honest manner, as well as how to find the artifacts in the game related to this Virtue. Keep careful notes of this information because you never know when it will come in handy.

If you are playing a character who can use magic, you'll want to read through *The Book of Mystic Wisdom* and make notes of the reagents and spells. You might want to go through the spells and write them on one sheet of paper with the list of reagents needed to make the spell to one side. This way you can keep better track of the spells and how to mix them when you're in a tight spot.

Remember to keep lots of reagents with you when travelling through the dungeons. It is also helpful to



have a number of spells readied in case you need them during a fight.

In keeping with the tenor of the game, be sure you treat the inhabitants of Britannia well, particularly the residents of the different towns and villages. Stealing from the citizens of Britannia is a very bad idea. Avatars don't do that sort of thing. Not that you can't make the occasional mistake, but beware of the consequences for continued bad behavior.

Remember to give a gold piece to any beggar you see, and donate generously of your blood to the local healers. Don't lie, run from danger, or kill animals who are fleeing when wounded in combat. All these actions will affect your Virtues.

Visiting the Seer Hawkwind in Lord British's castle will help your Spirituality and will also give you a good idea as to the status of your character and what Virtues you need to work on.

In short, remember all those things that you were told to do when you were growing up: be nice to people, don't steal, be honest and trustworthy, don't brag, give of yourself, don't run away from danger — stand up for yourself.

The Playthrough—Ultima IV—Down and Dirty

In Ultima IV, the fastest way to play the first third of the game is to play through with just the Avatar character. If you gather together the other party members too soon, it'll take you longer to get through the first part. For one thing, the more party members you have, the longer combat takes. This really slows things down in the beginning.

Also, when you talk to the citizens of Britannia, always ask them their name, job, and health. These questions will often lead to answers that will give you information about the Quest.

The first goal is to gather together the eight runes. They are located as follows:

The Rune of Spirituality is in the southeastern corner of Lord British's treasure room.

The Rune of Compassion is in Britain in the Inn at the end of the hallway.

The Rune of Humility is in Paws in a group of mountains in the southeast corner of town.

The Rune of Justice is in Yew in the cell with the felon on his cot.

The Rune of Honor is in Trinsic in the southwest corner behind the green force field.

The Rune of Sacrifice is in Minoc in the forge at the Weapons shop.

The Rune of Valor is in Jhelom in the secret passageway in the wall that surrounds the city. It is in the southeastern tower.

The Rune of Honesty is in Moonglow next to the chest of gold that Mariah is guarding.

A sextant will greatly help when you're trying to get around Britain. You may purchase one at the Guild shops which are located in Vesper and Buccaneer's Den. Sextants are expensive (900 gold pieces) but invaluable for locating places and items. Below is a listing of the coordinates for all the places and treasure in Ultima IV:

CASTLES:

Empath Abbey	DC BM
Lord British's Castle	GL FG
Serpent's Hold	PB JC
The Lycaenum	GL NK

DUNGEONS:

Covetous	BL JM
Destard	KI EI
Deceit	EJ PA
Despise	ED FL
Great Abyss	OJ OJ
Hythloth	PA OP
Shame	GG DK
Wrong	BE HO

TOWNS:

Britain	GK FC
Jhelom	NC CE
Magincia	KJ LL
Minoc	BE JP
Moonglow	IH OI
Skara Brae	IA BG
Trinsic	LI GK
Yew	CL DK
Buccaneer's Den	JO II
Cove	FK II
Vesper	DL MJ
Paws	JB GC

MOONGATES:

Britain.....	GG GA
Honor.....	MC GI
Jhelom.....	OA CG
Magincia.....	KH LL
Moonglow.....	IF OA
Skara Brae.....	HO BH
Spirituality.....	BD KG
Yew.....	CF DD

SHRINES:

Compassion.....	FM IA
Honesty.....	EC OJ
Honor.....	MP FB
Humility.....	NI OH
Justice.....	AL EJ
Sacrifice.....	CN MN
Spirituality.....	BD KG
Valor.....	OF CE

ITEMS:

Bell.....	NA LA
Black Stone.....	IF OA
Book.....	AG AG
Candle.....	AB BG
Mandrake Root.....	DG LG
.....	DH LG
Mystic Armor.....	AE BG
Mystic Weapons.....	AP AI
Nightshade.....	CM MN
.....	JF CO
Silver Horn.....	KN CN
Skull.....	PF MF
Telescope.....	AC BG
White Stone.....	FA FA
Wheel.....	NH GA

After you've acquired the runes and the various items above, you'll be ready to brave the dungeons. Before you go into the dungeons be sure you have all of your party members together. (Check out the maps at the end of this chapter.) You'll need to get the stones off the shrines in each of the dungeons. The other two stones (black and white) are found above ground. One is in the Shrine of Spirituality which you get to by entering the moongate in Moonglow when the moons are both full. The white stone is in the

Serpent's Spine (the mountain range north of Britain) and can only be accessed by using the balloon.

Once you have all the stones, use them on the altars of Truth, Love and Courage in the bottom of Hythloth. Stand on the altar and Use the stones. The colors to use for each altar are as follows:

Truth: blue, green, purple, and white

Love: yellow, green, orange, and white

Courage: red, orange, purple, and white

Each altar will give one third of the Three-Part Key.

At this point you should have gone through all the dungeons and gotten the Three-Part Key and all the stones. The items you need to enter the Abyss and finish the Quest are as follows:

The Stones, the Three-Part Key, The Bell, Book, and Candle, Mondain's Skull, the Magic Wheel. If possible, buy up as many reagents as possible. The Abyss is deadly and you'll need lots of spells.

Go into the Abyss. Follow the maps. Secret doors will be marked.

On level one at the altar use the stone. The answer is Honesty and blue. Go down the ladder.

On level two (need *Dispel Field* for this level). Use the stone at the altar. The answer to the question is Compassion and yellow. Go down the ladder.

On level three use the stone at the altar. Answer to the question is Valor and red. Go down the ladder.

On level four use the stone at the altar. Answer to the question is Justice and green. Go down the ladder.

On Level five use the stone at the altar. Answer to the question is Sacrifice and orange. Go down the ladder.

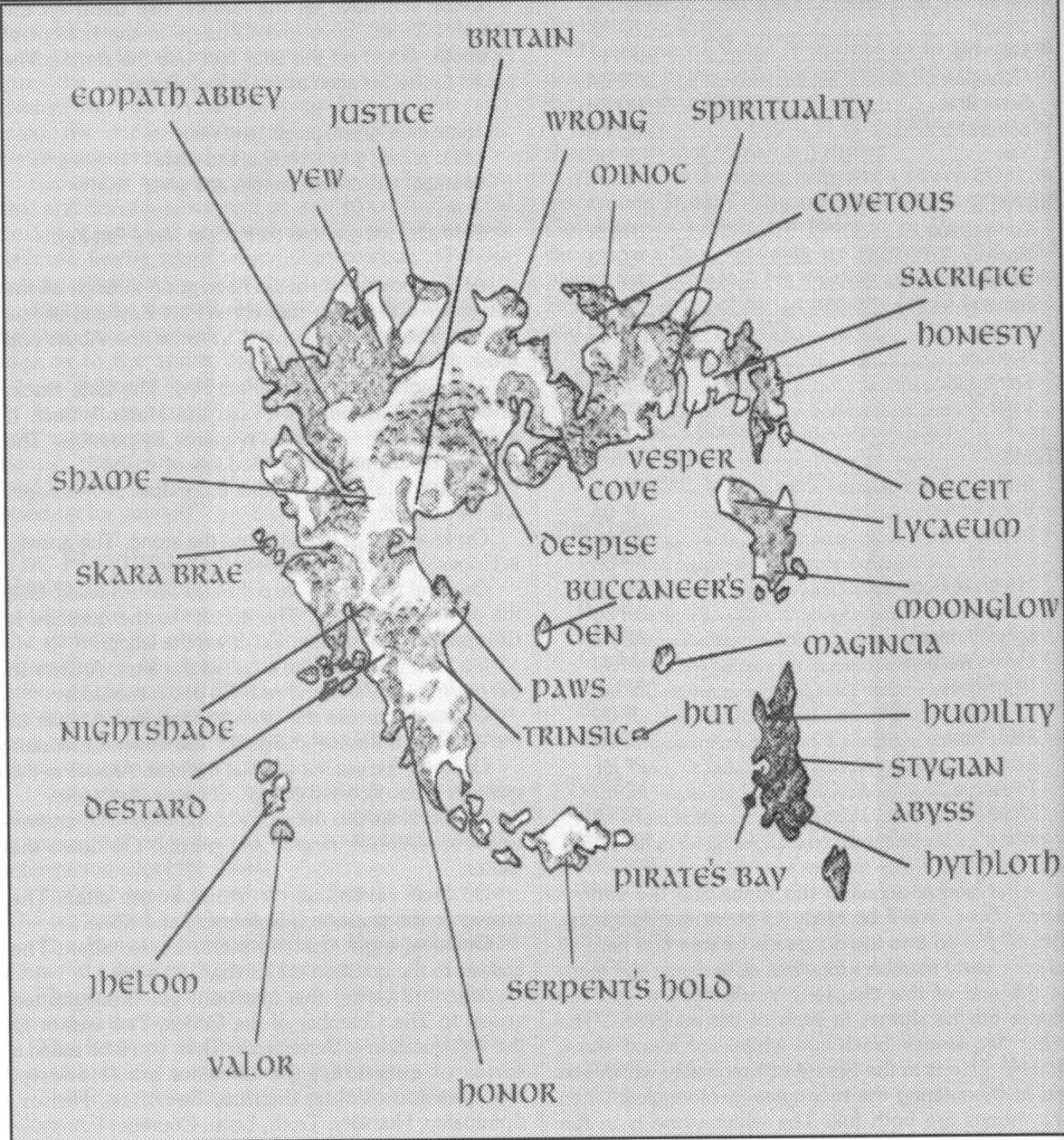
One level six use the stone at the altar. The answer to the question is Honor and purple. Go down the ladder.

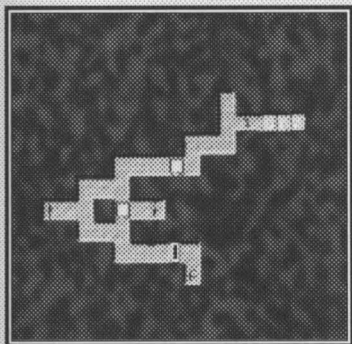
On level seven use the stone at the altar. The answer to the question is Spirituality and white.

On level eight use the stone at the altar. The answer to the question is Humility and black.

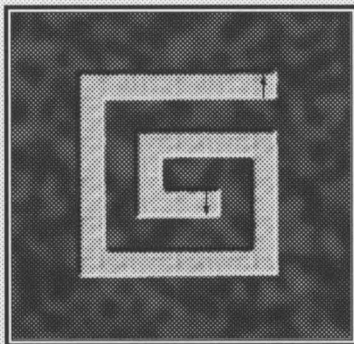
After answering this question, you'll be granted access to The Chamber of the Codex. The answer to the first question is Veramocor. Then you'll be asked a series of questions; the answers are: Honesty, Compassion, Valor, Justice, Sacrifice, Honor, Spirituality, Humility, Truth, Love, Courage, Infinity.

The Overworld

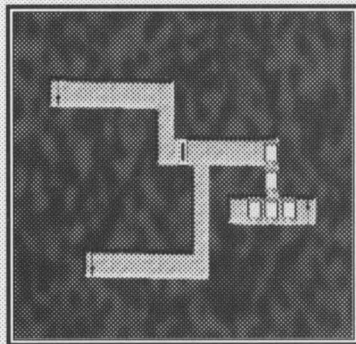




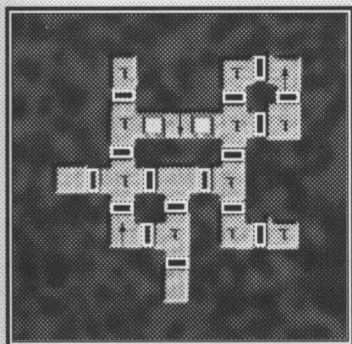
Level 1



Level 2



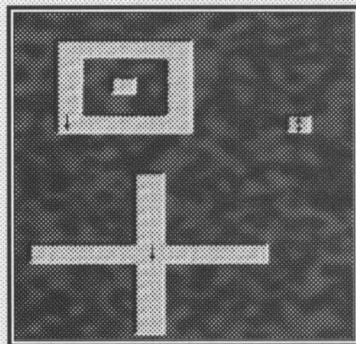
Level 3



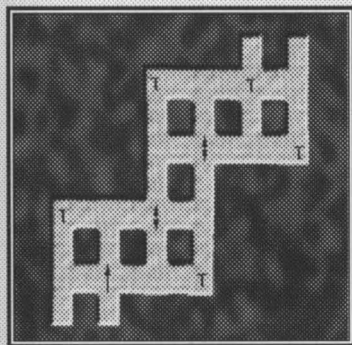
Level 4

Covetous

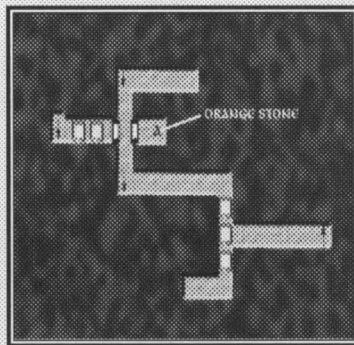
- T TRAP
- F FOUNTAIN
- SECRET DOOR
- ▣ FORCE FIELD
- △ ALTARS
- ↓ DOWN LADDER
- ↑ UP LADDER
- ROOM
- I DOOR
- ◻ SECRET DOOR



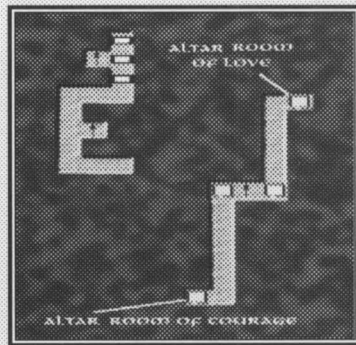
Level 5



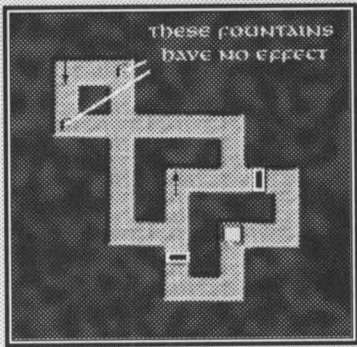
Level 6



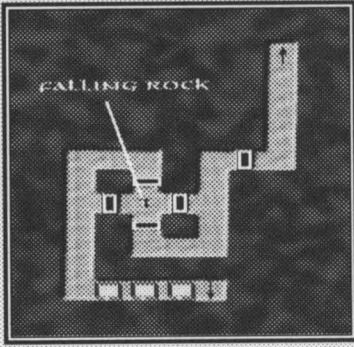
Level 7



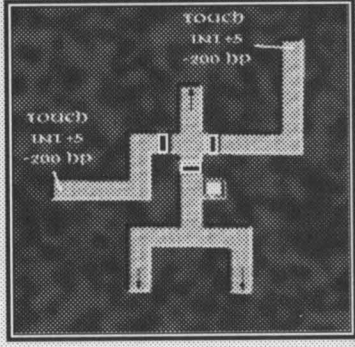
Level 8



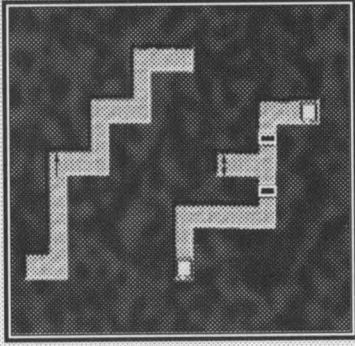
Level 1



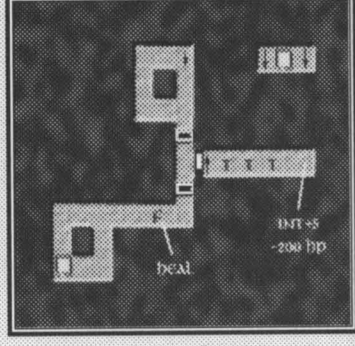
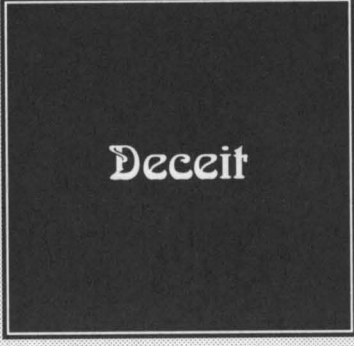
Level 2



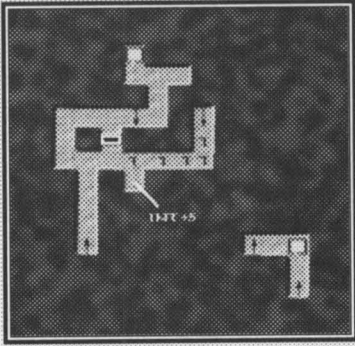
Level 3



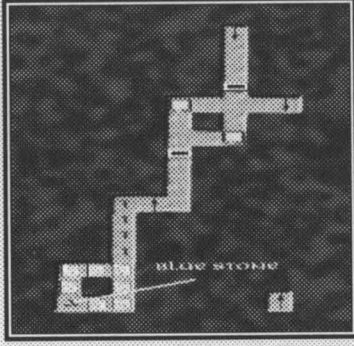
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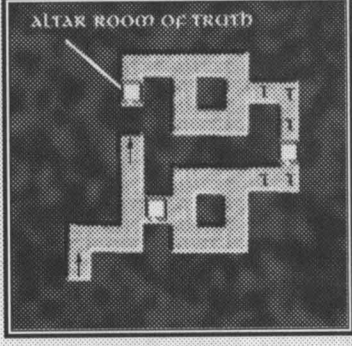
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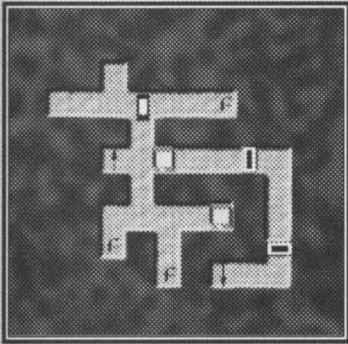
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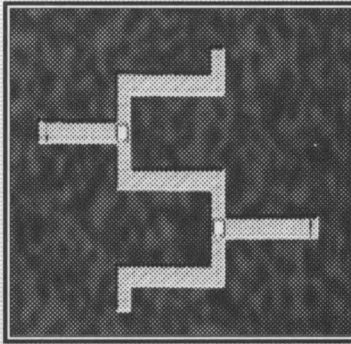
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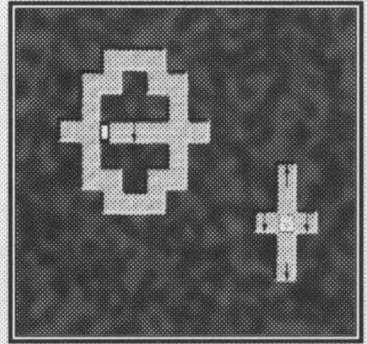
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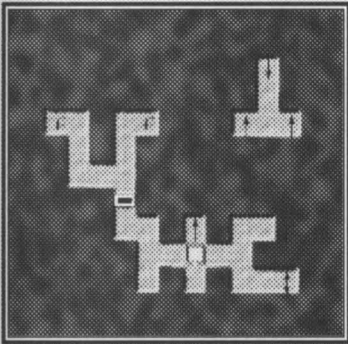
Level 1



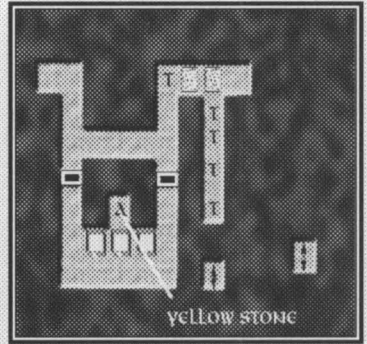
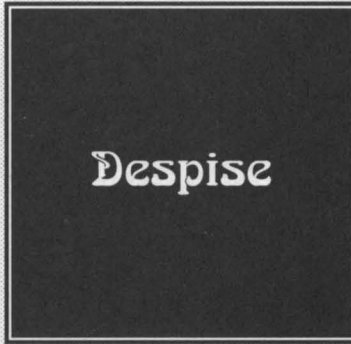
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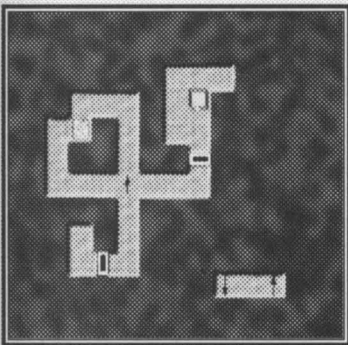
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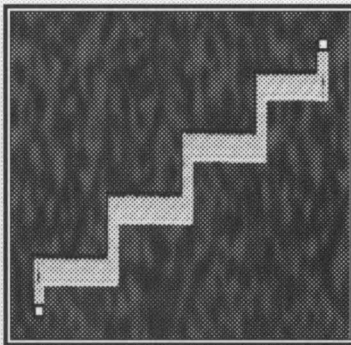
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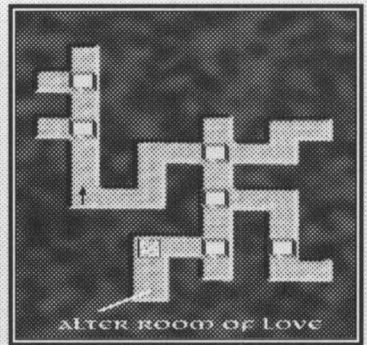
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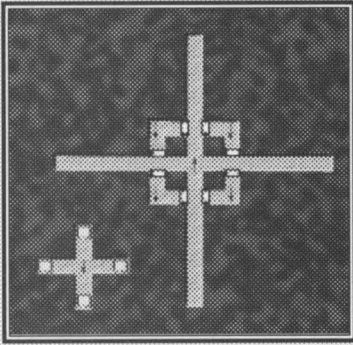
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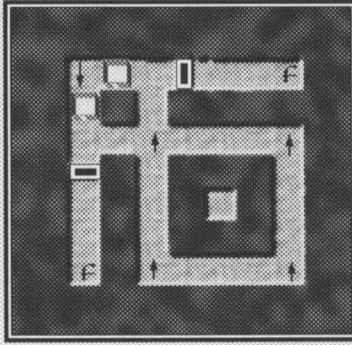
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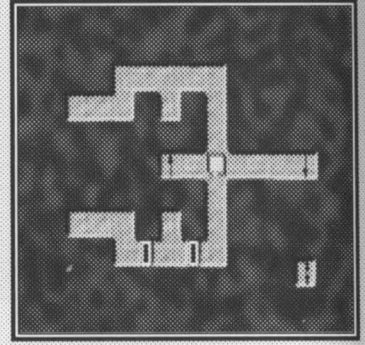
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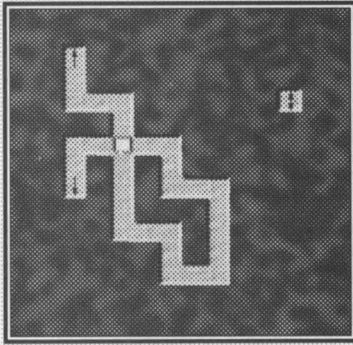
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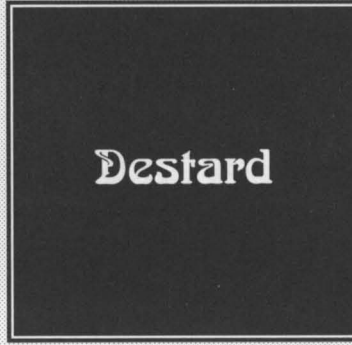
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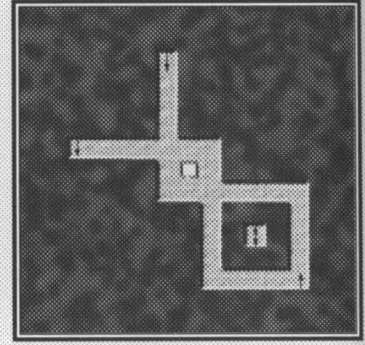
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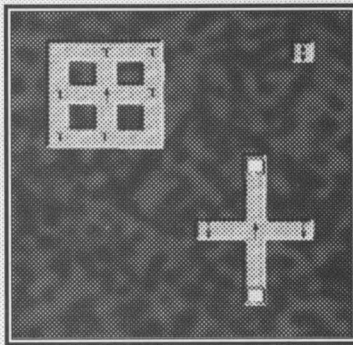
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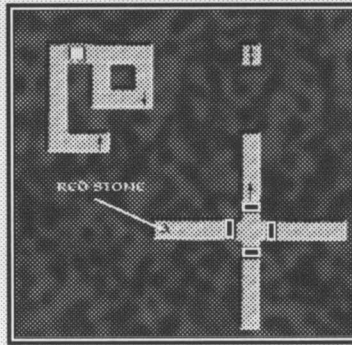
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Level 5

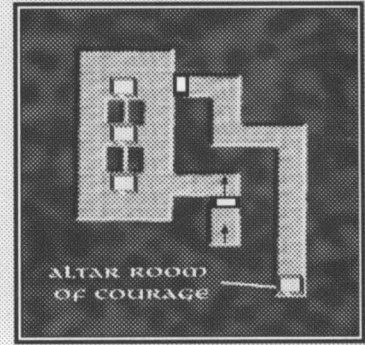


Level 6



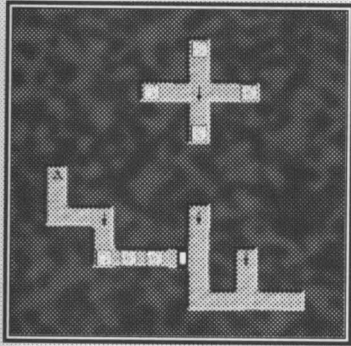
RED STONE

Level 7

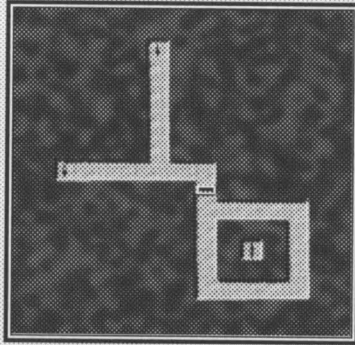


ALTAR ROAD OF COURAGE

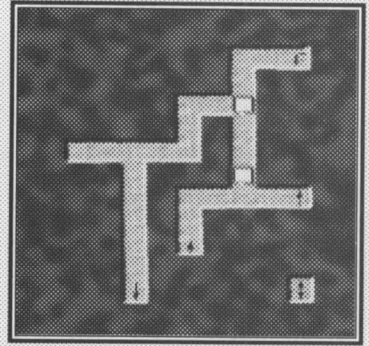
Level 8



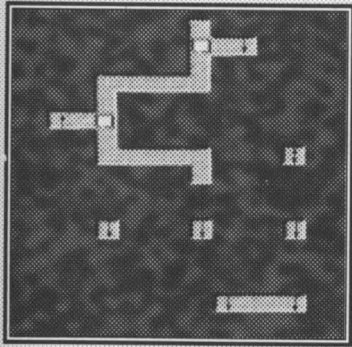
Level 1



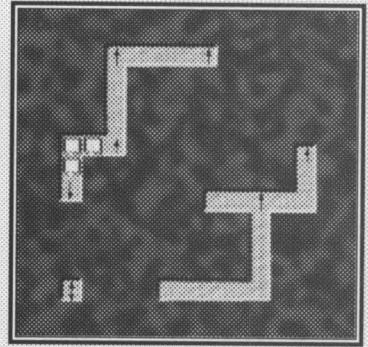
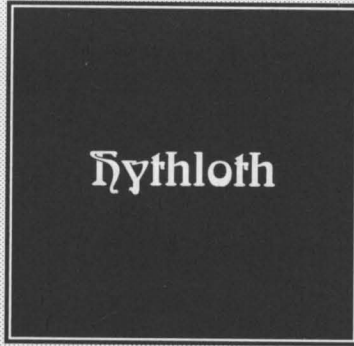
Level 2



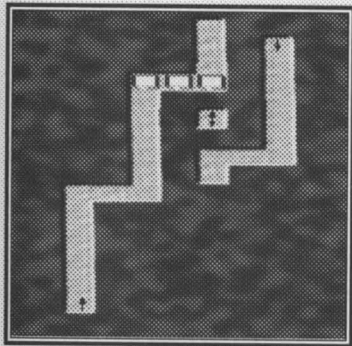
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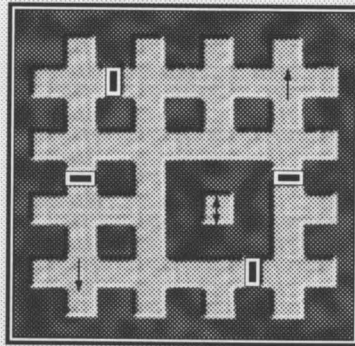
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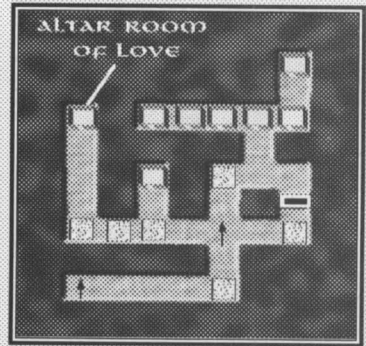
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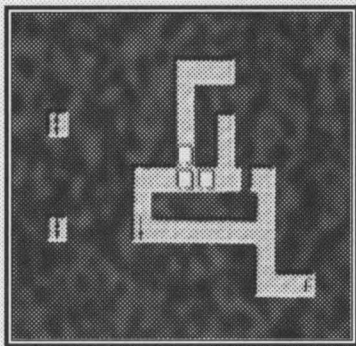
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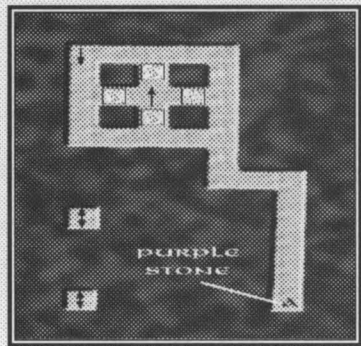
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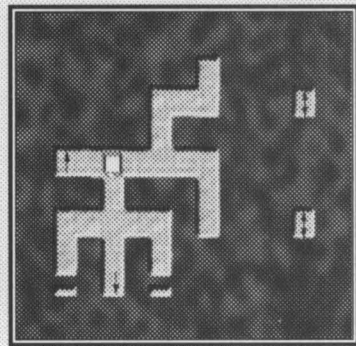
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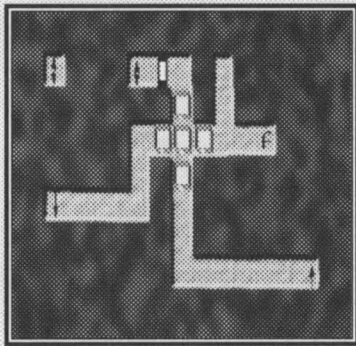
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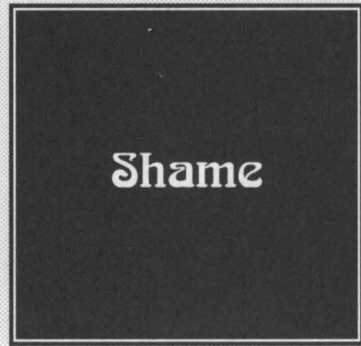
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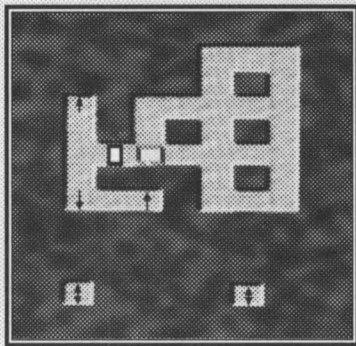
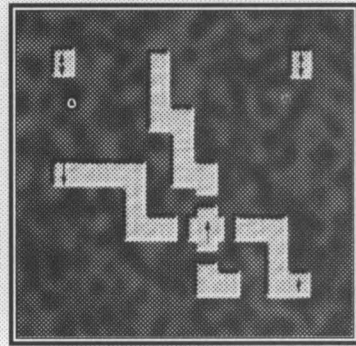
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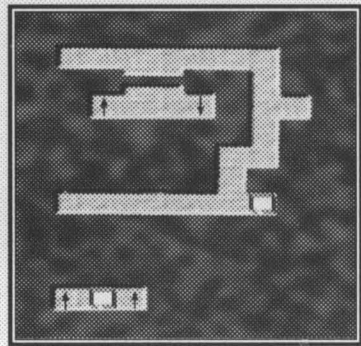
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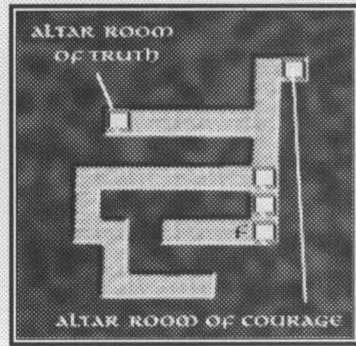
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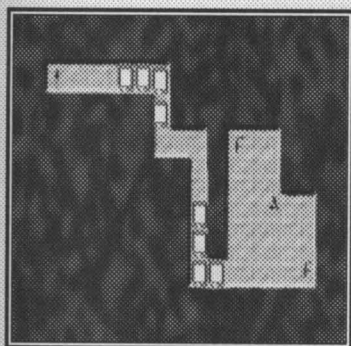
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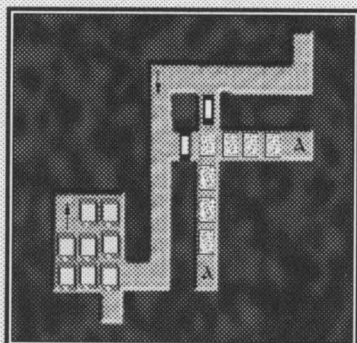
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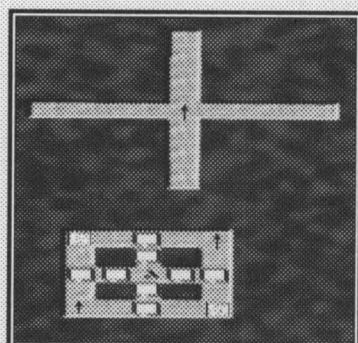
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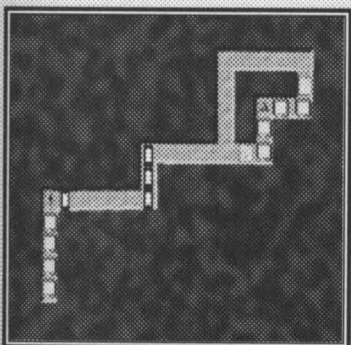
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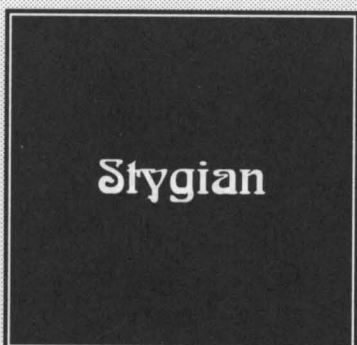
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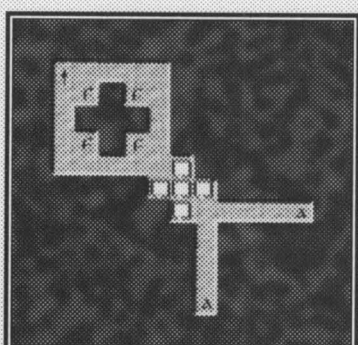
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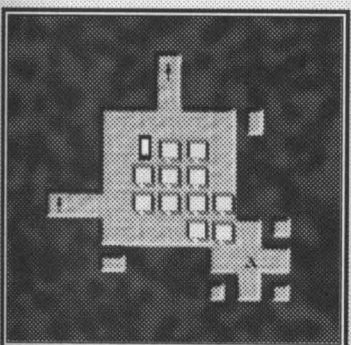
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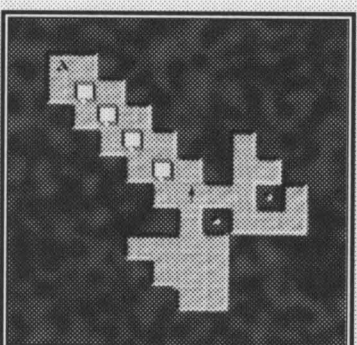
Stygian



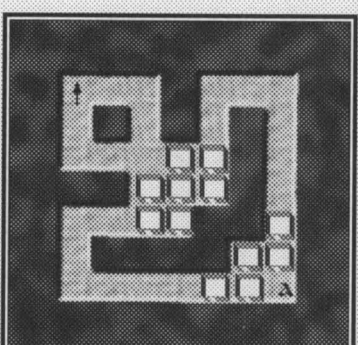
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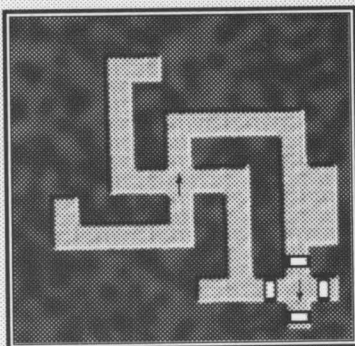
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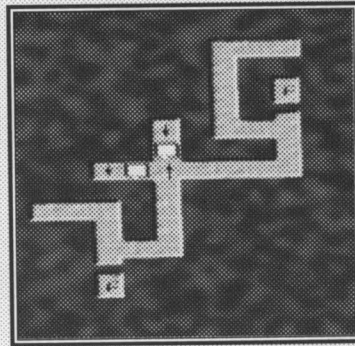
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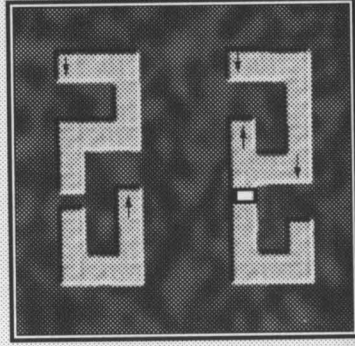
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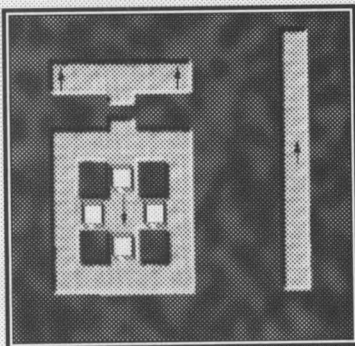
Level 1



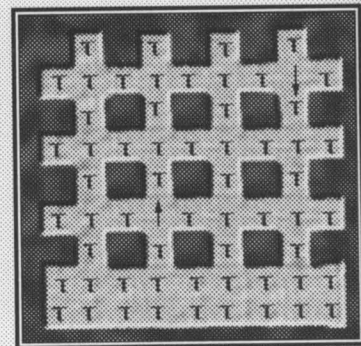
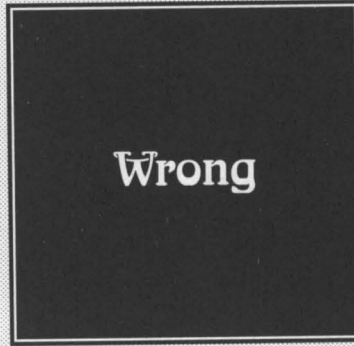
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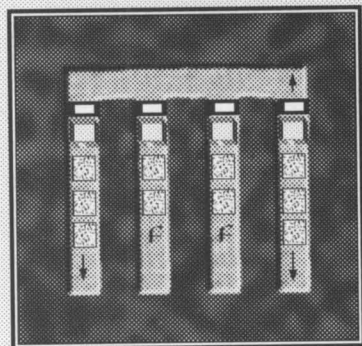
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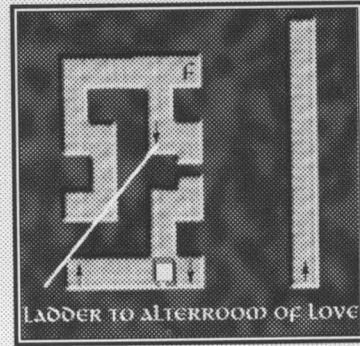
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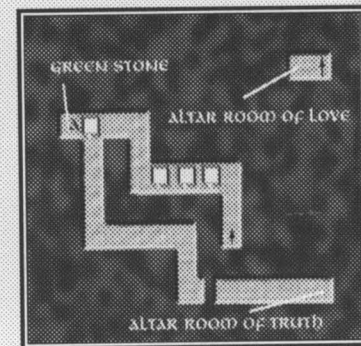


Level 6



LADDER TO ALTERROOD OF LOVE

Level 7

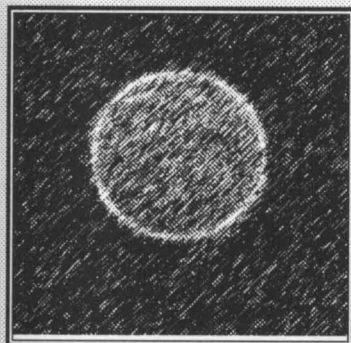


GREEN STONE

ALTAR ROOD OF LOVE

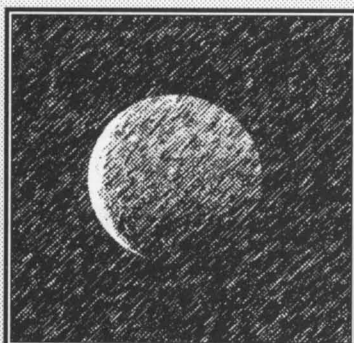
ALTAR ROOD OF TRUTH

Level 8



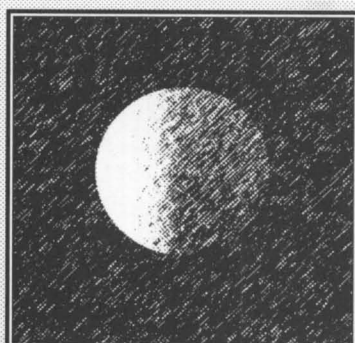
New Moon

Moonglow: Goes to 1, 2, 3



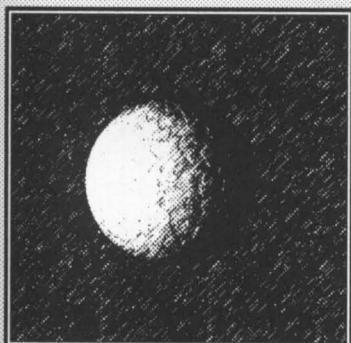
Crescent Waxing

Britain: Goes to 4, 5, 6



1st Quarter

Jhelom: Goes to 7, 8, 1

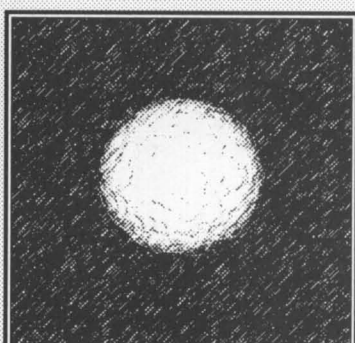


Gibbous Waxing

Yew: Goes to 2, 3, 4

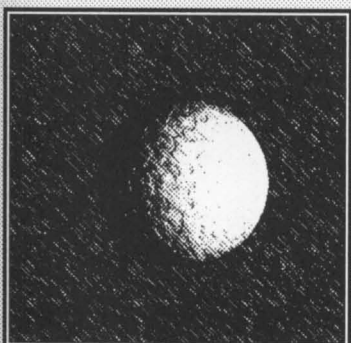
Moons

- | | | |
|---|-------|------------|
| 1 | ----- | Moonglow |
| 2 | ----- | Britain |
| 3 | ----- | Jhelom |
| 4 | ----- | Yew |
| 5 | ----- | Minoc |
| 6 | ----- | Trinsic |
| 7 | ----- | Skara Brae |
| 8 | ----- | Magincia |



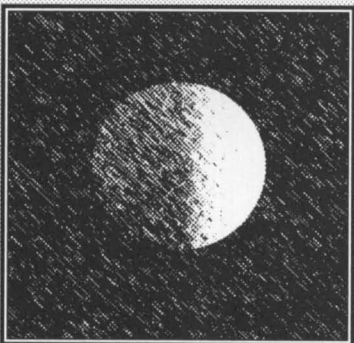
Full Moon

Minoc: Goes to Shrine, 6, 7



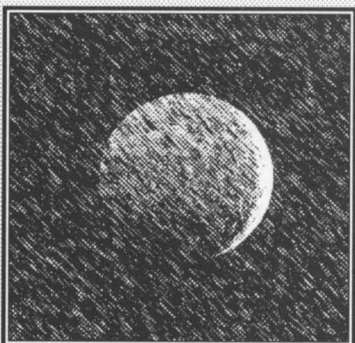
Gibbous Waning

Trinsic: Goes to 8, 1, 2



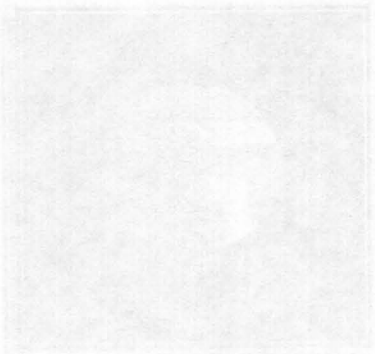
Last Quarter

Skara Brae: Goes to 3, 4, 5

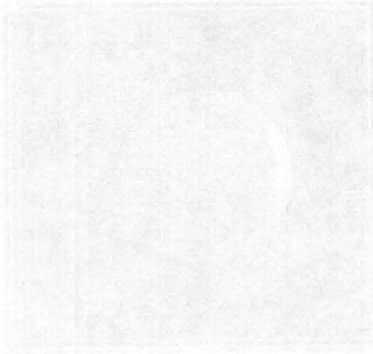


Crescent Waning

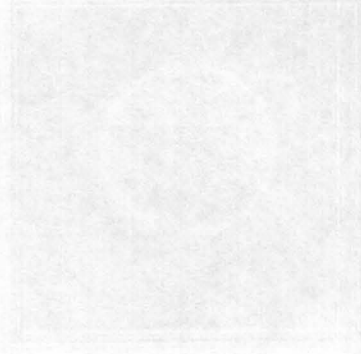
Magincia: Goes to 6, 7, 8



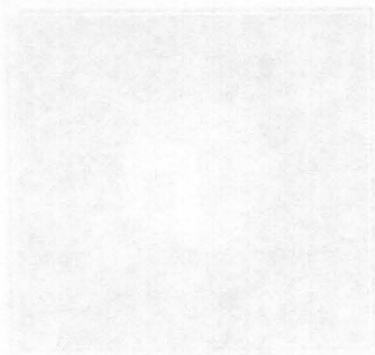
Last Quarter
Crescent Goes to 7-8-1



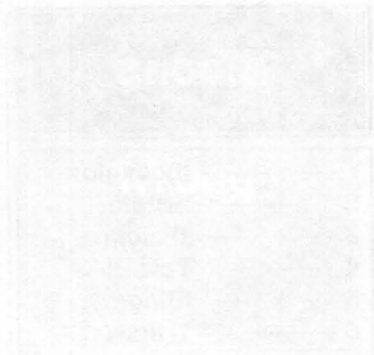
Crescent Waxing
Crescent Goes to 4-5-6



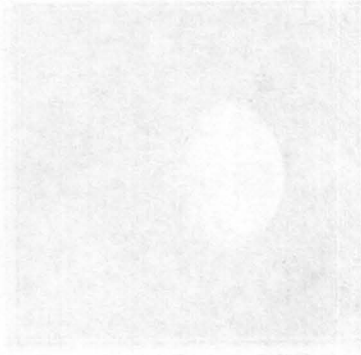
New Moon
Crescent Goes to 1-2-3



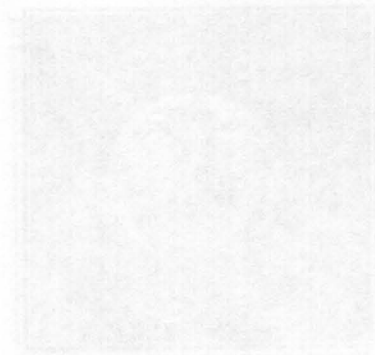
First Quarter
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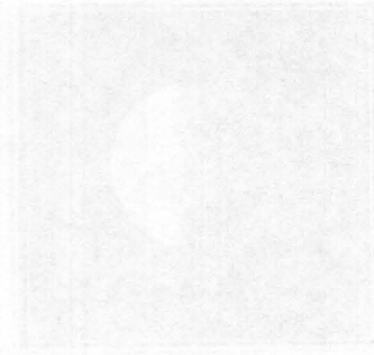
Waxing Gibbous
Crescent Goes to 5-6-7



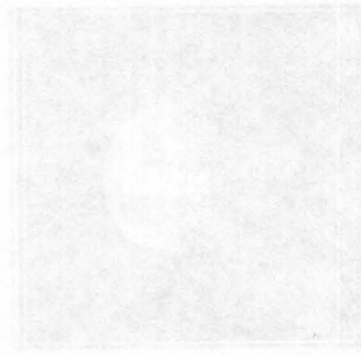
Gibbous Waxing
Crescent Goes to 2-3-4



Crescent Waxing
Crescent Goes to 6-7-8



Last Quarter
Crescent Goes to 3-4-5

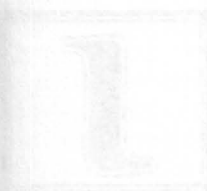


Gibbous Waxing
Crescent Goes to 1-2-3



Part II

Ultima V Warriors of Destiny



Entry 1—Jolo's Tomb and the Road to Castle Britannia

I've just buried Saurus, but I can't tell how to get to Jolo's tomb in the woods. I can't believe what they're telling me. The job of being back in

both ways—except in this case, Lord British, now? I think you did the deed, his wife managed to bring back the light, I think it must be true. The Grog has the book.

And the Drowweads... I can't go out there looking for them and guess where they will! That I get seen that myself I would scarcely have believed they

weren't bad enough, now all my old companions—heroes of Britannia—are dead by the sword, execution, and fire. I had hoped to return to this world and discover an old enemy, a reunion, and a new order. We my Quest for the eight artifacts. Now I find I have engaged the forces

of Britannia's ancient. I am not it. And I am not at all sure as I see. Following to my home world has revealed the special properties of Britannia, and I quickly find the almost supernatural health and strength I enjoyed here. Now, I know, I must start again to hone my skills and raise my power.

But I can't find to wonder how this happened, or to guess, whether it's all a dream. I've been to



ULTIMA: The Avatar Adventures

Part II
Ultima V
Warriors of Destiny



Ultima V

Warriors of Destiny

Introduction

For many years, after obtaining the journals attributed to the Avatar of Legend, we had continued our search for evidence that this was, indeed, the true journal of the veritable Avatar. Though we have not yet found conclusive proof, we may have discovered something nearly incontrovertible. What you now read is an amazing chronicle. It is the Second Quest of the Avatar.

We believe this to be the genuine document. There are many parallels between the first document and the second. Several scholars who have studied this, our newest find, have commented on disparities in the style and language of the writing. We can only say that they are consistent with the continued evolution of the Avatar as he accepts his role in our history.

But we'll ask you to be the judge. Is this the true story of the Avatar's Quest to save the King? Or is it a forgery?

The journal begins just after the famous, and oft-recounted, tale of the Avatar's first encounter with the Shadowlord, in which he saves Shamino's life using a magical amulet. We have pieced this information together from our researches, though the Avatar mentions the encounter with the Shadowlord only briefly.

—Carlotta Stein and Robert DeMain



Entry 1—Jolo's Hut and the Road to Castle Britannia

I've just helped Shamino back to Jolo's hut deep in the woods. I can't believe what they're telling me. The joy of being back in

Britannia... erased by their news. Lord British, gone? I have read the scroll his scribe managed to bring back into the light. I think it must be true. The King has been taken!

And the Shadowlords... Creatures so evil they deaden the trees and grass where they walk! Had I not seen them myself I would scarcely have believed they existed!

As if that weren't bad enough, now all my old friends and companions—heroes of Britannia—are outlaws, hunted by the usurper, Blackthorn, and his men! It is too much. I had longed to return to this world, but I had envisioned an adventure, a reunion, something clean and noble like my Quest for the eight Virtues. Never could I have imagined this horror.

Britannia is soiled. I can feel it. And I . . . I am not as strong as I was. Returning to my home world has removed the special properties of Britannia, and I quickly lost the almost supernatural health and strength I enjoyed here. Now, I know, I must start again to hone my skills and raise my powers.

But there isn't time to wonder how this happened, or to question whether it's all a dream. I've been to

Britannia once. On this visit I'm not concerned about the fine points of reality.

My life went well after I became the Avatar. Though I returned to my home world, I retained some of the strength of character I had gained in my adventures. To be sure, I was no hero with weapons and magic abilities, but I'd gained a certain . . . charm and, let us say, charisma, which helped me prosper in a very different world.

But this isn't the time for reflection. Now is the time for action.

I discussed the situation with Iolo and the wounded Shamino, and we decided to journey to Castle Britannia at the first possible moment.

"We must seek support in our efforts," Iolo said. "There have to be others who oppose Blackthorn and the Shadowlords. Perhaps we will find some near the castle."

Shamino, though still in pain, agreed.

Going through our inventory, I noticed we had a small amount of gold, some meager weapons, a bit of food, and several vials of a thick yellow liquid. I asked Iolo about the vials and he told me they were healing potions. I was about to administer one of them to Shamino, but he stayed my hand.

"Nay, Avatar. Waste not this precious brew on me. I am sure that a good sleep or two under the sky will heal me just as well."

"But 'tis not safe," interjected Iolo. "As we slept, we would be at the mercy of all the monsters that now roam the land."

"Not if I sleep during the day and someone keeps watch."

"I shall keep watch," Iolo and I said simultaneously. Shamino smiled gratefully. "So be it. Let us be off."

We were about to leave Iolo's hut, but he stopped and started taking the torches from the walls. "We may have need of these later. And we will have other uses for our gold. If we are successful, it will be easy to replace them."

And so we set off when the sun was high, and for just a moment I was able to forget the dire circumstances of our journey and enjoy the dappled shadows of the deep forest and the cool, reviving air

of Britannia. I think, had the conditions been more favorable, I would have wept for joy to be back in this world. Or perhaps I would have danced a jig. As it was, I was preoccupied with helping Shamino, who was still very weak, and with a grim foreboding that this would be a much deadlier experience than my last one had been. I knew, just from my brief encounter with them, that I was no match for the Shadowlords. The Amulet protected me, but would that protection last?

We headed due east, and eventually reached a sign in a clearing. It said, "Beware the Deep Forest," and, for some reason, Iolo and Shamino decided that camping here would be a good joke. Iolo insisted on taking the first watch. He pointed out that sleeping in the magical air of Britannia would do me good—I think his actual words were "harden thy aspect"—and I couldn't argue.

We slept for eight hours. By the time we awakened, it was full night. But Iolo had kept any creatures from our camp. I was refreshed, and I could see that Shamino was almost cured. One more sleep would certainly do the trick, but both my companions were anxious to begin our journey to Castle Britannia.

We headed out under the light of the twin moons, wary at every step. We were marching south by southeast, speaking softly, when we reached the foothills. Climbing the low hills, we were caught by surprise. A group of giant rats had been waiting for us. We engaged them successfully, though. My skills were not at their best, but I was still able to wound one of them and Iolo finished it off. Uninjured, we continued on our journey and eventually turned east. We reached Castle Britannia without further incident.

At the very gates of the castle, Shamino stopped. "I should like to rest again, if you two don't mind."

It seemed safe here, and most of the castle's occupants would probably be in bed at this hour anyway. We agreed.

This time, it was I who insisted on taking the watch. Even Iolo needed rest. Shamino agreed, but cautioned me to stay alert. A deadly ambush could still surprise the unwary, he warned me, even in the shadow of the castle.

It was a long night, but I was able to use the time well. I wrote this account of my adventures up to this point. I also studied my magic book. It appeared to be the same as the one I had carried in my previous adventure, but most of my best spells were no longer in it. What had happened to all my spells? Intuition told me I would have to learn them all over again.



Entry 2—Castle Britannia

When my companions awoke it was late morning, so we hurried into the castle. The guards, normally taciturn, were completely unresponsive. Iolo reminded me in a stage whisper that we were criminals, and I glanced furtively toward the nearest guard, but he seemed to ignore us completely. Were they secretly loyal to Lord British? Were we, perhaps, walking into a trap? Shamino laughed when I voiced my concerns, though.

“Blackthorn has his own castle. Here, at least, we will be safe enough, though we must be careful everywhere.” He paused a second, then drew us into a quiet corner. “Avatar, I know you are the essence of Virtue, but I think the King would wish you to obtain any advantage you can from his possessions. There are a few items we might be able to use. Chief among these is a Magic Carpet. I’ve heard he keeps it in his rooms at the top of the castle. Shall we go and see if it is there?”

I looked dubiously at Iolo, but he only nodded his agreement and took me by the arm. “Come, Avatar. We must save the King. If this carpet will provide us with reliable transportation, I’m sure the King will forgive you. And if we fail, what does it matter after all?”

We passed Chuckles, the jester. I had already sampled his strange discourse on my previous visit, and I felt sure he would add nothing to my Quest. A brief attempt at conversation confirmed my intuition, and we continued onward.

The ladders were in the corner towers, but the doorways leading to the two southern towers were

locked. Iolo claimed that he could jimmy the locks with his skeleton keys, but we all agreed that, rather than risk breaking a key, we might as well take the ladder in the northeast corner of the castle. The door leading to it was unlocked.

We climbed two ladders and found ourselves on the parapet overlooking the Britannian landscape. I paused for a moment and checked the pocket watch I was carrying. It was just past noon. Quickly we headed south, then rounded the corner carefully.

Shamino stopped us short. “There’s a guard here, and I’m sure he would not let us do what we’re about to do.”

I remember frowning at that. “And what, good friend, are we going to do?” I asked.

“Blow up the King’s door,” he answered with a lopsided grin. “There’s no other way in, unless you can use the *In Ex Por* spell to unbind the magical lock on the door.”

I sighed at the thought of once-held power. “No. I can’t. I remember the spell, but not its working. Besides, I think I lack some of the reagents to cast it. I don’t seem to have anything suitable for blowing up a door, either,” I added with just a bit of sarcasm. I was beginning to think this was a wild goose chase.

Shamino just smiled and pulled me around the corner. Luckily, the guard was facing away from us. He pointed dramatically toward a rather large cannon nearby. “Avatar, we have the means,” he whispered, “but we shall have to await the opportunity.”

We waited, taking turns watching the guard. Then, around 1:15 p.m., the guard walked over to a nearby ladder and climbed down. The coast was clear.

Shamino walked quickly to the cannon he’d pointed out. As I joined him, I could see a short hallway north of us and a door at the end of it. “Come,” Shamino urged me. “Put thy shoulder to it and we’ll push this cannon into place. Hurry. We don’t want the guard to return before we’re well gone.”

We all pushed and pulled the heavy cannon until it was standing before the doorway. Then, before I could have any second thoughts, Shamino fired it. The door, which had once glowed with the telltale signs of a magical lock, was splintered and destroyed.

My ears rang for several minutes, so I hardly heard Iolo as he yelled, "There it is! Just inside the doorway. Quickly, Avatar, take the Carpet and let us be off!"

I did as Iolo instructed. I took the Carpet, practically cringing at the surge of guilt I expected to feel. Strangely, though, I felt nothing. One of the side effects of being an Avatar is that when you do something wrong, you feel it. I realized this was not a wrong act, and I was relieved.

I remember thinking there must be more to find in the King's apartment, but it seemed imperative that we be gone before anyone came to investigate the boom of the cannon. I had only quickly glimpsed the room, but I remember seeing a clock, a fireplace, and a beautiful harpsichord. There was also a ladder in the middle of the room. But all that would have to wait until another time.

Still standing in the shattered doorway, I backed out, almost bumping into the still-smoking muzzle of the cannon. Quickly pushing the cannon out of the way, we hurried from the roof.

As we climbed down the ladders, I was all for getting out of the castle, and Iolo agreed. From above me, he said, "I'm sure there's more to find here, though. The guards will be alerted now that we've set off the cannon. But if we leave the castle, then enter again, it should fool them."

Reluctantly I acquiesced, but kept an eye out for trouble as we climbed down the stairs in the southwestern tower. We caught sight of no guards, though we had to jimmy the lock to get out of the tower on the first floor. I thought I heard shouting elsewhere in the castle, and judged it just as well that we'd taken this route. I could hear armor clanking and swords rattling in the northern part of the keep.

Finally, we were able to run out the front gates, laughing with relief as we ran past a surprised jester, who winked at me. Once safely outside the castle grounds, I wrote down my memories carefully in case Iolo was mistaken. But the bard was right as usual. We re-entered the castle, acting innocent and casual, and, once again, the guards ignored us.

Most of what we did in the castle after that was of little consequence. In the upper kitchen, we spoke with the cook, Margaret, who offered us food, but

asked five gold pieces for it. I thought the price a bit stiff. Her granddaughter, however, told us of a certain Lord Stuart who had created a spell for creating food. It sounded interesting. I decided to find this Lord Stuart and ask him about the spell.

In the basement, in a storage room on the western side, we found a ring of seven keys discarded in a barrel, and in a room on the opposite side we found a Ring of Regeneration in a trunk. I felt no pangs of guilt when we took these things, so I judged the acts to be virtuous and in a good cause. We also took as many torches as we could hold. I felt a little uneasy about that, but Iolo brazenly took one right under the nose of one of the guards on the first floor, and the guard didn't even blink. After that I had no more worries about torches.

Although we met several other people in the castle, we were unable to gain any significant information. Max the Armorer, at the North Star Armory, was willing enough to sell us his wares, but we were not wealthy enough to afford anything, though he had some tempting weapons and armor. We also saw a room with a magical lock on it. Iolo said it was the King's Treasury, but, even if we had been able to borrow from it, I wasn't sure it would have been honorable to do so. It was a moot point, however, because there were no cannons nearby. I gave it no more thought.

One encounter did yield something odd, however. We met a young girl in the stables. She wore her brown hair short and cropped. There was a bit of straw caught in it. She was pulling on riding boots when we approached and introduced ourselves. Her name was Treanna. We talked about her Job, the Stables, Lord British, and horse Breeds. She then asked me which was my favorite breed. I was going to say something like "Tennessee Walker," but Iolo whispered in my ear, "Say 'Valorian.'" At my quizzical look, he added, "'Tis the most prized war horse of Britannia."

So I answered, "Valorian."

She brightened considerably at that. "Hey, mine too! Ever heard of a talking horse?" I had, of course, but the talking horse I'd heard of was called Mr. Ed. So I said *Ed*.

"A mage from Paws named Bandaii claims one exists. I wish I could remember the horse's name." I thought Iolo was going to say something again, but this time he kept quiet.

So we completed our exploration of the castle. It was late at night by now, so we decided to rest a while, then head for the town of Britain in the morning. Not feeling completely easy within the castle

walls, we went back to our former camp and holed up there for another eight hours of sleep. Shamino insisted that it was his turn to stand guard. He seemed fully recovered.

In my dream, I saw Lord British. He was limned in a bluish glow, and he seemed to speak inside my head.



"Thou showest well the wisdom of an Avatar, but not yet hast thou achieved thy potential. Stay on the path and thy soul shall flourish!"

Then I realized that I was awake and this apparition of the King was standing above our campfire. My companions were awake as well, and beaming with pleasure. Before I could say a word, however, the ghostly image faded into nothingness and we were alone again. I felt terrific, though. All the pains and aches of the road had vanished. Iolo and Shamino looked similarly refreshed. We decided it was time to take the road to the town of Britain.



Entry 3—Britain

Iolo looked uneasy as we headed for Britain. Shamino remarked it and joked, "Worried lest thou dost encounter a lass thou hast made some promise to?"

Iolo shook his head. "No, 'tis an uneasy feeling my home town is under a spell. There's evil there. I sense it."

We were still a good mile away, but I think I felt what Iolo felt. Something in the air itself, an electricity and an odor of fear and . . . something ugly.

Our suspicions were given more substance as we entered the city gates. An air of hatred surrounded the town, and even the normally placid guards wore evil sneers in place of their customary neutrality.

"'Tis as I suspected," whispered Iolo. "There's a Shadowlord in the town. We must retreat, quickly."

"What can we do, then?" I asked as we headed back beyond the city walls.

"Wait, or go elsewhere," was the answer.

We waited.

We all felt the evil oppression lift just after midnight. The Shadowlord had gone. But there was nothing much to be done until morning, so we rested until the sun came up, banishing the dark and its malicious portents. None of us slept, however, and just before dawn, we fended off the attack of a band of orcs. In our current mood, the orcs were no match for us and we escaped with only minor scratches. My battle skills

were returning, though I longed for a decent weapon.

With the sun shining at last, we rushed to Britain to see if everything was all right. Fortunately, as we entered the city gates, we saw that the guards were back to normal and a quick look revealed no lasting effects of the Shadowlord's visitation, other than a noticeable tension in the faces of the townsfolk.

We passed through the walls and headed for the city's center. Soon our attention was drawn to a noble bard dressed in military garb, still eating his breakfast in the local pub. He greeted us over his gruel as we approached.

His name was Greyson, and he was an adventurer. Iolo seemed to know him and asked him about the things he had seen on his adventures.

"I've even seen the Guardians!" he boasted.

"Guardians?" I asked.

"They are like two winged stone giants, yet they possess life!" he told us in awestruck tones.

"Giants?" I repeated. "They were giants?"

He nodded his assent. "Only those upon a sacred Quest ordained by the mystic Shrines are granted passage unto the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom which lies beyond."

I felt a surge of hope. Perhaps he could save us some time. "Then you have seen the Codex?"

"I know not more, for I was not upon a sacred Quest and could not pass."

"What do you know about the Shrines, then?" I asked, trying to salvage something useful from this conversation.

He paused, the spoon held halfway to his mouth. "One must know first the Mantra for a particular Shrine. Meditate there, and be sent upon a sacred Quest, then canst thou enter the Shrine of the Codex."

That sounded interesting, so I asked him, "Do you know anything about Mantras?"

His answer was somewhat off the subject, but I chose to answer it honestly. "Who dost thou think is the rightful ruler of Britain?"

"British," I replied.

"Which Mantra dost thou seek?"

I knew we were in the city of Compassion, so that was my answer. He said, "The Mantra of Compassion is 'MU.'"

I asked him about some of the other Mantras, but he knew nothing more of interest, and we said our goodbyes. I had thought to ask him to join us, but Iolo forestalled me. In any event, I don't think Greyson would have abandoned his own adventure to join ours.

We stayed only a day in Britain, but we learned much more. From the inn's busboy, Eb, we learned of a glass sword of immense power. He started talking of it when Iolo ordered a clean Glass. The boy mentioned a friend named Malik who lived in Moonglow.

Meanwhile, Shamino had prowled around and struck up a conversation with a lady busy cleaning the rooms at the inn. He asked her if there was any good Gossip, and she let slip some information about an armorer in Jhelom. His name was Bullwier and he was reputed to know something of the Mystic Weapons of the Avatar. I don't think Shamino let on that I was the Avatar.

I was ready to complete our business in Britain and get back on the road again before sundown, but Iolo disagreed. "There be them as haunts the night in every place. 'Tis not wise to leave wi'out sounding them for what they know."

So we agreed to stay the night in Britain, and it's a good thing we did. It was on the balcony above the inn that we encountered the mage called Annon. He was a man of great height, garbed in wizard's robes. In every way he looked the part, too. His long white hair and beard framed eyes that blazed under thick brows. Even his nose was large; it seemed to punctuate the intensity of those eyes. I was immediately reminded of Gandalf. I almost laughed, but this man was real, whereas Gandalf had been a character in a book. I approached him cautiously, more nervous than I had been with any Britannian before, save the King himself. But Annon turned out to be most affable, and far less severe than his appearance had led me to expect. He even seemed glad to see us, and easily informed us that he had once served on the Great Council. I hadn't heard of it before, but it sounded mighty important.

"Tell me about the Council," I requested.

"We derived the eight Words of Power!" he said, and some of the intensity of his eyes hit me full force.

His eyebrows seemed to have their own life as well. They bobbed up and down as he spoke. As the conversation intensified, so did Annon.

"May I inquire about the Words of Power?" I wasn't sure I wanted to hear the answer, but I could not help asking.

"We used these words to seal the eight dungeons!" That, at least, was good news. Those dungeons had been true hell-pits. It was a blessing to hear they were sealed up. Now I would not have to relive one of my worst nightmares. "That's good about the Dungeons," I said, a bit lamely.

"Blackthorn hunts us down so that he might unlock them and free the evils within," the mage told me, more or less ignoring my comment.

"Evils? Any evils in particular, or just general evils?" I asked. Now I was beginning to sound inane to my own ears, but the mage never faltered. He looked at me for several moments, as if reading my level of goodness. Finally, he seemed to judge me worthy of the information he next imparted, though I wondered at the time if he was right.

"I know merely one of these Words. Dost thou wish to know it?"

I was all set to say no, but some daemon inside me said, "Yes."

"The Word is 'VILIS,' and remember, it can be used to open the dungeon Despise! The daughter of another Council member works as a sailmaker. Ask the child about her mother, for she too knows one of the Words of Power."

I thanked him and motioned for my friends to follow me from the balcony. I was not in a particularly good mood. The very knowledge of how to unlock the sealed dungeons made me almost certain that I would eventually find myself once again within their evil, fetid, slimy, and thoroughly deadly walls.

We found beds as best we could during the night, but I slept fitfully, dreaming of my last experiences within Britannia's dungeons. It was a great relief when dawn finally arrived. I decided to head out of town soon, though I wanted to make one stop first.

I had seen a sign for Iolo's Bows, and that's where we went next, but before we arrived, Iolo warned me not to expect any great deals. In fact, he had to

remain incognito, and donned a disguise before entering the shop. He wouldn't explain it, but I imagined it had something to do with the security of the shopkeeper, who shouldn't be seen in the company of criminals.

I was tired of fighting with sword alone. The sword allowed my enemies to get too close. I had already received several minor, but annoying, scratches and nicks. A weapon with some range was what I needed, so I bought a sling for myself and another for Shamino. Iolo said he was happy with what he had. Shamino and I readied our slings immediately, though. No sense being caught unprepared.

Once we had made our purchase, we entered a side room and met a pretty young woman named Gwenno. As we spoke, Iolo hung in the background. Finally, the young woman offered to join us. I don't think we had fooled her at all. She knew what we were up to. And she still wanted to join.

I was about to find a polite way to refuse her offer. She seemed a bit too frail to bring along on what would certainly prove to be a deadly quest. Before I could frame my reply, however, Iolo came forward and took her by the hand. At one point, I think I remember hearing Gwenno say she was Iolo's "better half." Or something like that. At any rate, they finally made me understand that they were married. Iolo said he would like Gwenno to come along, for now at least. So my decision was made, and now we were four.

We decided to leave Britain then, but as we headed for the city gates, our attention was caught by a cheery young man standing in a fruit orchard. He hailed us.

"What is your Name?" Shamino asked.

"My name is Terrance," he answered.

"And Terrance, what is your Job?" I asked. I had found this to be a good ice breaker with the Britanni.

The man smiled heartily. "I keep this orchard to earn my humble living."

I asked him about his Living, and he replied, "I barely manage to make ends meet. Dost thou have enough to eat?"

I was surprised at the question, and started to answer yes, but Shamino interrupted and said, "No, we can always use more provisions."

I was embarrassed by Shamino's outburst, but said nothing more as Terrance handed me some fruit, saying, "Then here, friend, I have enough to share with one in need."

I glared at Shamino. We certainly weren't in need, but the knight smiled and said, for my benefit, "We'll use this food in a good cause, friend." I felt only slightly better after that.

To change the subject, I said, "Times are bad, it seems."

Terrance frowned and kicked at the dirt. "It's mostly on account of them blasted Shadowlords," he told us.

"Shadowlords?" I asked, wondering if this man might shed some light on their dark natures.

"If it weren't for the Resistance, I'd have nothing."

"Resistance? What is that?" I asked, my attention suddenly riveted on the answer. I felt, rather than saw, Iolo and Shamino stiffen, but Terrance looked as if he had accidentally shot his best friend.

"Ooops. . . . Dost thou intend to turn me in for treason?"

"Nay, lad," said Iolo. "Speak up."

But we got little more from Terrance that day. He simply whispered, "Ask the owner of the Arms of Justice!"

After the conversation with Terrance, we talked briefly among ourselves. Iolo told me that the Arms of Justice was in Yew, so we agreed that Yew would be our next destination.

But as we left Britain, I think the nature of our Quest became clearer in my mind. I was not an ordinary person. I was the Avatar. Though I felt more or less as I had always felt, something had happened to me during my previous Quest, and now I represented something good, something powerful in this world. Evil had taken this land, and the people suffered in its grip. The very Virtues I had sought so hard to master were now being used to subjugate innocent people. In the name of Virtue, Blackthorn had created a reign of tyranny. How had this

happened? Couldn't they see how wrong it all was? Though I had no idea how I would do it, I knew I was the one chosen to set things right. But who had chosen me? How could I defeat creatures of such obvious power as the Shadowlords? How could I live up to the terrible burden I had inherited with the title of Avatar?

And how could I stop my beard from itching? I hadn't shaved in days.

Entry 4—The Road to Yew

On the road to Yew, around sundown, we were ambushed by a large band of Skeletons. These undead creatures were lacking in skill, but difficult to destroy, and I was thankful that I had thought to purchase slings. We were able to damage some of the creatures before they reached us. Having no projectile weapons themselves, they were unable to harm us from a distance. Gwenno proved to be a stout fighter as well, wielding her sling with skill and courage.

However we were badly outnumbered. There must have been eight or nine of the bleach-boned monsters, and they soon lined up to take their swings at us. I switched from sling to short sword as the creatures came closer, and Shamino wielded the long sword in

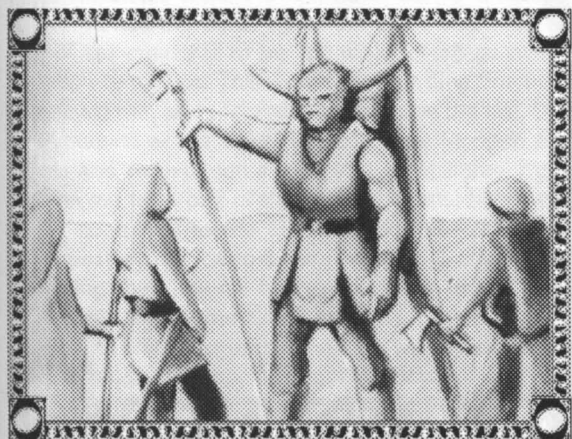
one hand and a club in the other, doing double damage. I missed some of my swings, but had the satisfaction of feeling my blade bite into a brittle arm, breaking it in two. But the answering blow barely missed my own sword hand and nearly sent my weapon flying.

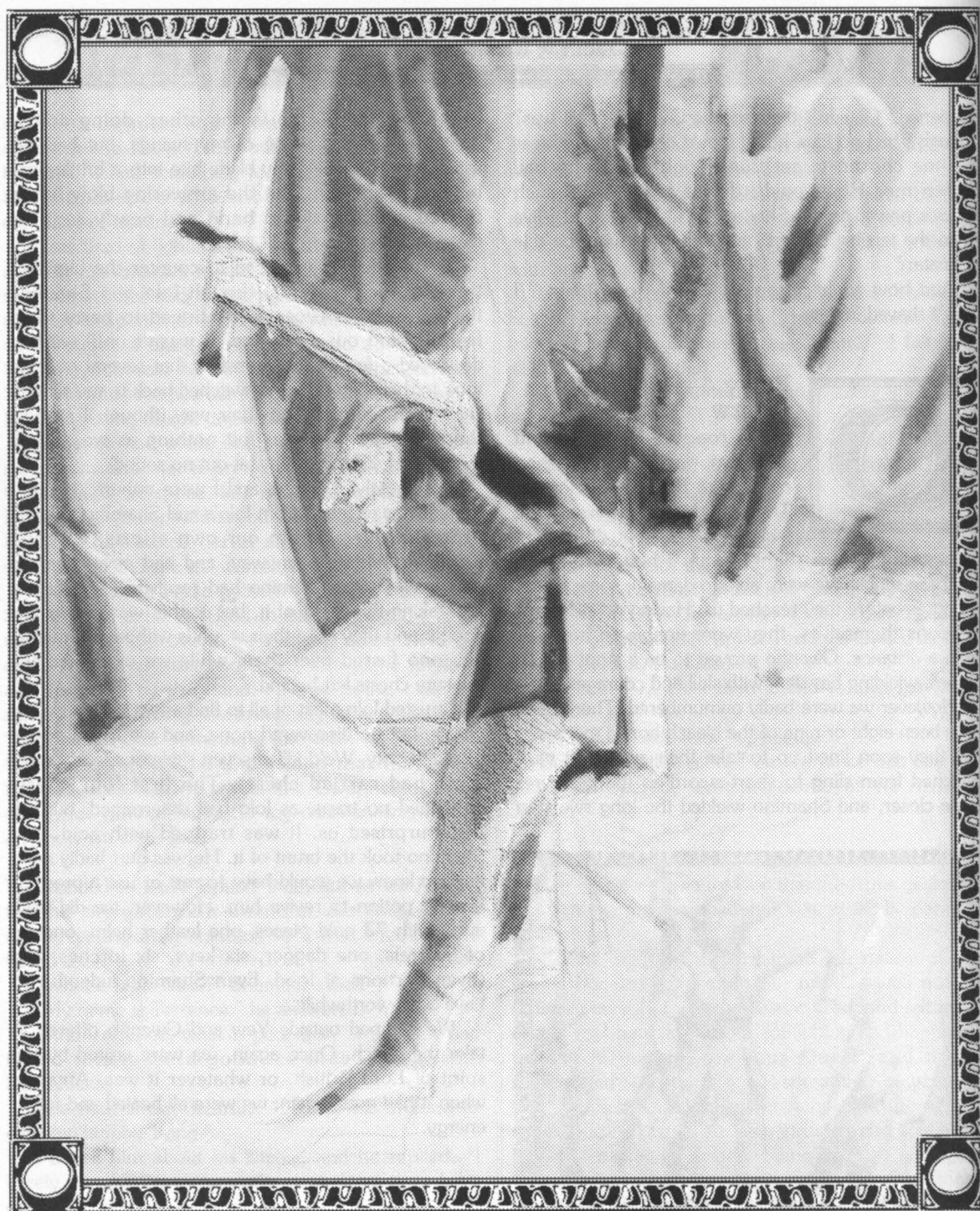
Eventually, I was forced to counter the blows of three of the creatures, though Iolo and Shamino flanked me and Gwenno continued to harry them from behind our stout line. It wasn't until we had destroyed a few of the monsters that several of them took to their bony heels. I switched back to my sling to send them painfully on their way (though I suspect these undead creatures felt nothing as we hacked them apart; certainly they let out no sound).

Fortunately, Gwenno and I were unhurt, though I think it was as much from Iolo's and Shamino's skill at protecting us as from our own efforts. Gwenno remained behind us anyway, and had never been in danger. Iolo and Shamino had received some blows, Iolo taking the worst of it, but neither was in any real danger and they bore their wounds without complaint. Gwenno fussed over them while we examined the treasure chests left behind.

I trusted Iolo most of all to find any traps set on the chests, but he discovered none, and we found much-needed booty. We'd killed seven skeletons, and five of them had carried chests. The first four chests contained no traps, as Iolo had determined, but the fifth surprised us. It was trapped with acid, and Shamino took the brunt of it. He was hurt badly now, and we knew we would have to rest or use a precious healing potion to revive him. However, we did walk away with 73 gold pieces, one leather helm, one set of quarrels, one dagger, six keys, six torches, and seven portions of food. Even Shamino judged it to have been worthwhile.

We camped outside Yew and Gwenno offered to take the watch. Once again, we were visited by the spirit of Lord British, or whatever it was. Anyway, when it had gone again, we were all healed and full of energy.





Entry 5— The Deep Forests

Lt was still dark when we awakened, so we decided to patrol the area around Yew for a while. We were making it safer for the citizens by eliminating some of the monsters that dwelt in the deep woods around the area. We dispatched several giant rats, giant spiders, orcs, trolls, and headless before dawn. Iolo and I both got poisoned, he by a python and I by a giant rat, but we had plenty of *An Nox* spells and the poison was quickly removed. I was queasy for hours afterward, though.

Once we tried to enter Yew, but a Shadowlord was there and we had to retreat. We decided to patrol the area until the evil creature left town, but we hadn't reckoned on meeting another band of skeletons, the very twin of the group we had dispatched previously. These were even more determined, and managed to surround us before we could beat them back with our slings and our swords. I cursed the lack of a decent weapon, but kept fighting as hard as I could. This time all of us, save Gwenno, sustained serious wounds. Even she was hurt, I could tell, though she hid it well. By the time the battle had ended, Iolo was barely standing and Shamino was in little better shape. I was wounded in the left arm and had taken a vicious blow to the head, which had caused me to stagger and almost eat a skeleton's steel. I would have, too, if Shamino hadn't parried the blow. I fear the effort cost him, as one of the creatures to his left took advantage of his attention to my foe. This wasn't the first time Shamino had saved me, and I feared it wouldn't be the last.

Wounded as we were, we took time to open the chests and recover some food and other items. I got acid on me from one of the trapped chests, but it was minor compared to the other damage already done. This battle had been less rewarding and more damaging than any we had encountered before, and we realized it was time to rest again.

Gwenno stood guard again as we lay down to sleep through the day. With the Shadowlord in Yew, we had little choice. None of us knew what the Shadowlords were doing in the towns, but we knew

their very presence caused the people to suffer. Shadowlords exuded Evil. I longed to plunge a sword into one of them, but was sure, from my previous meeting, that I was overmatched. As galling as it was, I had to bide my time. I knew my companions felt the same way.

We made camp in a clearing, where Gwenno could warn us if any foe approached. Our sleep refreshed us, though my dreams were black and ominous. Despite my nightmares, the air of this strange world revived me quickly, and I felt my health return, but Iolo was not so lucky, and Gwenno needed some rest herself.

It was night, so we took the risk of sleeping again since nothing could be done before morning. This time I stood guard. After eight hours, just as the sun began to rise, I saw Lord British again. He appeared as if from within our campfire. This time, he smiled.

"Hail, Shamino! For thy valiant deeds, I shall reward thee! Thou art now Level 3, and quicker!"

That's exactly what he said. He then delivered his standard speech to me, healed us all, and disappeared. I felt wonderful, but slightly miffed as well. Hadn't I fought side by side with Shamino? And what about the others? Did we not deserve a similar reward? I quickly dismissed the thoughts as unworthy, and was the first to reach Shamino's side and congratulate him.

As we were breaking camp, Gwenno approached me and stood waiting for me to acknowledge her presence.

"What is it, Gwenno? Is something wrong?" I asked. I hoped she wasn't going to tell me she had to leave us. We still needed her.

Her shy smile told me that her news could not be so dire.

"Avatar, I have heard thee curse the lack of good weapons, and am distressed to see thee so badly equipped. Would that I could provide better for thee! But I may be able to do just as well. 'Tis rumored that a silver sword is hidden in a basement in Yew, and an even more precious treasure, a Magic Axe, hidden in Jhelom. One hears much, working in an armory. I believe these weapons are thine to take, if thou canst but find them."

I thanked her and shook her hand heartily. I think I

would have kissed her, but I wasn't sure what Iolo would think. But quickly my thoughts returned to Yew. I had added reason to enter the city as soon as possible. As the light began to spread through the forest, we headed back to the city of Justice. It was time to find out more about the Resistance, and to find that silver sword!



Entry 6—Yew and the Shrine of Justice

We finally entered Yew in the dark of night. I thought the Shadowlords would never leave! No sooner had one left than another arrived. My frustration grew until finally, after midnight, the evil lifted from the place, and we knew it was now safe to enter. Of course, the gate to the city was closed for the night. Yew was that kind of place. So we waited before the gate until it opened early in the morning, then headed directly for the Arms of Justice. I had to find out about the Resistance first thing.

Imagine my irritation to find that the smith slept well into the morning. Didn't he know I was on a Quest? Well, apparently he didn't, so we cooled our heels until he came out and began his work day. Then, and only then, could we discuss the matters at hand.

I guess it was Blackthorn's doing, but the people in Britannia had never seemed so stiff and inflexible. I pushed my anger away. It would not serve me, and if this man was really with the Resistance, then perhaps his actions were warranted. It would be dangerous to deviate from normal patterns in these times. I had seen the stocks in the middle of the city, and the poor unfortunates imprisoned in them. But now, finally, I had the chance to talk to the smith. His name was Chamfort. He nearly brushed me off when I asked about his goods, so I got right to the point.

"What do you know about the Resistance?" I asked, *sotto voce*.

He became even stiffer than before, if that was possible.

"Who told thee to ask me?" he asked, a hint of fear mixing with the suspicion in his voice.

"Dost thou know Terrance of Britain?" I inquired, one of the rare times I found myself talking in the local vernacular. I thought it best not to arouse any more suspicion than I already had.

"I see . . ." he muttered. His suspicion was dropping away, and his eyes narrowed as he appraised me and my companions. "Dost thou wish to aid the Resistance?"

There was no hesitation in my response. "Yes."

"What is thy name?"

I told him, and he smiled for the first time. "Very good. The first thing thou dost need is to see Landon." He looked around—somewhat theatrically, I thought. "The password is 'DAWN.'"

After that, I asked him about Landon, whom he identified as the leader of the Resistance. Asked about the Leader, he directed me to a secret passage that led through the fireplace in his bedroom. I thanked him, and my friends and I went in search of the bedroom. Once there, I looked at my companions and shrugged. The fireplace certainly looked hot, but we all agreed it was no time to back out now.

A few first-degree burns later, we found ourselves in a very small room with a ladder, which we climbed. It was dark, and Iolo lit a torch. A plain narrow hallway stretched out ahead. The walls were rough stone and small trickles of water ran down them, staining them with yellow and white residue. At the first intersection, we headed south and finally found ourselves at a door. I was about to knock, but realized where I was. It was probably better just to enter and be prepared for what was on the other side.

I had prepared myself for nothing. The room was empty. Or, on second thought, it was almost empty. Sitting at the table eating breakfast was a truly marvelous sight. Jaana! My old companion from my Quest of the Avatar days! I had forgotten many things, but I had never forgotten her.

I hurried over to Jaana and she greeted me with a bow, but I put my arms around her and hugged her. Once I had gotten over my excitement, we talked a while. I asked Jaana to join us and she agreed. It would be good to have her magical talents with us. I was fond of her personality, too.

We were carrying an extra sling, so we gave it to

Jaana, who took it thoughtfully. "I yearn for battle," she told me.

"I've no doubt you'll find it," I replied. Though she was slender and pale, I knew she would hold her own. She looked a little less robust than I remembered, however. Perhaps she had spent too much time in this basement recently. Some Britannian sun would do her good.

It was just past eleven in the morning and I saw that a man was sleeping in the adjoining bedroom. I had a feeling it was Landon, and Jaana confirmed it. We were about to sit down to wait politely for him to awaken, when Gwenno turned to Jaana and spoke somewhat teasingly.

"Now that the Avatar hath finished his business with thee, hast thou time for thy friends? Welcome, sister. 'Tis good to have you with us."

Jaana smiled and went over to Gwenno, hugging her. It was obvious that they were old friends. Jaana then greeted Iolo and Shamino with equal warmth.

Finally, after all the reunions were completed, Gwenno asked, "Tell me, hast thou heard of a silver sword hidden somewhere in Yew?"

Jaana frowned in concentration. "I know not of the sword, but there is a suspicious wall at the end of the corridor in this basement. It's next to the ladder at the eastern end."

That's all I needed to hear. We left Landon to his rest and headed for the hallway to the north. Then we headed east until we reached the ladder Jaana had mentioned. Sure enough, there was something just a bit strange about the wall. I searched it more carefully and found one of those secret catches I'd seen so much on my previous visit to Britannia. Pushing the catch revealed an ordinary door, which I opened impatiently.

"Let's go," I called to my friends, and we all filed down another narrow hallway.

At the end of this hall was a fetid pool that looked dangerous. Several giant rats stood in the corner as if guarding the room. Behind the rats I spied a lone barrel. I had to know what was in that barrel.

I was about to attack the rats when Iolo suggested we use the Magic Carpet. We might avoid unnecessary battle by floating safely over the

poisonous pools. I agreed, but we ended up battling one group of rats while the others stood off to the side and watched. We easily disposed of the rats, however, and came upon the barrel. In it I found the silver sword I sought. I hefted it and found it to be of superior craftsmanship. I did not immediately need the sword, however, even though the other group of rats took the moment to attack. Our slings were more than a match for these overweight rodents!

We discovered another secret room off the main hallway, but found nothing other than more rats. Then we returned in search of Landon. It was now just past 2 p.m., but Landon was still deep in slumber. We decided to wait an hour or two. The others spent the time catching up while I updated my notes.

At 3 p.m. Landon emerged from his bedroom, looking ready to take on an army. He obviously wasn't one of those people who needed coffee to get going in the morning, though it was hardly morning, come to think of it. I liked him on first sight. Don't ask me why. Charisma, I guess. Anyway, the man was a born leader. He nodded to us as if we had been expected, and beckoned us to follow. He took up a position in the hallway, then turned and waited for me to speak.

"Hello," I said, perhaps not brilliantly, but at least with good intentions.

This was a man who would be a stalwart friend, or a deadly enemy. I could see it in his eyes as he looked me over.

"What is thy name?" he asked.

I answered, and he went through the ritual of determining my loyalty to Lord British and asking me the password. I think he knew I was all right, though. It was just for form. I don't recall all that transpired in our meeting, but suffice it to say I came away with a renewed sense of commitment. This guy was good!

Landon also told us that Blackthorn had stolen Lord British's crown and planned to use it for evil purposes. More cheery news. I was the one who would have to get it back. What's more, Blackthorn had protected his castle so that magic would not work there. I wasn't looking forward to breaching a castle with just a few loyal friends, but it looked as if that was part of this adventure.

Finally, Landon told me to seek out Sir Simon on a mountain island west of Spiritwood. Then he hurried off in that way common to many Britanniens. We also had people to see and places to go, so we didn't linger either. We made our way through Chamfort's fireplace again (ugh!) and headed for the herb seller's place across the square. It was time to stock up on reagents. We had already had to use several spells and it was time to mix some new ones, especially *An Nox* and *Mani*. We bought spider silk, ginseng, garlic, blood moss, and sulfur ash. Our purse was lighter, but we were better prepared for the battles to come. And with Jaana among us, we were also better able to wield the magical forces available in Britannia. I was still worried, though, about storming Blackthorn's castle without any magic to help us. But I didn't have time to worry about that now.

We immediately mixed several batches of *An Nox* and then left the shop. My attention was drawn toward two figures locked up in the stocks at the town square. I'd noticed them each time we passed that way. One was just a child. It didn't seem right. I approached the young boy. His eyes drooped as if he were falling asleep, but when I came near, he looked up, scared at first, then with an innocent look of hope.

Talking with the boy, I learned that his father was accused of not giving enough to charity and the unfortunate child had been locked up for not turning him in. This was Blackthorn's justice! He had perverted the Virtues and the Principles until they had become just the opposite of what they were meant to be. I was angered. Outraged. To lock a man up for not giving enough to charity. . . . It was an abomination. I turned to Iolo and suggested—not too politely, I'm afraid—that he pick the locks and set them free at once. He did so with a grin, and I felt a surge of good feeling go through me. I knew this was a good act and that these were honest folk. Undoing Blackthorn's misguided justice was an act of Virtue!

Avoiding the guard standing nearby, we ducked into the courthouse. Jaana had suggested that we search the prison for information, and I agreed.

We tried the left-hand cell first. We found a wizard there—named Felespar—a former member of the Great Council.

He had been involved in the sealing of the eight dungeons, and Jaana asked him if he knew about the *Words of Power*. He seemed to know what she was talking about. He told us the word for the dungeon Wrong was "MALLUM." I couldn't have been more pleased to know that I might get to go back into that nasty dungeon. Terrific!

In another cell, we met a man named Greymarch. He asked after his son, Froed, but we were unable to help him. We left him sitting, dejected, on the rough wooden bench that served as his bed.

In the middle cell we met Jerone, who told us of seeing an apparition much like the one we had now seen several times. But he knew little else. His brother, however, might know more. Jerone told us that his brother always came at 10 p.m. and 10 a.m. It was just past 7 p.m., so we decided to wait. I lay down on the hard cot and closed my eyes to think, but awakened a couple of hours later when Jerone decided to take the bed.

Jeremy, Jerone's brother, was already there, an hour early! I peered at him through the bars of the cell door. He was a fair haired young man with an honest-looking face. "Hello. What is your job here?" I asked. My standard greeting.

"I work hard; I need the money," he replied earnestly.

"Money? For what?"

"I'm trying to get my brother out of jail."

The conversation went on in that vein. I asked about Jail, about the gold Crowns needed to get his brother out. He then offered to sell me some keys, food, or information. We had keys and food, but never enough Information, so I asked about that.

"All I can tell thee is that Chamfort knows a Mantra."

This was useful information, and I handed him 30 crowns with my thanks. It was time to find Chamfort again. I was ready to leave, but Jeremy wanted to stick around a while and I couldn't get him to move. Iolo tapped me on the shoulder and showed me what looked like a suspicious wall just behind the bed, but we couldn't get to it to investigate because Jerone was fast asleep. What a predicament! Oh, well. Chamfort was probably asleep anyway. We would have to wait until

morning. So we waited until Jeremy left, then completed our exploration of the jail, learning nothing new.

Eventually we found beds at the Slaughtered Lamb where we could hole up for a while, though we were thrown out to make room for the regular customers after a few hours.

The next morning we questioned Chamfort about the Mantra of Justice. He told us it was "BEH."

We left Yew then, and discussed our next move. Learning the Mantra of Justice had reminded me that I hadn't visited any of the wonderful Shrines of Britannia, and that the Shrine of Justice was not far from Yew. My friends agreed that the Shrine of Justice would be a worthy destination, and we set off. We decided to ride the Magic Carpet. It was faster than traveling by foot, and protected us from poisonous swamps as well.

The Shrine of Justice was just a little northeast of Yew, at the very tip of a point of land that reached out into the ocean. We made it there with no difficulty and flew over the swamp that guarded the entrance. I went inside, alone.

I was relieved to find the shrine seemed safe, untouched by the defilement of the Shadowlords. Its peace and otherworldly atmosphere could almost allow you to forget the great danger that hovered over the land. I stood still a moment and refreshed myself in the Shrine's aura, then walked to the center, where I removed my arms and armor, taking the role of a worshipper.

A deep, booming voice spoke in my head and asked what virtue I wished to meditate on. Of course I answered, "Justice." I then intoned the Mantra three times. "Beh . . . Beh . . . Beh . . ."

Then the voice spoke again, and its words were a compulsion upon me. This was no mere statement, but an almost hypnotic command that forced me to heed it well. "'Tis now thy sacred Quest to go unto the Codex and learn the weakness of the Unjust! Return again when thy Quest is done!"

And then I must have passed out. At least I don't remember much else, just a hazy image of dressing and arming myself and walking out of the shrine. Suddenly I was aware that I was back among my friends. They all looked at me strangely and Jaana nodded knowingly.

"What?" I asked, feeling like I had a wart on my nose or something.

But Jaana smiled and took my hand. "There is a light about thee, Avatar. 'Tis the glow of the sacred Quest. Few receive such an honor, or such a duty. Wilt thou take us along on the Quest? For we would serve thee to the end."

I didn't like this "to the end" stuff, but I was more than grateful to have the support of these friends. Somehow I wondered what it would be like to spend some ordinary time with Iolo and Shamino . . . and Jaana. But such reveries got us nowhere nearer to saving Britannia, so I put my thoughts in order and we headed south.

It was night and the moons lit our way, though the addition of a torch didn't hurt. Even as we flew southward, I was thinking what to do next. I was anxious to get to Jhelom, for there I might learn more about the Mystic Arms, and Gwenno had promised to help me seek the hidden Magic Axe. But I needed a boat to get to Jhelom. The moons were still several days away from the position necessary to take the Moongate there. I was thinking where else to go, when Shamino, who had been unusually quiet for the past few hours, suggested Minoc.

"Minoc? Why there?" I asked. The others grumbled a little, as if echoing my question. Minoc was not a place most people went for fun. It was the city of Sacrifice—a most austere place.

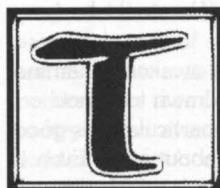
Shamino's answer was anything but informative. "I don't know. I just think we should go there. I've a feeling."

"That's good enough for me!" shouted Iolo, in high spirits for some reason.

"And for me!"

"And me!" echoed Gwenno and Jaana.

So it was decided. We would undertake the journey to Minoc next.



Entry 7—Minoc

To get to Minoc, we had to travel south, then east. It was a long journey, and took the better part of a day and a night on the Magic Carpet. It would certainly have taken longer on

foot, so I blessed the King and his carpet many times along the way.

We traveled in and out of the mysterious forests east of Yew, passing north of the towering Serpent's Spine mountains, whose peaks seemed to loom off in the distance whenever we could peer past the thick woodlands. From there, we crossed the High Steppes, enduring the cold winds that blew there, skirting the River of Despair—if for no other reason, because its name was so unpleasant.

We were chased several times by misshapen creatures, but managed to elude most of them. The Carpet could fly where they could not walk. We reached another mountain range, but quickly found the pass through it. The Carpet flew easily over the rolling foothills and passed us safely between the higher peaks on either side, and we came to the Bloody Plains, so named for ancient battles in which whole armies had been destroyed. Now, however, the Bloody Plains were mostly peaceful grasslands, and, as our journey took us north to find the entrance to Minoc, we were able to relax a little for the first time.

The entrance to Minoc was as I remembered, nestled within a ring of mountains. The peaks surrounding Minoc were majestic, but their shadow cast a gloom upon the town. Strange, twisted trees and shrubs grew in the Minoc valley, and the winds swirled around us, causing dust storms and buffeting us about. We were glad to reach the city gates and all looked forward to some respite from the journey.

Our fate was to be otherwise, however. As we neared the city, we sensed the foul emanations of a Shadowlord. If we were to obtain any rest, it would have to be in the open. We would not set foot in the city until the embodiment of evil had gone.

So we rested through the day, recovering our strength, and scoured the countryside for monsters during the evening. Finally, after midnight, we entered the city and reconnoitered a bit. We would be busy come daylight.

While we waited for the city to awaken, Shamino told me one of the reasons he was drawn to Minoc.

" 'Tis a place of great spirit. In particular, 'tis good to hunt the evil creatures that live about here. Even if thou art wounded or poisoned, the local Healer will

cure thee without charge! Thou who hast the magic may not appreciate that, but I have none, and such a Healer is like wine to a parched throat."

It was still early in the morning, before six by my watch, that we encountered the unfortunate Fenelon and his daughter, Rew. Fenelon told us of his servitude to one Captain Blythe, whom he described as "a real nasty soul." But it was Rew who turned out to be wise beyond her years. Gwenno went to talk with her as she ate her meager breakfast.

"Tell me about your Job, Rew," Gwenno inquired.

"I sew sails," the little girl answered, all seriousness.

"Do you like sewing Sails?" Gwenno persisted.

"It's very hard work," the girl answered, still very serious.

Gwenno continued to talk with the girl, asking about the long Hours and the seven-day Week Rew had to put in, while I put two and two together and got the Great Council. I remembered suddenly what Annon had said about a sailmaker's mother. But the girl was singing a little song, so I didn't interrupt.

" The raven sees
Thy raven saw
And in the corn
He sayeth 'Caw' "

The song meant nothing to me, but Gwenno was more perceptive. "CAH?" she asked.

The girl smiled for the first time and said she believed it to be a Mantra. Then the two talked of *Wishing Wells* and *Horses*, but I didn't listen. I think it was just childhood fantasy, though I filed away the

If you throw a coin in a well and wish for a horse when you come to a new town, there is a small chance that the wish will be granted.

thought that I might try dropping a coin in some wells and wishing for *Horses*. Who knows? Maybe I'd get lucky! On a more practical note, I realized that CAH

was the Mantra of Sacrifice. In fact, I remembered that I had once known it.

“What about your Mother?” I asked the girl.

This elicited the second smile of the day. “Her name is Fiona. She works at the poorhouse.”

We left the child to her breakfast then and went in search of Fiona. We soon found her on the way to the poorhouse. She was clearly a woman of some power. I could see something of the mage in her, though she was dressed in simple homespun rags and carried no amulets or other implements of the trade. Still, she was a pleasant woman who spoke freely and enthusiastically of her work at the mission. She also wished that Lord British would return, and we knew for sure she was one of us. She even gave us some food, though I was reluctant to take it.

Finally, the conversation took a more meaningful turn as I asked about the Great Council. She immediately clammed up, claiming to know nothing, but I whispered the Resistance password, **RAIN**, to her, and she gave me a knowing look.

“Then yes, I did once serve on the Great Council! Thou must be the Avatar of Legends past! What knowledge dost thou seek from me?”

Once again, I wished I didn’t have to ask, but it seemed important, so I answered with a question of my own. “Do you know a Word of Power?”

“The Word of Power to open the dungeon of Covetous is ‘AVIOUS.’” Her grave expression told me that the interview was probably over, so we wished her well and watched as she headed for the poorhouse.

We looked around for a few hours, stopping to eat a small breakfast and talking among ourselves. I noticed that Iolo and Gwenno, normally inseparable, were seated some distance apart, but gave it no thought. Around ten in the morning, we came upon a beggar kneeling by a tree near the Healer’s. I knew that Minoc was the city of Sacrifice, but this man seemed to have given up a great deal. His eyes were black hollows, and I could see that his rags hung on him as if they had originally clothed a much larger frame. In all, I felt pity for him and approached him. For a second I thought Shamino was going to stop me, but then he seemed to change his mind.

The man asked a few coins of me, which I freely gave. I felt better for the giving. He also promised that I should find him a worthy investment, and I thought about that statement as I walked away from him. Was he looking for a job or planning on going public?

We visited the Darkwatch Armory and spoke with Tactus and the proprietor, Shenstone, but did not purchase anything. I found Tactus to be somewhat of a boor. His support of Blackthorn made me wary. While I was dealing with the proprietor, however, Iolo spoke with Tactus at greater length, learning something about a judge named Dryden who was part of something called the Oppression. Dryden was in Yew, but I had no desire to see him. He sounded, well . . . oppressive.

As we left the armory, I thought again about what the beggar had intimated. Perhaps he knew something. I returned to him, and, once again, he begged some coins of me. I gave them and waited. He came forth with some information about Shenstone that intrigued me, and I gave him a few more coins for his cooperation. He led me to believe that Shenstone was up to something and that I should watch him around noon. It was now nearly eleven, so we had only an hour to wait. We resolved to stake out the Darkwatch Armory and see what Master Shenstone was up to.

Our wait was very short. Within a few minutes, we saw Shenstone emerge from the doorway to the armory and look around furtively. We managed to look nonchalant, and he paid us no notice. Carefully we followed him as he crossed the square and headed to the northeast corner of town. As we watched, crowded close to a wall so he wouldn’t notice us, he dug a shallow hole at the base of a tree and left something there.

We backed around the corner of the building as he retraced his steps, still acting all wound up tight and nervous. We didn’t want to arouse his suspicions so we pretended to be deep in conversation. Once he was safely out of sight, we hurried to the spot and searched the area. Iolo dug up five keys with skull markings on them. I was mystified. They looked like no keys I had ever seen before, but Iolo and Shamino nodded to each other as if these keys had some special significance.

As soon as we had moved away from the tree, I rounded on them and demanded, "O.K. What's the big secret? You two are up to something, so out with it!"

Surprisingly, it was neither Shamino nor Iolo who answered, but Gwenno, and she looked distressed. "Avatar," she began. I nodded, indicating that she should go on. "These two have cooked up a scheme that I don't like. Not one little bit." Again I nodded, encouraging her to continue, but Iolo laughed and interrupted.

" 'Tis no harebrained scheme as my dear Gwenno would have thee believe. But first, let me ask thee a question."

"Go ahead," I replied, though I was growing more confused by the moment. I had derived so much comfort from my loyal friends that this discord did much to undermine my sense of security. I was pretty sure I wouldn't like what I was going to hear.

"Tell me, Avatar. What is more important, the well being of the entire land and of its rightful king, or arguing needlessly over petty points of honor?"

On the surface, it seemed easy enough to answer. Certainly the welfare of Britannia and the King were the reason for our Quest. But, on the other hand, Iolo and the others had not completed the Avatar's Quest as I had. What might appear to be a petty point of honor could be the door leading to a world of self-justification and expediency. Saying the end justified the means had been a tradition most often leading to disaster and moral degradation. But perhaps I judged too quickly.

"What are you talking about?" I asked cautiously.

"Would you agree, my friend, that we lack enough gold and weapons to attempt the King's rescue at this time?" he countered.

"Doubtless," I replied, waiting for him to continue.

"There may be a way for us to secure that which we now lack, and, I believe, at no cost to our Virtue."

I didn't like this much, but felt compelled to hear the rest. "I'm listening."

" 'Tis the King's own Treasury of which we speak. We feel sure the King would approve, though there are those among us who see things differently." He looked pointedly at Gwenno, who huffed and looked away. "And these Skull Keys here

are the literal key to the problem," he continued. "Thou mayest not know't, Avatar, but these keys will open the Treasury."

Gwenno started to object, but I forestalled her outburst with an upraised hand. They were looking to me for leadership—that was clear—and I was going to try to play Solomon in this dispute.

"O.K., I get the idea. It's the King's own Treasury, and he would want us to help him. But I'm uneasy about it. Still, I agree that we could save His Majesty far more quickly if we had a little help. Lord British has offered me his aid many times before, and has even appeared to us in visions recently." I realized suddenly that I had made up my mind. I was still uneasy about it, though. "I will try it, but we must be aware that it could hurt our Virtue if the King has placed a magic spell or glamour over the Treasury."

"What of it?" asked Shamino heatedly. "Dost thou not see that even the sacrifice of thy Virtue in the name of the better good is a worthy act? Besides, Avatar, 'tis a certainty that thou wilt recover anything lost by thy good acts in the future."

I was not completely convinced, but, standing here in Minoc, the city of Sacrifice, his argument was persuasive. What was Virtue that I could own it or place it above the well being of an entire nation? On the other hand, what was the Avatar without Virtue? Would I not sink to the level of Blackthorn and his terrible "ethics," as he called them? I had no answer, and by my indecision was I damned.

We stayed a few days more, each day watching the furtive movements of Shenstone, and each day collecting five more keys. We never found the person for whom he buried them, but I was sure the purpose of the keys was not for good. I could feel that strongly.

Shamino was all in favor of camping outside the city while we waited, but I had a feeling that our presence might keep the Shadowlords away. I couldn't prove it, but it seemed safer to sleep in the city. There was usually a free bed to use.

Once we had a good collection of keys, we all agreed, even Gwenno, that it was best if we visited the Treasury as soon as possible. Gwenno was not

enthusiastic, but I think she had accepted my judgment. Besides, I had noticed Iolo turning his not inconsiderable charm on her, and it was obvious that she couldn't resist him for long.



Entry 8—Castle Britannia—The Treasury!

We left Minoc in the early afternoon and arrived at Castle Britannia in the dead of night.

The Magic Carpet had taken us quickly over all obstacles and no monsters had been able to surprise us on the way. When we arrived at Castle Britannia, we headed directly for the basement.

I allowed Shamino to open the door with a Skull Key. He seemed eager to begin, while I hung back, having more second thoughts. Once inside, however, we found several chests and Iolo joined Shamino as he examined them. There were weapons, scrolls, gems, gold, and much more. It was certainly the King's treasure! Iolo and Shamino began taking what they could find, stacking up any items they didn't need in other corners of the room. They even took some extra weapons to sell later, in case we ran out of gold.

Max	58G
Shamino	20G
Iolo	20G
Gwenno	20G
Jaana	60G

F: 9966 G: 8734
4-19-139

some torches!
a gem!
a ring of keys!
a scroll!
a potion!
a sack of gold!
a weapon!
a helm!
some armour!
a weapon!
a weapon!

I sat in a corner, unable to participate. Even though the logic of their argument had reached me, I could feel something being sucked out of me as they took the items. Perhaps they weren't sensitive to it.

Not even Gwenno and Jaana seemed as bothered by it as I was. I kept telling myself I was just a wimp after all. There was no reason to feel all this guilt! But somehow I knew there was a price to be paid for this action. I could feel the wrongness despite my belief that we did it for a good cause. I recalled Shamino's words. Was I, then, sacrificing my Honor for a better cause? It was certainly unclear, and I vowed to redeem myself as soon as I could.

Finally, the deed was done. No guards showed up; they generally avoided the basement, and we were gone without having raised any alarm. As we reached the first floor, however, Jaana exclaimed that she could not find her special dagger. It had been her father's and she could not bear losing it.

"I must have laid it down inside the Treasury. We must return for it."

Fortunately, we had plenty of Skull Keys left, so we climbed back down the ladder and once again stood before the door, which had magically reset its lock. This time I opened the door and Jaana went in alone. Her low whistle a moment later caught all our attention.

"What is it, Jaana?" I asked quickly.

"It's all back," she exclaimed. "The treasure. It has been magically replenished!"

We all piled into the room then, and sure enough, she was right. The room was full of new treasure. And this treasure was of even greater quality than before.

Shamino looked briefly at me, then started sifting through the treasure again. I sighed. Each time they opened a new chest, I felt something go out of me, but there was no stopping them now. Even as he worked, Shamino was stating his justification.

"It seemeth the King hath magical resources we never dreamed of. We can work no hardship on a Treasury that can so replenish itself. Come, Avatar, cheer up! We will have the King safe again before thou knowest!"

I groaned, but refrained from telling him the price I was paying.

Things got worse still, and I'm sure I have only myself to blame. I should have said something, but once it was discovered that the room would magically recharge its treasures, and that even greater, more

powerful items would appear, Iolo and Shamino seemed to go a little mad. We made many trips back and forth. I should have said something, but was feeling too sick to do more than register feeble protests. I honestly don't think they understood what was happening until it was too late. By the time they had finished, we had enough money and weapons to support an army, but I felt as if I had no honor left at all. I was like a ghost.

I remember an argument that Shamino and Iolo had as they were skeining the treasure for the very best weapons and armor. I had listened in a dull state, without interest. I only recount it now because it is one of the few incidents I can remember from that time. Iolo had started it by saying, "Give me a Magic Axe and a silver sword, and I shall be prepared for any foe!"

But Shamino had a different view. "Nay, good Iolo. Thou art mistaken. The Magic Axe, aye 'tis the very best weapon. But thou shouldst carry a shield to protect thyself. A spiked shield will even damage thine enemies."

"My enemies are cut down all the faster by my double attack, good friend," boasted Iolo. "Whilst thou hidest behind thy shield," he added, stacking a shield with various daggers, slings, and other small items and tossing it into the growing pile in the corner.

"As thou wilt," muttered Shamino as he hefted a great two-handed sword thoughtfully. They both returned to their inspection of the loot, and the matter was forgotten.

As we began to leave following our final trip (we had nearly run out of Skull Keys), I tripped and nearly fell. Iolo caught me and Shamino helped him. They set me down gently on a nearby bench and asked if I was all right. Jaana came to me with her herbs, ready to heal, but I waved her off sadly.

"It's nothing of the flesh, my friends, but I'm afraid the King's Treasury has taken its toll on me. I'll be all right in time. Just give me a moment to breathe."

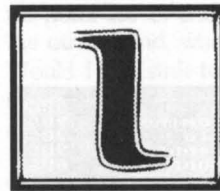
Shamino knelt before me and took my hands in his. The expression on his face would have made even Blackthorn weep. "Avatar. I fear we have done thee a great injustice, and I feel ashamed. We were caught in a net of our own weaving, perhaps a mite overzealous in our actions. Canst thou forgive us?"

I smiled at him, as best I could. I felt as if I had been drinking for a week and the hangover had just caught up with me. But I knew I would live. "I think it's time for me to earn my Avatar's stripes all over again," I joked, but this only left Shamino looking bemused as well as upset. I patted his armored shoulder and did my best to retrieve my lost energy. I was partially successful. "What's done is done, friends," I told them. "Now let's arm ourselves with Magic Axes and stout armor. We're on a Quest. Moping down here will do us no good at all." I wished I felt as confident as I was trying to sound.

The others murmured their agreement, but there was still an air of uncertainty about my little party. "What next, then? Where do we go?" asked Gwenno, who had been silent throughout the whole Treasury incident.

"I feel I must complete my Shrine Quest as soon as possible. I sense that it will provide some of what I have lost."

"Agreed!" shouted Iolo, and his voice echoed down the long hallways of the basement. We all swiveled our heads looking for guards. None came, and we set off as quickly as possible before anything else happened.



Entry 9—East Brittany, North Brittany, and West Brittany: The Shrine of the Codex

It was time to get ourselves a ship, because that was the only way we could reach the Codex and complete the Shrine Quest. I walked along, choking back my nausea, gradually gaining control over the way I felt. By the time we had reached East Brittany, a little village just east of the castle, I felt I probably would live after all. In fact, it was not so much that I was really harmed by my experience in the Treasury, as that I had returned to my pre-Avatar state. In some ways, I no longer felt the title Avatar was appropriate any more. But once an Avatar. . . . I needed to redeem myself, that was certain.

East Brittany was a small village whose main industry was The Oaken Oar, a shipwright's shop run

by Master Hawkins. There was also a Healer in town and I briefly toyed with the idea of paying a visit there, but decided against it. What ailed me would not succumb to the Healer's touch.

It was about half past ten in the morning when we arrived, and we found two workers arriving at The Oaken Oar—Sir Adam and his son, Squire Jimmy. Sir Adam was holding a small black box as if it contained a family of serpents. We spoke with Sir Adam about water travel, and he said something strange that caught my attention.

"Look out, this might explode," he said. I think he was referring to the box. Not serpents, then. Maybe gunpowder.

I asked him what was going to Explode, and he started talking about a fire on a ship. When I asked him about the Ship, he mentioned an experiment and claimed to have discovered a way to boost the speed of a ship. I wasn't sure I wanted to know much more if it involved the mysterious and obviously unstable box.

Squire Jimmy also gave us news. We were talking about Master Hawkins. Jimmy was trying to impress us, I think. He was proud of his job, and of his master. "Hawkins," he stated, "is a third-generation master shipwright."

"A Shipwright?" asked Jaana, to encourage him.

"His grandfather designed the HMS Cape, fastest ship that ever sailed. Now Master Hawkins and his servants ply the family trade."

I wasn't expecting much from this conversation, so I was beginning to tune it out and think about other matters when I heard something that caught my interest. Jaana had just asked, "What was that about the HMS Cape?"

And Jimmy answered, "Master Hawkins misplaced the plans for 'er long ago and nothing since has been so fast. Still, we try many new ideas."

I was thinking about these plans. I remembered the special ship's wheel I had used before. Perhaps these plans could be of some help to us. I barely heard Jimmy suggest that we talk to his father about his new ideas. I was already wondering if we could find those plans.

I went to talk with Master Hawkins, but he seemed interested only in selling ships. We did need a ship, so we paid his rather stiff price for a Frigate, and he

added a Skiff for another small fortune. But he would not talk about anything else. I noticed a double doorway at the eastern end of the building, near a table and some chairs. We made our way in that direction and when nobody was looking, we jimmied the lock on one door and entered a storeroom. A thorough examination of the premises revealed several scrolls. The old man had them all mixed up, which is why he couldn't find anything, but we found the HMS Cape plans among them, in the third chest of drawers from the left.

I took the plans and tried to talk to Hawkins about them, but he wouldn't even look at them. I don't know if he was trying to tell me he wasn't interested in them any more, or if he was just pig-headed. At any rate, I was certain it would be all right to borrow the plans, so we tucked them into our packs and headed for the docks, where we would find our Frigate waiting.

On our way to the wharf, we passed through two other small villages, North Brittany and West Brittany. North Brittany turned out to be a hotbed of Resistance fighters. Whenever we mentioned the Resistance or said the password, DAWN, we were treated to useful information. For instance, we learned about Shadowlords and their vulnerabilities. They could be struck down, but not killed by ordinary means. Joshua instructed us to meet with a man called Sutek, who lived on a remote island somewhere in the Great Sea.

Leof told us about Sir Sean, who could be found at the Lycaenum on Dagger Isle. We were supposed to ask him about Stonegate.

As much as we felt at home in North Brittany, we found little to hold us long in its western neighbor, not surprisingly called West Brittany. There were a few friendly sorts there, especially Christopher and his friend Philip, and Kurt the stable boy told us all about his favorite horse breeds. There was no useful information, though.

We continued on, past the town of Britain, and found our Frigate waiting on the dock to the west. The dockmaster handed it over to us without delay and we boarded the ship.

All of us had previous experience on the high seas, so we set to work instantly. First we rowed away from

shore so our large craft wouldn't run aground. Then I used the HMS Cape plans to modify our rigging and give us extra speed. I was still feeling pretty bad, but being back on the sea invigorated me and I finally yelled, "Hoist the sails!" and we quickly ran up the sheets.

I watched the wind puff out the sails and listened to the creaks and snaps of the rigging as the great ship began to gather speed. Soon we were headed east at a rapid pace. Jaana sang the same bawdy sea chanty I remembered from our last adventure, but this time I didn't find it so shocking.

As we sailed past the Britannian coast, Iolo and Gwenno retired belowdecks and Shamino stood at the helm. Jaana and I found ourselves talking at the starboard rail.

"Art thou well, Avatar? Is there aught I can do for thee?" she asked.

Sadly, I could think of nothing to ask of her, though in these quiet moments, I found myself thinking about her. Jaana had a far-away quality that I found most intriguing, but she also had a very immediate warmth about her. I had never considered more than comradely affection for her before. Well, I had considered it, but not too seriously. Now I found myself wondering what it would be like to get to know her better. Much better. In fact, I think I was thinking about kissing her when Shamino shouted, "Sea Serpent!" and all hell broke loose.

The whole upper deck cracked from the blow and Jaana was nearly thrown overboard. I managed to catch her before she went over, but there was no time to deliberate. All of us took our battle stations while Shamino deftly steered the ship, which now seemed puny, close enough to the giant monster for us to use our weapons. If we had tried to outrun the beast, it might have destroyed the ship before we had a chance to get away. Nor could we bring the cannons to bear because the time it would take to swing the ship around might allow the great monster to blast us again. At close quarters, though, we knew our newly acquired Magic Axes and Bows would help us destroy it.

The battle was quick, but not without its cost. Several of us were injured by the great balls of fire the creature spat out at us, and the ship took some

damage. But we prevailed. The sea serpent finally slipped beneath the waves and was seen no more. We set sail again.

I looked for Jaana, but she had gone below to tend to the wounded. I was almost untouched, so I helped at the helm until we reached the coast above Dagger Isle. There were no more attacks, but it was dark now, and we were concerned that more attacks might come at any time.

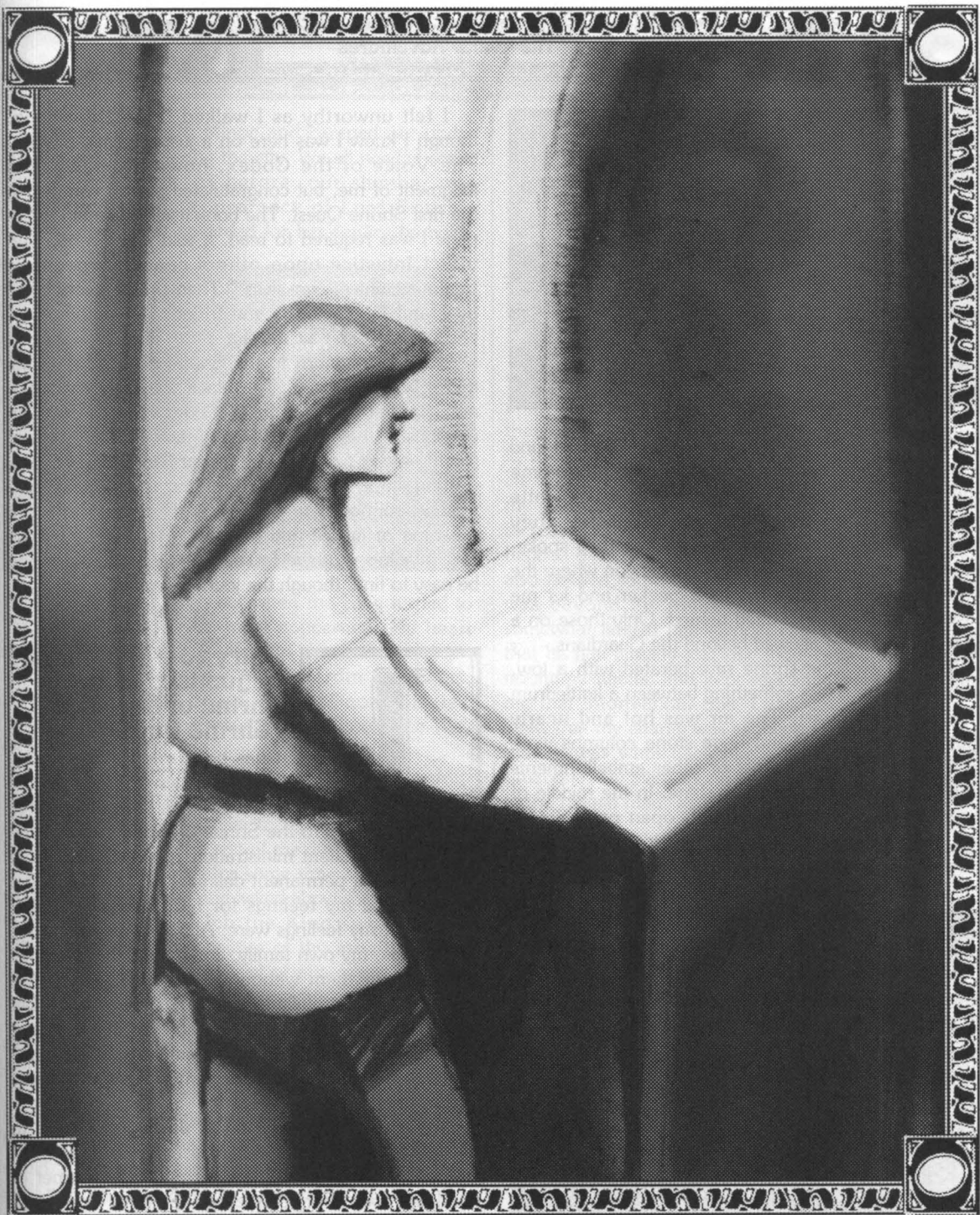
"We head north from Dagger Isle to find the island of the Codex," announced Shamino. "Shall we seek the Codex now, Avatar, or visit the Lycaenum first?"

"The Codex. Please." I needed to complete the Shrine Quest as soon as I could.



So we headed north. We endured several attacks by roving bands of sharks and poisonous giant squids, but we were able to beat them off without taking much further damage. We blasted some of them out of the water with a good broadside from the cannons, but others were able to get too close for the cannons and we fought them hand to tentacle, or tooth, whatever they attacked us with.

We found the island that housed the Codex without much trouble. At the southern tip was a path that started at the mouth of a small river. Taking that path led us to the Shrine of the Codex. Two great living stone guardians blocked the path. They were much as the bard had described them back in Britain, but I had no time for awe. Later, upon reflection, I realized what unlikely behemoths they were. I had never believed anything living could be so huge. And they certainly appeared to be fashioned from stone,





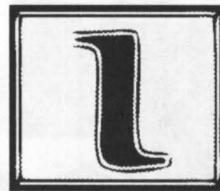
not flesh. At the time, though, the only fact I found important was that they let me pass. Like some oversized Michelangelo's masterpieces of white marble, they stood as still as the statues they resembled—until we tried to pass. Then they spoke, and their voices echoed through the canyon where the shrine lay. They hailed me as a Seeker and let me pass while the others waited behind. Only those on a Shrine Quest were allowed beyond the Guardians.

The walls of the shrine reverberated with a low, steady beating. It was something between a kettledrum and a human heart. The air was hot and nearly stifling, but the walls and huge stone columns were solid white. No adornments or other embellishments marred the stark purity of the shine. In the middle of the room stood the Codex itself, open on a simple dais made of marble. I found myself idly wondering if the dais was alive too.



I felt unworthy as I walked toward the book, though I knew I was here on a just and vital mission. The Voice of the Codex, however, passed no judgment of me, but congratulated me on completing the first Shrine Quest. The book itself was open to the page I was required to read. It told me, "Those who inflict injustice upon others cannot expect fair treatment unto themselves." Then the encounter was over and I returned to my friends. If anything else occurred, I wasn't aware of it.

"I need to return to the Shrine of Justice," I told them. Nobody spoke. The place was truly awesome, and some of the aura of the Codex escaped even the confines of the shrine. On the Magic Carpet, we flew silently away from the two Guardians and onto the waiting ship. I was thinking about the words of the Codex, fixing them in my mind, delving into the meaning of justice and injustice. Meanwhile, we set sail, heading southwest. The Shrine of Justice would be easy to find, though the journey would be long.



Entry 10—The Shrine of Justice; Minoc; Shrine of Sacrifice (Shrine Quest)

It has been a long time since I last sat down to write in my journal. I was ravaged by fever on the return trip to the Shrine of Justice, and I think only Jaana's patient ministrations prevented me from slipping into a permanent delirium. But during it all, I never voiced my feelings for her. In truth, I didn't know what my feelings were. All my companions had become like my own family, and I would have laid my life down for them without hesitation. It's true. You can't say that truthfully in the world I came from. But in this wild world, with death stalking us at every turn, I had already risked my own skin for them many times. And they had done the same for me even more often.

My return to the Shrine of Justice did much to revive my spirits, though I knew my redemption was still far off. I felt more virtuous and also sharper of mind and body after completing the Shrine Quest.

ULTIMA V: Warriors of Destiny

We sailed back to Minoc and camped out under the stars before entering the city. We all needed some rest at this point. As before, our slumber was interrupted by the appearance of Lord British's specter. Jaana was rewarded for her service by being



raised to the next level, but when the King turned to me, his expression was most concerned. My heart sank. I knew he'd seen my failings clearly.

"Thy soul seeketh direction from thy heart, misguided one," he began. "Accept now this new chance to prove thy worth, 'ere thou loseth the Way forever!"

This was bad. When the apparition had disappeared, I was once again thrust into a black mood, and my companions, though respectful of my feelings, avoided me the rest of the day.

I had been confused for some time about "levels," so I approached Jaana and asked about them.

"The levels of which the King speaketh are initiations into higher qualities of thy essential being. For instance, at a higher level of attainment, a mage such as I would cast more powerful spells, and cast them better, too. A fighter would be stronger and more telling with his blows. Only the King can grant such advancement."

"Then, if we are trying to save his life, why doesn't he just advance us to the highest level now?" I asked. I knew immediately that I had said something rather stupid. I could tell from Jaana's patient smile. I could see my third-grade teacher explaining the multiplication table to me for the tenth time.

"Such attainments cannot be given out on a whim, Avatar. Thou, of all people, shouldst know that. Though the King has the power to advance, he can only do so if the recipient be worthy."

"Worthy," I muttered, returning to my black mood. I wasn't sure I understood all of it, but I now had the basic concept more clearly in mind. I had eventually learned the multiplication tables, and in time I'd probably figure this out too.

We entered Minoc in the morning and I went immediately to find the beggar. I gave perhaps more than was seemly to him. Though I may have overdone it, the poor man would have enough to begin a new life by the time I was through. Each time I gave him of my gold, I could feel my inner Avatar sense of Virtue increase. I was a little surprised, given the amount I handed over, that he remained a beggar. Perhaps he also needed some kind of career counseling, but that was beyond my abilities. He did seem to be of somewhat limited intelligence. He never remembered that he had already told me about Shenstone and his noontime habits, and kept repeating his offer to sell me that information. Still, I was patient with him. I knew that my charity was as much for me as it was for him. It was what back home we called a "win-win situation." My black mood lifted as I handed over coins to the ragged man.

The trick of taking items from the King's Treasury costs the Avatar his Virtue (which can be read by pressing Ctrl-K on the keyboard). Some of the people you meet will not help you if your Virtue (or Karma) is below 50. Therefore, since you now have a lot of money, you can afford to be generous. Each time you give money to the beggar, you gain 1 Karma point. Each time you complete a Shrine Quest, you gain 3. Therefore, if you complete a few Shrine Quests and give to the beggar many times, you will regain enough

Karma to complete the Quest. You can choose to do this slowly or all at once. It's a good idea to do it as soon as possible, however, and we recommend that you give to the beggar until your Karma reaches at least 44 points. Following the story line in this book, you'll complete two Shrine Quests, which will bring your Karma to 50. Freeing the prisoners in Yew (the ones in the stocks) also increases your Karma. You could choose to do that after visiting the Treasury instead of before, as we did in this story. And there are prisoners in Blackthorn's castle. You can free them, but you can't afford to get caught. We chose to visit Blackthorn's Castle later in the game, but you may choose to do it sooner. As long as you have the Magic Carpet, you should be able to do so. Take plenty of keys, though.

From Minoc we sailed east until we had reached the area of the northern desert. It was just southeast of a great peninsula that jugged out into the deep ocean, pointing to the northeast. We left the ship anchored near the shore and rowed in on the skiff. Then we headed south on the Magic Carpet until we found the shrine in the middle of the barren wasteland of the desert. It was a short, unremarkable hike. Other than cactus, we saw nothing of interest, and we avoided the cactus.

We made good time. We quickly found the Shrine of Sacrifice and I entered. It was in all visible ways identical to the Shrine of Justice, but I knew that Sacrifice was unique. I meditated on the Mantra CAH. The peace of the Shrine descended upon me. All too soon we were on our way back to the ship and the Shrine receded into the distance. Barely an hour had passed and I had a new Shrine Quest.

The journey back to the Shrine of the Codex was not remarkable. We arrived soon after sundown. We

had discovered that the most dangerous time to be sailing was after midnight and into the early morning. But this trip was uneventful. Once again, the Codex was open to the page appropriate to my Quest. It said, "None live alone, save they who will not share their fortune with those around them." I thought of the beggar in Minoc and hoped he was no longer alone.

We returned quickly to the Shrine of Sacrifice, but the journey was far worse than before. We had set sail in the early evening, but as the moons passed the zenith, we were suddenly assailed by a seemingly endless stream of squids, seahorses, and sharks. Then Iolo spotted a pirate ship off our bow. We tried to outrun her, but a few broadsides from her cannons threatened to break our ship apart. Already our ship was far less seaworthy than she had been. We turned about and closed the distance between us. I was going to order Shamino to fire our own cannons, but he advised against it.



"Nay, Avatar. Our own vessel is near ruined, but if we must fight these scurvy seadogs, mayhap we will find their ship of use once we have taught them a lesson."

Soon we were close against their starboard rail and they were within our magical weapons' range. The pirates refused to yield and we were forced to feed them to the sharks. I would rather have struck a deal with them, but they were obdurate. Their ship was in better shape than ours, so, once we had dealt with the bodies, we boarded their vessel and left ours to its fate.

We reached the desert a short time later and I returned to the Shrine of Sacrifice to complete the Quest. Once again, I came away feeling refreshed, stronger and more agile than before. I could almost smile now, and my friends noticed that my mood had improved.

"Where to, now?" asked Gwenno, poking at Iolo's bum playfully with a sharp dagger. I pretended not to notice, though Iolo made a great show of being wounded until I, along with all the others, laughed heartily. It felt good. I realized that this was the first time I had laughed in a long time.

"I think I'd like to complete at least one more Shrine Quest. We have learned the Mantra of Compassion. Let's sail to that shrine. Does anyone know where it is? I seem to have forgotten."

Of course, Iolo knew. He was from Britain, the city of Compassion, and had been there often.

"Tis south of here, as the crow flies, but we'll have to sail around to the east, then back west again."

"Couldn't we sail north from here and still reach our goal?" asked Gwenno.

"Aye, we could. But 'tis a fearful long journey over the open ocean," replied Iolo.

In the end, we decided to sail east, then south around Dagger Isle. Jaana suggested we stop at the Lycaem and visit Moonglow on the way, but I wasn't ready yet to visit the city of Honesty or the revered repository of Britannian learning. Despite my good deeds and my Quests, I was still not feeling worthy enough for that. Compassion was more to my liking just then.

We had little difficulty as we sailed around Dagger Isle and then turned west to hug the main coastline and find the Shrine of Compassion. But it was a long sail and none of us relished sailing at night, particularly after midnight. So, as the moons shone overhead, we put to shore and rested. That's when a singular event of my adventure occurred.

We had already seen the apparition of Lord British several times, but the last time had left me shaken. He only seemed to appear when we were under the open sky. This time, I slept eight full hours and awakened to see the now-familiar shape above the campfire. I was afraid he would chew me out again, or cast me out entirely, but his healing touch was more than I had

ever expected. It was like an explosion of light and sound and I could feel myself changing within. It's almost impossible to describe. Through it all I heard his voice, as if from a great distance.

"For thy valiant deeds, I shall reward thee! Thou art now Level 3, and wiser! Well armed art thou to fight Death's embrace, O enlightened one! Thy destiny awaits thee!"

I was feeling pretty good as we headed back out to sea that morning. I was once again an Avatar in good standing. I was so happy, in fact, that I failed to read the weather. My companions seemed likewise to ignore the signs until, suddenly, we found ourselves in a gale. We had drifted some distance from the shore and soon the boat was being blown completely off course. We watched the Britannian shore grow more and more distant, and were helpless to do anything about it.

The storm mentioned here is not a part of the Ultima adventure, but is used for story purposes only.

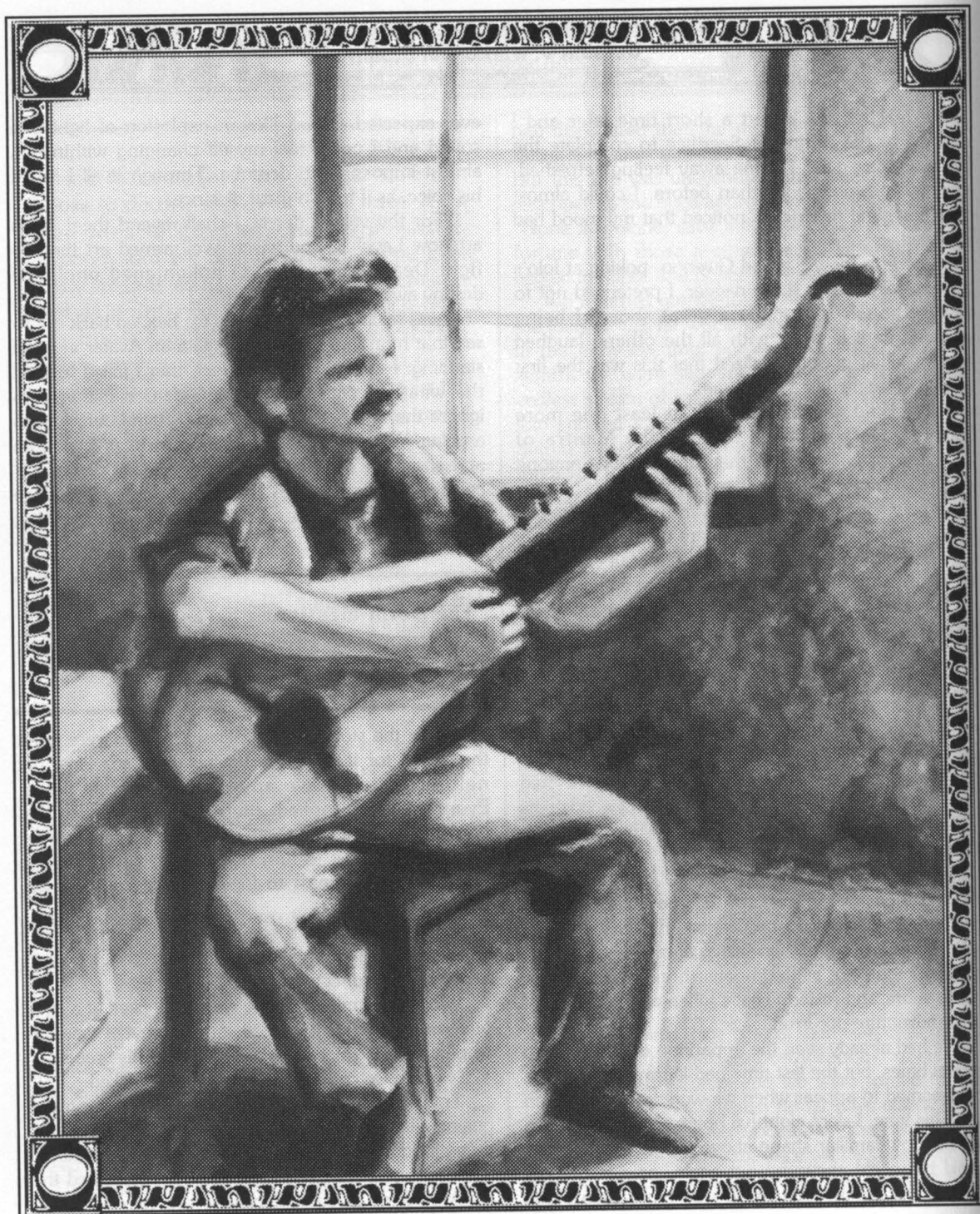
When the storm finally released us, we were none the worse for it, all of us having good sea legs, but neither did we have any clue where we were. Everywhere we looked, there was ocean. We had been blown far to the south— of that we were sure— so we were about to turn north when Gwenno, who had climbed the mast to look around, called down, "Land ho!"

We all looked up to see her pointing east. With a shrug, I wheeled the helm around until we were headed in that direction.

Within a couple of hours, we had docked at a small pier on an island. It looked familiar, but it was Iolo who breathed "Buccaneer's Den" under his breath.

"Should we check things out here?" I asked.

The others smiled. They thought my language quaint. They had no idea what I thought of theirs. But they all nodded agreement. We might as well find out what was going on in the pirate's lair. I guessed they would have no love for Blackthorn and his rules here.



**Entry 11—
Buccaneer's Den**

The Buccaneer's Den was nothing more than a small settlement surrounded by a low wall. The place would not have stood long under a determined



siege. But for a small band of adventurers the place had its dangers, and its rewards. The Fallen Virgin served a fine rum and wild boar, though its main fare was information. One could learn plenty from these pirates and adventurers, if one knew the right questions to ask. They were a boastful lot, and more than ready to spill an earful of gossip after hoisting a few ales.

We arrived early in the day and went directly to the Fallen Virgin, where I was delighted to encounter my old friend Geoffrey, a powerful fighter, even stronger than Shamino. When he offered to join us, I accepted with pleasure.

Sven, a glassblower turned pirate, reminisced with us about his earlier days, and I thought to ask if he had ever created the Glass Swords we had heard about. He told us that he had never succeeded, but had heard there might be one lost in the mountains of the Serpent's Spine. He also mentioned an airship, but knew nothing about it.

Somebody must have set an alarm clock at the local inn because at just about 9:15 a.m., four of the local citizens emerged from wherever they had stayed the night. As they headed for the Fallen Virgin, I took the opportunity to ask them some questions. From a bard named Scally I learned about a pirate, David, who had been an inventor. He had invented a Sextant to aid in navigation. Scally didn't know where I could find David, but thought he might be running a lighthouse somewhere.

Lord Dalgrin and the saucy wench Tierra had little to add, but Bidney was a character. A real drinker, he was. I followed him into the tavern and he proceeded to get soused. I nursed a bottle of rum that I had purchased to keep him company, though I hardly expected to drink much of it before ten in the morning! Our conversation was a bit surreal, but I recount it here because it was both amusing and informative.

"So what's your Job, Bidney?" I asked.

He picked up his glass and drained it in one long satisfying gulp, signaling almost simultaneously for the barkeep to refill it. "Ahh. That's it. I loves to drink!"

"What's your Drink?" I inquired, just to keep the conversation moving.

Already his voice was beginning to thicken and his eyes seemed to lose their focus. I had the impression that he peered through me at some spot on the wall. "Rum, that's me favorite!" He hiccupped and excused himself under his breath, which by now was getting powerful enough to scorch my eyebrows.

"Rum?"

"Yo ho ho!" he chanted.

"Yo ho ho!" I repeated, falling into an inane state of mind. I was beginning to wonder if I could get drunk just listening to this man.

"And a bottle of rum!" he continued.

"A Bottle," I murmured.

"Of rum!" he answered. "Ey, got any?"

"Yes," I answered.

I was already shoving over my practically untasted bottle as he asked, "Might I have a li'l taste?"

I nodded and said, "Yes." He was already drinking it by then.

"Didst ye ask me 'bout mountain climb'n?"

I hadn't, but it sounded like a good change of subject from rum and drinking. "Yes," I said.

"I used to be a mountain climber . . . Gave it up . . . Too dangerous . . . So I became a pirate!" I could imagine Bidney hanging off a cliff, clutching a bottle of rum. Giving it up was probably a wise decision.

I asked him about being a mountain climber then and he answered, "Grapple of Rum." Even though it made no sense, nothing he had said so far had been much use. I decided to ask him about being a Pirate.

"Gave me Grapple to a man named Lord Michael . . . Lived o'er at the Empatical Abbeyneyney . . ."

That was about all I could get out of Bidney. He passed out then and I left him with what remained of his precious bottle. The Grapple he had given Lord Michael sounded more useful.

I could see no point in staying long here. I wanted to be on my way. Iolo figured it wouldn't take too long to reach the Shrine of Compassion if we started early,

and I didn't want to stay in the Buccaneer's Den any longer than I had to. On the way out of town, we stopped at the Guild of the Broken Lock and bought some Gems. We had no easy time getting in. The place was a fortress! First there was an ordinary door, then a locked door, then a magically locked door. Fortunately, we still had Skull Keys and were able to get past them all. They also sold keys and torches at the Broken Lock, but we had plenty. We also had Gems, but figured we could use some more.



Entry 12—Shrine of Compassion: Lycaeum

We sailed almost due north until we reached land, then veered west until we reached the great river east of Britain. We sailed up the river a short distance, Iolo guiding us, then moored the ship and continued by Magic Carpet. We flew north and around a small range of mountains, making good time, then veered east until we encountered a small stream. If we hadn't been on the Magic Carpet, we would have been poisoned by nearby swamps and would have needed the skiff to reach the Shrine of Compassion, just to the south.

As usual, I entered alone, meditating on the Mantra MU. When I rejoined my companions, I had a new Shrine Quest to complete.

After my visitation from the King, I now felt more worthy, and so I acceded to Jaana's request that we visit Dagger Isle on our way to the Shrine of the Codex.

We sailed due east, seeing nothing but the waves and the shoreline (and even the shoreline eventually fell away). The route to Dagger Island was directly east of us and we made good speed with the HMS Cape rigging to augment the ship's sails. I silently thanked Master Hawkins of East Britanny for his kind, if unintentional, loan of the HMS Cape plans.

We landed very near the Lycaeum. I was anxious to see the place again. I was sure it would be a haven of learning and peace in these troubled times, and I was not wrong.

We had arrived late, and the gates had already

closed for the night, but we rested under the stars and nothing bothered us. Jaana set a charm on our camp and stood watch. In the morning we walked within the walls of the Lycaeum and went in search of Lord Shalineth and Lady Janell, the rulers of the Keep of Truth, as the Lycaeum was known.

We met them at breakfast in the downstairs dining room. I paid my respects to the Lady first. Lady Janell was a stately woman who looked as if she had been born wise. Her dark eyes seemed to see things that others would never even know existed, and her hair shone in the torchlight like molten gold. A mature woman now, I imagined momentarily that she might have looked somewhat like Jaana when she had been younger.

The Lady began by reminding me that she was Queen of the Magi of Britannia. I wondered for a moment if she had read my mind and was putting me in my place, but there was only kindness in her voice. I replied by mentioning the sad state of Britannia. Her answering smile was full of hope and wisdom.

"Evil times are before us, but the hearts of our people shall persevere."

"These are evil Times," I agreed.

"Though the days grow darker, there are many who still seek the light of Truth." I could see that nothing would shake her faith.

"Ahhh. The Truth. . ." I began.

She interrupted me. "I know of two sisters, ascetics of a temple of Virtue, who know of the evil artifact which most opposes Truth!"

"Something that Opposes Truth?" I asked. I felt foolish. Her eyes bored through me and she sat in unmoving concentration as if willing me to get this information from her. I tried to match her concentration, but even as I listened to her words I was realizing, not for the first time, that becoming an Avatar hadn't necessarily made me a great conversationalist.

"Seek out the twin sisters in the hidden city of Cove, and ask them of the Shard of Falsehood!" she told me. I nodded to indicate my comprehension of the task. The Shard of Falsehood sounded like a dandy item, though. Then she was peering even deeper into my soul. "Dost thou meditate at the shrines?"

"Yes, of course." It was nice to have an answer I was sure of.

She looked pleased, and I felt as if I had just passed my algebra test when I was fourteen. "Dost thou seek the Shrine of Spirituality?"

"Yes," I said.

"Enter one of the mystic Moongates when both moons are full, then shalt thou find the shrine!"

I was about to make one further attempt to say something coherent when her husband motioned me over. I made my apologies to the Lady and moved closer to Lord Shalineth. He began without much preamble.

"I am the Lord of the Keep of Truth!"

I knew that already, but I would have been content to have him tell me anything he wanted as often as he wished. His voice carried an authority and a sense of rightness like none other. His grey hair contrasted with youthful, energetic eyes that seemed to see into my soul in a masculine way, direct and forthright. The Lady's soul peering had been feminine and full of mystery. Anyway, it's hard to explain here on paper. You had to be there. One thing I knew. I had been right not to come here until I had redeemed myself. Otherwise, I would not have borne his gaze for long.

Talking about Truth had been fruitful with the Lady, so I asked Lord Shalineth about Truth as well.

"We use the precepts of Truth to strengthen our magic."

"Magic?" I asked.

"It is Truth that lends our arts the power to overcome all Evil, if we but trust it."

That sounded encouraging, but not foolproof. "What about Evil?"

He searched my face a moment, as if making a great decision, then continued as if nothing had happened. His tone, however, became almost conspiratorial. "A creature of great Evil must hide its name, for it is at the mercy of one armed with such a simple truth."

This was getting very interesting. "It is at your mercy?" I inquired to encourage him to continue.

"Through the exercise of great magic and scrying, I have gleaned the name of the Shadowlord of Falsehood." Once again, the appraising look. "Dost thou swear not to use it foolishly?" he demanded.

"Yes. I swear," I answered before I could think about it.

"The Name of this dread lord is FAULINEI. Speak it not, for only at thy bidding can he enter our hallowed Keep."

I think that after telling me the name of the evil Shadowlord of Falsehood, Lord Shalineth considered our little audience over. I know I was reluctant to press the issue any further. What was I doing with some mystic evil creature's Name? It was an uncomfortable knowledge, despite the fact that it might one day help save Britannia. But was I up to the task?

We took our leave of the Lord and Lady of the Keep and, with their permission, stayed awhile within the sacred halls of the Lycaenum, talking with the people we met there. We came upon an old friend, Mariah, who was still recovering from an encounter with the Shadowlords. She offered to join us, but I saw that she was not fully recovered. Besides, I had determined that our party should be no larger. A band of six adventurers was not so noticeable, but any larger and we might call too much attention to ourselves. Blackthorn and his minions would have been happy to get their hands on any of us. Better to keep our band small for now.

The rest of the people we met were full of good advice, but had little practical knowledge. The one exception was Sir Sean, the Keeper of the Eternal Flame of Truth. He was on the third floor, guarding the sacred flame. We spoke for a few moments about the Shadowlords when Iolo reminded me of the clue we had gotten from Loef in North Britanny. He had urged us to seek out Sir Sean and ask him about Stonegate.

So I asked him, "What do you know about Stonegate?"

He gave me one of those looks. You know, the kind Lord Shalineth had given me. I was getting used to it by now. I just smiled.

"Art thou afraid to journey into Evil's abode?"

You bet I was, but I figured that was where this whole adventure was going to take me eventually. Besides, afraid or not, I was willing to do whatever I had to. I was the Avatar, after all, and I was on a Quest. I knew it might sound a little silly to the part of

me I'd left behind at home, but here in Britannia, that was the way you found yourself thinking. So I said, "No."

"Then sail first thy ship unto the southernmost part of Lost Hope Bay. Travel so far as thy skiff will take thee. Some speak of a special implement that can be used to cross the mountains. Find first this equipment. Then climb thy way through the mountains to the south. There thou shalt find the black keep Stonegate, guarded by Balinor, foulest of daemons! This is the earthly domain of the three Shadowlords from which few have returned."

I asked him if he knew anyone who had returned. I didn't catch his reply. I found myself thinking. . . . *It didn't sound like a vacation cruise to me. In fact, it sounded like a fool's errand. But then, perhaps I was a fool. Look at me. Traipsing around in breeches and tunic with magic reagents in my pouch and a Magic Axe, ready for trouble.*

Maybe it was the proximity of the Flame of Truth, but one moment I was the brave Avatar, then next minute I saw myself for what I was—an outsider playing hero in a world he didn't really understand. It was all I could do not to sit down right there and give up the whole thing. *How could I really hope to continue with this folly? What made me think this was even real? Everything was beginning to look two-dimensional. What was going on? Couldn't I change the channel?*

"Art thou well?" I heard Jaana ask, and with a start, I watched her come into focus before my eyes. I was going to say something I would have regretted, but her pretty, sincere face stopped me. I looked over my companions. Iolo and Gwenno, brave to a fault and loyal, too. Shamino, mysterious but steadfast. Geoffrey, a grizzly bear of a man with a heart that wouldn't quit on you . . . ever. And Jaana. She was perhaps just beginning to become a great magic user. She was already a fine companion and, well, I obviously had a soft spot for her. How could I leave these great friends now, even if they were just illusions?

Suddenly my moment of doubt had passed. I was once again the Avatar. I had no other reality to which I owed anything. I said, "Let's go," and led my little

party of brave warriors down the ladders and out past the Lycaeum gates. I had reached a turning point. And now there was no turning back.



Entry 13—Moonglow: Codex: Lycaeum

I took the short path down to Moonglow after leaving the Lycaeum. Moonglow was the city of Honesty, and I expected to learn something more about

our Quest. Nor would I be disappointed.

It was late when we entered the city and most of the citizens were sleeping. There was an observatory in the center of the town, however, and we all filed up to look out over the battlements. There we discovered the stargazer, Zachariah, looking through his telescope. He wore a robe of blue silk covered with comets and stars in pale yellow. He wore his brown hair long, tied in back with a small leather thong. All around him were charts and what looked like a stack of notebooks. I asked him about the Stars, and he started talking about watching for signs among the planets.

"Signs?" I asked.

He gestured toward the heavens. "Comets have come! They are a sign of Evil!" His voice was full of warning.

"Really? Of Evil?" I had always thought comets were just comets. You know, balls of gas and ice.

The astronomer was becoming more agitated as we spoke. Now, in addition to the gestures intended to punctuate his statements, his shoulders began to shake and his eyes grew wide. I was afraid he might be having a mild epileptic seizure. But he continued to speak, so I tried not to be alarmed. "There are three comets in the firmament. Likely each of these represents one of the Shadowlords."

Indeed. That made as much sense as anything else in this world. But I wasn't sure what difference it would make. So I asked how it related to the Shadowlords.

"It seems that when a comet aligns with a planet, the city of that Virtue comes under attack!" He looked

truly horrified. Testimony to the fear the Shadowlords had spread throughout the land.

I hadn't even known the planets were aligned with the Virtues in the way the cities were, but it made sense in a Britannian sort of way. I asked him about the Virtues, but he only muttered, his agitation momentarily turning to a caricature of despair. "If only the Avatar would return."

"The Avatar?" I said slowly. Something in my voice must have caught his attention. He studied me; nothing new, of course. Eventually most of the people I met ended up scrutinizing me.

"Art thou the Avatar of Legend?" he finally asked. "Yes."

"Indeed?" He looked just a bit skeptical, but hopeful. "What is the password of the Resistance?" I wasn't sure what knowing the password had to do with being the Avatar, but I told him. He replied, "I have news that may aid thee. There is a mage named Goeth that knows a newly discovered power of the Moongates. Seek him out in Jhelom. Beware, some say he has gone insane!"

That was encouraging. Anyway, I asked Zachariah if I could look through his telescope, and he agreed. Sure enough, there were three comets in the sky, and each was near a particular planet. Zachariah explained that the planets were in roughly the same relationship to each other in the sky as the major cities were on the ground. So the planet to the northwest of the sky was associated with Justice and with Yew. Below that one was the planet most closely associated with Compassion and with the city of Britain. As I looked I could see that a comet shone near the planet associated with Justice. I supposed that meant a Shadowlord was in Yew.

It was still night, but none of us were sleepy. We explored the city. In the corner towers of the city walls, we found rooms full of barrels and trunks. In the northeast and southeast rooms we found useful items—torches in one and a Ring of Invisibility in another. I felt no harm in taking them. They had long been abandoned.

Early in the morning, we found Nilrem, proprietor of the Herbalist, already at work. Jaana suggested that we stock up on reagents, so we bought what we felt

we'd need. We purchased some rare ingredients such as mandrake root and nightshade, but these were very costly, even with our swollen purses. Still, they were also ingredients in some powerful spells which we might find need of before our adventure concluded.

Our next stop was a place called the Honest Meal. We had discovered that many people would come to eat their morning meal in such a place, so it was a good place to gather news.

The first one down was one Lord Stuart the Hungry. I remembered his name. He was the one working on a food spell. I asked him about the spell and he eventually told it to me. The incantation was *In Xen Mani* and it required ginseng, garlic, and mandrake root. Except for the mandrake root, this spell would be edible without the casting, but I wondered if it would be cheaper just to purchase food or find it in our travels. Of course, if we were running especially low, the spell might come in handy. We tried it and weren't all that impressed, but thanked Lord Stuart anyway.

A little later we met a young Gypsy child named Malik. I remembered hearing his name before—from the busboy, Eb. Malik's mother was a fortune teller. He only charged us three coins to tell us that. I felt that he could tell us more, though, so I kept asking him about *Fortune Telling*. Eventually he came out with another bit of information. He told us about a man named Saul who lived in Skara Brae. This man was supposed to have information about the two expensive reagents we had just purchased. Maybe he knew how to get them cheaper.

I decided that it was time to speak with Malik's mother. Not surprisingly, she was sitting across the table, also eating, so I went closer and greeted her. She returned the greeting as if she knew me, but I didn't remember her. No matter, though. There were all sorts of gaps in my memory, and this was probably one of them. She bade me sit and speak to her. I asked about her Job and she responded that she could see many things.

"Things?" I asked. "What things?"

Her answer was a little evasive. "Tell me what thou seekest."

I had to think a second. What was I looking for?

What did I need to know? I asked her first about Blackthorn.

"I see that he resides upon an isle of three volcanoes, far to the south in the great sea!"

Shadowlords?

"Their magic is too black for even my eyes to penetrate!"

Mantras?

"I see an honest man chanting 'AHM!' "

That was helpful. How about Word of Power?

"I see the runes 'FALLAX' inscribed upon the entrance of the dungeon Deceit!"

I could think of nothing else to ask at the time, so I thanked her. She asked 15 gold crowns for her aid, and I gladly gave them.

We met outside the Honest Meal and spoke of what we had learned. I favored heading for the Shrine of the Codex and then returning to the Shrine of Compassion to complete the Shrine Quest. Iolo added, "Cove is very near the Shrine of Compassion. We can visit the mysterious sisters there." We all agreed it was a fine plan.

The journey to the Codex and back to the Shrine of Compassion was one of the hardest we had yet endured. That was due entirely to my foolishness, however, and it still pains me to remember. I am tempted to leave it out of my journal, but I feel that would be less than truthful, should anyone ever care to know what really happened. Having made the trip several times to the Shrine of the Codex by now, we were full of confidence and, using the HMS Cape plans again, headed at breakneck speed around Dagger Isle and north toward the Isle of the Codex. We were careless and nearly destroyed our beloved ship in the shallows around an eastern peninsula. The ship survived, but in a weakened condition. There was little to do but continue, hoping nothing bad would happen to us, but once again, carelessness cost us.

We made it safely to the Isle of the Codex, where I read the words, "Only a detested life owes its pleasures to another's pain." I meditated on that thought as we headed back to the Shrine of Compassion. I thought that Blackthorn must really despise his existence, judging by his actions.

It was late at night. We had made it safely to Dagger Isle. We should have gone ashore to rest until morning. We knew full well that the hours after midnight were perilous at sea. But we thought we would trust to luck. This one time, our luck ran out.

It was around 2 a.m. that we found ourselves surrounded. The attack began with a sea serpent that further weakened our poor ship until I feared she would break up. We fought the monster off, but Jaana, standing bravely to cast a spell, was wounded severely. I told her to take cover, but she continued to fight. We were attacked again by glowing giant seahorses. Again, our luck was bad. One of them scored a direct hit on Jaana and another on Shamino. I was grazed, but not badly hurt. I threw my Magic Axe again and again until my arm ached and sharp pains ran through my shoulder. But I was scoring heavily on our enemies. I occasionally stole a glance in Jaana's direction. She was pale and seemed to be losing her balance. The others were fighting for their lives.

After the seahorses, we were attacked by sharks, but they posed little danger. We dispatched them and then tried to outrun another sea serpent. That was our final mistake. One blast from the sea serpent's fireball and our ship was broken to pieces. We were forced to abandon her and use the skiff to try to escape. But we were in water too deep and rough for the skiff, and as we rowed frantically, we were tossed around mercilessly. We all received additional wounds from the rough seas. The sea serpent continued to follow us.

I don't know the exact moment when Jaana died. We were all trying to survive. I blame myself. I could have healed her with the *Mani* spell. She was too weak to tend to herself, her magic spent and most of her strength as well. We reached shore at last, a broken little band of would-be adventurers, and ran into the forest to escape the monster that still sought our deaths. We had little time to mourn Jaana's passing, but Geoffrey carried her to the relative safety of the land.

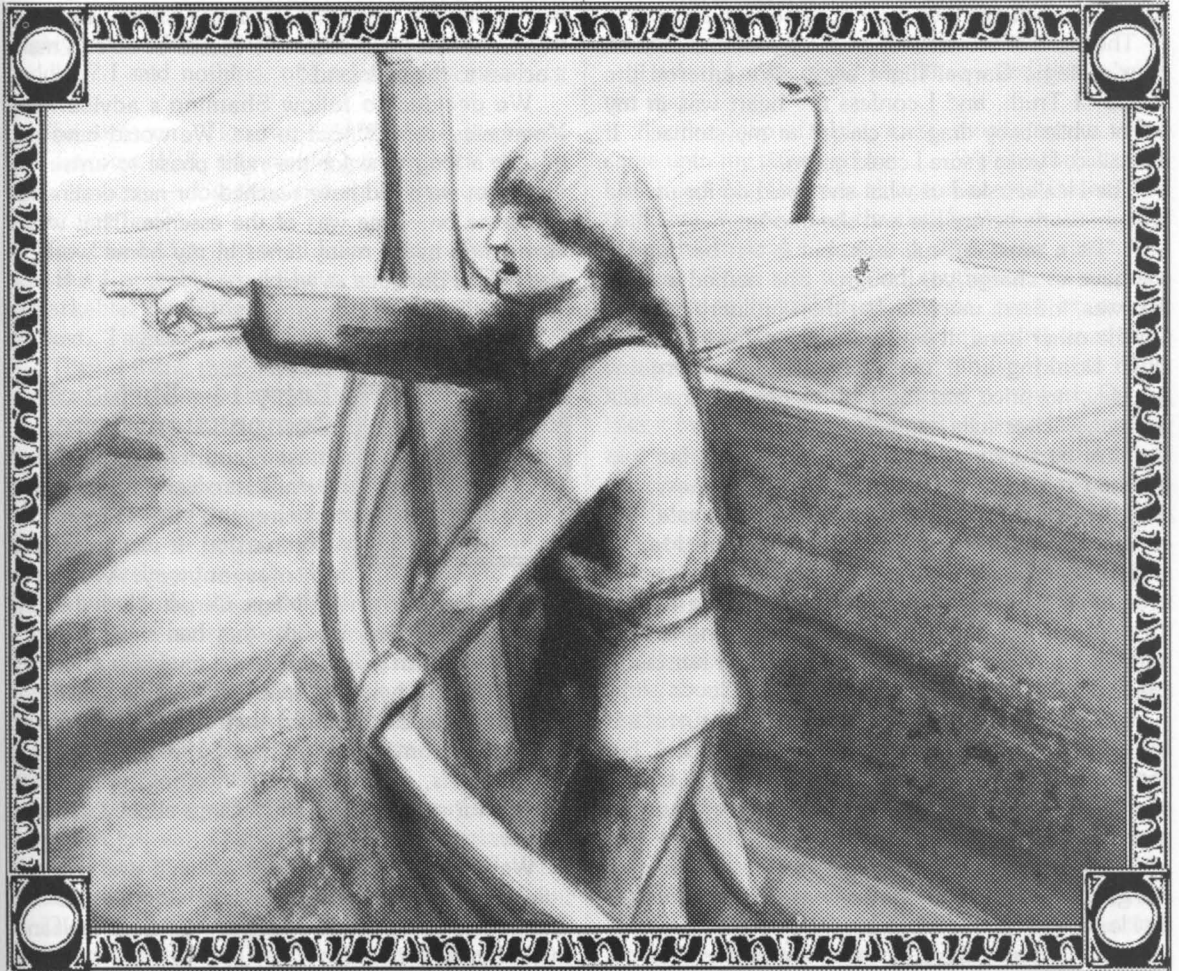
We were obliged to fight off a single wyvern before our ordeal was over. This magical creature nearly finished off Iolo, who took one too many of its

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magical attacks, but we were able to destroy it. Geoffrey ran up close to it and hacked at its neck with a monstrous two-handed sword. His great strength proved a deciding factor. We made camp as the sun began to peek over the horizon. We were a beaten, bloody, discouraged lot. I ministered to those in the most dire shape, but my magic was not enough to tend to all. I was bleeding from numerous gashes and I'd received many burns which now alternately throbbed and stung.

We all gathered around Jaana's body. None of us had dry eyes. I don't know how long I stood there, silent tears mixing with the blood all over my tunic. I'm sure nobody would have recognized their precious Avatar now. I was in favor of burying her on Dagger Isle. She would have liked that, I think, but my friends stopped me.

"Avatar, knowest thou not that there be great Healers in Britannia?" asked Gwenno, her arm around my shoulder to comfort me.



"Yes, of course there are Healers. But she's dead!" My tone was reproachful. I did not mean to let the bitterness and self-recrimination escape me, but I was unable to prevent it. Fortunately Gwenno seemed to take no offense.

"My dear friend," she began, "death is no obstacle to our great Healers. Come. Bear her with us and we shall find comfort for thy pain. Jaana will once again ride with us."

I must have known, long ago, that such a thing was possible, but now it came as great news. Like a ray of sunshine penetrating the darkest storm, my hope was renewed. Could it be true? I prayed that it was.

The nearest Healer was at the Lycaenum, only an hour's Magic Carpet flight away. We entered the Shield of Truth, and I confess my heart was in my throat while baby dragons clawed at my stomach. If this failed, I wasn't sure I could go on.

The Healer asked us what she could do for us. We brought Jaana before her and she nodded.

"'Tis a most difficult task, but it can be done. I will have to charge ye, though." She named a price that was, indeed, much higher than ordinary healing. On the other hand, it was about the same price as a skiff. Looking at it that way, it was a bargain. Anyway, no price was too high to bring Jaana back to us and I cheerfully handed over the coins.

"Just be sure you do it right," I warned, but Iolo grabbed my arm as if to restrain me. I guess you didn't speak that way to a Healer. At any rate, my comment didn't elicit any reaction. The Healer simply gestured for Geoffrey to lay Jaana on a pallet in another room. We could see soft glowing flashes through the doorway as we waited. Then, several minutes later, the healer returned. Behind her came Jaana. She was alive!

We all crowded around our newly resurrected friend. She was obviously weak from her ordeal, but she smiled. She claimed to remember little of the afterlife. A vision of Lord British. A sense of love and peace surrounding her. Nothing else.

We asked the Healer to give Jaana something to strengthen her, for she was still very weak. Then we thanked the Healer again and again. Finally we left and headed back out of the Lycaenum. Jaana looked us over and laughed.

"Why, my good friends, you save me even from the jaws of Death, but you have done little for yourselves. 'Tis time to rest and recover from your trials."

She was right. We were all ragged and wounded. We settled down for a long rest in a safe spot on the island. When we awakened, now refreshed and healed by the magic in the Britannian air, we realized that we were stuck on an island without a ship.

"We could take the Moongate," suggested Iolo, but Shamino had another idea.

"We can take the Magic Carpet through the narrow strait at the north end of the island. The water there is shallow and calm. We should be able to make it across to the mainland."

We decided to follow Shamino's advice. The Moongates were difficult to use. We would have had to wait a long time for the right phase to arrive. By that time, we could have reached our next destination and gone on. Time was of the essence. That was a term I had heard many times in my home world. It was true in Britannia as well.



Entry 14—Shrine of Compassion: Cove

must recount one important event that occurred on the long journey to the Shrine of Compassion. It was important to me, anyway. We were traveling overland on the Magic Carpet. I was thinking about Jaana; losing her like that had shocked me. I had already been wondering about my feelings for her, and when I lost her I was sure I had lost the love of my life. But I had also realized that our danger was too real, too immediate. I had to rely on all my companions, and I was sure it would complicate matters for me to pursue my feelings about Jaana any further.

We were crossing an open plain. It was daylight, little innocuous-looking puffy clouds dotted the sky, and there was no danger in sight. I sat close to Jaana. I took her hand in mine.

"Jaana," I began. "I'm glad you're back with us."

She laughed a moment. Then I think she noticed the earnest expression I wore. I probably radiated nervousness as well. "No less glad than I," she told me. "But thou lookest troubled, Avatar. Dost thou wish to confide something?"

Bingo! She was right on it. What was I going to say, though? "I guess so. I . . ."

"I have long admired thee, Avatar," she interrupted. "Often my thoughts have dwelt upon thee."

" . . . dwelt upon thee . . ." Suddenly my heart was pounding. Did I want to deal with this? Why was it that I could face the most fearsome orc or even a mighty sea serpent, but this girl could reduce me to pudding? I said nothing, not trusting my mouth to obey me.

She went on. "However—Ahhh, here it comes. The letdown. Well, this would get me back off the hook, anyway—dost thou not agree that our Quest must come first?"

Yes. She had it. Just what I was going to try to tell her. But I probably would have bungled it. She was remarkable. So honest and direct. I nodded and croaked, "I agree."

"Then, I thank thee, Avatar, for thy great love and wisdom. Let us hope our Quest is over soon."

At that moment, Iolo began to sing a bawdy song and we all joined in. The mood was broken, but I found myself wondering if she had wished the Quest over soon because it was dangerous, because it would save Britannia, or because we might then talk more about our feelings for each other. I continued to gnaw at that question for the rest of the day.

We made it safely to the Shrine of Compassion, where I was able to complete the Shrine Quest. It was a relief both to have Jaana back with us and to complete the Quest. I was feeling pretty good, as good as I was able to feel under the circumstances. Then we visited Cove. Iolo led us there.

Cove was a very small settlement nestled in the mountains just east of the Shrine of Compassion. The town had only three buildings—an herbalist's, a Healer's, and a small temple. We went directly to the temple.

There we found two women who could only have been identical twins. They were a strange pair. Ava

and Leona, they were called. They looked like beggars in ragged shifts and bare feet, but they turned out to be caretakers for the Temple of Virtue. Both women were thin, even frail-looking. Their bare arms were white as cream, and their jet-black hair was thick and curly, but uncombed. Despite their strange appearance, which I admit made me hesitate to approach them, the eyes that met mine were not wild or crazed, but calm and at peace.

These women turned out to be the sisters Lady Janell had told me about. The ones who could give me some information about the Shard of Falsehood. I asked Ava about the Shard, and she told me to ask her sister about the Vision they had shared.

I asked Leona about this Vision and this is what she said.

"In the deep of night, many moons ago, a vision came unto my sister and me. . . . We saw the Shard of Falsehood deep below a dungeon named Deceit. The path that was revealed traveled first southwest across many high peaks, opening to a large system of caverns. Then the way led southwest. At a major intersection it turned northwest, soon branching northeast. After a long journey northward, the passage turned west. Here the path went on to rocky hills to the southwest, then turned northwest. Over a lake it ran, unto a massive series of great falls, ending in a larger lake. Here, upon a small isle, lies the Shard of Falsehood."

Piece of cake. Dungeon? Deceit? Northwest, northeast? I wasn't looking forward to this. As I had suspected all along, our path would lead into the stinking dungeons of Britannia, places I'd hoped never to see again.

We took our leave of the sisters then, and talked a while about our next step. I was sure we weren't yet ready to brave the dungeons. The others agreed.

"I'm trying to sort out the information we've gotten," I said. "I admit, it gets confusing. Does anyone have any suggestions?"

"What about this Sir Simon? Landon told us to see him," offered Iolo.

Shamino nodded, then suggested, "Or Lord Michael. He has the Grapple. Methinks some mountains lie in our future."

"Yes," I agreed. "I think we'll visit the Empath Abbey, then seek out Sir Simon."

It was getting late, and we all agreed we should rest a while at the healer's. We slept a few hours, getting ready for the next leg of our great journey, but at just past 11 p.m., when all was dark and quiet, I heard the clank of armor. Startled, I lunged for my sword, but then I saw a frail fighter arising from his sickbed. I had noticed him earlier, asleep in that bed. I had seen nothing remarkable, however.

I got up and followed him out of the room. He stood by the stove, warming himself in the chill night air. I had not taken the time to put on a cloak, and stood barefoot and cold. But I thought it polite at this point, having followed him and all, to ask after his health. We got to talking and he told me his name was Ambrose and he had been in a great battle.



That sounded pretty interesting. "A Battle, you say?" I tried to edge a little closer to the stove. The brick floor was freezing!

He took his time answering, as if dredging up a memory better forgotten. "I was deep below the surface of Britannia, in search of the fabled mystic weapons of the Avatar!"

"You were seeking the Mystic weapons?" I rubbed my arms to keep them warm. He seemed not to notice my discomfort.

"I heard that they lay at the foundation of the Great Abyss!"

I shuddered, but this time not from the cold. "The Great Abyss," I repeated, not wanting to think about it.

Again, he pondered his answer while I tried to drink up the radiance from the stove behind him. His body blocked most of it. "Though the Abyss is gone, I descended through the mines of Hythloth to search out the mystics."

"Hythloth!" I blurted.

I remembered that name. And the memories I held were not pleasant. But Ambrose laid his hand on my shoulder, drawing me closer. In a whisper, he said, "Within the Underworld, where the Abyss once was the lava still flows, north of the underground entrance of Hythloth. 'Tis there, northward across cavernous peaks from the dungeon, amidst the boiling lava, that the Mystic arms are said to lie! Dost thou seek the fate of Lord British?"

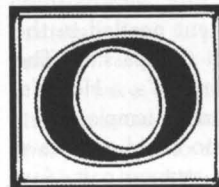
This all sounded pretty bad. Boiling lava, indeed. Even half freezing as I was, the thought sent an additional chill down my spine. But I answered his question. I was doing nothing else but what he asked. "Yes, I seek the King."

His hand seemed suddenly to grip me with terrible strength. I was afraid for a moment that he might become violent, but he only said, "Remember, only the Mystic weapons work near great Evil. Only such Evil could hold our Lord!"

Suddenly the strength seemed to go out of him. He looked once again the ailing fighter. I suggested he might want to lie down again, and he thanked me, saying he would stand by the fire a while, then sleep.

My companions had awakened at the sound of our conversation, and crowded around me to learn what had transpired. I told them, and, at the mention of the Abyss, they all made signs against Evil. Even stalwart Geoffrey wore a look of dread.

"We had best be off," I said. "Ambrose has rekindled my sense of urgency. Is everyone rested?" They all nodded. "Then let us brave the night to reach Empath Abbey before the day has passed."



Entry 15— Empath Abbey

ur journey to Empath Abbey was fraught with the usual battles. Giant rats, orcs, nasty headless and ettins...They

were all around. We could outmaneuver some of them by flying the Magic Carpet where they could not go, or by flying faster, but we still did our part to rid Britannia of such monsters. In our haste, we got lost and took a wrong turn. We never did figure out how, so we didn't arrive at the Abbey until late. We decided to rest until the next morning to recover from our battles.

When we finally entered the Abbey, we saw a juggler near the front entrance. Iolo seemed to know him. His name was Hardluck; he identified himself, somewhat redundantly, as the Abbey jester. He sang me a *Song* that underscored the nature of this place—Empathy.

“Blackthorn once was a fine ol’ man
 Upon fine principles he would stand.
 But then came the Shadowlords, full of evil.
 Blackthorn’s soul they came to steal.
 All at once the Tyranny began.
 All because of Fate’s dark hand!”

When he had finished, he asked if I liked it. I said it was a fine song. He explained, “Thou may have noticed that it points out that Blackthorn himself is not responsible for the evils he imposes. Rather, he is trapped, as we are, under the control of the truly evil Shadowlords, only more so. A pity.”

His words were wise. I had forgotten that Blackthorn was not the true villain. He had once been loyal to Lord British and to the Principles. His very loyalty had been corrupted. I thanked Hardluck for his insights, and he looked very pleased.

We found Lord Michael in the east wing on the second floor. When we entered the room, a young Tinker stood and called to me. It was Julia, one of my former companions. We greeted each other warmly and spoke of recent events. She offered to join me, but I had to decline her offer for the moment. Our party was as large as I thought it should be. But I didn't want to offend Lord Michael, who sat on a throne watching our reunion patiently, so I made my apologies to Julia and walked over to Lord Michael, introducing myself.

Lord Michael might have posed for some great Renaissance painter's image of a saint. He exuded

that sort of kindness. He looked troubled, though, as if he could use someone else's empathy just now.

We talked about his *Job* and about the *Castle*. He mentioned the *Evil* that sought to corrupt the Principle of Love and we talked about that. At one point he mentioned the Shadowlord of Hate. If there was one monster who would oppose the Principle of this Abbey, it would be that one. Apparently there was a daemon somewhere in the desert to the east who knew something about the Shadowlord of Hate. Lord Michael suggested we go see if we could learn anything from him. I didn't relish the thought of trying to question a daemon, but did not even think of voicing my reservations. I didn't want to seem cowardly.

Finally, I asked Lord Michael about the *Grapple*. To my surprise, he gave it to me freely. He didn't climb mountains any more, he said. Then, as I was thanking him, he added that we should feel free to take anything we could find if it would help us on our Quest. Again, I thanked him and started to leave the room.

A mature, stately woman sat at a table in the southeastern corner of the room. Before leaving, I thought it would be a good idea to see if she knew anything.

She turned out to be Barbra, keeper of the Flame of Love. We spoke a few minutes only, but she told me of a vision. In her vision, she had seen a great man in a distant place. “I saw him as if through a looking glass. I saw naught but his reflection.” That was all she could tell me. We talked a few moments more, then I took my leave. It wasn't until a long, long time later that I would understand her vision.

With Lord Michael's permission, we searched the Abbey, finding a few useful items—food, a healing potion, that kind of thing. We also met Toshi, a tough customer who was studying at the Abbey. Like Julia, he offered to join us, but I had to refuse his offer for the moment. I promised to return and enlist his aid if the need should arise, though.

In the downstairs kitchen we met Cory. She was most interested in speaking of culinary delights and spoke at length with Geoffrey, who had a prodigious appetite. She gave us all samples of her *Shark*

Delicacy. It was delicious and we went back for several servings.

The oddest encounter we had at Empath Abbey was with Tim. We found him pacing the battlements of the castle.



"You're a Bard?" I asked, recognizing his outfit. He was young and somewhat shorter than I. He carried a small stack of papers in his hand. They were covered with what looked like musical notations.

"Yes, I play and sing for the inhabitants of this castle."

"You play? What instrument do you play?" I asked.

He smiled. "Dost thou enjoy fine harpsichord music?"

"Yes," I replied.

Tim fussed with his music papers a moment as if thinking about something else, then he looked up and said. "Since Lord British's disappearance, his Court Composer, Lord Kenneth, is said to be traveling throughout Britannia."

"Lord Kenneth? I don't know him."

"He trades music lessons for melodies. He is compiling a collection of Britannian folkmusic."

"I like folkmusic," I said, not sure where this conversation was heading.

"Recently he gave a recital in Trinsic, and then headed south. He often teaches a piece by Iolo and Gwenno. 'Tis a favorite of Lord British."

I stole a glance at Iolo, but he merely shrugged.

Apparently he didn't know what piece Tim was referring to. "So this is one of the King's favorites," I said.

Tim examined his papers again, then said, shyly, "Some even say that to play the piece on the finest instrument may cause magical occurrences."

"Occurrences? What exactly do you mean?" I asked him.

But he only answered, "Only on an instrument worthy of kings!" I had a mental image of a beautiful, ornate harpsichord in a stately room. Where had I seen it before? Then I remembered. Lord British's Castle.

Finally, we left Tim and the Abbey itself. I asked both Iolo and Gwenno about the piece Tim had mentioned, but neither seemed to be able to recall it. We would have to find Sir Kenneth, then. These "magical occurrences" had sparked my interest in music.



Entry 16—Yew Moongate to Jhelom: Jhelom

"We shall need another boat," Shamino said. He had come up with a plan. I was glad, too.

It was sometimes difficult to know what to do next. There seemed so much to accomplish. Shamino's suggestion was that we sail south from Britain, then come "around the horn" and eventually reach the island where Sir Simon was supposed to be. Along the way, we could visit the cities of Trinsic, Skara Brae, and Jhelom, as well as Serpent's Hold. But to embark on such a journey would require a new ship. He continued, "We have many weapons we have no need of. We should stop in Yew and sell some of our excess, then head for East Britannia to obtain another vessel. What sayest thou, Avatar? Shall we follow this plan?"

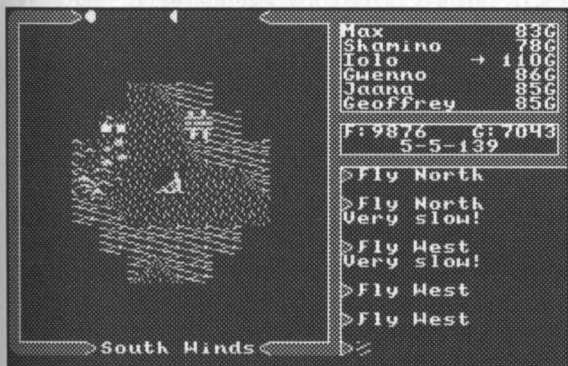
I agreed. It was the most sensible course of action anyone had suggested. Looking around, I saw only nods of agreement from my companions, so we headed back toward Yew. It was a short ride on the Magic Carpet, only an hour or two.

CHAPTER V: Warriors of Destiny

It was late night when we arrived and Iolo remarked that the Moongate was up. Checking his charts and tables, he told me that the gate was perfect for travel to Jhelom.

"Perhaps we should consider using the gate to travel there, Avatar," he suggested. "There is a fine shipwright on Jhelom, and I believe his prices to be most reasonable."

Everyone agreed that a quick trip by Moongate would be preferable to a long ocean voyage, though Shamino did point out that we would bypass our visits to Trinsic and Serpent's Hold that way. In the end, we stepped into the Moongate around midnight and were whisked away, to the accompaniment of a slight twinge in my stomach and a moment of blurred vision. Moments later, we were just south of Jhelom.



We walked to the entrance of the city, but found that the Shadowlord of Hatred had gotten there before us. We had no choice but to wait until the evil being left the city. Geoffrey and Shamino were all for attacking the monster as a group, reasoning that we might overcome it, but Iolo argued that the Shadowlords could isolate us and make us fight one by one. How he knew this I never found out, but it made us all stop and think. Iolo told us that a fight with the Shadowlord now would only result in our deaths.

We found a place inland, so we wouldn't be attacked from the sea, and rested a few hours. Even though Iolo stood watch, we were beset by a small group of giant rats and skeletons. They fell beneath our blows, but our sleep was disturbed. There was little

to do but wait until the Evil had left the city, so we slept through the day and the next night. In the morning, we entered the city very early.

We encountered nobody but the city guards, who we had learned to avoid, and so we explored the town. In the southwest corner of the courtyard, we discovered a pair of locked doors. Iolo soon opened one of them, however, and we found ourselves in a passageway that led all the way around the battlements. We found some abandoned barrels and chests, but our most notable discovery was in the northeast corner of the city. Climbing down the ladder in that tower, we found ourselves in a room full of barrels, but Gwenno's sharp eyes caught the hint of something out of place in the northeast corner of the room: the telltale sign of a hidden door.



I searched the wall and found the secret catch. There was a locked door behind the false wall, but it gave us no trouble.

We walked outside the walls for a moment, but I saw nothing interesting and was about to return. Gwenno stopped me.

"Dear friend, wouldst thou still be interested in a Magic Axe?" she asked.

We had several, but I knew it to be a most effective weapon. The more the merrier! "Yes, indeed!" I told her.

Gwenno led us to a rotted stump south of the secret door. Searching there revealed the very weapon she had promised. Gwenno beamed with pleasure, and so did Geoffrey when I handed him the axe.

In the northwest tower, we found a strange mage.



His eyes were focused a great distance away and he didn't seem to know where he was. We tried talking to him, but he made little sense. We left him there and continued our search.

When we were satisfied that nothing remained to find in the battlements and towers, we headed for the tavern, the Sword and Keg. There we found a minstrel breaking his fast. His name was Trian. We talked of Songs and of Valor, and of brave Deeds. He mentioned a man called Thorne and we asked about him. Apparently this man Thorne was like us. He also found himself on Quests, and apparently knew some of the Shrines. We thanked Trian for his help and walked outside.

We found a burly knight nearby and engaged the fellow in a brief discussion. He was the very Thorne Trian had mentioned. Good fortune for a change. I thought at first Thorne was just another braggart, telling of his Battle with Trolls, but when I asked him about the Shrines, he became much more serious, and I suddenly felt a great deal of respect for him.

"Who dost thou serve?" he demanded of me.

"Lord British, of course," I answered, hoping he was not one of Blackthorn's men.

But he was not. He relaxed when he heard my answer and stated, "The Mantra for Valor is 'RA'! Wilt thou be explorin' the dungeon Destard?"

I was hoping we would not, but figured that was a long shot, so I said, "Yes."

"In many dungeon rooms there are traps. The more devious ones are those that must be pushed like wall panels. Some even must be shot at, such as a

torch across a chasm. And remember, you'll need the Word of Power to get in!"

"What is the Word of Power?" I asked him.

"Ask the minstrel," was his reply.

So we returned to Trian, who was still eating, and asked him about the Word of Power. He looked surprised, but asked me, "Dost thou intend to explore one of the forbidden dungeons?" Of course I answered in the affirmative. He continued, "Well, if thou must be so foolish as to try that, I can tell thee only this. There is one in this town who doth search for that which is not there. He knows the Word of Power. But he hath gone quite insane, so if he doth have trouble remembering, saying each word backwards oft is of some help!"

I thought immediately of the mage we had met in the northwest tower. My companions must have thought the same thing, because, before I knew it, we were on our way back there.

The mage's name was Goeth and I suspected that he had once been a powerful magician. Now he seemed lost and confused. In his hand he held a small rock, which he turned over and over as he spoke with us. I felt some pity for him. I asked about his Job.

"Looking for something, I am," he replied. I understood now. "Rof" was "for." I asked him about Looking.

"Not gnol ago, I tsol it." He was looking down at his hands, at the stone he carried, but he seemed not to see it at all.

"Lost it?" I prodded.

He looked wistful as he plucked at his unkempt beard. "Valuable, saw it!"

This was getting nowhere. "What about the Word of Power?" I asked finally, but he answered that he did not remember, though he knew he should.

I was still trying to figure out how to reach his hidden memory when Jaana stepped in and asked, "Drow of Rewop?"

He brightened, and his eyes seemed to focus momentarily on the present place and time. "Ah, sey, coming kcab to me it is. Drow which, that was? Remember ton I. Drow of Rewop thou seekest; remember 'AIPON!' htod I."

Just then, I remembered something I had been told

earlier. Where was it? I asked Shamino if he remembered somebody mentioning a crazy mage.

"Yes, 'twas in Moonglow, was it not?" he answered.

"Ahh. Zachariah had said something about a new power of the moonstones." I turned back to Goeth, who seemed not to have even noticed the interruption. "Do you know anything about the moonstones?" I asked.

He seemed confused still. "Noom Senats?" I inquired.

He smiled then, holding the stone he carried up before my eyes. "On taht, my dnm is more clear!" he stated almost coherently. "Noom Gates, thou tsod know about?"

I nodded and said, "Yes."

"I have found taht, below the location erehw a gate appears, there si a stone! Reveal it nac thou, htiw a simple hcaes, retfa the gate senaw. If uoht takest siht stone and yrub it elsewhere, the noom gate shall appear ni the wen location. Amazing, it si ton?" I agreed, and he added, "This sevig one great rewop indeed!"

Great rewop, indeed. We deknahnt him and departed. He had been very helpful, but understanding his mixed-up speech had been an effort of lliw rewop.

The day was waning, and we hurried back to the center of town to complete our business. We sold some of our excess weapons to replenish our purse, and were about to head over to the Island Shipwright's when we encountered a thickset older man of powerful build. He wore an eye patch. He turned out to be Bullwier, a man we had heard about long ago in Britain. He was reputed to know something about the Mystic weapons, but he turned out to be rude and uncouth. He did tell us about Ambrose when we asked about the Mystic weapons, but we already knew more than Bullwier and so we quickly got away from him. Nor was he sorry to see us go, either.

We purchased a fine Frigate and Skiff at the Island Shipwright's, but thought the prices less reasonable than Iolo had promised. Still, we had our ship, and it was time to cast off again. In the little remaining daylight, we hoped to find Sir Simon's abode, or at least a safe port where we could spend the night

under the stars. We were reluctant to sail much at night after our last experience.



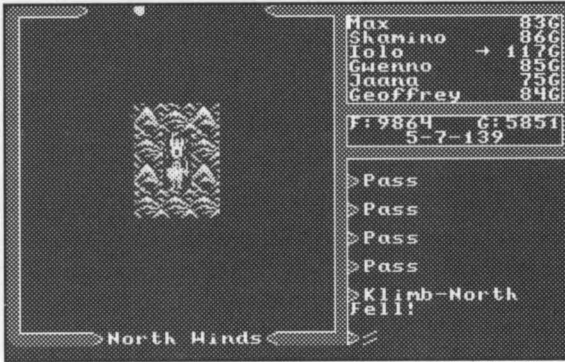
Entry 17— Bordermarch

The winds were favorable and, rigged for double speed, our new Frigate took us safely north to the island where Sir Simon lived. We recognized it by the cross-shaped mountain range. It was just northeast of a small archipelago, and we found it without too much trouble. But it was late by the time we got there, and we decided to rest until morning before trying to find the Keep of Bordermarch.

The night passed uneventfully, and that morning we set out to find a way into the mountains. Deep ravines and boulders the size of small asteroids alternated in the lower elevations with cypress and small shrubs. At their peaks, the bare rocks stood out grey against the blue sky. Steep, craggy outcroppings and slippery shale beds made us retrace our steps several times. We were no mountain climbers and the way looked too steep. We fell many times trying to climb impassable cliffs or negotiate the treacherous shale, and were getting pretty banged up.

Somebody, either Gwenno or Iolo I think, found a way from the south that looked hopeful. We had the Grapple and used it to climb up and over a narrow pass. The way was hard, and more loose shale caused us to slip again and again, but we made it over the

Max	83G
Shamino	86G
Iolo	+ 117G
Gwenno	85G
Jaana	75G
Geoffrey	86G
F: 9824 G: 5851	
5-7-139	
Pass	
Pass	
Pass	
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pass more rapidly than I would have predicted. There, nestled upon a mountain plateau and surrounded by craggy peaks, stood Bordermarch. We marched directly into the keep and searched for Sir Simon.

We began our search in the room to the southeast of the keep and there we found a dear friend. Even though I had forgotten much of my former visit, I had not forgotten Dupré. His powerful fighting and steadfast honor had always been an inspiration for me as I proceeded on my Avatar's Quest. It was a hearty reunion we had, and he immediately offered to join us. I had a great reluctance to include more than six in our party, and all my companions were of great help to me. Geoffrey saved the day for me, though.

He came up rather diffidently for such a big man in armor. "Um . . . Avatar, may I speak?" he inquired. I nodded and signaled for him to go ahead.

"Well, it seems that Lord Dupré would like to join thee, and I had not planned to say anything, but . . ." Then he stood silently, fingering the hilt of his sword.

"What is it?" I asked. "Are you all right?"

He smiled then. "Oh. I am fine, Avatar. It is just that . . ." Again he hesitated. I was beginning to become alarmed. Then he continued in a rush. "It's just that I've a girl in Skara Brae. I was thinkin' to see her, beggin' yer pardon, but now it seems . . ." He let the sentence die.

I smiled. That was the answer. We would let Geoffrey rest in Skara Brae and come back for Dupré. I voiced my plan to the others and everyone seemed content. Then we took our temporary leave of Dupré and continued in search of Sir Simon.

We found the Lord of the Keep in the northeastern corner room. He sat with his wife, the Lady Tessa. He was young for a man of his reputation. His powerful hands gripped a long staff which looked well worn. His beard was full and cropped short after the fashion of younger men, but his eyes showed the years of toil and the stress of his current lot. For he and his striking wife had been governors of Britannia before the Oppression. Now they lived in exile in this faraway, forgotten place. I bowed slightly to them and asked leave to speak. Sir Simon inclined his head.

"Lord, I've come to ask your Help to save Lord British." I began.

He nodded, but spread his hands as if to say he could do little. Nor did his words encourage me much. "All I know is that his crown jewels, the Crown, the Sceptre and the Amulet must be recovered."

"And what of the Crown?" I asked.

"A powerful artifact. Lord British once told me of its ability."

"And what Ability is that?" I knew the King had many magical powers. Perhaps this was the secret to some of them.

"When worn, it absorbs all magical forms of attack, no matter how powerful."

"That sounds very useful," I said sincerely. "And what about the Sceptre?"

He rose to his full height then, towering over me. His hands described the action of dispelling as he said, "A mighty item of immense power. It is said that when used it can disperse all magical barriers even in the ethereal plane. I hear 'tis held by the Shadowlords themselves in their earthly fortress!"

That was encouraging. Oh, well. "And what about the Amulet?" I concluded.

He shrugged and sat back down again, gesturing toward his lady. "Of that, my wife knows more than I."

The Lady then graced me with a smile I shall never forget. Golden-tressed, she was almost elven in her beauty (though there were no elves to my knowledge in Britannia, so I had only my imagination to tell me so). Her grace was that of a deer walking unconcerned through a forest, her hands like swallows gliding on the wind as she spoke. And her voice was like crystal goblets clinking together in a gentle toast to good

health. I almost lost her first words and had to recollect myself quickly.

"... seen the Amulet which Lord British once bore." she was saying. "It lies forgotten in the Underworld amongst the graves of valiant warriors. With only this can thee find thy path in a place of unholy darkness, which I have foreseen shall block thy way. 'Tis beyond such a place that thou must search, if thou art to mend the injustice wrought upon the world by Blackthorn and his spectres."

We chatted a while with the Lord and his Lady. It was a pleasant diversion from the rigors of the Quest. Even when the Lady spoke of unholy darkness, I felt none of the alarm I should have experienced. I knew this pleasant visit could not last long. Nor did it. We ate a small meal, though it was memorable for the addition of spicy mountain mushrooms and rare herbs found only in the area. I was just beginning to relax when Dupré entered the room, followed by a swarthy fighter. They both sat down at the table.

"Have we not met before?" inquired the swarthy man.

I thought he looked familiar, but my memory was still full of gaps. Uncertainly, I said, "No."

But the man was not easily dissuaded. "Ah yes, I remember, 'twas before the dark times! Thou art the Avatar of Legend, art thou not?" I agreed that I was, and he continued. "Art thou here collecting adventurers for thy cause?"

I wasn't sure whether I should say yes or no. In the end I said no and he replied, "I see."

"Why, 'tis Senti," called Shamino. "Well met, friend."

Then I remembered. Senti had been one of my friends before, but he had changed somewhat. He looked more mature somehow. Or maybe he had a new haircut. I couldn't be sure how, but he had changed. We talked a while, and then I began to feel that we had best be off. We still had to sail to Skara Brae and back to drop off Geoffrey and collect Dupré. Reluctantly, we took our leave of our good hosts and returned to our boat, making our way back through the mountains more easily this time.

We made good time getting back to the boat, but found ourselves immediately in terrible trouble. Our

boat, it seemed, had attracted the attention of a nearly endless horde of enemies. Two sea serpents topped the list, and began pelting us with their fire even before we could reach the ship. Sharks and seahorses were also circling and we spied a pirate ship just off in the distance. We had little choice but to fight.

The battles we fought that day belong in a book of legends. Our small band was sorely tested, and all of us received serious wounds, but we were not about to allow a repetition of our last experience. None of us would die!

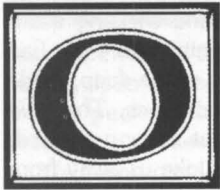
We struck back at the monsters with all our strength, casting powerful magic and wielding death with our hands. It seemed an eternity before we had finally dispatched the foul denizens of the deep, made especially brave in these troubled times. Then we quickly boarded our ship and set sail northward, counting on our special rigging to take us away from trouble.



We outdistanced the pirate ship, but a group of sharks kept a watchful eye on us. These must have been very fast sharks! Finally, we reached the islands where Skara Brae was located. At that moment, the sharks attacked. We handled them easily, never letting them get close enough to bite us, but by the time we had finished with them, the pirates had caught up with us. They fired an accurate cannon round that hit us square in the rigging, and I knew our ship would be damaged beyond repair if she took more shots like that. So I hauled on the wheel and headed directly toward the enemy, on a collision course. At the last

moment, I pulled with all my might, calling for Geoffrey to help me. We came around just before ramming them, and quickly engaged the pirates in close combat.

They would not yield, and in the end we were forced to deliver them to Davey Jones' Locker (if such a place also existed here in Britannia, that is). At any rate, we were victorious and all of us, wounded as we were, felt a surge of elation and power at the end of this latest series of battles.



Entry 18—Skara Brae: Bordermarch (again)

ur Frigate made incredible speed to Skara Brae and the sun was still high when we, sore and wounded, limped into

the city. Though we still ached, we decided to search the city for information—our usual method whenever we visited a new place. Also, I remembered that the Gypsy child, Malik, had told us to seek a man named Saul in this city.



Skara Brae was a rough-hewn town, an island outpost. Its buildings were small and quaint. It was not much bigger than the little Brittany villages, but this was the city of Spirituality, and one would not expect it to put on airs.

As we walked over the drawbridge and up the main path, Jaana spotted a child in the woods to the

west. He was hiding and only our battle-sharpened senses had detected him there. We went to see if we could offer him any help. He was battered and dirty and, as we came closer, we saw that he had that haunted look some children develop when mistreated. In one hand he carried a wooden flute, but he carried it more like a club than an instrument.

Not surprisingly, he was afraid of us and tried to get away. Seeing six huge warriors, wounded and battered from their own battles, would certainly have scared me when I was a child, and I was not mistreated. He was fast, too. He dodged through the woods and would not heed our calls. Finally, I suggested that we board the Magic Carpet, which could travel very fast. With the Magic Carpet we were able to catch up with the youngster and get him to stop. He told us his Name when we asked. It was Froed.

"Why are you hiding, child?" asked Gwenna.

He answered us bravely, almost defiantly. "From those nasty people!"

"What People?" I asked.

He shrank back from me, but answered, "They dragged off my father."

Gwenna signaled me to wait, and asked, "Tell me, who is your Father?"

The boy seemed to open up to Gwenna. I had never seen her as a motherly type, but she was kind and he obviously needed to trust someone.

"His name is Greymarch. He spoke out against Blackthorn and they took him away. Hast thou ever heard of him?"

I remembered Greymarch. He was one of the prisoners we'd met in Yew. "Yes, I have," I told the boy.

For the first time, he smiled. Suddenly I saw a renewed strength in the lad. His fear seemed to vanish as if it had never been there. Perhaps it was false bravery, but I wondered if he weren't just a bit more resourceful than I had given him credit for. At any rate, when we told the boy his father was in Yew, he answered happily, "Then there is hope! Wouldst thou take him a message?"

I was not sure we would pass through Yew again, but I said, "Yes, if I can."

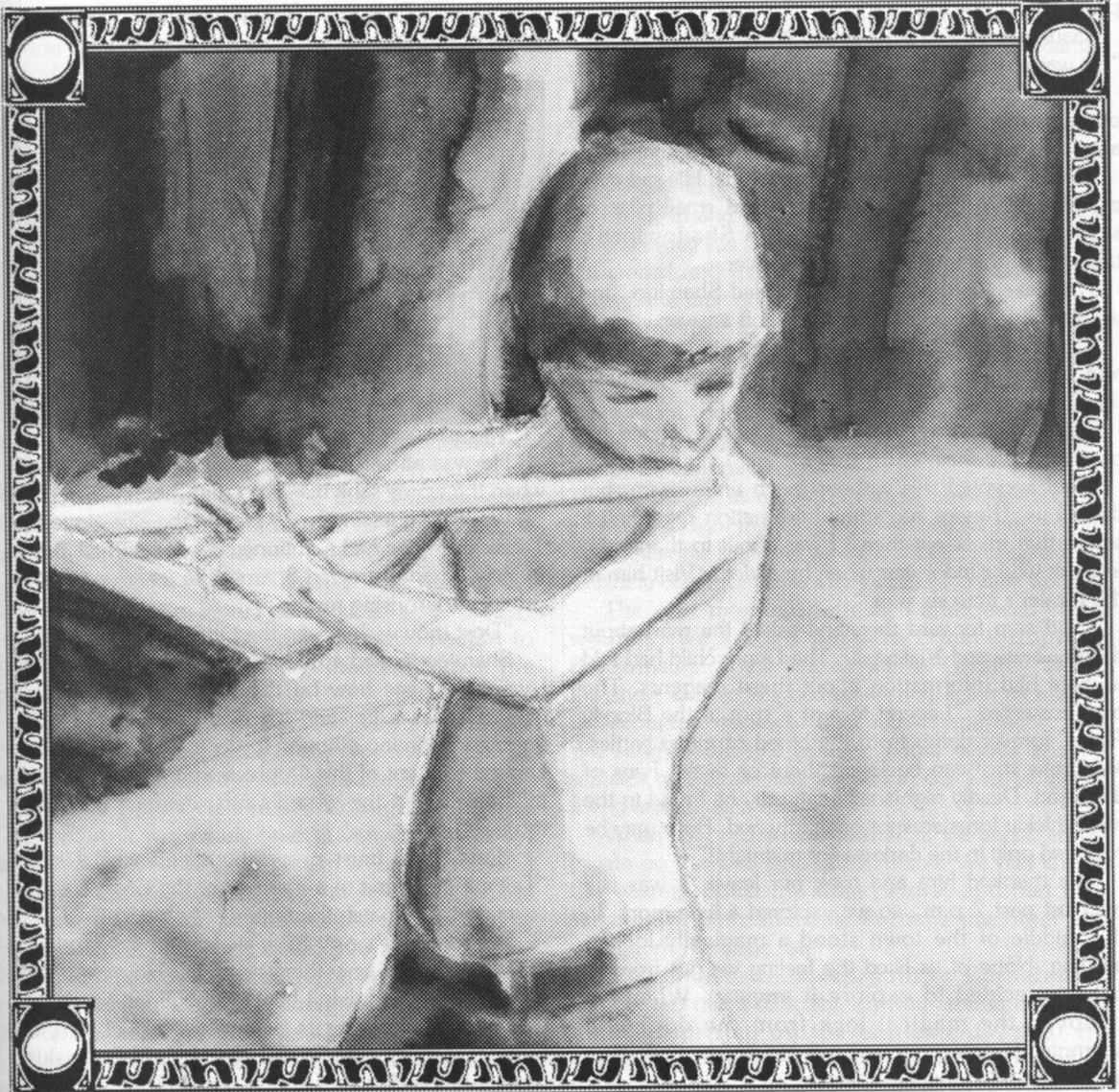
CHAPTER V: Warriors of Destiny

The boy nodded as if that were the best he could ask of any stranger. "Tell him Froed is well and I'm sure he shall reward thee!"

He raised his flute to his lips and played a quick melody, then started to run off again. We called after

him, offering our help. Some food? Maybe a few coins? But he shrugged off all our offerings and ran off to hide again in the woods, his flute once again a weapon.

We headed for the Inn. In this small town, that seemed the most likely place to find anyone. Sure



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enough, we found the man named Saul loitering about the room. He seemed a poor man, dressed in torn clothing, but there was nothing evil about him. He was just a simple man, perhaps a bit down on his luck. His voice was hushed, as if he feared to wake someone, though we saw nobody nearby other than the proprietor of the inn.

Saul was here to Visit an old Friend named Kindor. "He was struck by a Shadowlord's bolt!"

Shamino stepped forward when he heard that, obviously remembering a similar experience. "Thy friend also took one of those accursed Bolts?" he asked the man.

The man's whisper barely reached us. His sad eyes examined the floor as his foot pushed small piles of sawdust about. "He resisted the Shadowlord's takeover of this town!" was the answer.

"A Takeover, thou sayest," prodded Shamino, and we all listened intently to catch the soft answer.

"He fled after he was shot. I found him near death and brought him here. Wilt thou help us vanquish these daemons?"

"Yes," answered Shamino, and we all echoed his promise. "We shall."

Saul accepted this without much enthusiasm, but did tell us, "Kindor has some information regarding a shrine that might aid thee." I was about to thank him and ask who Kindor was when he added, "Visit him at the Healer's near six p.m."

I did step forward then and asked the man about the Mandrake and Nightshade. The Gypsy child had told us Saul had information about these reagents. The man answered, "Legend tells of a spot in the Bloody Plains, forever damp from the blood of many battles. Mandrake root can be found there or in the Fens of the Dead. Deadly nightshade can only be found in the most thickly forested spot of Spiritwood. Both may be collected only in the darkness of midnight!"

We thanked him and took our leave. It was still only just past 2 p.m., so we explored a little more. In the middle of the town stood a magically locked building. None of us liked the feeling we got from it, but we decided to explore it anyway. When we removed the magical lock from the door and attempted to enter, our way was blocked by a cloud of angry bats. We fought our way in.

Climbing a ladder, we found a mage standing by a telescope. He glared in our direction, and when we attempted to speak with him, he threatened us. I didn't like this man at all. I was getting ready to leave the place when I had an inspiration. I conferred with my friends a moment, then we returned and accosted him again. This time Shamino asked, "Dost thou know of the Oppression?"



He was all set to deliver another round of insults when the words sank in. "Who sent thee?"

We were guessing here, putting the clues together. Tactus in Minoc had mentioned a judge named Aruden in Yew. I had instructed Shamino to use that name. It produced surprising results.

"Dost thou wish to join the Oppression?"

Shamino looked at me for guidance, and I nodded. I wanted to see how far this would go. So he said, "Yes." It was a lie, and I hoped it wouldn't do any harm to Shamino's honor to do this. But we had to know the extent of this Oppression. Perhaps we could infiltrate it. But the wizard's next demand pushed us too far.

"First, thou must prove thy allegiance!" *Uh oh.* "Tell me the name of a member of the Great Council, so we might dispatch the traitor!"

There wasn't anything we could do about it. Shamino did the only thing he could. He gave a false name. The wizard didn't buy it, though, and dismissed us with his usual threats. I wasn't afraid of him, but saw no way to pursue the matter without risking capture by Blackthorn's agents. So we left.

We purchased some reagents from the herbalist at the Alchemist. We stocked up especially on black pearl and blood moss, but took samples of all their stock, pausing to mix some spells.

Iolo left us then, saying he had some business he wanted to attend to. He returned somewhat later, just as we were about to head for the Healer's. He wouldn't say anything about his private errand, but he looked so pleased with himself that I had to ask.

"Iolo. My friend. What have you been up to?" I asked.

"No small matter, Avatar. I've found a way to persuade our friend the wizard to tell me what I wished to know."

I frowned. "And what was that?"

"Oh, nothing, really. Just the password for the Oppression," he told me, beaming in self-approbation.

"Well done!" shouted Shamino, clapping the bard heartily on the back. "Thou hast beaten the insufferable creature at his own game."

But I was not immediately so elated. "I hope you've done nothing to harm anyone," I cautioned.

Iolo looked at me in near disbelief. "Avatar! Thou knowest me too well to believe that! I merely used stealth and cunning. I overheard it as he muttered it under his breath. He never even saw me."

Now I smiled at last. "Then you've done well. Thank you, Iolo. I'm sorry I ever doubted you."

He smiled, then. "'Tis only thy way, Avatar, to look for justice in every act. Shall I tell thee the password?" he asked, finally.

"If you must," I replied, not really eager to know it.

"To converse with those of the Oppression, simply say 'IMPERA.' That is the word they use."

By this time I had heard enough about the Oppression. It was nearly time to visit the Healer's. I suggested we head in that direction.

Saul's friend awakened early, at just about 5 p.m. His name was Kindor, and he was obviously shaken by his experience. He settled slowly into a chair and sat the whole time we talked. His eyes had a haunted look, understandable when one realized that he had tried to take on a Shadowlord. He was lucky to be alive.

We talked with him for a few minutes, and eventually got to the reason we had sought him out.

"Your friend Saul tells us you know something about the Shrines."

The very mention of the shrines seemed to give him courage. "Yes," he answered slowly, "I know the Mantra of Spirituality. If I give it unto thee, wilt thou use it to help rid us of the evil Shadowlords?" Of course I told him we would. He continued then. "Use it soon, for remember, Blackthorn too searches for the Mantra. He will use the Mantra to destroy the shrines and remove their power from the world! The Mantra of Spirituality is 'OM.' Guard it well! I have not yet learned the location of the shrine, but I was on my way to see Lady Janell in the Lycaenum. She may know."

I nodded and told the man what the Lady had told us. It seemed the least we could do for this brave man. He smiled and thanked us again and again. But, as always, the time quickly came for us to be off.

We returned to the inn and checked Geoffrey into a room for an extended stay. We all said our farewells, then, each of us knowing that we might not see each other again. But Geoffrey looked relieved and said he would find his girl in the morning, after a good night's rest and a chance to clean up.

The rest of us decided to allow ourselves the rare luxury of a night in clean beds. We usually preferred to sleep under the stars, but we were still badly wounded, and a night in one of Britannia's inns was said to work wonders.

The next morning, refreshed and healed of our wounds, we set off early to collect Dupré at Bordermarch. There was no sign of Geoffrey. During the short sail we laughed again and again as each of us recounted stories of near misses and heroic acts. We sang Geoffrey's praises to the clouds and the seabirds as well, saying farewell in our way to a good friend and staunch ally.

When we reached Bordermarch, we anchored our frigate on the west side of the island. We had chosen the eastern coast the time before, and had been surrounded with enemies. Perhaps the other side would turn out to be safer.

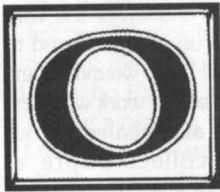
We climbed the steep path to Bordermarch without too much difficulty, arriving around noon. We found Dupré up on the battlements, near the southwest tower. He joined our party readily and we prepared to set off on the next stage of our adventure.

"Before thou leavest the city, Avatar, why not visit the Shattered Shield? 'Tis an armoury where thou canst find the most powerful and rare of weapons."

We took his advice and visited the Shattered Shield. Despite its inauspicious name, we found Dupré had not misled us. This was not at all a surprise, for Dupré was the noblest of Paladins, a seeker of Virtue and Truth. Those who joked at our friend's prodigious appetite for ale were certainly missing the point.

The prices at The Shattered Shield were as high as the quality of their goods, however, and we were only able to afford a few items. Fortunately, we were pretty well armed from our visit to the King's Treasury. For some reason, though, I didn't feel it necessary to tell Dupré how we had come upon our good fortune. I doubted he would have agreed with our methods.

Still, we were refreshed and encouraged little band of adventurers as we set off that day from Bordermarch. Our next destination: Serpent's Hold. The Keep of Courage.



Entry 19—Shrine of Valor: Farthing

In our journey south toward Serpent's Hold, Dupré told us we would pass the Shrine of Valor, and we all agreed we should stop there and meditate. Once again, I received a Shrine Quest.

By the time we left the shrine, it was dark. We had had enough bad experiences on the high seas at night, so we sailed to the nearby island where Dupré told us the settlement of Farthing could be found. Here we might find a place to rest. On smaller islands it was dangerous to sleep close to shore. Sea monsters were attracted to us or to our boat. At any rate, we still had a long way to go, and preferred to rest for the night.

Farthing was little more than a manor house set in the deepest part of a thick forest. We entered late at night and found the gates closed. However a door just east of the gates, though magically locked, proved no great barrier. We entered a snug, warm kitchen. Two hot wood-burning stoves blazed to our right as we



entered, and we spotted a round, jovial man who told us his name was Quintin. We spoke with the man for a few minutes, learning little. It was nice to know the people here were friendly, though.

We soon found out, however, that everyone else was asleep, and even our friend Quintin was about to retire for the night. Even worse, there were no spare beds. I guess the people of Farthing weren't used to having visitors. In the end we decided to retire to the forest and rest there under the trees.

In the morning we arose, feeling refreshed. It was after nine by the time we re-entered Farthing, and we went in search of Lord Seggallion, whom Quintin had mentioned.

We found Seggallion in the main hall and spoke a while with him. He was courteous and well groomed. He had the look of a man of action who had been idle for many years. There was a sense of caged strength just beneath his very polite and mannered surface. We learned that he had once been a pirate, though he never used that term, but now he was retired to his manor. Quintin had told us the same thing, but more bluntly. Seggallion gave us permission to stay as long as we liked, so we thanked him and wandered about the estate for a while.

In the southeast corner room, we found a wizard and a child sitting at writing desks. We guessed that the child was an apprentice from the way he worked so diligently at copying scrolls. The wizard herself seemed preoccupied and motioned for us to speak with the child, which we did.

The apprentice's name was Dufus. O.K., it's a pretty dumb name, and my expectations of him plummeted. The wizard, we learned, was Temme. We talked with the child about Temme and got onto the subject of the wizard's magical spells. Dufus was certainly impressed with his master.

"Beyond imagining! Why, one day I even saw her nearly kill a Giant Rat with a single spell!" His eyes were wide with wonder, and I didn't have the heart to tell him that many spells could do that!

I encouraged him. "A Rat? Very good!"

"Yes, 'tis true. I saw it with my own eyes! Would you like me to tell you something really amazing?" I was beginning to think I was wasting my time with this child, but I nodded anyway. He continued in awestruck tones. "Just the other day, the Great Mage Temme lit a fire with no flint or steel, but merely Lord Seggallion's spyglass."

"Spyglass?" I asked, my interest finally aroused.

"Lord Seggallion uses it to study the stars! If thou asketh, he might show it unto thee."

At this point, the wizard, the Great Mage Temme, looked up from her studies and asked what we wanted. I quickly found out that the teacher shared her apprentice's high opinion of her abilities.

"I am a mage of great repute!" she told us emphatically.

"Of great Repute?" Iolo said with a touch of sarcasm.

The mage was not entirely self-absorbed, and she caught the skepticism in Iolo's tone. "Modesty was never one of my great virtues," she told us with a hint of apology. "But I am actually quite good. Would you be impressed if I told you that I can cast a spell that creates light even on the darkest night?"

It was a common spell, but there was no sense in being rude. The woman might have some other unique skill, so I said, "Yes. That is a good spell."

Temme beamed. "Well! If you think that's good, I've nearly made things disappear!"

"Disappear?" echoed Jaana. Apparently she had not heard that one before.

Temme suddenly wilted a little. "I know I've got the words right, but I may have mixed the reagents improperly, I think."

Jaana asked her, "What are the ~~Words~~?"

"I use the chant . . . Now don't tell anyone else . . . AN YLEM!"

Shamino muttered, "An Ylem," as if trying the words on for size, but the wizard shrieked, "Not now, fool! Am I still here?"

I wasn't sure she'd be there long if she called Shamino a fool again, but Jaana interrupted and asked, "What are the ~~Reagents~~?"

The wizard calmed down again, and I grinned at Shamino, who finally grinned back, but continued to finger his dagger ominously. I knew he would not harm the woman, however. Scare her a bit, maybe, but no more. Meanwhile, Temme answered, "I think it was Ash and Mandrake. . . But, then again, perhaps it was Garlic and Blood Moss. Oh, I don't know. I've never had a very good memory."

The Great Mage Temme continued to babble and argue with herself as we let ourselves out of the room. We went in search of Lord Seggallion and found him still in the main hall. When I asked him about the ~~Spyglass~~, he looked pleased.

"I used my spyglass to study the stars. Wouldst thou like to see it?"

"Yes, I would." I replied.

"I used it on many nights for navigational purposes. I use it but rarely now. Dost thou study the stars?" he asked, suddenly. I nodded, and he studied me. I knew a question of my loyalty would follow. They always got that look before asking one of those questions. Seggallion's question was a little different, however, and almost threw me. "What is it said that the eight planets represent?" he asked.

I had to think a moment. Then I remembered what Zachariah in Moonglow had said about the planets. "They represent the ~~Virtues~~," I answered.

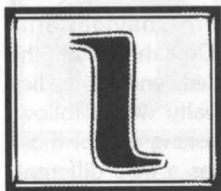
Satisfied, Seggallion handed me the Spyglass, saying, "I would like thee to have my spyglass. Wouldst thou like it?" When I said I would, he advised me to use it wisely.

A little later, after spending some time with Seggallion trading adventure stories, we took our leave and made ready for the next leg of our journey. I was all set to try to reach the Serpent's Hold before grey dark, but Dupré suggested we stop off at the Greyhaven



lighthouse. I had no reason to go there, but none to avoid the place either.

The Greyhaven lighthouse was at the southern tip of the Britannian continent. It was practically due east of Farthing, and just a bit north. When we reached the southern islands, we had to row our ship carefully to avoid running aground. We found the lighthouse on the eastern peninsula that jutted down off the mainland. The journey had taken only a few hours, but the sun was already setting by the time we arrived.



Entry 20—Greyhaven

In the twilight, we entered the lighthouse grounds, where we saw a young boy playing in the bushes to our left. He played a game of hide and seek with us, but we chased him down and

asked his name. We learned that his name was Anthony and that his parents were David and Charlotte. What was most disturbing was the way he had been indoctrinated into a belief in Blackthorn's misguided laws. I don't think he believed I was the Avatar when I didn't support Blackthorn's position, but I had no time to argue the point or to try to undo the damage that had been done to his mind. He was young. I assumed he would grow wiser once we had rid the land of the scourge of the Shadowlords and restored the King to his place. If we could do all that. . . .

Inside we met a man named Sir Arbuthnot, a fighter who claimed to have created the coin that had

brought me back to Britannia. He seemed to have little else to add. He was hiding from Blackthorn's justice.

In a room to the west we found Lord Kenneth, the court composer we had heard about at the Empath Abbey. I asked about his job, just to confirm that it was, indeed, the same Lord Kenneth.

"I am the Court Composer," he stated, acknowledging my question.

I asked him about being a Composer and he asked me if I wished to learn the harpsichord. I remembered Tim at Empath Abbey saying something about that instrument, so I indicated my willingness to be a student. Lord Kenneth told me to open the Book of Lore, a book I had found in my pouch when I had first arrived this time. In it I found a musical piece called "Stones." He told me the first three notes and asked me to read the next three.

"ABC?" I guessed. He then converted the first few lettered notes into numbers and asked me to do the same with my answer.

"987?" I guessed again.

"Good!" he congratulated me. I had guessed right both times and he seemed satisfied. "So the first phrase goes 678 987 8767653! Now thou must practice."

I fingered the little tune a few times and found it easier than I had thought at first. Of course I lacked the delicacy of a real musician. After all, my hands had most recently been used to rig the Frigate and to hack apart orcs. Though enjoyable, my one music lesson was clearly not the beginning of a new-found career.

We left Lord Kenneth after the lesson and climbed the ladder to the top of the lighthouse. Here we spotted an old man tinkering with the gear assembly that drove the lighthouse beacon. He grunted as he worked, but paused when we approached, looking us over with some suspicion. I couldn't blame him, though. Here we were, six battle-hardened adventurers, walking up to him in the dead of night. I would have been suspicious, too.

This grizzled old veteran turned out to be the father of the boy we had met outside. His name was David and his conversation was hardly more polite than his

expression, which was sour. I had a purpose in speaking with the man, however, and guided the conversation as quickly to that subject as I could. I remembered hearing about an ex-pirate named David at the Buccaneer's Den. I thought this might be the very same one. So I asked him about the Sextant.

The old man was most pleased that I knew of his device and warmed to me suddenly, calling me a person of exceptional wisdom. I tried not to say anything to make him change his opinion. Eventually, he gave me one of his inventions, and I thanked him. It was with some pleasure that we left him, still tinkering with his lighthouse beacon.

On our way out of the house, Dupré caught up with me and seemed most pleased with something.

"What is it, my friend?" I asked him.

"Oh, 'tis nothing of much import, Avatar. 'Tis just that we have come and gone in the night and so will not have to speak with the lady of the lighthouse."

"Oh?" I wasn't sure what he was getting at.

He grinned even wider. "Meanin' no disrespect for the good woman, I've met her before. She fancies herself a philosopher, but follows a confused logic. She supports Blackthorn's laws, thinking they are in accordance with the Virtues. No amount of argument will change her mind. I doubt she knows anything else besides," he added.

"So that's where the young boy gets his philosophy," I guessed.

"Aye," agreed Dupré. "He's an acorn fallen not far from the tree, right enough."

"Do you think many people believe in Blackthorn's philosophy?" I asked him.

He shrugged. "Some do, many do not. Many a true seeker has been diverted from the path by such plausible half-truths. 'Tis easy enough to turn the Principles into rules and to turn seekers into slaves."

"And they don't see the difference, do they?" I added sadly.

"Few have the strength of character to follow the true path of Virtue, Avatar. Thou must bear thy burden and be an example to those whose eyes do not see. 'Tis the Shadowlords who darken people's sight and their minds. Defeat the Shadowlords and the

people will see again."

"Yes, my friend. You're right, of course. No amount of argument will change the minds of people convinced of their own righteousness. But we can remove the darkness and allow them to see for themselves."

I think Dupré's smile indicated a new respect. "Well said, Avatar," he told me. "Thou hast grasped the essence of the problem."

We found a suitable place to camp, just a short distance from the lighthouse, and holed up for the night. The rest was refreshing and washed away any tiredness we felt. By morning we were bound for Serpent's Hold.



Entry 21— Serpent's Hold

We sailed east, then turned south, coming in at the northern coast of the island of the Serpent's Hold. We set the anchor there and took the

Magic Carpet overland until we reached the castle itself. The island was a paradise of low woods, rolling hills, and dense green grassland. The weather was quite warm, and we all loosened our armor just a little. But when we reached Serpent's Hold, we made ourselves as presentable as we could. The castle sprawled at the mouth of a great bay, two great bridges leading to and from it. The architecture was truly a marvel, done in the southern style. We had seen traces of that style in Jhelom and even at Farthing, but here was a magnificent masterpiece of colonnades, arches, and great rounded towers. Carved relief figures adorned the castle walls, depicting geometric designs that caught the eye hypnotically.

As we entered the gates, gawking like tourists, we felt the refreshing coolness that emanated from the stone walls. There was also a sense of strength here, and of hope. I knew that Serpent's Hold held Courage above all other Principles. Our spirits were lifted by the magic of the place.

Passing under the arches of the front hall, we came upon a peaceful fountain. Flowers of all kinds lined the flowing water in special ornate planter boxes, a riot of rose, fuchsia, sky blue, indigo, and lemon. Fragrant perfumes wafted from fruit trees that grew in the corners of the courtyard. We breathed the intoxicating pollens and listened to the water falling for a few minutes, each of us captivated in his own way by its beauty and peace. I only sneezed once.

We passed through the gardens and entered a door to the west. The door led to a small chamber, lit by smoky torches, and at the far wall we spotted a ladder. Climbing up this ladder, we reached another chamber. This one was lit from above by windows sculpted into the walls and embellished with a design of interwoven vines. Heading through the north exits, we found ourselves in the throne room of Lord Malone, the Castellan of Serpent's Hold. It was just past 11:30 in the morning.

The throne room was almost Spartan in its simplicity. It had virtually no adornment, just massive stone walls and a solid table of some hardwood, surrounded by heavy chairs that could have been used to batter down the gates of lesser keeps.

Lord Malone was almost like part of the furniture of this room, massive and solid, simple and unpretentious. His clothing was that of an ordinary soldier, though he held a small baton-like scepter in one hand.

We spoke with Lord Malone for several minutes, passing on our news and asking if he had any to offer. Of course, one of our questions had to do with Lord British.

"I fear that Lord British is no more," he told us. His hawk-like eyes searched us as he spoke and his hands gripped the scepter of his office, wringing it as if to squeeze the truth out of it. "He has been missing for some time. I feel sure if he still lived he would deal with the imposter Blackthorn!"

My companions muttered their disagreement at this notion of the King's fate, but I asked the Lord if he knew anything about Blackthorn.

"This castle, a bastion of Courage, is one of the last redoubts against the evil of the Shadowlords!" he told us, holding his scepter as if to encompass the entire castle within its protection.

"And what of the Shadowlords?" I asked him.

The scepter smashed onto the table with a loud bang, making me jump a foot in the air. I heard the brief swish of weapons being drawn behind me. "Even Nosfentor dares not cross the sacred threshold of Serpent's Hold!" he said in very even tones, enunciating each word very clearly so there could be no mistaking his meaning or his certainty.

"Nosfentor?" I asked him in a whisper, almost afraid to talk after witnessing his intensity.

Lord Malone raised a great, calloused hand as if to stop me. "Speak not that name too loudly, for 'tis the name of the Shadowlord of Cowardice!" I felt like washing my mouth out with something antiseptic, and preferably intoxicating.

Lord Malone proved to be a great host, and encouraged us to visit his kitchens and also to pay homage to the Flame of Truth in the basement, where his valiant knights often stood vigil. He also encouraged us to take anything we could find that might aid us. As I was turning to leave, he motioned me over and told me in a quiet voice that I might find the prisoner to have some useful information. I didn't know what he meant, but nodded my thanks as my companions filed out of the room, back the way we had come.

We explored the rest of the west wing, and Iolo found a secret library behind a fireplace. There was little to interest us there, however, other than an abandoned potion that Iolo took. Dupré frowned, but Lord Malone had told us to take what we needed.

In the southwest tower, we found a ladder that led down to the first floor of the keep. From there, we headed east, through a door, then down another ladder to the basement.

The air in the basement was smoky and stiflingly hot. Through a doorway we found the Flame of Courage, but nobody was nearby. We paid homage to the flame, then hurried back to the ladder to return to cooler and fresher air. Just as we were about to climb the easternmost ladder, Dupré called my attention to a strange part of the eastern wall. It was a false one, and a door hid behind it. We found a long passageway on the other side, but it seemed to go nowhere. We found another hidden door at the end of the

passageway, but there was nothing of interest in the room that was revealed when we opened it, only a small, noxious seepage from the ground. It looked poisonous and we all avoided it.

Back on the first floor, we explored the east wing, where we met Gardner, the keeper of the Flame of Courage. When he mentioned the *Shadafurds*, I asked him about them. His answer was most interesting.

"Within the flames I often see visions!" he told us. He seemed sincere and without pretense.

"Visions. What do you see?" I asked.

"Avatar, I can offer thee my vision of the Shard of Cowardice to aid thee in thy Quest." Again, he was deadly serious and yet seemed to place no importance on his own contribution.

"You know of my Quest, then?"

He nodded and went on with his story. "Upon the Isle of the Codex, there lies a dungeon. At its bottom lies but a small, cavernous room of the Underworld. However, there are many more such small chambers, near enough to be reached by one with the proper magic! With many uses of such magic, and a great deal of exploration, one may find the Shard of Cowardice. It lies at the location which upon the surface would be recorded at LA' LI'."

And that was it. He returned to his meal, ignoring us. I discussed this information with the others and Jaana told me she thought she knew the spell he referred to. It was called the *Blink* spell, and could be handled easily by even moderately trained mages.

A pretty young woman asked us if we needed anything. Her raven hair cascaded over her shoulders and her violet eyes reflected the light of the torches to give her an almost wild look. But she was perhaps less wild than her appearance suggested. It turned out she was Kristi, the castle's head cook. We talked about her cooking for the hungry *flourths* in the castle, and she mentioned that she also cooked for any Visitors. That sounded good to me.

"Visitors?" I asked, hoping I was hinting broadly enough to entice her to bring out a morsel or two for me and my friends. Her answer surprised me, however.

"We don't have too many these days. . . . A few weeks ago there was a strange, silent mage who ate

here. He gave me 5 Skull Keys as payment. He said they are magic and powerful, worth many gold pieces. I have no use for them." Then she offered to sell them to me for 100 gold crowns. I thought about it a moment and decided a few more of these keys would be worth having, just in case. I asked if she had any more and she said no. She also told me they had come originally from an armorer named Shenstone. Small world!

After we had had a bite, we looked through more of the east wing and found a Monsieur Loubet and his pupil, Maxwell. Monsieur Loubet was a fencing master with a decidedly French accent. He knew about the Magic Carpet, which he claimed was his method of arriving in Britannia from a "faraway land." It all sounded pretty dubious, but I wasn't about to argue with a fencing master!

Maxwell offered to join us, but we said no, not now. He shrugged and turned back to his master for more sparring. As we left the room, we heard the French master saying, "En garde!" The clash of steel followed us out of the room.

We were about to leave Serpent's Hold, having done all we could think to do, when I remembered Lord Malone's advice regarding the prisoner. The jail was at the northern end of the garden courtyard, making it perhaps the nicest-smelling prison in all Britannia. We headed that way and jimmed open the lock to the main door. Inside, we could see two jail cells. Only one held a prisoner, making it easier to guess who Lord Malone had meant.

Inside the cell, I immediately noticed some hidden doors. Later inspection of them showed that they led nowhere important. However, the prisoner's testimony proved to be interesting, at the very least.

His name was Toede—pronounced like "Toady"—and he lived up to his name. It turned out that he had been the architect of Blackthorn's castle and knew where all the pits, traps, and secret doors were. We didn't learn all of it, but he was persuaded to give us some of the information we wanted. Though we stopped short of saying we supported Blackthorn, neither did we pose as the man's enemies. He may have hoped we could help him, so he was free with the information—up to a point.



**Entry 22—Trinsic:
Paws: New Magincia**

It has been some time since I caught up in my journal. Much has happened, and I hope I can remember it well enough. First, after leaving Serpent's Hold, we visited Trinsic and Paws. In Trinsic, we dug up a moonstone and took it with us as the crazy mage Goeth had suggested. I was half afraid we would end up like him.



In Trinsic, I learned the Mantra of Honor from Gruman, a noble fighter we met in a strange way. We had spotted a hidden doorway just at the entrance to Trinsic. It led to a long hallway that encircled the town. On the second floor, in the northeast corner, we found Gruman looking out over the battlements.



When we spoke of Honor, we discovered the depth of this man's commitment to the virtue represented by Trinsic. He told us the Mantra of Honor was SUMM. He told us he was waiting for a sign, and when he saw it, he would go in search of Lord British. I wanted to ask him to join us, but our party was full. At any rate, I don't think he would have come. He didn't recognize me as the Avatar, though he did trust me with the Mantra.

Nearby, we found a barrel containing four magical Gems. Gruman told us to take them, so we did. We also heard about a sleepwalker who sounded interesting, so we stayed around until nightfall and looked up in the battlements, near where we had met Gruman at first. The sun had been down several hours when we came across him. He was sleepwalking, all right.

"Hey!" I called. "Wake up."

He looked a little startled, but not quite all there. "Wake?" he asked dimly.

He was dressed as a wizard, so I asked, "Aren't you a Wizard?"

"Yes," he told me.

He reminded me of the crazy wizard, Goeth, so I asked him, "Hey, do you know a Word of Power?"

He paused so long I didn't think he was going to answer at all. Then he mumbled, "INFAMA."

Score one for the Avatar. "Great. Then do you also know what Dungeon that is for?"

"Shame," he said after another pause, and I wasn't sure whether it was a comment or the name of the dungeon. I decided it was the dungeon as the old man wandered off, still mostly asleep.

After Trinsic, we paid a brief visit to the very small village of Paws. We left the ship at anchor near Trinsic and followed the well-kept road that led north. Paws was only a couple of hours away by Magic Carpet.

In a dead tree north of the stables, Jaana spotted a Ring of Invisibility. We took it, since it seemed to be abandoned.

In the Guild shop we found Glinkie, a self-styled adventurer who turned out to have some useful information. He was seeking the Shrine of Spirituality, but was having some trouble finding it.

Actually, we were talking about the Guild and the Gems they made there when he said, "I am searching for the mystic Shrine of Spirituality and feel they would be of good use!"

I asked, "What do you know about the Shrine?"

"I fear it has been destroyed," he answered. He was standing near a bookcase, and he pulled a book from the shelf, *The Great Avatar Hoax* by Richard DeMain. (*My great-great-great-grandfather, I believe.* —RDM)

"Destroyed?" I asked. "I hope not."

He looked up from the book hopefully. "Dost thou know where to find it?" I answered him and he asked, "Where?"

I told him about the Moongates then and he was elated. "Art thou saying that I must enter a Moongate to reach the Shrine of Spirituality?"

I nodded and found myself smiling. His excitement was contagious.

"At midnight?"

Another nod.

"Oh, no wonder I never found it. Well, that one is likely safe then. But should thou see one destroyed . . . Remember, they can be restored with the Words of Power."

This was something new. "With the Words of Power?"

Now it was his turn to nod. "Whilst at the destroyed shrine, yell the Word of Power. Then meditate upon the Shrine's Virtue with the proper Mantra for three cycles."

While I was speaking with Glinkie, Iolo had found some keys hidden in a barrel. I frowned at him to inform him that I didn't think we should take them. I thought at the time that he'd put them back, but later I wasn't so sure. Oh well. I don't think it harmed his Virtue. He has done so much good, even if he is somewhat irreverent.

Around noon, when all the merchants were at lunch at the Smuggler's Inn, we ran across an odd mage out in the central square. If it is possible to walk mysteriously, he was doing it. I was surprised to see him out in broad daylight. His name was Bandaii, and he told me was searching for Smith, the talking horse. We had been through that before, and helped him as



much as we could, telling him to look near Iolo's hut. He told us something about the Magic Carpet, but of course we already knew all about it. We were riding it at the time, and I was surprised he didn't notice. People in Britannia could be so one-pointed and myopic at times, it was no wonder that they had embraced Blackthorn's false philosophy. They just failed to look around them and observe the larger truths.

After we left Paws, we returned to the ship and sailed northeast until we reached the Buccaneer's island, then sailed due east from its southern tip. In that way, we reached the shores of New Magincia without incident.

The city was under siege by a Shadowlord, and we still weren't ready to face one of those monsters, so we camped outside. The apparition of Lord British visited us again, advancing some of us, and healing us all.

We entered New Magincia before dawn, and though it was still dark, we saw an old man standing in a field of wheat. He seemed to be deep in contemplation, but when we approached he greeted us openly.

"I am called Wartow," he told us.

Closer up, I could see that he had lived a full life. The lines in his face told a story of laughter and tears as clearly as a book. But he seemed to be at peace and his eyes were young. I asked him what he did, and he answered, "I stay here to live out my life!"

"Life," I said. "You have had a long Life, I think."

"I have lived many years," he answered simply.

"Many Years, indeed."

He smiled a little. "Too many to count."

I could think of nothing else to say, though I enjoyed meeting this man of peace. But our Quest would not wait. I said goodbye and he advised me not to stray from the Path.

We searched the village, but found no people at first. What might once have been a great city was now little more than a collection of adobe huts surrounded by fields of grain and other crops. It was not a bad place, but a very simple one. We saw no frills. In fact, there seemed to be only one small tavern in the whole village.

Suddenly I remembered being here before. The last time I had been to New Magincia, it had been a ruin populated by deformed ghosts. I had been only too happy to leave it then. Now it was a place where I could imagine staying for a while, though life would not be easy here. But the town had begun to rebuild, and I was suddenly filled with joy at the rebirth of this community. They had learned a bitter lesson. Now they would act as a living example of humility.

Eventually we reached a field in the western part of the city. There we found four villagers already at work. First we spoke with Kaiko. In another place, Kaiko might have been a Lady of the Court or perhaps a Healer. Here, she was diffident and seemed to lack confidence. She held onto a long hoe and kept her distance from us as we spoke. I began by asking her about her **Jab**—that standard Britannian ice-breaker.

She gestured around her. "I work to grow the crops for our town," she said, bending back to her work.

"The **Crops** are good?" I asked.

"Without our work, many would starve, yet we seek no more than our humble earnings, unlike the new King!" Was there just a hint of fire underneath that shy exterior? Her eyes were hidden by her bangs as she continued to work the hoe, but I caught a hard edge of outrage in her tone.

"What about the new **King**?" I prodded.

"Blackthorn, the usurper!" she muttered. Yes. There was the fire!

"Tell me about **Blackthorn**," I asked her.

She didn't look up from her hoe, even now, but she told me, "He takes half our harvest, and imprisons those with the knowledge of the ancients!"

"What **Knowledge**?"

Finally she looked up at me again, and I could see that she was close to tears. "One of our people was of the Council, and was jailed by the King even though he never lifted a finger against the throne!"

I shared her frustration. "They **jailed** him?"

Suddenly she looked tired. The strain was obviously getting to her. "Hassad came to us from Skara Brae, fleeing Blackthorn's search. A long time he lived among us, for Magincia was near-forgotten. But the Shadowlords found him. Now he lies chained in Blackthorn's dark dungeon. He is to be an example to those who refuse to yield their knowledge for Blackthorn's evil use!"

I could offer little comfort, but I promised I would do what I could to rescue Hassad. She looked grateful, but not convinced. She returned to her hoeing.

The others with Kaiko were steadfast in their pursuit of Virtue, but had little new information to offer us. So we left the little field and began to explore once again. That's when we ran into my former companion, Katrina. She looked well, but when she saw me, she immediately offered to join my band. It seemed that life in New Magincia was not active enough. When I told her I could not invite her, she seemed genuinely disappointed. So was I, for that matter. Katrina, though not the most powerful fighter of all, was a person of great inner power. I told her I would return for her if the need arose, and she seemed somewhat mollified. But I knew she ached to join us. I even considered bending my rule, but then thought better of it. For above all, Katrina was woman of peace. She fought well when challenged, but was at her best in times of peace. She was a shepherd, but we were not out hunting wolves. Our prey was more deadly!

In the graveyard we spotted an old woman tending the graves. She was clipping the grass around them and arranging flowers at the headstones. We approached a bit nervously. Speaking for myself, graveyards are not my favorite hangouts. But you never knew who was going to tell you something you just had to know. And in a town like this, the most unlikely people could have the most information. Anyway, I went up to her and she greeted me, saying

her name was Shirita. She told me she tended the graves of the former residents of Magincia. I asked about the Inhabitants, and she told me how Magincia had been destroyed for its sins of pride and arrogance.

"Arrogance," I commented. "Well, that's all gone now."

She sighed. "Magincia was once a thriving merchant community, the envy of all Britannia!"

"Ah, Britannia . . ." I was going to say something more, but she interrupted me. I think she wasn't really listening to me any more. She seemed to be reliving the past glories and the degradation of Magincia in her mind.

"Sadly, they were not at all humble. Daemons sprang from the earth, engulfing Magincia in flames!" She seemed to see the horror of it, and I could only mutter "Flames" under my breath before she went on with her story. She almost seemed to be transported to the past. It was like listening to a ghost. I got chicken skin all over.

"The souls of the inhabitants lived on as undead creatures to ward others from the twisted path of Pride! After years of torment, they have finally been laid to rest." Then she turned her gaze toward me and seemed suddenly to be back in the present. The effect was no less disconcerting than her ghostly reminiscences had been. "Pride, 'tis difficult to avoid. Dost thou strive to walk a humble path?" she asked. The question had caught me off guard, but the answer was simple.

"Yes," I said.

She smiled, a kindly old woman once again. "Good. There is a wise old man in this town, who lives the life of a recluse. He has much wisdom on the Virtue of Humility." The old man in the field. He had to be the one.

I can't say I was sorry to leave Shirita and her grave-tending, but neither would I soon forget her. Even her final farewell, " 'Til then," sounded ominous. Would she one day soon be tending my grave? Or perhaps someone just like her? I noticed that my companions seemed just as eager to be elsewhere, and that gave me some small comfort.

We hurried back to Wartow's field and found him more or less where we had left him. He was working slowly in his field. After Shirita, I felt like getting to the point right away.

"Can you tell me about Humility?" I asked.

I can't say this was a great surprise, but he tested me. "Who dost thou serve?" he countered.

"British," I assured him.

He nodded slowly. "Dost thou hate the evil tyrant Blackthorn?"

Now just a minute! I'd already answered the obligatory question. No fair asking another. What should I say? The fact is, though I might have good reason to hate Blackthorn, I was well aware that he was a victim of a greater evil. And, as Avatar, I knew hatred to be the opposite of Love, which was one of the cardinal Principles. No, I could not hate Blackthorn, though I wasn't sure I could love him either. I told the old man as much.

He smiled, a slow sort of grin that came out like the sun peeking from behind dense clouds after a storm. "Thou are wiser than I thought!" he told me. "Dost thou need the Mantra of Humility?"

I was somewhat overcome by his smile. I felt somehow as if I had just pleased my own father, something that every son wishes he could do. But I made the appropriate answer.

He took my shoulders in his hands. They were surprisingly strong. "Then it is thine!" he said. " 'LUM' is the chant which thou dost seek!"

And that was that. With another "Farewell, and stay on the Path," Wartow saw us on our way. Next stop, the Shrine of the Codex.



Entry 23—Sutek's Island

Sailing due south off the western coast of New Magincia, we planned to turn east after a few hours, hoping that would lead us to the Isle of the Codex. We rigged her for double speed, and set sail just before noon. We were surprised, however, by the appearance of a small island just about an hour's sail south. We could see a small dwelling set on the middle of the island, which seemed to be a nasty, poisonous place covered by fens and steaming swamps.

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“Whoever lives here must not want company,” commented Shamino as he tied a length of cloth around his nose.

“Then let us give ‘im some and find out the reason why,” added Lolo, flexing his sword hand.

Fortunately, we had the Magic Carpet, for I would not have liked the idea of slogging through the muck on that island. But we flew over it and simply had to hold our noses, or do as Shamino had done and bind a cloth over our faces. We arrived at the rude dwelling none the worse for wear, though slightly lightheaded from breathing the stinking gases.

There were several paths leading through the swamp. We found one that led to a small footbridge over a freshwater lake, and we glided past it to find the hut just beyond. Inside, however, we found nobody. We flew the Magic Carpet around outside again until we spotted a small graveyard. The well-tended grass of the graves stood out in stark contrast to the fetid mire of the area. Standing next to one of the graves was a tall, neatly dressed wizard. He contrasted even more heavily with his surroundings than the grass did. I just had time to read one of the headstones before the wizard looked up and acknowledged our approach. It said, “Here lies Lebling in his coffin. Kicked the dragon once too often.”

When we approached the wizard, he greeted us. I was half afraid he’d be a lunatic, living out here in the middle of nowhere surrounded only by the most noxious pools of deadly muck I’d seen this side of a Britannian dungeon. But he was very civil and spoke with an educated tongue. He told us his name was

Sutek (a name that rang a bell somewhere in my head) and then asked if I was the Avatar of Legend. I acknowledged my identity and he began to tell us a most amazing tale. All through the telling of it, he studied my face, as if willing the information into me. It was a most intense few minutes. In some ways it felt like hours. In another sense, it seemed to flash by in an instant.

“I have been scrying for the nature of the three Shards!” he began. “I have learned they were formed at the time of the first Dark Lord. When Mondain’s Gem of Immortality was destroyed, its shards still harbored unspeakable Evil!”

He paused a moment for effect. I could feel the sweat dripping off my forehead, but I was so riveted by his stare that I couldn’t even raise my arm to wipe it off. I remember a part of my mind thinking sweat would run into my eyes while another part simply concentrated on Sutek. It was almost as if I were two people. It was weird. But the wizard was already speaking again and I realized I was already listening.

“They lay festering deep within the earth, but now their malevolent power has been unleashed upon the world.” He drew a deep breath and I almost winced at the irrational thought that he was about to blow me down. With a tremendous authority, he said, “The Shards and the Shadowlords can and must be destroyed!”

Now I knew he was using some kind of mind control on me. I saw visions of the scenes he described next. “The Shards must be recovered from their resting places in the boundless Underworld, and cast into the Eternal Flames of Truth, Love, and Courage . . .” He paused again while visions of the Eternal Flames flickered in my head. Then suddenly they were there. Standing near the flames were the Shadowlords. I hardly heard his next words. Half my mind was cringing in horror at their black evil staining these sacred places.

But Sutek was punctuating the visions, completing his thoughts with the words, “Even as each respective Shadowlord stands nigh upon the flame of the Principle it opposes.”

Suddenly I was released from the spell. Now I was just myself, standing there talking to a rather strange old wizard. He was still speaking, though. “Take now this knowledge and use it well!” he told me.

And that was that.

As we were walking away from him, however, he called, "I've some scrolls, potions and other items in my hut, Avatar. Take what thou hast need of."

So we backtracked to the hut and found an orange Sleep potion, a Negate Time scroll, and a Summon Daemon scroll. We also found an Amulet of Turning, which would protect the wearer from undead creatures.

Finally we got under way again. We were all grateful to see the last of Sutek's island, though I think Jaana and Gwenno, the least vocal about their displeasure, were the most relieved. They both splashed on perfumes until we were all reeling in jasmine and gardenia.

Our destination was still the Shrine of the Codex, and we sailed into the night, due east, until we reached its shores. Then we turned south and followed the shore until we came to the river mouth that led up to the Shrine.

The Shrine was unchanged, but this time the Codex was opened to a page that read, "Those who fear to try know not their limits and thus know not themselves."

It was a long journey back to the Shrine of Valor, but that had to be our next destination. Feeling the words of the Codex within my soul, I fought off any doubts of my ability to complete this immense task. I knew I would have to test my limits before this was done. For now, however, another sea voyage faced me and my companions. We continued our sail north a short distance until we reached a bay on the eastern shore of the Island of the Codex, then began the long sail east until we found land. Finally, we sailed along the coastline until we found the Shrine of Valor.

After completing the Valor Quest, it was but a short sail to the northeast to find the Shrine of Honor, set at the head of a small bay.

We have completed all the Shrine Quests, but the adventures have quickly blended into one another. I have chosen to spare my pen and conserve ink by relating only some of the most important aspects of our journey.

From the Shrine of Honor, we returned to the Shrine of the Codex and learned from the sacred book, "It is the guilt, not the guillotine, that constitutes the shame."



From the Shrine of Humility, located right there on the Island of the Codex, the book told me, "Pride is a vice, which Pride itself inclines one to find in others, and overlook in oneself."



From the Shrine of Honesty, the Codex said, "A dishonest life brings unto thee temporary gain, but forsakes the permanent."

After we had completed the Shrine Quest of Honesty, we had completed all but one of the Shrine

Entry 24—Shrine Quests: Codex: Sin Vraal: Grendel the Rat

make an entry now after many days of sailing and questing.



Quests. We knew that we would have to wait until both moons became full to reach the Shrine of Spirituality, but we hadn't noticed that happening. Gwenno suggested burying the moonstone we had gotten in Trinsic and waiting a few days, but Jaana had another idea, which sounded very interesting.

"Why not get the moonstone from near Minoc?" she asked, frowning a little as if trying to grasp a difficult concept. "Maybe its moonstone will have some special property, especially because Minoc is associated with the full moon."

"Now why would a moonstone have any effect on the moon itself?" Shamino inquired skeptically. He stroked his beard with one hand while gesturing, somewhat dramatically I thought, toward the sky. "'Tis harebrained!"

"Nay, Shamino. 'Tis a truly inspired conception," Iolo countered, clapping Jaana heartily on the back. Jaana grimaced, but said nothing.

Everyone had an opinion, but in the end we all decided that it was just weird enough to work. Even Shamino grudgingly accepted the notion, so we set sail for Minoc. The voyage was pleasant, though I found myself on more than one occasion wondering how I had so easily discarded the laws of physics that had once seemed so immutable.

Sure enough, when we came into proximity with the moonstone, it seemed to affect the phases of the moon. Now if this happened where I came from, it would have driven a lot of people crazy, but here it merely seemed improbable and fortuitous.

We tried waiting there, near the Moongate's location, but kept getting attacked by all manner of creature, both by land and by sea. So we dug up the stone and moved it to the relative safety of the valley where Minoc was located. There, we could wait out the time until the moons reached the correct phase.

We waited for several days, but both moons had not yet become full at the same time. One night, though, both moons went dark at the same time. They were both new moons. For some reason—call it a hunch—we all decided I should try the Moongate then, and, to my surprise, I found myself at the Shrine of Spirituality as soon as I had stepped into the gate. I don't remember much about the Shrine. All I remember is that familiar feeling once the Shrine Quest was ordained.

We returned to the Avatar's Island, where I once again visited the Codex. I read, "To forsake one's inner being is to abandon thy hopes for thyself and for thy world."

Just as I finished reading the passage, the whole Shrine began to shake and there was a great rumbling. I think the only thing that prevented me from running was that I was in a state of shock. The air itself seemed to vibrate palpably, perhaps stirred up by the earthquake. Whatever it was, it caused a page of the sacred book to turn. Here is what it said: "Beyond Shame's egress in the centre of the Underground there is a place of Darkness! Beyond this darkness lies the gate to the core of the world! When thou art ready thou must call forth Veramocor to unlock the gate and venture past ethereal wards and stealers of souls. That which the world hath lost awaits thy coming."

ULTIMA V: Warriors of Destiny

All I could think at the time was that I was glad I hadn't read that passage earlier. I thought perhaps I might have backed out of the whole thing. Place of Darkness? Stealers of souls? I had a bad feeling about the whole thing.

When I rejoined my companions, I didn't say anything about what I'd seen in the Codex. Not at first, anyway. But they noticed my mood was somber and questioned me. When I did tell them, however, they seemed unconcerned, and I tried to use their confidence to bolster mine. It worked, a little. I knew, though, that we were soon to find ourselves in places far worse than those we had visited so far. I kept thinking about dungeons, undergrounds, and places of Darkness. It weighed on me constantly, and I began to feel almost eager to get to it, to get it over with.

Meanwhile, we sailed south from the Avatar's Island, past the Shrine of Honesty, and around Dagger Isle. Then we veered west, intending to head back to the Brittany area. Along the way we had one of our more memorable encounters.



Along the southern shore of the main continent, we spotted a hut off in the distance. It was set in the middle of the southern desert, and I was reminded of some information we'd received about a daemon who lived in the area. I wasn't too thrilled with the idea of meeting a daemon, but I knew I would meet worse before this Quest was over.

We anchored the ship offshore and made our way to the hut. We found the monster tilling his fields. I was struck by the similarity between it and the people



of New Magincia. Not that they looked alike! This was a truly frightful monster before us. But the very bucolic nature of its activity brought up the association, and perhaps lent me some courage to approach and speak with the creature instead of burying a Magic Axe in its skull.

The creature had great leathery wings, like some sort of man-sized bat, though it towered over even the tallest of us. I don't think it would have taken more than a gesture from the thing to make us all draw weapons or take to our heels, but it held silent and didn't move.

"I think thou shouldst wish the creature a good day," whispered Iolo, "and we should be gone."

"Art thou afraid?" taunted Shamino. "Dost thou want to remain in the boat, my fragile friend?"

Iolo stood to his fullest height and turned to face Shamino. His eyes were like full moons and his mouth worked a moment before anything came out. "Afraid? What manner of slanderous dragon excrement is this?" he cried.

Shamino only smiled, then started to laugh. We all started laughing then, and, after a moment, even Iolo joined in. "Thou hast got me a good one," commented Iolo.

Suddenly I noticed that our levity had aroused the attention of the daemon. It looked at us with what might have passed for a bemused expression in its race. I walked toward it, still chuckling at Iolo's outrage; my moment of anxiety was gone. I could see the greenish-yellow eyes watching as I approached, the scaly, horned head swiveling to keep me in view.

Finally I judged I was close enough and I greeted the creature. I asked its Name and it answered, "My name is Sin'Vraal." At least that's how I would spell what it said. Its voice was surprisingly intelligible, though I doubted the monster would have much of a career as an FM radio personality. But there was an echoing quality to the voice that vibrated in the pit of my stomach. I was suddenly glad I hadn't eaten within the past hour.

"Do you have a Job?" I asked, keeping to tradition. The wings spread out and I took an involuntary

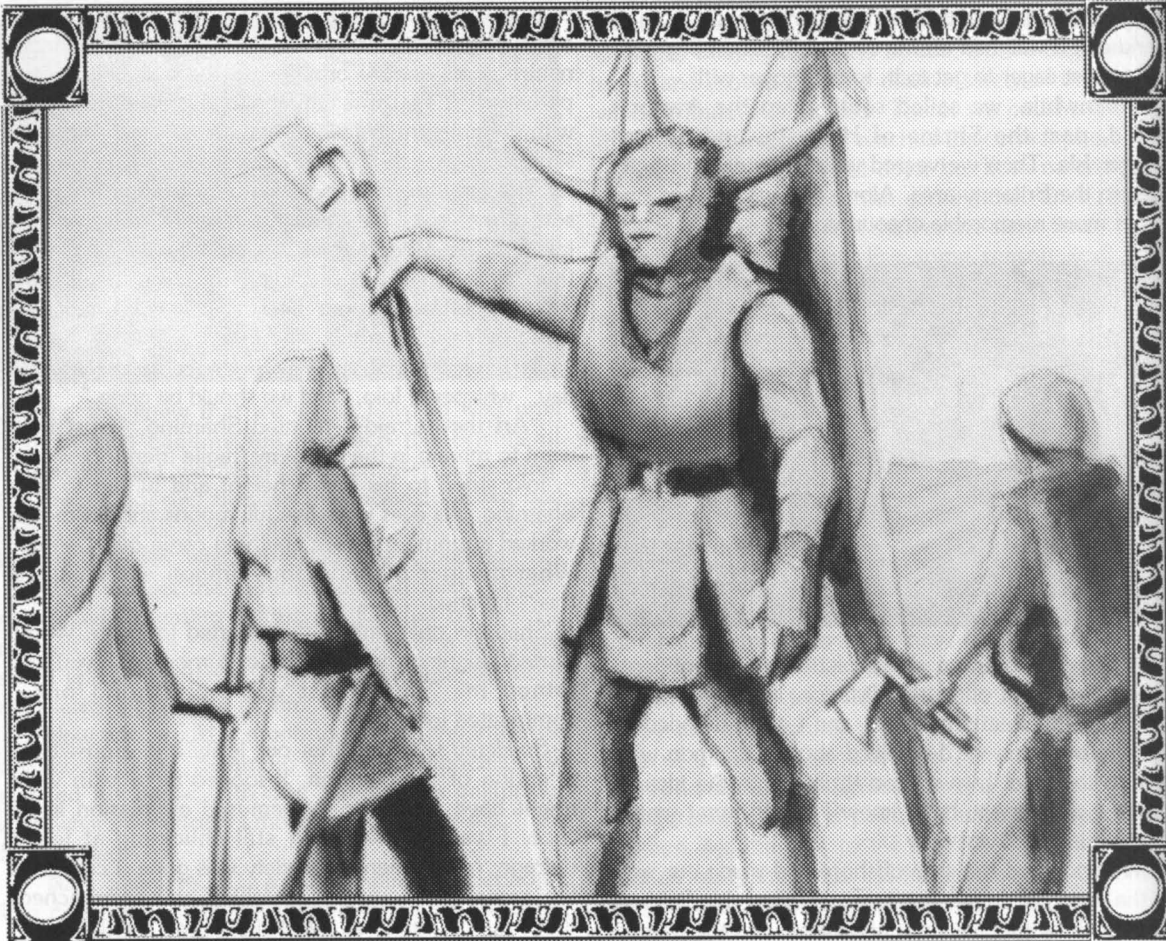
step backward as it answered me, "I once served the mighty ASTAROTH, but that was long ago."

"Astaroth?" I asked.

I could see very human-like concern in its face. "Speak not that name in too loud a voice, lest thou summon the Shadowlord of Hatred!" it warned.

I think I was having a difficult time concentrating. At any rate, I asked Sin'Vraal to repeat. "Hatred? Is that what you said?"

He nodded, then told me, "Beware, for they who yell their Names, oft die at the will of the foul wraiths!"



I had heard of wraiths before, but I wasn't sure whether it had been on this Quest or in a book I had read somewhere. So I asked him about Wraiths. His answer was not precisely to the point, but I wasn't about to argue.

"No longer do I serve Evil, for deep below the earth did the Once and True King show me the paths of Virtue!"

Now we were on more familiar, not to mention more pleasant, ground. He knew Lord British. Moreover, he had seen him alive. I tried to find out more about Lord British, but he couldn't, or wouldn't, tell me more. I tried a different approach. "Uh," I said, "you learned about Virtue."

"I can only tell thee that he has turned me from the darkness, but he'll have no such luck with the Shadowlords!"

I remembered just then to ask the creature about the Shards. He was supposed to know something. His answer, though probably helpful, did nothing to raise my spirits.

"The accursed Shard of Hatred that spawned my former master lies within the Underworld at the location thou wouldst call IA' IA'. Enter through the dungeons by Lost Hope Bay!"

And that was the end of the interview. We all made tracks out of there and back to the boat.

Later on the same journey, we spotted another hut, this one surrounded by swamps almost as bad as those surrounding Sutek's little settlement. There we found a talking rat, who taught us the spell *Rel Xen Bet* to turn an enemy into a rat. It seemed that our friendly rodent was really a mage named Grendel whose experiments had backfired. Anyway, the spell called for a mixture of spider silk, sulfurous ash, mandrake root, and nightshade.

the Glass Sword we'd heard about. But first we paid a short visit to the castle itself. I kept remembering that harpsichord and the clues I had learned from Tim and Lord Kenneth. I had a feeling there was something more to learn in the King's upper chambers.

This time, we waited until night. We had the Skull Keys, so we didn't have to use the cannon on the lock again. For that matter, we could have used the *In Ex Por* spell now. We had learned it again.

We were waiting for the guard to go away, or at least to go around the corner, but, even as we waited, a figure came near us in the darkness. It was just past 11 p.m. and he seemed about as eager to be noticed as we were. I was instantly suspicious. What could he be up to?

Iolo spoke with this man while I stood back and observed. He was dark-skinned and somewhat shorter than Iolo. His hair was black and he wore a very dark tunic and breeches as well as a cap on his head. He had the look of someone who was trying to blend in with the night.

We found out his name was Saduj and he claimed to be a gardener. There were no gardens up here on the castle battlements. He claimed to be inspecting some plants, but I didn't see any potted plants here either. Still, it could be true. Maybe there were some plants I didn't know about.

Iolo was following my line of reasoning, I think. He asked Saduj about the Plants he was supposed to be watering.

The man's eyes never focused on one spot for long. Whenever he spoke, he looked away from Iolo's eyes. It was a sure sign that he was nervous about something, and was probably lying as he said, "Thou knowest, watering and the like!"

"Watering?" asked Iolo not hiding his suspicion.

Now Saduj gave us one of those really innocent looks. "What is the matter . . . Dost thou not believe me?" Iolo just stared at him without answering or acknowledging his question. Saduj shifted on his feet and his eyes started to dart about as if looking for an escape. I found myself watching his dagger hand, but he only said, "I see." Then a sort of cunning light seemed to shine from his eyes. He half-leaned onto the balls of his feet, putting his eyes but a few inches

Entry 25—Castle Britannia: Serpent's Spine

e were heading back toward the area around Castle Britannia to search in the Serpent's Spine mountains for



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from Lolo's nose. "For that matter, what art thou doing here?"

I didn't hear what Lolo told him. I think he said something about viewing the moon. Anyway, the little man didn't buy our story any more than we bought his. Maybe it was our own shiftiness, but he suddenly asked us if we were with the Oppression. Lolo told him he was. I wouldn't have done that, but it was too late to stop him, so I waited to see how Saduj would respond.

Saduj asked for the password then. I had forgotten that we even knew of it, but Lolo remembered and told him it was *Impera*.

Suddenly Saduj became much more relaxed, even conspiratorial, as he asked Lolo, "Dost thou know of my mission?" He made it sound very important. This time Lolo said, "No."

"Blackthorn himself sent me here to find an object hidden in Lord British's chambers."

"In his Chambers? What is it?" asked Lolo.

The man shrugged. "I know not what it is, but it rests in a Sandalwood Box."

"In a Sandalwood Box?" Lolo prompted.

Once again, Saduj looked quickly around to see if we were being observed, then told us, "If destroyed, there shall be no chance for that scourge British to return." He seemed to come to a conclusion suddenly and asked, "Might I join thee, that we might work together?"

Lolo told him No and the man seemed unconcerned. "Maybe later," he said, then he skulked off.

Meanwhile, making sure we weren't followed, we entered the King's chambers. I went to the harpsichord and played the first notes of the tune I had learned from Lord Kenneth while the others searched for hidden doors or anything else of interest. They did find a secret room behind the fireplace, but there was nothing worthwhile there. However, as soon as I finished playing the first bar of the tune, there was a scraping as of stone on stone and a passageway slowly opened up behind me. We dashed over to inspect it and found a small chamber there. Inside the chamber was a single object—a small sandalwood box.

"This must be the very box Saduj was looking for," I whispered.



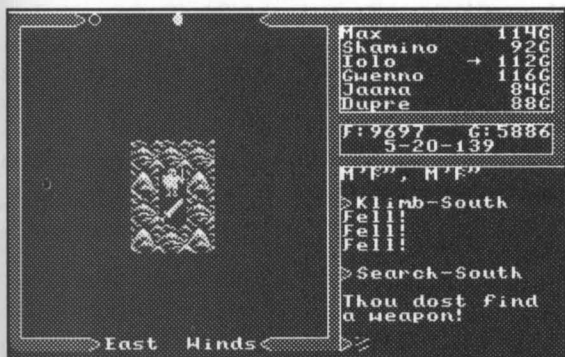
"Aye," agreed Lolo. "Let us take it and begone before he returns."

We were all thinking the same thing, so we took the box. I hid it in my cloak as we made our way back down the ladders and out of the castle. Our next goal was to seek out the Glass Sword we had heard about.

We made it to the foothills below the Serpent's Spine by midday, and searched until the sun went down. We were somewhere in the northwestern part of the mountain range when Dupré finally called us over. He had found what looked like a low pass through the mountains. We had to use the Grapple to climb through the pass, but it eventually led us to a tiny valley where the grass was stark green against the russet and violet mountain peaks reflecting the dying sun. I stood a moment admiring the view, which looked almost like a silken tapestry. Jaana came up to stand beside me and Lolo followed arm-in-arm with Gwenna. I saw nothing of Shamino or Dupré.

I tried to soak in the beauty of the moment, to store its peace and vibrancy for later, when I was deep in the bowels of Britannia. Was this the calm before the storm?

The sun went down quickly and the moment passed. We used the Sextant to confirm our location. It was FA' EA'. There we dug until we found a small cask, long and narrow. Opening the cask, I found a shimmering sword of glass. Its edge was so sharp, I feared I might be cut just looking at it. I tested it on a hair from my head and it sliced it neatly in half,



lengthwise. I handed it quickly, and very gingerly, to Dupré, who stood waiting at my side.

"Be careful, friend. This could cut your toe off if you drop it," I said.

"There's no tavern nearby," commented Iolo thoughtfully. "He'll most likely manage not to drop it."

"I could drop thee, my friend, tavern or not," answered Dupré. "And I'll drink thee under the table next time we find a decent establishment," he added. Then Dupré wrapped the Glass Sword carefully so it wouldn't slice any of our body parts off by accident.

I searched again and found yet another sword exactly like the first. Gwenno took this one, and I searched again. There was something magical about the cask, because whenever I searched and any sword wasn't being held by one of my companions, I found nothing. But if someone was holding each of the other swords, another would appear. We hiked away from the little valley richer by seven Glass Swords, all wrapped carefully for the time when we might need them.

Each member of the party should equip a Glass Sword before you search again. This way, you'll end up with seven—one equipped by each member and one in the inventory.

We visited several other special places as well. We found Mandrake Root at midnight, south of Minoc,

and deadly Nightshade south of Spiritwood. We were preparing ourselves for the next, most dangerous, part of our journey. Now that we had completed the Shrine Quests, it was my intention to go underground and recover the Shards and the other items hidden there. I was sure we would be completely tested underground, and I wanted us to be as well prepared as possible.

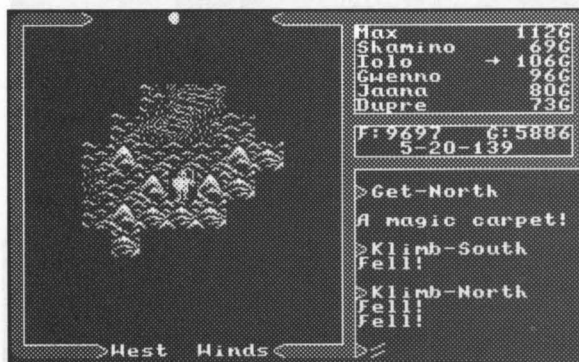
We fought many battles, hardening our skills, and on several occasions the apparition of the King visited us, raising us and giving us renewed strength, more abilities, and, most of all, hope that he still lived.

One of the most frightening places we visited was Stonegate, the abode of the Shadowlords themselves!



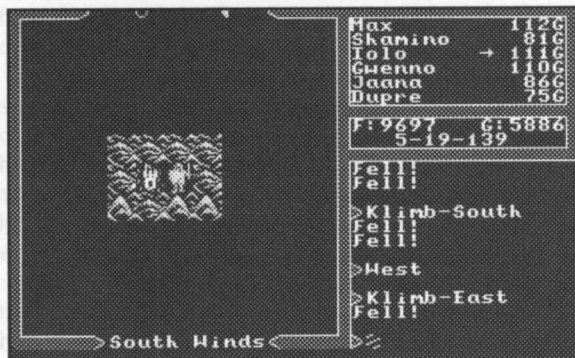
Entry 26—Stonegate: Blackthorn's Castle

In our travels, we came across the castle controlled by the Shadowlords. Stonegate it was called. It was located deep in a mountain range north of the rat Grendel's hut. The exact location was EK' JE' by the Sextant, but we only found it by accident when climbing



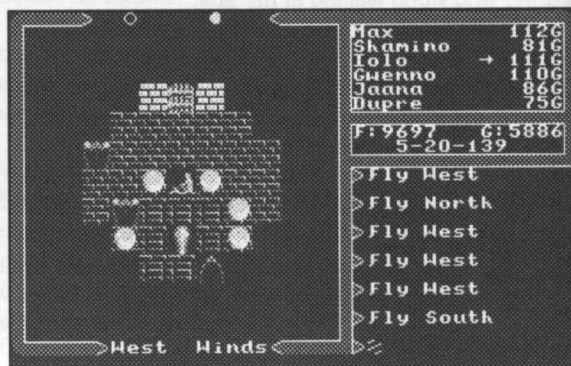
the mountains. We had spotted what looked like a high pass through the north end of the range of mountains, and discovered that it led south to the castle.

We used a Skull Key to open the door to the castle, but once we had done so we were accosted by a daemon, not nearly so well spoken as Sin'Vraal. Its name was Balinor, and it seemed to like to play



Now we had two daemons to battle. Fortunately, they kept their distance and we were able to score repeatedly with our Magic Axes. We took our lumps, but we gave better than we got. Maybe we were lucky, because Balinor's attacks missed us twice in a row, perhaps because he was dodging a veritable rain of Magic Axes. I don't know. All I know is that we survived.

After defeating the daemons, we walked up the hallway. We knew from the stench of evil that the Shadowlords were home. But we had to see what this place was. Call it curiosity. Or call it a death wish. I don't know. Anyway, we opened a door at the end of the hallway and found ourselves staring at three—count 'em . . . three!—Shadowlords.



games. It promised that if we guessed the answer to a riddle, it would spare us, but if not, it would kill us. Sounded like a fair deal to me. Any sensible person, when faced with a daemon, would agree.

So it asked its question. "What is as tall as a house, round as a cup, and all the king's men can't draw it up?"

I thought for some time. It was tall and round. A tower came to mind, but there was more to it. I was still pondering it when sharp-witted Iolo yelled, "Hest!"

The daemon snarled. "Thou hast guessed well, foolish mortal," it said wittily; then in an ugly tone of voice, even for a daemon, "but thou has committed a fatal blunder! Never trust a Daemon's word!" And with its last syllable, it launched an attack on us that we narrowly avoided.

The battle with Balinor was not as bad as I had expected. That's because I'd expected to end up dead, and I didn't. In fact, we did pretty well against the monster until it decided to call in one of its friends.

My eyes were riveted on the evil wraiths in their shimmering cloaks of Evil. But Shamino ran up next to me and pointed. Behind a stone barrier I saw a glowing item. Shamino whispered, "It's the King's Scepter. We must obtain it."

Easier said than done, my friend. We tried to outmaneuver the evil creatures, but they kept cutting us off. If we hadn't been on the Magic Carpet, we probably would have been caught, but we moved faster than they did. Still, we couldn't get the Scepter. We all knew it was certain death if we had to fight these creatures, though we suspected that even they would run if caught a good blow from a Glass Sword!

We decided, however, that it would be more prudent to deal with the Shadowlords at a time and place of our choosing, and made a hasty, though dignified retreat. In other words, we ran.

Fortunately, the Shadowlords did not follow us, and we were able to escape with our skins intact. Still, none of us were any happier for having run, nor were we satisfied that the Scepter still resided in the hands of those monsters. Their Evil laughter echoed in my ears for hours afterwards.

It is possible to gain the Scepter even when the Shadowlords are present. With the Magic Carpet, and a little luck, you can outmaneuver them, grab the Scepter, and be gone without having to fight them. If you do end up in a fight, you can use the Glass Swords to beat the Shadowlords off, but that will not kill them. The easier method of getting the Scepter is to destroy the Shadowlords first. Then it's easy pickings.

Having seen the domain of the Shadowlords, we decided to have a look at Blackthorn's Castle. We had sailed past it a few times when crossing the southern waters. It was on a small island west of the Avatar's Island.

When we arrived at the castle, we all took a deep breath and walked in, watching carefully for any signs of trouble. As soon as we had entered the place, we saw that there were guards everywhere. We were pretty sure that these guards would not let us pass as easily as those in Castle Britannia had, so we kept our distance from them.

We weren't sure where to go, so we began exploring some of the ladders and stairs, carefully avoiding contact with anyone. In an upstairs room on the south end of the castle, we found two prisoners. They had little to say, but we released them and they set about making their escape.

We had learned about some hidden doors from the prisoner at Serpent's Hold, and knew of a passage at the back of the main hall on the first floor. However, the guards were blocking our way.

"I think we'll have to try to sneak past the guards," whispered Iolo.

"Can we manage it?" I asked.

Iolo nodded and motioned us to follow him. And we almost made it. At the last minute one of the guards spotted us and called his friends. We were surrounded and pinned down before we could even draw weapons.

What happened next was a blur. I can only say that it was a kaleidoscope of violence, questions, and fear. The next thing I remembered was finding myself chained to a wall, unable to move. My arms ached and my head was throbbing. I must have been knocked unconscious. I was just beginning to get a clear idea of what was happening when Blackthorn himself stood before me.

He told me it was an honor to meet me. Big deal!

Blackthorn might once have been handsome, but now his soul was twisted by the Shadowlords' Evil. His face was mottled with red and yellow blotches that showed in the places his beard did not cover. His hands shook, and it even seemed to me that one of his legs dragged a little as he paced before me. I listened to his oily voice only because I couldn't move my hands to cover my ears.

"Since I myself seek Avatarhood as once did thee, mayhap thou couldst aid me in my Quest by answering a question." His tone was intended to reassure me of his virtuous intentions, but I could almost imagine an adder's forked tongue licking Blackthorn's lips in anticipation. I looked quickly for cloven hooves.

Max	120G
Shamino	87G
Iolo	120G
Gwerno	120G
Jaana	90G
Dupre	90G

F: 9625 G: 5886
5-26-139

This goodman at once!

"Hait!"

"Since I myself seek Avatarhood as once did thee, mayhap thou couldst aid me in my Quest by answering a question."

In the silence Blackthorn allowed me I said nothing. I was trying to figure a way out of this situation. Blackthorn ignored my silence and asked his evil question. "What is the Mantra of the Mystic Shrine of Honesty?" he asked, all sweetness and light.

"Fahrvergnügen," I told him.

He looked so confused for a moment that I could almost have laughed. But then his eyes clouded over and his whole face took on a luminescent shade of vermilion.

"Make not the mistake of laughing at me!" His voice dripped venom. Still, I could hardly help myself. He was so pathetic. But then he found a way to erase my smile instantly.

Blackthorn, the usurper, turned and motioned to the guards. Several of them marched over to Shamino, unlocking his manacles and dragging him into the center of the room. There they forced him onto a sort of bench over which hung a great axe blade. It was like something out of Edgar Allen Poe, though I doubt Blackthorn would have recognized the reference.

Then one of the guards turned over an hourglass and the sand began to pour into the bottom. The tableau was set, and Blackthorn told me, with a look of utter relish, "I will ask thee until the sand has fallen. And then Shamino will die. Now tell me, what is the Mantra of Honesty?"

I simply shook my head. What could I do? Even if he killed us all, I could not betray the sacred Shrines.

The scene became uglier by the minute as the sands flowed unceasingly and the time ran out. I continued to refuse his demands, and Blackthorn became more and more frantic until he was screaming at me, "My patience with thee has worn away! SPEAK UNTO ME THE MANTRA OF HONESTY!"

Wishing there were something I could do, even wishing I could tell him what he wanted to know, I still said no. Without another word, Blackthorn waved his hand and the blade fell.

And, mercifully, I awakened.

We were still outside Blackthorn's Castle. It had been a dream. An ugly dream that left me shaking, my heart pounding, sweat pouring off me even in the chill night air. It was still only just past midnight!

It took me more than an hour to calm myself down, to tell myself it was not real, and would not come to pass. But I was only partly convinced when I fell asleep again.

Again I dreamed. It was the same dream, only this time I told Blackthorn what he wanted to know. That was even worse. And he killed Shamino anyway. This time, when I awakened, I stayed awake the rest of the night. There was no point in trying to sleep again until I could turn my back on Blackthorn's evil palace once and for all.

When dawn finally broke, and the morning light drove away my fears, I joined my companions in a simple meal. A thin mist hung over the castle, which gleamed coldly in the growing light. We ate quietly. There was little joking or the usual banter. I wondered if my friends, too, had been visited by dreams. Shamino sat with his back to the castle, looking out over the water. Lolo picked his teeth with a sharp dagger while Dupré and I finished eating and began to pack up the gear. Jaana and Gwenno disappeared for a few minutes, and when they returned, nodded that they were ready. We carefully approached the castle, passing warily through the main gateway. We saw many guards, but kept ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. We were not spotted or challenged.

In the main entry hall, we saw more guards. They stood at their posts, but were not very alert. Probably they didn't get very many visitors.

We hid in the alcoves of the great hallway, hardly noticing the somber, dark tapestries that adorned the walls. We did see areas of the floor that looked odd. Lolo whispered to me that they were probably trapped. We were on the Magic Carpet, so we felt we could avoid setting off any traps. The guards were something else again. There were so many that I knew my dream could come true if we were caught.

Just as in my dream, Lolo led us toward the back of the room, cleverly outwitting and outmaneuvering the guards there. This time, however, we were not caught! I breathed a sigh of relief as we passed through to the stairs at the back of the room. If we didn't get caught in the next few moments, we would have gotten further than we had in my dream. Then I would be

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able to shake the sense that we were reliving my nightmare and would end up prisoners, or worse.

We climbed the stairs at the back of the main hall and found ourselves in a large room with a great desk at the north end. In a chair at the desk sat a man. We sent Iolo to question him while the rest of us hid in the shadows. The man was simply a clerk, and answered Iolo without questioning his right to be there. He told us how to get to several locations in the castle. Iolo hurried back to us.

With what the clerk, Weblock, had told us and the information from the prisoner in Serpent's Hold, we knew a great deal about the castle's layout. Most important, there were several secret doors in the castle, and one of them should be in this room. When the clerk was looking the other way, we dashed around the corner from the stairs and stood by a ladder near the southern end of the room. Iolo searched the wall south of the ladder. There he found the secret catch, jimmied open the door behind the wall, and we went through.



On the other side of the door was another ladder leading up. We climbed this one . . . and found ourselves in even deeper trouble! We were in Blackthorn's own throne room, and with the evil Usurper were two fearsome daemons! Their backs were toward us, however, and they did not notice us. They were talking loudly as well, so they did not hear our furtive movements. In fact, we actually had the audacity to release two prisoners chained against the back wall. Dupré and Iolo did, anyway.

"Avatar! We cannot leave these unfortunate men to their fate," whispered Dupré.

"Nay," agreed Iolo, "I will not sleep well if I do not free them."

I was less worried about my sleep than about my life just at that moment, but my friends were right. I nodded for them to go ahead, not trusting myself to speak.

Thankfully, they were very quiet as they jimmied the locks on the prisoners' chains. With a nod of thanks, the freed prisoners headed out through some doors to the side while we returned to the ladder that had brought us to this room and searched the wall behind it. Again, there was a false wall and a secret door.

This door led to Blackthorn's own secret apartments. We might have searched these apartments more thoroughly, but we decided to hurry onward, along the path described by the prisoner in

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Serpent's Hold. At the back of Blackthorn's apartment was a ladder leading up. We climbed it and found ourselves on the battlements of the castle. We saw no guards. Nobody at all. Carefully working our way around the walkway, we found a room set in the south end of the roof level.

There was a magically locked door leading north. Two gargoyle dogs guarded the entrance. This looked important, so we used a spell to open the door and went inside.



Opening the door, we came into a treasure room, but only one object was of interest to us. Lord British's Crown shone with an ethereal light in the very center of the room! This was the prize we sought. Quickly we retrieved it and made for the exit. Suddenly, the two gargoyles came to life and started to chase us! One minute they were stone; the next they were running after us. Though I had faced many creatures of more

fearsome appearance, there was something unsettling about these "dogs," and I didn't want to tangle with them.

It was lucky we had the Magic Carpet, because we were able to outrun the supernatural beasts. As we flew away from them, Gwanno said, "I have heard that the magical gargoyles cannot be defeated in combat. Any wound they receive causes them to create another of their kind. Before long, thou hast created an army to fight. Perhaps some powerful spell might defeat them, but I know it not."

Jaana answered, "Nor do I. But, Avatar, you should wear the Crown until we can return it to the King."

I was horrified. Even as the Carpet careened over the castle roof, the undefeatable monsters gradually falling behind, I had to reply. "No. I have no interest in the Crown or the Kingship," I argued.

But Jaana only smiled. "'Tis not to make thee act as King, or even as Regent, Avatar, but to provide thee with protection from magic. The King's Crown has that special property, and methinks the King would prefer that thou wearest his Crown now and savest him from captivity or death, rather than fail to wear it and be magically overcome in battle."

"Aye," added Dupré with a grin. "And if thou wearest the Crown, its protection may also extend to your friends. I'm sure the King would not want to lose me."

Iolo poked the paladin in the arm. "Dost thou mean to imply that His Majesty might not mind losing one of us?"

Dupré only laughed. "No doubt he values us equally, my friend, each in his own way."

Then Shamino interjected, "We each have some kinship and special place with the King, but about the Crown, Avatar, 'tis true that thou shouldst wear it."

I couldn't argue with their logic, such as it was, so I put on the Crown. It felt heavy and strange. I looked forward to the time when I could remove it and give it to its rightful owner. I was never much for ornate headgear.

We still hadn't found Hassad, the Council member who was being held somewhere within the castle. I remembered someone mentioning a basement, and we searched for it. We eventually found a fast way down to it, too. But in our searches we found other

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items. There were some scrolls and a magic ring. But we also found a dark item, the Chaos Sword. I could tell from its evil vibrations that it was a cursed thing. I left it behind. It could never have served our cause.

From the rooftop, we climbed down the ladder on the eastern side, then headed south and climbed down another ladder. From this point, we headed north again until we found a ladder in the northeast corner. Before climbing down this ladder, we freed a prisoner there, but he had no information for us.

Taking the ladder down to the next floor we found a second ladder in the same room and climbed down it. Now we were in the basement. The room we found ourselves in was built upon a pool of lava, and we carefully skirted the fiery pit to find a door at the western edge of the room.

The door led to a long hallway. It seemed blank, but Dupré spotted the telltale sign of a secret door just two steps into the hall. We searched, opened the door our search revealed, and entered a prison cell. That's where we found Hassad.



Hassad was a mystic, a dark-skinned wizard. His white hair was long, as was his beard. He seemed undaunted by his captivity, though his eyes shone with hope when he saw us enter his cell. We told him the way to escape and gave him some items he might find useful. He thanked us, but said little more—until, that is, I asked about the Word of Power. I knew that as a Council member, he'd have one of the words.

He looked uncomfortable when I asked about the Word of Power and backed away from me, perhaps

suspecting one of Blackthorn's tricks. It occurred to me that this was just the kind of thing a man like Blackthorn might try.

"I know of the Great Council," he admitted, "but what makes thee ask me? I know nothing about it!"

I wasn't sure how to answer him. Then, in my mind's eye, I saw the shy woman with the traces of fire in her heart. Kaiko! I told him, "Kaiko sent me."

He relaxed then. "She is a fine woman," he told me. "If she has told thee of me, she must have great faith in thee. I presume thou dost seek the Word of Power for the dungeon Hythloth. Are we where we may speak freely?" I looked around. My companions indicated that there was nobody nearby, so I told him yes. He answered without further hesitation. "The Word thou seekest is 'IGNAVUS!'"

After we left Hassad, we found another prisoner in the cell next to his. We jimmied the lock on his prison cell and entered. This prisoner's name was Gorn. Even though a prisoner here, he looked to be a powerful fighter. His stance was that of a skilled warrior, and his dark eyes seemed to see everything about him. He still wore a somewhat torn mail shirt and equally ragged leather pants, and he had a chain coif to protect his head. In his hand he held a dagger. How he had gotten it past Blackthorn's men was a mystery.

He smiled when we entered, apparently recognizing potential salvation, and asked us to attempt an escape with him. We agreed, and he motioned us to come closer as he told us of his escape route.

"I've escaped many times, and been caught as many. I know this castle likes the backs of my hands! In the dead of night we must go out through a secret door that's here behinds me. Climbs up onto the roof and sneaks down the northern ladder. In Blackthorn's bedroom, go through a secret door, down the ladder on t'other side. Through the secret door to the north, down another ladder and out the back gates! Wait there till morning when the drawbridge is lowered and flee for your lives."

It wasn't anything new, but we thanked him. Unfortunately, there wasn't room in our party to take him with us, but he offered to join us if we ever were short a member.

We retraced our steps, following the route that Gorn had outlined. It was almost the same route we had taken to get here. Then we made our way out of the castle and to the relative safety of the Britannian seas and sailed away. I breathed more easily when I realized my nightmares were behind me. Of course, I wasn't taking into account the nightmares I would soon meet.



**Entry 27—Hythloth:
Underworld (Mystic
Weapons: Shard
of Cowardice)**

y relief at having escaped Blackthorn's palace of evil was profound, but might have been far less so had I but known what lay ahead. For it was time now to enter the feared dungeons. I couldn't delay it any longer. It was time to get the three evil Shards as well as the magical items necessary to complete our mission. When the realization hit me that we would next be descending into the hell that awaited us below the surface, my mood blackened immediately.

Once again, my stalwart friends helped me get over my fears. When I told them our next destination, Hythloth, they hardly blinked an eye. Shamino and Dupré both seemed eager for battle, and no one showed any hesitation.

"I enjoy a good fight," was Shamino's comment.

Dupré only stated, " 'Tis a privilege to rid Britannia of more Evil."

For once, Iolo said little. I saw him glance over at Gwenno. I think he was worried about her. I thought of Jaana, but when I looked in her direction she was preparing reagents and powerful spells. She would take care of herself, and perhaps the rest of us, as well.

So we sailed east until we reached the Avatar's Island, then south around the tip. This time we passed by the familiar bay and sailed up the western side a short distance. A rocky path led up to the sealed cavern that had once been Hythloth's entrance. As we walked up a narrow pass between the foothills and the towering mountains of Avatar's Island, I could see the huge boulders and slabs of stone that buried the

entrance to the dungeon. *Better if we left it alone*, I thought. But even as I thought it, I knew it was impossible. Though I would have been glad to turn around and go back the way I had come, I knew I had to see this through.

It was time. I stood before the wreckage of the entrance and gathered my breath . . . and my courage. I yelled the Word of Power. "IGNAVUS!" The sound echoed through the hills and little valleys for a long moment and all was still. The silence was eerie, almost as if we had suddenly been cast into a vacuum. Then a low rumbling started from underneath our feet, deep in the bowels of the earth, and it grumbled and shook and came closer!

We all ran back as the pile of rubble began to shift. I thought at first it would tumble upon us, but instead, it changed, metamorphosed, shifted itself until it resembled a huge serpentine mouth, fangs ready to strike. It was the Hythloth of old. And we were about to step into its maw!

I will not write all our adventures within the dungeon, only those parts that might help future adventurers.

The first part was easy. We climbed down a long ladder that led all the way to the seventh level of this horror pit. We saw nothing other than the dank walls and the occasional bat.

On the seventh level, we eventually found that we could open a hidden door to the south of the ladder. We then walked south two steps, west two, and south two more. There we found a ladder that took us to the eighth level. There were other ladders, but this was the one that we needed.

From here we followed a twisting path first north, then west, then north again, west, north, and east to a ladder leading back up. At first we wondered why we should go back up, but eventually we found that we had to do so.

Back on the seventh level, we found a secret door two steps to the east. Through that door led the ladder down to the Underworld. But this is where our luck ran out. Until now we had met nothing to challenge our passage and I was beginning to believe the dungeons of Britannia had lost their sting. I learned better soon enough.



This room was guarded by fearsome daemons and we were forced to fight for our lives. I wore the King's Crown to protect us from the daemons' power to enchant, and Jaana cast a *Fear* spell at them to make them more vulnerable. The spell seemed to help. We killed them as they hesitated, caught between attack and flight. We took few wounds and were able to pass through to the ladder without further incident. It led down, into the Underworld.

In the Underworld, we were taxed mightily. It was a confusing land of darkness and huge mountain peaks. I had no idea how large this subterranean world was, but it felt immense. Though we could see only a part of it, even using a Gem to view it, we were in awe of this completely primitive place.

We stood in a strange grassy meadow. It could not have been ordinary grass—there was no sunlight here—but it was green and soft underfoot. We listened for a moment to an assortment of chirps and buzzes, falling rocks in the distance, and, over it all, a silence. The air was very still and dank. And that silence hung over everything, amplifying every sound. At the extreme limits of perception I thought I heard a roaring, but it might have been the blood rushing past my eardrums. I think we all gathered our courage and our breath together before setting out.

We had gathered many precious Gems and had come prepared with *Blink* spells, having heeded the visions of the keeper of the Flame of Truth, Gardner. Using the first of many Gems, we saw a cross-shaped area of lava off to the northwest. I also remembered

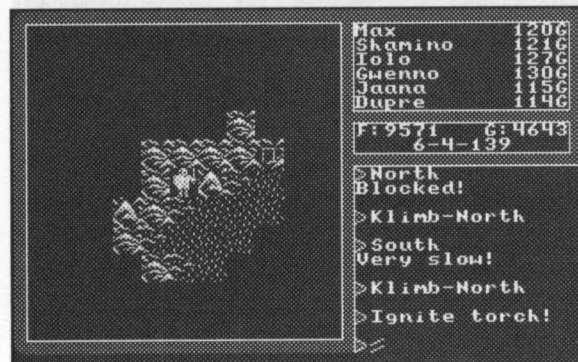
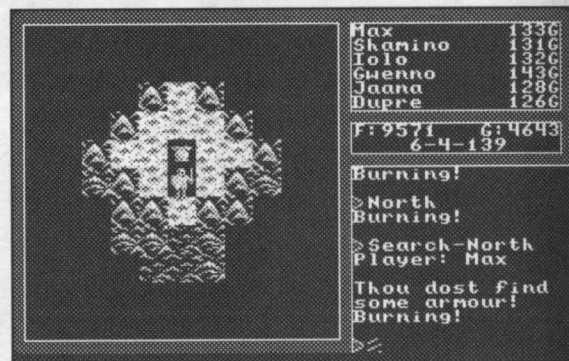
that Ambrose had talked of a lava pit near the exit of Hythloth. This must be it!

We soon found a path leading up to the lava. The air and the ground grew hotter as we approached and when we finally reached the edge of the cross-shaped inferno, I was ready to head back the way we had come. But Dupré chided me.

"Avatar, knowest thou not the power of thy faith? Aye, 'tis hot, but let thy blood run cold with vengeance 'gainst Evil, and the boiling rock will scorch thee not!"

Dupré was one of a kind. Who else could have told me this and make me believe him? But Dupré could not dissemble. He was a man of the highest principles. If he said it could be done, then, by the Eight Virtues, it would be done!

I closed my eyes a moment to prepare, breathed deeply, and saw myself walking above the lava as if it weren't there. I visualized myself in its center, gathering the Mystic Arms. And then the vision was past, and I stood there with my five companions, and we each had a set of arms and armor! I could not



explain it, but I had apparently not been visualizing. I had been doing! In fact, as I came back to myself, I realized that I had some burns. Nothing severe, but a few blisters around the feet and hands, and my face felt red, as if I had fallen asleep on a tropical beach. But whatever I was feeling, it was not what I would have expected from looking at the lava nearby. I hoped I hadn't just used up my last miracle. I was sure I would need more.

"Well done, Avatar!" exclaimed Shamino, and I felt

ULTIMA V: Warriors of Destiny

some satisfaction, for Shamino was not inclined to give out compliments easily.

Jaana came up to me and used some herbs on my burns. I immediately felt better. Then we all put on the Mystic Armor and readied the Mystic Swords we now carried. They were made of some metal much lighter than steel, but with a power about it. You could feel its strength and sturdiness. If nothing else, the new weapons and armor bolstered our spirits, and we were almost jovial as we walked back down the path.

We easily dispatched four giant rats and a whole horde of bats that tried to attack us. After dealing with daemons, these were merely inconveniences to be swept aside.

meadow. From there we used the *Blink* spell to travel west to another meadow. We walked up to the northwest until this meadow, too, gave way to the hills and mountains of the Underworld. Then we Blinked again to the west.



Once more we Blinked west, then walked west a short distance, using another Gem to allow us to line up our position until it was directly below the next meadow north. We Blinked north, then we Blinked north again, and we found ourselves in a swampy area. We rode the Magic Carpet to avoid the poison of the swamp, but had to fight off ugly giant wormlike creatures that tried to drag us down into the muck. We destroyed them with our superior weapons, taking little damage, and then made our way to the northeastern tip of this area, Blinking once more to the north. From here, we walked northwest until we found the Shard.



I will skip the bulk of our explorations, which involved many confusing false trails. Eventually we found our way to the place where the Shard of Cowardice lay. To get there, we travelled south from the Hythloth exit until we reached again green

It glittered there, to all appearances a thing of exceptional beauty, practically quivering in the torchlight with coruscating reds and purples. Yet I knew what Evil lay within it and could hardly bring myself to touch it. But I did. Without a word to my companions, I took the thing in my hands, intending to wrap it up so its sinister glow could not intrude on my senses. I had a momentary glimpse of its evil and felt a grip upon my mind that gave me an instant headache.

A sinister power flowed from the Shard, attempting to infiltrate my innermost being. Like tendrils of pure evil, its power tried to wrap me in its glamour, speaking to me in half-heard voices—sweet voices, sincere-sounding voices, voices as intimate as that of my own mother's. The voices prophesied my doom and that of my companions while the Shard painted pictures in my mind—pictures that I could not dispel by closing my eyes or by looking away. It tried in every way to instill me with Fear, but I fought the madness the Shard pressed upon me. Its power was great, and I didn't know how long I could hold on to my courage. And then someone wrapped a thick cloth around the thing, covering it with a second layer of silk, and, when I could no longer see its evil glow, the effect was reduced.

I finished wrapping the Shard and put it away until the time we would need it. I knew I had experienced only the smallest part of its power, and I could feel an uneasy pressure within for some time after the incident. But, after several minutes, I put all thoughts of the Shard behind me and turned my attention to my surroundings. With an effort, I banished the voices that still hovered at the edges of my perception.

"Art thou well?" asked Jaana.

They all stood there looking at me as if they expected me to start shouting profanities or spinning my head around in circles. I nodded. "It wasn't much fun, but I'm all right. Just give me a minute to catch my breath." I closed my eyes then and tried to picture the sunset at the Serpent's Spine and the closeness and comfort of my friends. I imagined a cool, fresh breeze blowing up the mountainside from the valley below. By the time I opened my eyes again, my companions had already turned back along the path

we had just taken. Only Jaana remained by my side. Numbly, my hand in hers, I followed them.

As quickly as we could, we retraced our steps, Blinking many times, finally making our way back to Hythloth, and from there back to the surface. We encountered a few more creatures whose goal was to destroy us, but we were too strong for them. Our experience on the surface had served us well. We were all operating at a very high level.

Speaking of high levels, it was a great relief to arrive finally at the top of the dungeon and once more breathe the clean air of Britannia. Even tainted with the evil of the Shadowlords, the air on the surface was miraculous and retained the power to heal. Below the surface, though it might still be the same air and might still be able to heal, it didn't have what I would call a quality of freedom. Whatever that quality was, we were glad to be surrounded by it once more.

Before we rested that night, we all gathered around the campfire and gave thanks. Once all the others slept, I inscribed my memories so they would not be forgotten. I knew that the next day would see us heading for yet another dungeon, and more danger.



Entry 28—Ararat: Shard of Hatred: Wrong

any days have passed. Our supply of magic herbs had fallen dangerously low on our journey to the Underworld, and we all agreed it would be foolish, and deadly, to attempt another dungeon expedition without replenishing our supplies and preparing spells. By this time we had a full arsenal of spells to cast, and meant to use them to our advantage.

There was an eagerness about my friends. We could feel the end of our Quest as a tangible quickening of our senses. Even the presence of the evil Shard failed to dampen our spirits as we traversed the land in search of supplies and prepared to go after the Shard of Hatred.

We were sailing from Minoc toward Dagger Isle. It was a sunny, clear day and the winds were with us.

We could almost have been on a pleasure cruise as the ship cleaved the gentle swells and the spars creaked in the ineffable rhythm of the sea. I was content, watching the distant shoreline drift by. I was caught completely unprepared when the whirlpool swept us up.

One moment we were in calm seas, and the next we were beginning to spin around and around. Our poor frigate was grabbed as if by a giant hand. The movement was gentle at first, simply nudging us out of our path. I noticed suddenly that the shoreline I had been idly viewing was now to the stern. Then the pace quickened.

Before I could secure myself, the boat was violently struck by a massive wave. Water crashed over the port railings, drenching me and nearly knocking me off my feet. I had been at the starboard rail, and the water had smashed across the entire deck!

The ship heeled over and I found myself hanging precariously over the side. Desperately I sought a foothold on the outside of the rail and launched myself back onto the deck as the ship righted herself. The combination of my efforts with the ship's sudden rocking back toward the port side had the effect of augmenting my forward motion to the point that, instead of simply vaulting back over the railing onto the deck, I found myself catapulted through the air like the human cannonball in the circus!

I had just a moment to survey the deck as I flew overhead. My companions were all clutching some part of the ship or another. I saw Iolo's face, lit with surprise, as he watched me fly high into the air. All this I caught in an instant. Then I saw the mast.

That was the last thing I saw. It caught me square in the head. I have a hazy memory of landing on the lowest spar and wrapping my arms and legs around it as everything went gray, then black.

o o o

My eyes flickered open, almost of their own accord. I was still only partly conscious, so it was a shock to see Jaana and Gwenno both looking down at me. I was about to babble something trite like "Where am I?" when memory returned. The headache that suddenly crushed me in its ham-handed grip evoked the image

of the mast speeding toward me, of the sickening *crack* that had led ultimately to my losing consciousness, of the whirlpool that had caught us unaware.

I couldn't resist. "Where am I?" I said, capitulating to the inevitable. Then I noticed the heavy air and the particular musty scent I had so recently observed. "The Underworld?" I asked, answering my own question with another.

Jaana nodded and put something in my mouth that tasted like chalk in a mushroom base. It made me gag, but my headache faded to an unpleasant memory and I was able to sit up.

"Thou shouldst be more careful, Avatar!" she chided.

"Thou makest a fine bird," interrupted Iolo dryly, "but thou shouldst learn to perch upon the mast, or at least fly on by it."

Jaana gave him a sour look as I fingered the lump above my forehead. "I've no plans to sprout wings, my friend," I answered. "But if I do, I hope you'll be flying right along with me."

"Nay, Avatar. I prefer to keep my feet upon the ground."

"Thou hast been known to fly high enough after a few pints of ale, Iolo my love," said Gwenno.

"Speaking of ale," muttered Dupré, "the sooner we find our way out of here, the sooner we may return to the Blue Boar and hoist a few."

I gathered myself as they went on with their conversation. I surveyed our surroundings. First, I saw the ship, floating quiescently in a small lake. From appearances, we were back in the Underworld, but not in the area we had previously visited. Then, as I recovered, Shamino, Iolo, and Dupré gathered our supplies from the ship, which looked none the worse for the experience.

A few minutes later we were aboard the Magic Carpet, flying over a wide, slow-moving river. Since none of us knew where we were headed, we simply explored the area. Therefore, it was probably something of a lucky break that we reached the waterfall leading to Ararat.

We had flown in a south-by-southeasterly direction when Shamino's sharp hearing detected the sound of

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a waterfall. We headed over to the western shore, where the roaring seemed to originate.

A small waterfall emptied into another lake, and there, in the middle, was a small building fashioned from the hulk of a frigate much like ours. Perhaps this was the work of an unlucky sailor who, having survived the whirlpool, had simply given up hope of returning to the surface and had made a home here. It could not have been an easy life. Already, in the short time we had been flying over the still waters of this part of the Underworld, we had spotted several bats, fearsome mongbats, and giant squids. We had managed to avoid contact with these monsters, but it was obvious that living here could be no picnic.

	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Max</td> <td style="text-align: right;">189G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shamino</td> <td style="text-align: right;">184G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Iolo</td> <td style="text-align: right;">183G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Guenno</td> <td style="text-align: right;">187G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jaana</td> <td style="text-align: right;">189G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dupre</td> <td style="text-align: right;">188G</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">F: 9505</td> <td style="width: 50%;">G: 4643</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">7-4-139</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fly West > Fly West > Fly West > Fly West > Fly West > Fly East 	Max	189G	Shamino	184G	Iolo	183G	Guenno	187G	Jaana	189G	Dupre	188G	F: 9505	G: 4643	7-4-139	
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We flew the Carpet up the gangplank leading into this strange abode. It was clearly a home now, and showed some signs of recent occupancy—a tattered robe hanging to dry from an equally frayed rope; a pair of small creatures, gutted and hanging before the ship's entry; and a set of muddy footprints leading up the gangplank. A sign proclaimed the name of the place—Ararat.

We spotted the man standing near the mid-deck. He had the look of a wizard fallen on hard times. We stood staring at him for several long moments while he returned our stares with equal intensity. His wizard's robe was ripped and patched in many places and his staff seemed to have been used for a variety of purposes ranging from hammer to fire poker. I am convinced that he didn't believe we were there. He began to walk away from us, muttering and shaking his head.

I approached and hailed him. He turned in surprise that his hallucination had spoken, but I think he realized I was real when he reached out and touched my hand with his.

"At long last, another living soul!" he cried.

I smiled and asked his Name. That's when I learned that he was the infamous Captain Johne.

The subject of conversation quickly turned to the Shadowlords, though there were other questions I might have asked. But on the subject of Shadowlords, Johne was most enlightening.

"Years ago, my ship was swallowed by a massive whirlpool." This part, at least, was familiar. "The remains of my ship washed up on this isle along with me and three others." Yes, it was just as I had suspected. "When I recovered, I explored my surroundings and found a great Gem broken into three Shards."

He shuddered at the memory, and I felt an echo of his distress, thinking about the evil thing we carried wrapped tight so we would not see it. But Johne was continuing his story. His head hung now, and he studied the deck beneath his shoes as he spoke. He seemed unable to meet my eyes or those of my friends.

"The Shards, full of evil, drove me to kill my three companions," he told us miserably, "and from their blood sprang the three Shadowlords. Taking the Shards deep into this underworld, they entrapped Lord British and now hold Blackthorn in their power." Now a hint of anger gleamed in his eye, and he became a little steadier on his feet. I could imagine a younger, stronger Captain Johne who must have been someone to fear. Finally he told us, "They spare me only to taunt me with such news until my dying day."

Johne looked at me then, with that look I had grown to recognize all too well. "Wilt thou save Britannia?" he asked.

I was going to say yes, but was wondering how I might do so if I was still stuck down here. I nodded, a little uncertain, but that did nothing to deter the good Captain. He asked to join us.

I was tempted to let him, but my rule of keeping our party to six adventurers had become habit, and I shook my head sadly. I was convinced that Johne

would have made an important contribution to our cause, but I couldn't break the rule I had set.

Some players may consider replacing one of the other characters with Johne, who can cast powerful magic spells. It depends on when you encounter him and how advanced your other players are. If you plan to add Johne to your roster, you must leave another player behind before entering a whirlpool.

Before we made our exit and left Johne to his fate, we found a scroll in his quarters. He gave it to us, saying it was the least he could do and wishing us luck. He also told us that the ruins of a dungeon were to be found almost due east of his little island. I suggested that he might accompany us as far as the top of the dungeon, but he seemed reluctant. He told us he would wait where he was. He looked suddenly tired and old, but by the time we were at the bottom of the gangplank he was busy retrieving his small animal carcasses, no doubt thinking about his dinner.

Taking a footpath south of Ararat, we returned to a spot just southeast of the waterfall and headed east. We found the entrance to the dungeon Despise at the easternmost edge of the broad river. We were about to use the Word of Power to open the dungeon and work our way back to the surface when I had an idea.



"Why don't we see if we can use our *Blink* spells to explore the Underworld some more?" I asked.

"Good idea," said Iolo. The others agreed, all except for Dupré.

"What's the matter, Dupré?" I asked.

His right hand curled tight around the hilt of his sword, and as he spoke, he would drag it several inches from its scabbard, then lower it back into place. He did this again and again in an unconscious rhythm. "Thou knowest I will go wherever thy Quest should lead, Avatar. But I like these *Blink* spells not at all." He sighed then. "'Tis a great concern of mine that I will not reappear, but will be lost in the strange timelessness of the magic spell."

Jaana laughed. "Good friend, our *Blink* spells are far less dangerous than the risk you take every time you walk in the Deep Forest alone or explore the depths of a dungeon. In fact, thou art probably in more danger when drinking at thy favorite pub than thou art from our spells."

"Still, I like it not," insisted Dupré. "But I am no coward. I will brave anything thou asketh of me. I just wonder if all this coming and going from existence is good for a body."

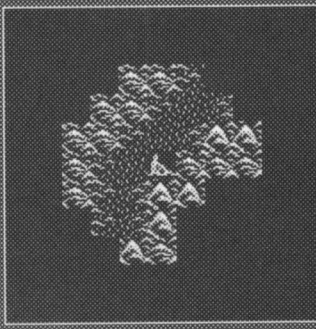
"No worse than the prodigious amounts of ale thou dost consume," interjected Shamino. "Come, friend, 'tis of no consequence. The Avatar hath decided. Whatever thou thinkest, thou wilt follow. Let us be off, then."

Dupré smiled his agreement. "Aye. Thou art correct, Shamino. Though I prefer to face an enemy with my sword, I will come."

We headed along a rocky path until we had reached a place as far to the east as we could go. Then we used a Gem to view the area. Finally, we Blinked east and ended up on another rocky path.

It took us some time, but we eventually discovered a mountainous path that led to the Shard of Hatred. It lay on a rocky, barren plateau, surrounded by small hills and taller peaks. The only way to the plateau was a maze-like path of hillocks that meandered among the higher mountains. Starting from the north, just below a fork in the path, we climbed first east, then south, east again, south again, and then turned east. The way turned gently southward, then doubled back

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Max	202G
Skamino	205G
Iolo	206G
Gwenno	208G
Jaana	203G
Dupre	208G

F: 9472 G: 5114
7-8-139

>View a gem!

>Fly North
Very slow!

>Fly North

>Fly East
Very slow!

>View a gem!

packed it away before it could infiltrate my being. We retraced our steps, back through the mountainous maze, and after a short search, using Gems several times, we found entrances for the dungeons Wrong and Covetous to the north. Several attempts to *Blink* further east failed, and we decided to climb to the surface via the dungeon Wrong, despite its unfortunate name.

Wrong was a catacomb of death. In addition to the corpses chained to the walls at intervals, it was littered with traps to catch the unwary. We stepped cautiously through its corridors. However, unlike most dungeons



Max	202G
Skamino	205G
Iolo	206G
Gwenno	208G
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F: 9472 G: 5114
7-8-139

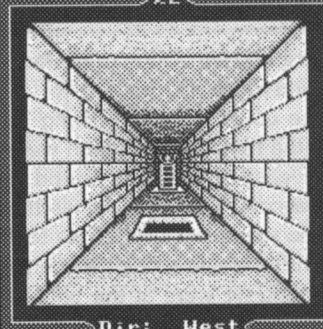
>View a gem!

>Fly North
Very slow!

>Fly North

>Fly East
Very slow!

>View a gem!



Max	210G
Skamino	210G
Iolo	210G
Gwenno	210G
Jaana	210G
Dupre	210G

F: 9466 G: 4843
7-7-139

Sceptre of Lord British...
Field destroyed!

>Advance

>Search...
Player: Max
Dir-Ahead
You find:
A pit!

Dir: West

to the west, and finally to the north. One final leg to the west led us to the plateau and the Shard.

Forewarned by my experience with the Shard of Cowardice, I handled the Shard of Hatred as little as possible. Though I felt the anger and intolerance of its nature seeping from it, I wrapped it quickly and

in Britannia, Wrong didn't smell too bad. The corpses were old and had long since rotted and dried. The only scent was a musty one, something like your grandmother's closet or bread a week too old to eat. At any rate, we had other worries besides our sensitive noses. We were kept busy dispelling fields and



Max	210G
Skamino	210G
Iolo	210G
Gwenno	210G
Jaana	210G
Dupre	208G

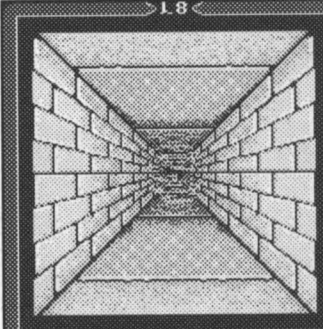
F: 9472 G: 5114
7-8-139

>Klimb-West
Not climbable!

>West
Very slow!

>West
Very slow!

>West
Very slow!



Max	202G
Skamino	205G
Iolo	206G
Gwenno	208G
Jaana	203G
Dupre	208G

F: 9472 G: 5114
7-7-139

Dir-Ahead
You find:
A bomb trap!

>Advance

>Search...
Player: Max
Dir-Ahead
You find:
A bomb trap!

Dir: South

disarming bomb traps on our way north from the bottom ladder. We searched carefully at each step, finding and disarming the traps as we went.



At the north end of the corridor, we entered a room that might almost have been cozy—if it hadn't been for the occupants, that is. A table and chair, a clock, a fireplace, and even a potted plant lent an eerie charm to this room at the bottom of the dungeon, but the resident mage and his attendant daemons were anything but hospitable. I tried to hail the mage, thinking we might avoid another conflict, but he ignored my efforts. There remained no choice but to fight, which is what we did.

During the battle, one of us, I forget who, tossed an errant Magic Axe and it revealed a hidden room behind the fireplace, where lurked a deadly reaper. We killed the fiend along with all the others in the room. A *Fear* spell helped keep them off balance as our weapons gradually wore even the tough daemons down. The mage himself had gone down in the first salvo. None of them even got close to us, and Lord British's Crown protected us from magic attacks.

A bomb trap and another field trap greeted us once we had left the cozy room. But dead ahead was a healing fountain, which we visited gratefully. There seemed to be no other exit from the corridor, but a brief search revealed a hidden door three paces east of the fountain. Through the door was a room, another battle, and a ladder leading to the next level. Without the Crown, I might have succumbed to the charms and enchantments of the daemons in this room, but

with it we were able to reach the ladder safely and depart without much difficulty.

We took this ladder two levels upward, walked south, then turned east and climbed again. From here our way was straightforward until we reached the second level, where we were nearly sent down a pit that stood just before a field trap. We found the ladder up without event, however, and climbed it, ending up in a room. The resident orcs didn't take kindly to our presence, but we dispatched them and exited north, soon encountering the next ladder up. At last we were free in Britannia again.

The entrance to Wrong was almost due north of the Brittany villages, so we headed south to buy another ship. Our next destination was the dungeon Deceit. I think we all felt more confident now that we had turned the adversity of the whirlpool to our advantage and had recovered the second Shard.



Entry 29—Deceit: Shard of Falsehood

Deceit was located east of Dagger Isle. It had once been a catacomb used by the ancients as a burial ground. At some time in its long history it had

been the scene of bizarre rites of an arcane sect, but now it was simply the abode of monsters. It hid nothing of importance, but at its bottom was another entrance to the Underworld. We believed that the Shard of Falsehood would be found beneath it.



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When we first entered the dungeon, we found a hallway leading south, but Jaana discovered a secret door that led north. My practice, learned from experience in my former adventures, was to follow the secret doors. It wasn't an infallible rule, but I figured that whatever someone had taken the trouble to hide was exactly what I wanted to find.



So we headed north to the ladder and climbed down. We spotted a healing fountain at the ladder's bottom. Heading south this time, we climbed down the ladder we found. I think we all felt we'd landed in a hornet's nest. The room we found ourselves in featured two ladders, one at either end of the room. A force field bisected the enclosure and our greeting committee consisted of some rather unfriendly daemons. Once again, I was glad I was wearing Lord British's Crown.

Jaana dispelled the force field with the *An Grav* spell while the rest of us tore into the daemons. Gwenno cast a *Confuse* spell, I think. Or was it a *Fear* spell?

One of the daemons got close enough to me to try to rake me with its razor-sharp claws. I was just ducking its attack when a Magic Axe flew over my head and buried itself in the creature's shoulder before magically returning to its owner. The daemon began to retreat then, and I finished it off with a blow from my own Axe. I looked around and saw Dupré grinning. It was good to have friends; that's what I found myself thinking as I gave him a quick thumbs-up sign.

Meanwhile, my companions and I completed the rout of our enemies, sweeping the room clean of their evil. Our wounds were painful, but not serious. Still, we took the time to climb the ladder we had just descended to visit the healing fountain before continuing our descent.

The ladder in the daemons' room led two levels down to Level 5, where a short walk east, then south, took us to another ladder down. Iolo spotted some bats flying in the distance, but we were down the ladder before they could catch us.

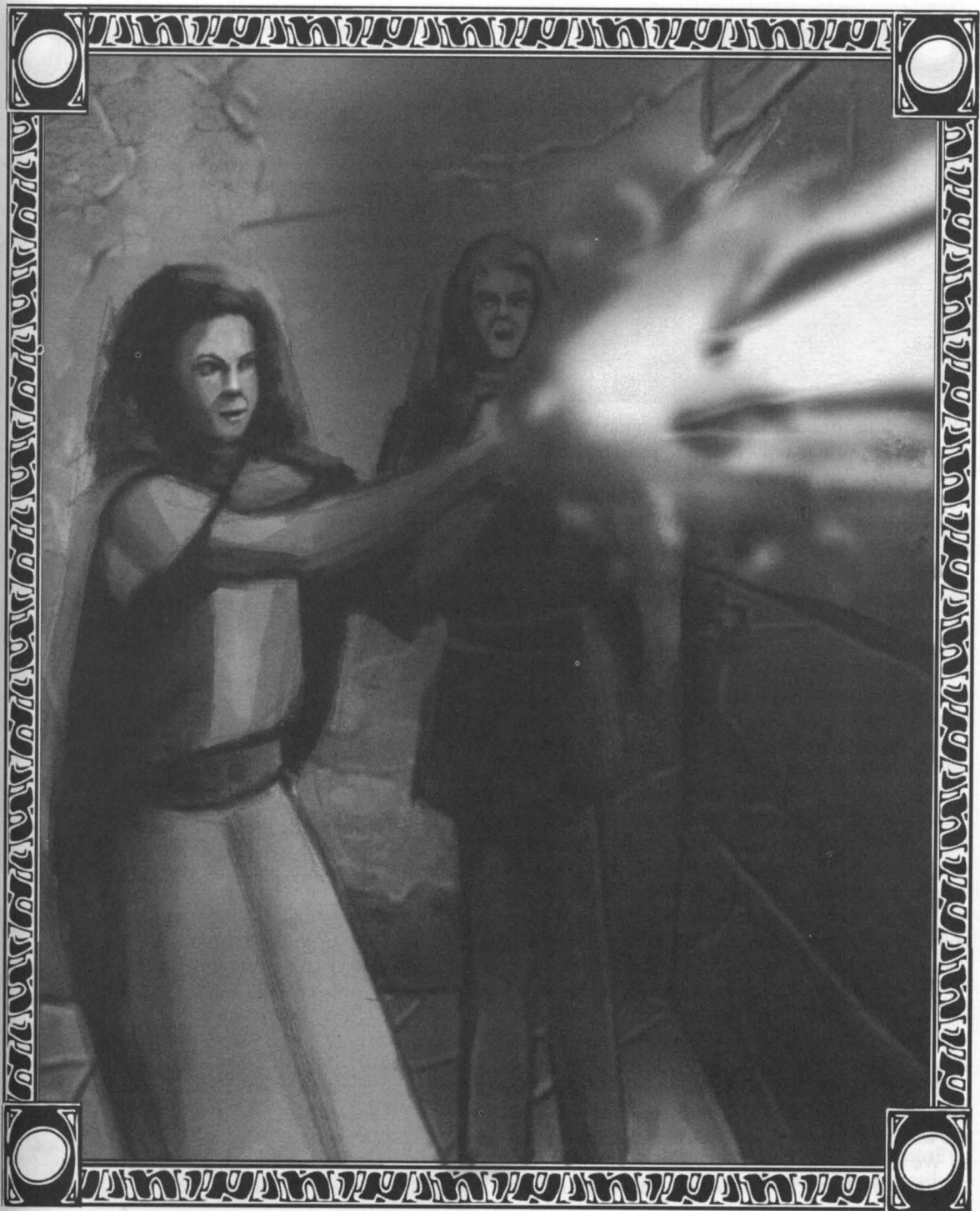
On Level 6 we headed east, spotting a pit trap at an intersection, where we turned north. The ladder took us to Level 7.



A doorway led west, and we crossed its threshold, finding ourselves once again in a room full of danger. A horde of rats stood sentry over some treasures as well as the body of some unfortunate explorer, but we had to be on guard against other, more deadly, enemies. We ignored the rats and quickly made our way through the room, exiting to the north. We continued north, turned east, then north again until we found another ladder.

On the eighth level, we first walked south until we reached a wall. There we found a false door that revealed a trapped chest. Foiling the trap, we walked away with some rations, gold, and keys. Then we turned east and south again to face a doorway.

Through the doorway was a truly a devious room. I confess that I stepped foolishly on the trip-stone that released the headlesses and bats, but we fought them



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off with little trouble. It was the dragons that were most difficult. Though they were trapped behind some stout stone pillars, they could occasionally blast us with their fiery breath. We chose not to stand and fight them, however, but passed through the room as quickly as we could.

The first room led to its mirror image. Yet again we tripped a hidden stone and released more monsters while we walked gingerly past the trapped dragons. This time we stopped at an advantageous position and killed all the headlesses and the dragons as well. I think we'd grown tired of taking a singeing from the dragons. They'd left several of us with blisters. It wasn't our nature to take such abuse without reprisals.

Once we were through the second of the dragon rooms, we came upon the most puzzling place we'd seen yet. Still heading south, we entered a room that seemed to end in a brick wall, but we could hear the sounds of evil creatures coming from within the walls.

"What do you make of this?" I asked my companions, unsure whether to head back the way we had come or stay and resolve this mystery.

"'Tis a sturdy wall," said Dupré, banging on it with his sword hilt. "We'll not break through it easily."

"There's some devious purpose to this room," stated Shamino. "I suggest we search."

Meanwhile, Iolo and Gwenno were examining the wall more closely. "Avatar!" cried Gwenno. "Methinks this wall may move. There is something irregular here."

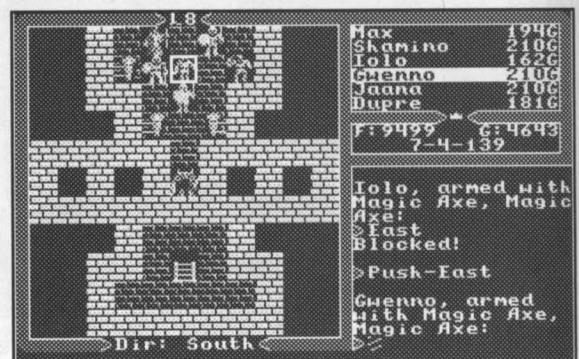
We all crowded around Gwenno and she showed us the slight crack in the mortar that might indicate

some moveable wall segment. "There must be a catch or lever somewhere," I said. "Let's find it."

We searched for what must have been nearly an hour amid the grunts and growls of the creatures trapped behind the wall. Finally Dupré found a raised spot behind the torch in the upper right corner of the room. It was sheer luck—first he'd taken the torch to help him search, then he inadvertently pushed on the spot and the wall opened before us!



A misshapen creature glared at us, blinking in the sudden light. It had been trapped within the wall for who knew how long. I slew it mercifully before it could realize it was free at last. I walked into the gap left by the disappearing wall and examined the area it revealed. It was a small cell, barely big enough for a man to stand in, and it smelled vile. Urine and feces, combined with the small bones of hapless creatures, formed the foul palette of some deranged artist of



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filth. It was, in its way, a masterpiece. But I could barely stomach my exposure to it and searched quickly, once again finding a raised spot on the western wall. The cell east of me opened up and I had to fight off another monster.

Max	194G
Shamino	210G
Lolo	162G
Guenno	210G
Jaana	210G
Dupre	181G

F: 9499 G: 4690
7-4-139

Magic Axe: Attack-Aim!
Dragon lightly wounded!
Max, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
Magic Axe: Attack-Aim! >>

>Dir: South<

Max	194G
Shamino	210G
Lolo	162G
Guenno	210G
Jaana	210G
Dupre	181G

F: 9501 G: 4754
7-4-139

>Pass
Max, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
>Push-East
Shamino, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
Magic Axe: Attack-Aim! >>

>Dir: South<

Max	194G
Shamino	210G
Lolo	162G
Guenno	182G
Jaana	210G
Dupre	181G

F: 9502 G: 4843
7-4-139

Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
>Pass
Guenno, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
>Push-South
Jaana, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!

>Dir: South<

Max	137G
Shamino	179G
Lolo	144G
Guenno	144G
Jaana	185G
Dupre	150G

F: 9484 G: 4843
7-7-139

Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
>Pass
Shamino, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!
>Push-North
Lolo, armed with Magic Axe, Magic Axe!

>Dir: West<

This pattern continued. First I'd press an eastern wall and the cell to the west would open. We'd kill the grotesque creature it housed, then cross into its filthy nest to press yet another wall stud and open yet another cell. Each successive cell revealed a more fearsome monster until, finally, we faced two horrible dragons in succession. And I can tell you, these scaly beasts were anything but grateful to have been released.

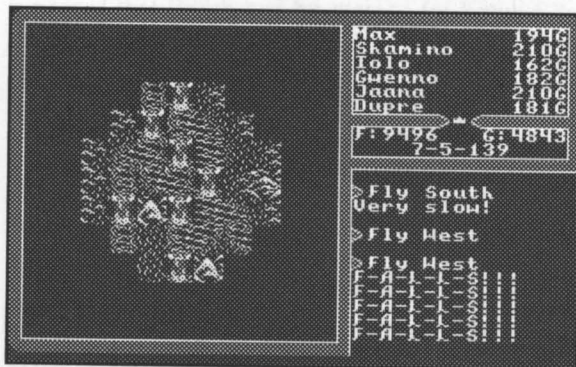
We battled the great green lizards and, though weakened by their fireballs, we killed them both and took their treasures. Then we were faced with a blank wall. No longer did the ends of the corridors reveal any mechanisms or new gaps. Again we had to search. We found the answer on the southern wall, two paces from the western edge of the row of cells. Pressing on a stud there opened the final wall segment and revealed a ladder to the south. We were through!

Back in the Underworld again, we paused to get our bearings. The sounds of a distant waterfall greeted us. It was off to the northwest, but there didn't appear to be a passage through the mountains in that direction. We climbed the low hills to the southwest until we reached a rough pathway littered with sharp rocks and small boulders.

We continued south until we came to a fork in the path, which had by this time widened considerably. We turned north up the fork, fighting our way through a reception committee of giant rats and spiders. When we came to another fork, we headed northeast. The western fork turned out to lead to a series of meadows



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and eventually to a dead end. I would have reason to be thankful for these meadows later on.

As had been the case frequently in the Underworld, earthquakes shook the ground and caused us to lose our footing. Though we were bruised each time these tremors hit, we were not seriously harmed. As usual, we picked ourselves up off the ground, dusted ourselves off, and continued our journey, each of us, no doubt, dreaming of a time when we could spend a few days in bed.

When we reached the head of the falls, we flew the Magic Carpet close in to investigate further, but something must have caught the Carpet—or we flew too far over the edge—because before we could change directions, we were crashing down the steep waterway. No rapids were ever so long or so rough. We were tumbled downward for what seemed like an hour. I could no longer tell which way was up and soon became convinced that I was caught in a waterfall that led to the very center of the world. I was already coughing and sputtering while the world spun about me. I figured I would drown before it was over.



I don't think I ever lost consciousness, but I was retching from dizziness and coughing from the water in my lungs when we finally reached the bottom. I managed to crawl onto the soggy but still serviceable Magic Carpet, but then I was overcome by my nausea and coughing. It could have been worse. A quick check—between heaves and hacks—revealed that my friends were all present and accounted for. In fact, they were all gathered around me as I hung over the side of the Carpet. Dupré stood on the shaky platform, with hands on hips, and Lolo apparently thought the sight of me on my belly was something hilarious. Shamino just looked disapproving. Only Jaana and Guenno seemed to have any sympathy for my plight. Jaana put her hand on my back in silent support while Guenno cuffed Lolo about the ears for mocking me.

I think we must have spent a day or more walking north, always climbing, as the pathway became ever more narrow and confining. But we eventually turned west and reached the shores of a great underground lake. By this time, we had climbed a great way upward, and the roaring of the waterfall had grown nearly deafening. We headed along the southern shore of the lake to investigate.

I said nothing. I just lay there a few minutes to catch my breath. Then, gathering my strength and my pride, I said, "Well? What are you all waiting for? Let's go find out what this hellhole has to offer."

"Thou shouldst consider taking up residence permanently in Britannia, Avatar," suggested Iolo, still chuckling. "Thy constitution is still not as sturdy as ours. We spend more and more time here."

"Aye," added Shamino. "What is it thou findest so attractive back in our homeland?"

I had no immediate answer. "Perhaps we should discuss this matter after we've completed our current mission. Without Lord British, even you, my friends, will admit that Britannia is not the same."

The Magic Carpet still floated serenely, drying quickly. A quick check under the hood, so to speak, revealed that its magic threads were still serviceable. Looking around me, I discovered that we had landed in another lake. A faint glow to the south caught my attention, and that was the way we headed. On a small island in the middle of the lake we found the Shard of Falsehood.

I was still weak from the beating and the dizziness, so I was reluctant to touch the tainted fragment. I motioned toward Iolo, inviting him to take it, but he wasn't laughing then. He just looked at me as if to say, "It's your job. You do it."

My struggle with the Shard was awful. But I had experience, having handled two Shards before this, and I was able to dispel the lies it tried to breed within my soul. Once I had controlled it, we wrapped the evil relic and prepared to return to the surface.

It was clear we would never make it back up the waterfall, but I had a brilliant idea, if I do say so myself. Flying the Carpet east of the small island, we came to a rocky path that headed into the mountains.

Following this path as far east as we could, we used a Gem to check our position. The large meadow we had seen previously was just east of us. A single *Blink* spell took us back to that meadow, only a short hike from the entrance to Deceit. We were almost back.

We rested a while before attempting our return through Deceit. Then we began the long return to the daylight of Britannia. The ascent was much as the descent had been. We had to search out and open the studs in the puzzle room in reverse order this time, and to pass through the two dragon rooms again. The rest was easy, though we traveled carefully. When we found the healing fountain again on the second level, we were all grateful for its balm.

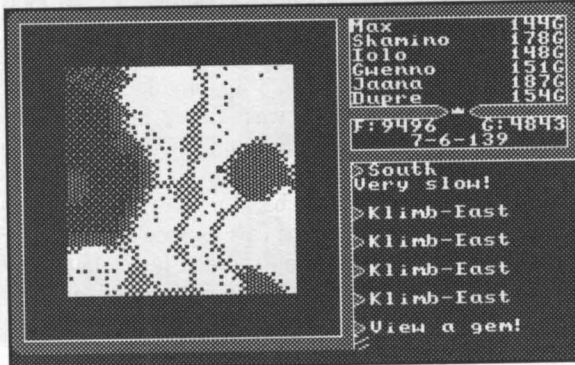
We had nearly completed our Underworld quests. One item remained, the King's Amulet. We had waited to retrieve it until we had all the other pieces. Now it was time to follow the King's path and find our way to the place where he had last been seen. We had the scroll his companion had brought to the surface. It described the way to the King's last battleground. We would have to follow his path if we hoped to succeed in our Quest. It was nearly over, but I couldn't help thinking that the worst was yet to come.



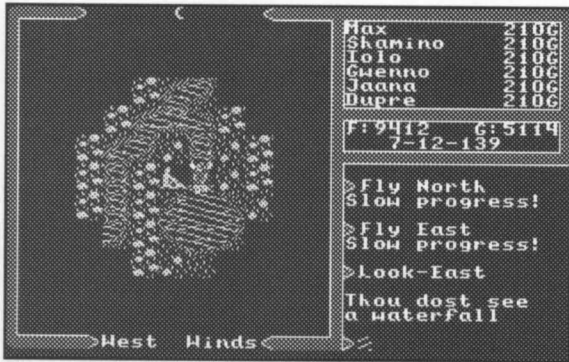
Entry 30—Spiritwood: Underworld (the Amulet); Destard

I had in our possession the scroll written by Remoh, Lord British's scribe, on the occasion of the King's expedition into the Underworld. In it, Remoh details the events of their journey: the treacherous attacks, the deaths of the heroic members of their party, and the eventual capture of Lord British. This sad and helpless chronicle was to be our guide as we set out for the waterfall Remoh describes, just east of Spiritwood.

Riding the Carpet, we found the waterfall within a day and, without hesitation, we rode it tumbling down into the depths of the earth. We were becoming adept at such adventures, and arrived unharmed directly in the middle of a small lake, just as Remoh had recounted.



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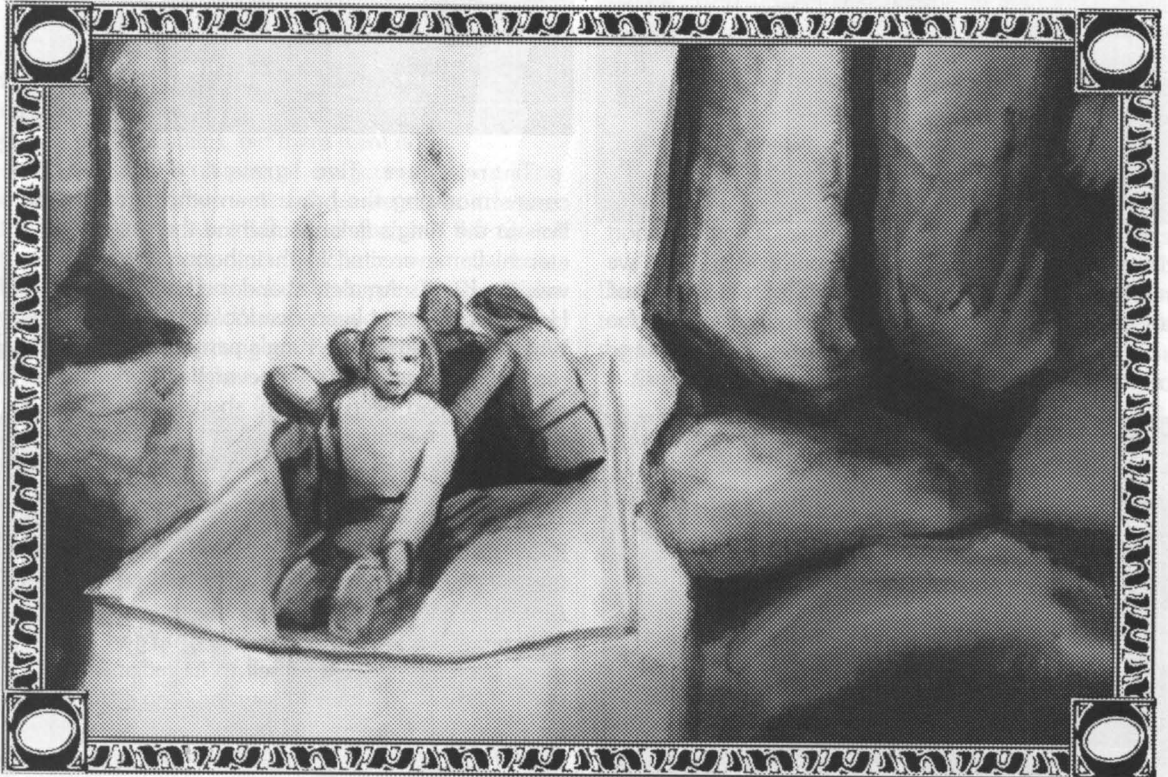


To the south, we found the small wooden sign erected by the King's party and we followed the small stream south, riding the Carpet instead of a more fragile skiff. Why the King had not taken his Carpet was a question that had often nagged me, but I

supposed that British had his reasons for keeping its existence secret. That secret was no longer safe. Too many had seen us flying by for there to be any doubt that the rumor of a flying rug would be all over Britannia by now. Of course, that rumor would have reached Blackthorn long ago, and he would be anything but pleased.

We were about to follow the long, circuitous route taken by the King and his party, keeping to the south when we reached the first fork in the river, but Jaana and Lolo both voted that we take a different route and go east. At first we were four against two, but slowly, as we read the scribe's account, we came to the conclusion that there might be a shorter way to the site of the final battle, where we hoped to find the Amulet or at least some clue.

So we took the eastern fork and flew over the rushing stream until it split again. One fork went



further east and the other turned south. We used a precious Gem and discovered that the eastern fork described a loop, so we went south. In viewing the Gem, we also noticed the telltale sign of a dungeon entrance to the southwest. I filed that information for later, hoping we would have reason to need it.

Soon we heard the sounds of falling water and we rushed down a short but violent rapids, narrowly avoiding some monstrous sharp rocks that might have smashed us. Once again, the Carpet was caught in the undertow of the rushing water, but once again we were able to hang on and come out only a little sodden, but unharmed.

When the river split again, we took the eastern fork. This time the river meandered about, first east, then south, then back to the north, east, and finally south again. After a long straight stretch to the south, the river turned to the west. We used another Gem to get a better look at our surroundings, and discovered something almost due south of us that seemed unusual. However, an attempted *Blink* spell failed to take us to the place we had seen. Still, I think we all knew we were close to something.

Continuing in a generally southwesterly direction, we came upon a rock-strewn path leading south. We decided to leave the river then and try a little exploration overland. The path took us south a short distance, then turned basically southwest. When we reached a straight section heading due west, we used another Gem and discovered a swampy meadow due south. High mountains prevented our passage overland, but a *Blink* spell took us to the swampy oasis.

The swamp turned out to be larger than we had supposed. It was huge, in fact, and we came to the conclusion that we had rejoined the King's path in this swamp. We were soon to find out how right we were.

We explored to the east, eventually finding a pathway that fit the description given by Remoh in his scroll. I kept my eyes open for an ambush, but saw nothing. We followed the path until it opened upon a meadow of the strange Underworld grass. Continuing east, we found them.



There were five graves, with markers commemorating the brave men who had lost their lives in the King's defense. Behind the graves was an eternal flame erected in their honor. Finally, there was the King's Amulet, abandoned near the graves. How it could have been overlooked was beyond me. Whatever had killed the King's party certainly failed to recognize its value. But whoever had buried them (I assumed it had been Remoh) should have known its value. I guessed that he had been forced to retreat unexpectedly and had had to abandon the precious relic.

The Amulet glowed with a luminescence that could have cut through the darkest night. In every way that the evil Shards had glowed with a sinister light, this Amulet radiated goodness and health. I picked it up and my whole being became charged with its presence. I surrendered myself to its radiance and for just a moment I imagined I saw the King's face before me. Then the moment had passed and I was grinning at my companions.



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"We have it now!" I exclaimed. "Let's go kick some Shadowlord butt!"

"Well put, Avatar," exclaimed Iolo. The others laughed, though I think none of us had as much confidence as we expressed. We still had to get back to Britannia, face the three Shadowlords, get the Scepter, and then find the King, who, according to the Codex, was somewhere down here. But first things first. It was time to get back.

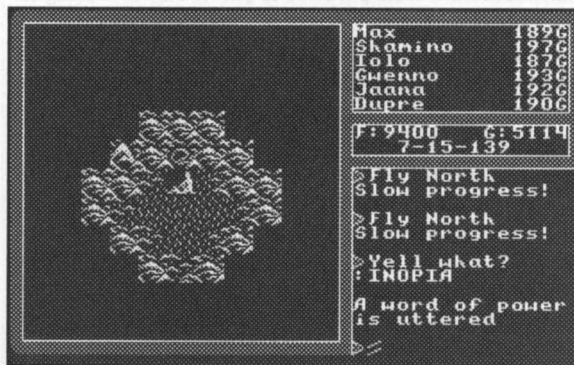
I had noticed, when using the Gem, that there were meadows off to the east, and thought we might be able to *Blink* our way to a familiar area of the Underworld. It was always easier to ascend one of the familiar dungeons than to explore a new one. But it was a risky course, and we were not well enough stocked with *Blink* spells to make too many wrong moves. So we headed back the way we had come, toward the dungeon entrance I had noted before.

We found getting to the dungeon easier said than done, however. In the end, we were forced to travel far to the west, retracing the King's own route. We made our way up the stream, using Gems to look for gaps in the mountains, but there were none.

The most difficult part of our journey was getting around the numerous waterfalls as we made it farther to the north. We were forced to abandon the use of the Carpet at one point and climb some low hills. Eventually we found ourselves back near the small lake where we had begun. We continued east, seeking the path that led to the dungeon entrance, our best hope of returning to the light.

We slid and crashed through the rapids again; then, at a fork in the river, we checked a Gem and it revealed a northwesterly path that led directly to the dungeon. In our haste to make it to the dungeon entrance, I'm afraid we were careless and were attacked by the same subterranean beasts that had so injured the King's party. "Corpsers" was what Shamino called them.

We had learned something of discretion in our travels, and we were able to slip away from the corpsers before they could get a grip on our ankles. A pack of giant rats then attempted to waylay us, but we gave them the slip as well.

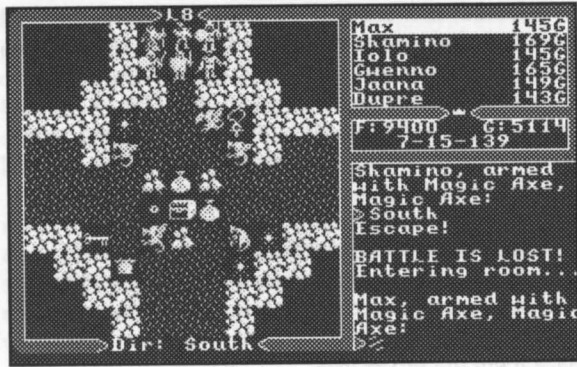


At the end of the path we found the entrance to Destard, another place of unpleasant memories. I took a deep breath, looked once at my friends, and yelled the Word of Power, INOPIA.

Destard was a nasty hole in the ground, little more than a mud pit. Once a gold mine, it was now the home of Britannia's creatures of the dark. Its meandering shafts were now the highways and byways of Britannia's merchants of death. On our trip back to the surface, we had commerce with them, and though we ultimately prevailed, the price we paid was both painful and horrifying.

The first room we found, though full of treasure, was also the abode of several dragons and we had to fight for our lives. A *Fear* spell gave us the advantage, however, and we were able to defeat five dragons! It must have been some kind of record, but I wasn't in the mood to give it much thought. We gathered





considerable treasure from the room before exiting to the north.

This dragon room led immediately into a room that was even worse. No sooner had we stepped within the doorway than we were viciously attacked by three daemons, who had probably been waiting for us to come in. I began to regret the time we had taken to gather the treasure, but in retrospect it had probably made no difference.

I immediately cast a *Fear* spell as my companions began to fight for their lives. One of the daemons went down quickly. The *Fear* spell had caused it to drop its guard. The others fought even more ferociously, however. Their magic at close quarters was formidable, and they caused our own weapons to turn upon our comrades. We fought without a word; only the grunts of the wounded and the clash of steel defiled the silent intensity of our battle.

The situation was grim, though we were gaining the upper hand. One of the creatures was critically injured and the other seemed to be weakening when something even worse happened. One of our weapons went astray and hit the fiery brazier in the center of the small alcove where this battle was taking place. Immediately the floor beneath us turned into an inferno of barely hardened lava. We could smell burning leather as our boots began to scorch. It would soon be burning flesh if we didn't hurry.

We redoubled our efforts. Then Jaana cast a *Time Stop* spell and we quickly ran from the lava. The daemons were not so lucky. When the spell wore off, they attempted to follow us. Each step caused them

obvious pain, and they were soon reduced to howling at us in rage as our Magic Axes bit into them again and again. They died horribly—their corpses instantly cremated in the lava—but we had no time to worry about them. I sensed the presence of other beings among us. I suspect that, without the King's Crown to protect us, we might have been prey to some even more evil magic than the daemons had possessed. We didn't wait around to find out. Having destroyed the daemons, we hurried from the room, taking the exit to the north.

We followed the passage north. It turned east, then north, then east again. Finally we came to a fork that led north and east. We took the northerly path and found a crude hole leading upward. We climbed with some effort through the hole. We came up through a grating, perhaps a drainage hole for the old mine. But our reception committee was anything but friendly. Though not as dangerous as dragons and daemons, a room full of slimes did nothing to reassure us. We battled them grimly. Though they divided many times, we eventually slew them all. Jaana quickly turned the odds against the creatures by casting a *Tremor* spell, which shook the jelly-like creatures until many of them fell apart. The others solemnly ate the remains of their companions and then resumed their slithering attack on us. But our strength had defeated the most fearsome enemies, and these slimes were no match for us.

Once the battle was over, we breathed a collective sigh of relief. We were all damaged in one way or another from the continuous fighting, and we decided

to use some precious healing potions to cure the worst of our wounds. We dared not use healing magic. There might be more rooms such as those we had just left behind.

We discovered a hole leading upward just outside the doorway to the slime room, but decided to skip it, following an instinct born of many trips to the dungeons. South of us, we found another room and entered it with some trepidation.

A narrow hallway separated two wider halls within the room. Exits led in all directions and we headed for the southern exit. However, as we passed through the narrow passage, we must have tripped a mechanism that released a cloud of bats from the walls. Though they posed little danger to us, we had to take the time to destroy those that didn't fly away. After that, we were unchallenged as we completed our passage through the room.

Outside the room we found a hole leading upward, past the sixth level of the old mine and on to the fifth, where a short walk west, then north, took us to another upward egress.

We found ourselves in a troll's nest. Their grisly feasts were upon the fire and their meager treasures lined the walls. Knowing trolls, we saw no point in dallying to discuss current events. With little hesitation, we threw a few Magic Axes to show them who was boss, killing their leader. That was the way to deal with trolls. Then we exited to the south, leaving them to wonder at the appearance of such a fierce band of warriors in their domain. Needless to say, they made no attempt to follow us.

We found a ventilation shaft due south of the trolls' nest and were able to climb it all the way to the first level. Heading north from the shaft, we followed a long passage to the final exit. Once again we stood beneath the Britannian sky, and for what seemed like the hundredth time, we collapsed on the rocky ground and gave thanks.

Our celebration was short-lived, however. Wordlessly, we all acknowledged that our next task would be among the most dangerous we had ever faced. We would have to summon the Shadowlords and destroy them. We had avoided confrontations with these evil creatures until now. The time had

come, though, to challenge them once and for all. We had the three Shards and the monsters' names. Now we would see if what we had been told was true.



Entry 31—Serpent's Hold—The End of a Shadowlord

We had left our ship in a great bay south of Spiritwood, and it remained there still. It was a short distance by Magic

Carpet, and we were soon at sea again. The salt air washed the grime and filth of Destard from our souls, even as the river had previously washed our bodies and clothing. We were ready for the Shadowlords.

We decided to sail south to Serpent's Hold, where we would summon the Shadowlord of Cowardice. Then we would see. . . .

At Serpent's Hold, we went directly to visit the Eternal Flame of Courage. There we stood a moment, silently gathering our courage. We had faced many deadly enemies together, and we knew our collective strength was able to defeat the most powerful dragons and daemons in the land, but we all knew the fear of the Shadowlords. You could see it in the faces of the people throughout Britannia. Only here, in the Keep of Courage, did we dare this arcane experiment. As I gathered myself to yell the creature's name, I prayed fervently that Sutek had been right. We were risking a lot on his say-so.

One by one, my companions came to me, nodded, embraced me, and walked back to stand behind me. They looked into my eyes with such confidence in me that I no longer doubted.

"The Shadowlord will come at thy call, Avatar," said Shamino. "Do not waver before it!"

"Here," said Iolo, walking up to me. "Take the Shard of Cowardice. Use it when the Shadowlord walks into the Flame of Courage. Thou must lure it into the flame. Thou wilt do it. 'Tis a piece of pudding."

"You mean a piece of cake, don't you?" I asked.

"Whatever," muttered Iolo. "Just do it and we can leave this smoky pit and get some fresh air."

I turned to face the Flame of Courage. I drew a great breath, let it out and drew another.

"NOSFENTOR!" I yelled. "Come to meet thy doom!" Well, I could be theatrical if I wanted. I might be dead in the next second.

I waited. At first nothing happened. I stood just before the Flame itself. Then, behind the Flame, the air seemed to shake and to implode, as if it were being sucked into a giant vacuum cleaner. With an eerie popping sound—something like a champagne cork opening, but ten times louder—the Shadowlord of Cowardice materialized. I waited. I wasn't sure what to do.

The creature was enraged. I could see in its bloodred eyes the hatred it bore me. It thought of only one thing: my death! Its claw-like hands reached for my neck as it prepared to step toward me. Just at that moment, I unwrapped the Shard of Cowardice and held it aloft.

The creature smiled then, and I had the most horrifying sensation that I had just done something quite wrong. The evil emanations of the Shard began their battle for my soul while its creature sent a mental bolt to augment its power. I was fighting a silent battle within, though from the outside it might have seemed that the danger came from the creature's razor-sharp claws. But my danger was of being subverted to Evil. The Shard and the Shadowlord whispered to me in the tones of a lover, yelled at me like an angry father, screamed in spasms of madness.

I was losing focus. The image of the Shadowlord wavered before me. But so did the Flame of Courage. The Shadowlord, blind with hatred, stepped forward—right into the Flame itself! I could feel the magic of the Flame reaching to me. It gripped me like a protector's hand upon my shoulder, and at first I actually thought Dupré was standing there beside me. The Shadowlord's smile disappeared as it writhed in the Flame, but its grip on my mind was still there, still powerful.

With a great effort, I ejected the Shadowlord from my mind, simultaneously throwing the Shard of Cowardice into the Flame of Courage. There was a great explosion as the two opposing forces met. Then, in an instant, it was over. I found myself on my

knees. A many-headed worm of nausea twisted in my bowels. My head ached, and my limbs were leaden. I couldn't stand. I could barely breathe.

But my friends were all around me, giving me courage with their congratulations. When I finally was able to look up, I saw the Eternal Flame, still burning as if nothing had happened. Of the Shard and the Shadowlord, not a trace remained. I managed a weak smile.

"One down and two to go," I gasped. Then I blacked out.

o o o

I came to several hours later. Jaana had given me some potion that set me right again. I was famished, however, and Lord Malone sent an exotic and satisfying feast to our rooms. Later I met with Malone privately and he thanked me. He vowed that the story of my courage would never be forgotten.

All of this meant little to me, however. I knew we would soon have to repeat our performance at Empath Abbey, and then again at the Lycaenum. I was anxious to be on my way, to get it over with.



Entry 32—Empath Abbey; The Lycaenum

We were able to destroy the remaining Shadowlords before the Flames of Love and Truth. We could feel their evil lift from the world. And each time

I banished another of these creatures, it became easier. Their grip on me became weaker, until, when I destroyed the Shadowlord of Falsehood, I did so with contempt for his once-feared power. He succumbed as the others had, with nothing but blind hatred on his mind. They all walked directly into the Flames that were their true nemesis, never realizing that I was nothing, just a tool in their destruction.

I think the struggle with their evil had changed me. I felt stronger and more complete than I ever had. I was ready to free the King. The time had come at last. I was no longer the weak, confused stranger I once had been. I was no longer the shadow of the Avatar. I



was now Avatar in name and in deed. It was a feeling of strength, of humility, and of supreme confidence in the power of Virtue. Not the blind virtue of Blackthorn's endless rules, twisted logic, and tyrannical enforcement, but the virtue of the heart, ruled by Love, Courage, and Truth. I longed to tell the people of these three Principles, but that task would properly fall to the King. My job was to bring him back and end Blackthorn's abominable regime forever.

Now that the Shadowlords were gone, we returned to Stonegate and retrieved the King's Scepter unopposed. Then it was time to find the King. We headed for Shame, the dungeon we knew would lead us to our final encounter. I had doubted Sutek (who had turned out to be a most excellent mage), but I had no doubt that the Codex had been correct when it had steered us toward Shame. Battle-hardened and armed

with the best weapons and armor, we almost looked forward to another dungeon, just to test ourselves again. None of my friends even thought of backing out; of that I am positive.



Entry 33—Shame: Underworld (Into the Darkness)

Shame lay west of Britain, surrounded by high mountains. A great bay stretched out from its entrance, and the waters

practically lapped the fallen stones where the Great Council had sealed it. Our journey to Shame had been uneventful, but I was thinking about what was to come. Beyond Shame were the place of Darkness and something called "stealer of souls."

"INFAMA," I yelled before I could think any more.

The earth shook, as it always did when I yelled a Word of Power, and the rocks sealing the entrance lifted and returned to the mountains from where they had come. We stepped into the rough-hewn portal that led to Shame.

We found ourselves in a room without an exit. It was confusing. Some magic must have sealed the way out. We searched, but found no obvious studs or levers.

Iolo, ever the most inventive of us, threw a Magic Axe at the wall in the southwest corner of the room. Why he threw it I never knew, but I don't think he did it out of frustration (as I was close to doing). Anyway, I



didn't ask why. I just marvelled at the result—a whole section of wall simply disappeared.

We proceeded to attack the south wall then, and revealed a passageway leading due south. We had to climb over some huge stones that had been set in the way, but that proved no great difficulty. Single file, we marched out of the room and into the dungeon proper.



Shame had once been a great mine. It was much better built than Destard, which was little more than a hole in the ground. The passageways in Shame had been nicely reinforced, and the wooden framework that supported walls and ceilings still held. Only close inspection showed the dry rot that was slowly weakening the structure. One day, this whole mine would collapse upon itself, but for now it seemed safe enough.

I spotted some giant rats dead ahead on the path south, but we turned into an eastern passage almost directly outside the door to the room we had left. We followed that path a long way until we found a ladder with a sign above it reading "Deepest." This seemed a good bet so we climbed down.

The ladder turned out to be a blessing. It took us directly to the seventh level of the mine. Then, we were lucky again. Just four paces to the south we found another ladder leading to Level 8.

This is where our luck ran out. Reaching the bottom of the ladder, we found ourselves near an underground river. A small army of slimes practically surrounded us, and three huge sea serpents floated in the subterranean waters. The only exit was west, and

we headed for it. A lengthy battle with the sea serpents was the last thing any of us wanted. We had long since learned when to run and when to fight. We ran. One *Confuse* spell to slow them down, then we were out of there!

Once outside the sea-serpent room, we walked west, then south, west again, south again, and into another room. Jaana suggested we might use the *Des Por* spell to attempt a descent to the Underworld after leaving the sea-serpent room, but I thought we had better find the exit just in case. In retrospect, I wish I had followed her advice.

Not that the room we found ourselves in was so terrible. We easily handled the giant rats, orcs, and ettins we found there. And there was some treasure, too. But the sight of a grisly corpse in their treasure trove brought home once more the mortal danger we all faced. We hurried from the room after taking what we needed, exiting to the east.

We were in a small closet-sized alcove, but we weren't fooled for long. A hidden lever revealed a doorway leading farther east, and beyond it, the ladder down!

Once again in the Underworld, we began to explore. Eventually we discovered that, by going as far east as we could, we were within a *Blink* of a large meadow area. That is what we did, but not before resting and healing our wounds. We didn't know what would lie before us, but if the past was any indication, we would need all our strength and abilities.

We floated on the Carpet, on the western shore of an underground lake. In the middle of the lake we could see an island. I think we all knew the island was our destination. We glided over the water toward it.

The middle of the lake was very agitated, as if some deep force were constantly churning the water. It bubbled and swirled beneath us, and we were tossed roughly on the Carpet until we reached the calmer shallows near the island. Only slightly bruised, we began to reconnoiter the area.

Using a Gem, we found that the island's center was impenetrable, except for a small area in its very middle. The way into the center would invariably take us over some lava streams, but we had seen worse. We searched out the shortest path, the one that



required the least amount of fire-walking. It involved some mountain-climbing from the southern tip of the island, and a brief crossing of the lava, but soon we reached the edge of the great Darkness described by the Codex.

It was impenetrable. It was the darkness of a child's nightmare. The darkness of the inside of a coffin when you're buried alive. It was the darkness of death! This darkness was like nothing I had ever experienced, and even my similes are only weak attempts at description. It was oily and thick and it flowed over us, sealing us in its utter blackness. I saw lights and swirling shapes, and realized only slowly that they sprang from my brain, desperate artifacts of utter blindness. We could not walk through this cloying black presence. It was almost alive. I felt it seeping into my eyes, my mouth, my nose. I began to suffocate.

I was desperate. If I spent any longer in this place, I would lose myself. I searched for any image of light, of hope. That's when I remembered the Amulet and its pure brilliance. The image of the Amulet sprang into my mind, and it was a full minute before I realized that I was already holding the glowing talisman aloft. I was not imagining the light any longer. I had unconsciously taken the Amulet from its place beneath my tunic. The light I was seeing was real, pure, and stronger than the Darkness.

With the help of a Gem and the Amulet, we stumbled through the gelatin-like blackness to its very center. There we found a great pile of rock on a parched, desolate oasis in the Darkness. This was a

forbidding place, but by comparison, it was heavenly.

I stood before the rock pile, piercing it with my gaze. It appeared much the same as the sealed entrances to the dungeons at the surface of Britannia, and I knew with instant certainty that this was the way to the depths of the earth. This was the final dungeon, Doom!

We rested here. It seemed inconceivable that anything could attack us from within that profound Darkness, and we needed to be at our full strength before we descended this deepest of all dungeons. Shamino took the watch.

When I awakened, the King's apparition was there. He said nothing he hadn't said before, but he healed us all and then disappeared. I took it as a sign. If Lord British could appear to us even here, in the heart of this evil place, then he must truly be near.

I had put the Amulet away in my pack while I slept, so I drew it out once more.

"VERAMOCOR," I yelled.



Entry 34—Doom

eing sure to wear the Crown, I entered the dungeon Doom—perhaps to save the King, perhaps to die. My companions followed me.

We found ourselves in a room with no exits. I mean no exits. There was no sign of the entrance we had taken to get here. The whole room was sealed with force fields.

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I used the Scepter to dispel the field along the western wall. The field dissolved immediately and an exit appeared. We left the room, walking cautiously. I think I was prepared for anything.

The walls of Doom were cut from the very bedrock of the world. They were rough, as if gouged carelessly by some giant hand. Here and there we saw the glint of gold, the sparkle of precious gems, but we had no time to worry about such trivialities. We headed west, then followed the path until we found a ladder leading down.

Due south of us we saw another ladder leading both up and down, but it turned out to lead into a trap. The correct path was south, then east at the first fork. We found another ladder after the path turned to the north again. This took us to Level 3.

As we started out from the base of the ladder, Iolo began to whistle. He had often done so when faced with danger, but I think this time we were all a little unnerved.

"Must thou keep up that infernal noise?" complained Shamino. "Dost thou really intend to call every monster in these depths to our side?"

Iolo stopped his tune in mid-bar. "Why, Shamino. Thou wert always a music lover. What hath happened to spoil thy ear?"

"If thou couldst carry a tune . . ."

"I? Carry a tune?" Iolo countered incredulously. Then he laughed. "I promise thee, Shamino, a song commemorating thy bravery when this adventure is done."

Shamino, too, laughed. "Now thou art making sense. But shall we not wait until we are once again in

our cups at the Blue Boar. Now I would keep my ears tuned to the sounds of our enemies."

"'Tis true," added Dupr . "We must be alert."

"As you wish, my friends," said Iolo, turning back down the passageway. "I thought only to entertain our dungeon dwellers before we end their miserable existences."

"Thou art a prince among adventurers," said Shamino to his receding back.

We had been gathered around the bottom of the ladder that had taken us to Level 3. From there, we went east, then took the first fork south. The path curved east again, then turned north. We didn't take the northern route, though. We discovered two hidden doorways at this corner and headed east through one of them. We were attacked by a torrent of bats, but we beat them off and continued on our way unharmed.

Rounding another corner, we were attacked by a small army of gremlins. These nasty, quick creatures would rob us of food and other essentials if they came close, and we threw ourselves into the battle ferociously. We had come too far to let these thieving little monsters thwart us.

Some of the gremlins left treasure chests behind, but we had little need for their purloined gold now. We continued onward until we found a rough stone entrance leading into a small cavern.

A ladder down to the next level stood behind a force field, and behind the ladder, a daemon. Two of its friends also awaited us. I quickly checked the Crown to be sure it was in place to ward off their magic, then we set about our grim task of battling the creatures. It was nothing new, except that I had to dispel the force field before we could rid ourselves of the daemons.

The daemons attempted to stand before the ladder to prevent our escape, but we had no intention of escaping while they still stood. We fired our Magic Axes through the narrow opening left by the dispelled force field. In time, we killed all three daemons. They never got close enough to us to do any damage. Then we headed for the ladder, which took us all the way to Level 5.

The next part of our descent into Doom was confusing. It took us a long time to find the correct

route, but we eventually did. I'll skip the false trails and traps we walked into. Here is the route we eventually took:

From the ladder that took us down to Level 5, we walked two paces east and climbed up a ventilation shaft, back to Level 4.

Walking south, we found a pit two paces away, at a four-way intersection. We climbed down this pit, back to Level 5.

We walked east until we found a passageway north. Walking along it, we found a shaft leading back upward again. This we took, bringing us back to Level 4 once more.

Next we walked west one, south two, and turned to the west, where we found a hidden shaft, partially buried beneath the dirt of the floor. This we climbed down, finding a ladder beneath it that led to Level 6.



On Level 6, there was only one path to take, and we followed it until we reached a cavern with a great rushing river. A waterfall splashed and roared at the north end of the cavern. The place would almost have been beautiful had it not been for the presence of several sea serpents and giant squids. We battled the monsters, using spells and weapons, exiting finally to the north. My *Fear* spell was especially effective and caused the monsters to froth about in the water, leaving them vulnerable to our attacks.

Just north of the cavern was another ladder, this one leading down to Level 7. We climbed down and found that the ladder continued to Level 8. If only it had been that easy. But we soon found that we must



remain on Level 7 and head south, into a diabolical cavern filled with the most fearsome enemies we had met so far. There were daemons and dragons, and a new enemy that lived beneath the sand at our feet. Its huge jaws, studded with sharp teeth that would have made a great white shark envious, pushed their way from below to snap us up. We used all our powers to save ourselves from disaster. *Fear* spells worked against the daemons and the dragons. Tremor spells seemed effective against the terrible sand creatures, but we dared not deplete our magic powers too much. In the end, these sand creatures proved dangerous and tough, but we finally beat them.

When the battle was over the room was filled with treasure chests. We opened them and gathered what we needed. In the center of the room, we found and opened a chest. When we had removed everything, we found a ladder, previously hidden from view. It led down.

As if things hadn't been bad enough! Now we were in another cavern with a great waterfall. It was much like the one we had been in before, but now, in addition to sea serpents, we were surrounded by dragons. And there was no obvious way out of the place other than the ladder we had taken to get here!

The old reliable *Fear* spell worked here, too. We still had a major battle on our hands, but most of the monsters were easy prey for our Magic Axes once the spell took hold of them. Just as we were mopping up the last of the dragons, an errant Axe flew past its target and hit a corner of the wall at the northwestern edge just below the waterfall. Two things happened then, one good and the other not so good.

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The good news was that a bridge appeared suddenly across the raging water. The bad news was that a huge gang of mongbats also appeared as if from nowhere.



Well, compared to dragons and sea serpents, mongbats were pretty wimpy, and we never missed a beat. The room was soon free of monsters. We collected the treasures we required, then headed across the bridge and out the western exit.

More of the same. A ladder led back to Level 7, and directly into another trap. This cavern was full of mongbats, but there was also a reaper in the center. I always worried about reapers and their ability to possess the unwary. And they were truly ugly. There were several varieties of reaper. This one looked something like a short, stubby tree trunk with four tentacles. It glowed with an unholy light and emitted strange, high-pitched sounds. We concentrated on

killing it first, even though the Crown afforded us some protection from its spell.

The battle was soon over, though I'd received some nicks and scrapes from the mongbats. Our first impulse was to exit to the west, but something told us to search this room more closely. Behind the grate, in an alcove, I pressed a stud, revealing a small area just above it. I then threw my Axe at a stud at the back of the newly revealed area. Yet another region opened just south of the grating. Shamino tossed an Axe at it and passages leading north and south opened before us. We quickly headed south.



The area south of the puzzle room was a dead end, but some suspicious-looking dirt led us to search at the end of the passage. We found a shaft leading downward, which we took down to Level 8.

We took the ladder we found just west of us, which brought us back to Level 7. I was growing tired of this back-and-forth journey, but it was obvious that someone, or some thing, had made our journey difficult on purpose.

At any rate, we headed west on Level 7, avoiding a hidden pit in the corner of the passage, then turned south and found another pit two paces from the previous one. This time we climbed down the pit, back to Level 8.

We were on a small island, surrounded by vicious sharks. Around the edges of the cavern we could see the winking lights of wisps, creatures who could appear and disappear, and whose powers I hoped not to test. I checked the Crown to be sure it was still



there. Then the battle began. The sharks snapped at our feet while the wisps hovered across the water. We were all tired, but fought as hard as we could. We were low on magic power by now and decided to save our magic for more powerful enemies. It took longer without magic to help us, but eventually we succeeded in clearing the cavern of enemies. However, the one exit, leading north, had mysteriously sealed itself. I went alone to investigate while the rest of my companions waited on the island.

As I walked along the northern wall of the cavern, there was a grinding noise behind me. Looking to the east, I noticed that a small hole had been revealed. I walked to the hole, and pushed on the northern wall there. Again there was a great sound of grinding rock. An exit appeared, leading east. Though I couldn't see it from where I stood within the hole, Dupré called to me to tell me of its appearance. We made haste to get out of the cavern, using the eastern exit, in case it sealed itself as the other exit had.

A ladder led back to Level 7 and we took it. I was beginning to fear we would never get out of this maze. No other dungeon had been so confusing. I was tired of the constant battles, but my wish for an end to things was not to be granted yet. When we came out at the top of this latest ladder, we were in another cavern. A force field bisected the area, and there were numerous mongbats and daemons awaiting us. I had the impression that we had encountered a reception committee of some sort. As usual, we responded to their hospitality in kind.

We killed a few stray mongbats, then I strode

forward to dispel the field. As I did so, yet another surprise was added for our amusement. The floor beneath our feet suddenly turned into lava! Once again, we would get the hotfoot treatment.

Well, all this activity convinced me that we were close to our goal. We were all battle-weary and half beaten, low on magic power and bleeding from a dozen slashes and scrapes. But I was damned if I would let these daemons know it. Raising the Scepter high above my head, I destroyed the field and taunted the daemons behind it.

"Is this the best you can offer?" I screamed as I threw my Magic Axe in the face of one of the monsters. It reeled back a step, then held its ground. I think Jaana used the last of her magic to cast a *Fear* spell, and then the battle was fully joined. Once again, the *Fear* spell worked wonders. Mongbats were heading for the exit while the daemons grew confused and ineffective. We stepped quickly, but carefully, out of the lava and finished off the daemons. A few of them had kept their heads, and it took some time to kill them. The rest went down with one or two blows. We were soon the masters of the cavern. Wounded, beaten-up, worn-out masters, to be sure. I wasn't convinced we could go much further. One more battle like this last would probably finish us.

Despite our condition, we hesitated only long enough to heal the worst of our wounds, then headed east, out of the cavern and into the passageway beyond. Though it appeared a dead end, we searched and found a pit leading down. Once again, we were headed into the jaws of death. We had not yet met the "stealer of souls" mentioned by the Codex. I had no doubt we soon would, though. I felt a profound sense of sadness as I looked over my brave companions. We weren't strong enough to last much longer down here. How would we ever get back?

Nobody said anything. We just climbed down the hole, one after the other. I think we were all ready to risk everything, to succeed or to die. We just wanted a resolution of some sort. Dungeon Doom had taken its toll, and no amount of false bravado would replace what we'd lost. As I set my feet into the hole and prepared to lower myself, I said a little internal prayer for all our benefits, then I dropped.

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I found myself in a pleasant enough room. One by one, my companions dropped down the hole and joined me. No daemons or other creatures of evil attacked. There was no apparent danger, and that bothered me the most. There were books here, a bed, and a table set with silverware. Torches lit the walls, and at the north end of the room, a mirror. My attention was drawn to the mirror, where I thought I saw a shape moving independently of the objects and people in the room. There was definitely something in the mirror! I walked up to the shiny, reflective plane and . . .

I was in a timeless place for a heartbeat. It was not unlike the sensation of the Moongates, but worse. I felt a wrenching at my soul. Something pulled at me, dragging me through a soul-stealing molasses. I couldn't breathe, though I wasn't sure I needed to. The dragging continued until . . .



"Well met!" I heard him say. Even so, I wasn't sure it was he, or that I was still alive. Wherever I was, it was the strangest place I had been yet. Everything was tinged by a weird greenish light and the face that smiled at me was a face I had seen only as a ghost for so long, that I doubted its reality.

But it was Lord British himself. He was helping me through the mirror. Behind me came my companions. Each of them, one after the other, came silently through the eerie gate of the mirror. We were in the twin of the room we had left. Obviously, we were inside a mirror world. I thought of Alice, but this was not Wonderland. The sound of the King's voice warbled like a bad phonograph record, but his strength came through it anyway.

"Didst thou bring my box?" he asked.

"Yes, Sire," I managed to stammer as I dug through my possessions to uncover the precious sandalwood box. I handed it to him. My hands shook. It had been a long Quest. I had a bittersweet feeling that it was just about over. A sense of foreboding swept through my stomach and chest, but a cry of elation struggled to escape my lips. I took a deep breath and held it as Lord British began to speak.

This is what the King said:

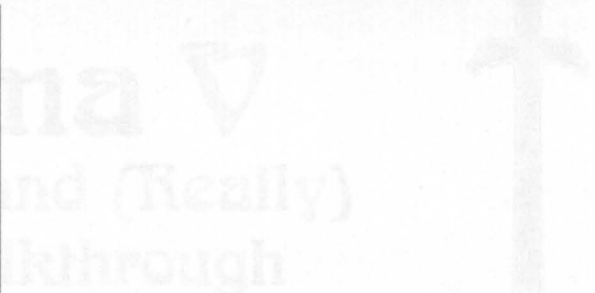
"An artifact of astral power fell to this earth long ago from the skies . . . From the world that thee and I both call home did it come. Often did I return to the old world with its magic, and now will it free us from this prison! Older even than Mondain's evil are the forces which bind us here . . . But older still is the power of the Orb of the Moons!"

"Follow!" cried Lord British, as he extracted a small, red sphere from the wooden box. He then cast it to the floor. "Our worlds await!"

CHAPTER V: Warriors of Destiny

This is the end of the second chronicle of the Avatar. What happened to the Avatar after this, and how the manuscript managed to find its way to the surface from deep in the earth, from the mysterious mirror world of the Soul Stealer . . . none of this is known. But we believe this to be a true account. It accurately presents many of the facts as we know them. Many reports tell of a party of adventurers who rode a flying carpet. Stories have been handed down in some families. For instance, in New Magincia there is a man who claims to be descended from Kaiko and who swears that the Avatar did speak with his ancestor. Other stories are less certain, but their vague references reinforce the truth of this tale. Certainly the journal leaves many questions unanswered, but it does account for most of the Avatar's Quest as it is known in legend. We leave it to you to judge. Is it real? Or is it a hoax?

—Carlotta Stein and Robert DeMain



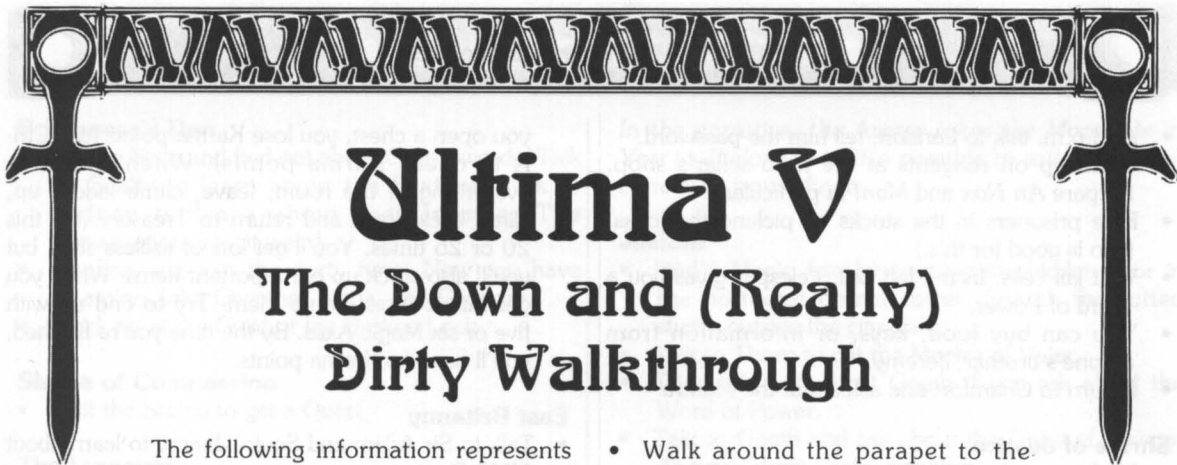
- Walk around the ruins to the south.
- When guard is gone, take the sword and head to the door. Be careful.
- Go to the Mage Guild and the temple.
- Don't enter. This makes the guard leave again. (Remember: try to try to get in, you and you'll end up in jail.)
- Return to the temple.
- Find the code and get to workshop. There's no more critical information here, however, you can give them a Page of Propagation and a scroll of the Basement Search to search. Take a scroll of the Basement Search to search. Take a scroll of the Basement Search to search. Take a scroll of the Basement Search to search.

Below

- Talk to the guard in particular, talk to G. When you get the Code and the scroll. Talk to El, the feeling. Talk to Telle about G. Talk to the guard in the night and get the Word of Power. Talk to the guard. You can get the food from Telle by getting over the Wall. Talk about the Time and the Stone. Talk to the guard about the Stone.
- Purchase things and Ready them.
- Talk to Owen. Owen joins the party.

View

- Talk to Chandler at the Area of Justice about the Temple.
- Go through the passageway behind Chandler's shop.
- Meet Owen. He joins the party.
- Find secret/look at the end of the hallway and get the other scroll in the barrel.



Ultima V

The Down and (Really) Dirty Walkthrough

The following information represents one fairly efficient way to play through Ultima V. It's a big game, and there's no way to do it really fast. In this walkthrough we follow the same path taken in the fictional narrative, but we've condensed the information. If you get stuck somewhere, check the narrative section. It's more explicit.

You can play the game more quickly by skipping many of the clues, obtaining the objects needed, and rescuing the King. This walkthrough guides you to most of the clues and through almost all of the game. There are, however, a few shortcuts that can make the game a little easier. It's up to you whether you want to take advantage of these shortcuts or not.

Be sure to save your game often. Sometimes it's a good idea to return to the operating system and copy the SAVED.GAM file to another name (like SAVE1.U5) This way, any time you want to return to an earlier save, simply copy the archived game back to SAVED.GAM. If you really make a mistake, you can recover. To return to DOS on PCs, press Alt-5 (on the numeric keypad). This will bring up a prompt allowing you to drop directly to the operating system.

Iolo's Hut

- Get torches.

Forest

- Head east.
- Camp out at sign for 8 hours (to heal Shamino).
- Go to castle.
- Camp out for 8 hours.

Castle Britannia

- Climb ladder in northwest tower room.
- Climb again to reach ramparts.

- Walk around the parapet to the south.
- When guard is gone, Push the cannon in front of the door. Fire cannon.
- Get the Magic Carpet and Use it.
- Exit castle. (This makes the guards forget about you. Otherwise they'll try to capture you and you'll end up in jail in Yew.)
- Return to the castle.
- Explore the castle and talk to everyone. There's no really critical information here, however. You can get a Ring of Regeneration and a ring of keys in the basement. Search the barrels. Take as many torches as you like. There's no penalty for taking them.
- Exit the castle.

Britain

- Talk to everyone. In particular, talk to Greyson about the Codex and about Mantras. Talk to Eb, the busboy. Talk to Telila about Gossip. Talk to Annon at night and get the Word of Power. Talk to Terrance. You can get free food from Terrance by asking about his Living. Talk about the Times and the Shadowlords to learn about the Resistance.
- Purchase Slings and Ready them.
- Talk to Gwenno. Gwenno joins the party.

Yew

- Talk to Chamfort at the Arms of Justice about the Resistance.
- Go through passageway behind Chamfort's fireplace.
- Meet Jaana. She joins the party.
- Find secret door at the end of the hallway and get the silver sword in the barrel.

- At 3 p.m. talk to Landon; tell him the password.
- Stock up on reagents at the herb seller's shop. Prepare *An Nox* and *Mani* in particular.
- Free prisoners in the stocks by picking the locks. (Iolo is good for this.)
- Visit jail cells. In the left cell, Felespar gives you a Word of Power.
- You can buy food, keys, or information from Jerone's brother, Jeremy.
- Return to Chamfort and ask about the Mantra.

Shrine of Justice

- Meditate at the Shrine and get a Shrine Quest.

Minoc

- Minoc is a good place to gain experience. The Healer is free. You can get food as well.
- Talk to Rew, the sailmaker, about her Job, the Hours and Week. The song she sings is instructive. Pay attention to her talk about Wells and Horses.
- Talk to Fiona (at the poorhouse). Ask about Great Council and the Word of Power for Covetous.
- Give coins to the beggar. Leave and return. Give coins again to get the hint about Shenstone.
- Follow Shenstone from the Darkwatch Armory around 11 a.m. to noon. (You don't actually need to follow him at all, if you already know where the tree is.) Dig up Skull Keys from base of tree. Stay several days and collect 25 to 30 Skull Keys. Use the time between to hunt monsters and raise character levels.
- If you want to know about the dark side of the game, talk to Tactus and learn about Judge Dryden in Yew.

Castle Britannia (Again)

What you are about to do is going to damage your status as Avatar. It is justifiable, only with some difficulty, but any damage done to your Virtue is recoverable. This is the best way to get stocked up with supplies, weapons, and gold. It is not necessary to do this, however. It just helps you bypass some of the routine monster-hunting.

- Return to Castle Britannia, go to the basement, and use Skull Keys to open the Treasury room (the door to the south with the magic lock). Each time

you open a chest, you lose Karma points (use Ctrl-K to check Karma points). When you have everything in the room, leave, climb ladder up, climb back down and return to Treasury. Do this 20 or 25 times. You'll get lots of useless stuff, but you'll also stock up on important items. When you get Magic Axes, equip them. Try to end up with five or six Magic Axes. By the time you're finished, you'll have no Karma points.

East Brittany

- Talk to Sir Adam and Squire Jimmy to learn about HMS Cape.
- Find HMS Cape plans in locked room in eastern end of the Oaken Oar. It's in a chest of drawers.
- Purchase a Frigate and a Skiff.

North Brittany

- Talk to everyone and mention the Resistance often. Learn about Shadowlords, Sutek, Stonegate, and more.

West Brittany

- Be sure to visit Christopher. (Hint: Christopher may seem familiar to fans of some of Origin's other games.)

Shrine of the Codex

- Sail to the Avatar's Island and visit the Shrine of the Codex. Find it by following the river in the southern tip of the island.

Shrine of Justice

- Complete the first Shrine Quest.

Minoc (Again)

- Give money to the beggar to recover Karma points (Virtue). Give as much as you want. It will bring your Virtue up again. It should be at least 44 by the time you stop, but we recommend bringing it to 50 or more. You'll get more Karma points as you complete Shrine Quests.
- Pick up some more Skull Keys while you're here.

Shrine of Sacrifice (Shrine Quest)

- Visit the Shrine of Sacrifice in the desert east of Minoc. Then visit the Codex; return to the shrine.

Buccaneer's Den

- Talk to Sven and find out about Glass Swords. Talk to Scally to learn about the Sextant. Talk to Bidney to learn about the Grapple. The conversation is a bit weird.
- Geoffrey will join the party here. Now you have Shamino, Iolo, Gwenno, Jaana, and Geoffrey.
- Stock up at the Guild of the Broken Lock.

Shrine of Compassion

- Visit the Shrine to get a Quest.

The Lycaeum

- Talk to Lord Shalineth and Lady Janell. From the Lady, learn about the twin sisters in Cove and about the Shrine of Spirituality. From the Lord, learn the name of the Shadowlord of Falsehood.
- Talk to Sir Sean about Stonegate.

Moonglow

- Talk to Zachariah to learn about comets. He'll also tell you about Goeth.
- Search barrels in the towers for objects of interest.
- Stock up on reagents at the Herbalist.
- Talk to Lord Stuart if you want the food spell.
- Talk to Malik. Keep talking to him to learn about Saul.
- Talk to Malik's mother, Malifora. Ask her about Mantras, Words of Power, Blackthorn, and anything else that occurs to you.

Cove

- Talk to Ava and Leona. Learn about the Shard of Falsehood.
- Talk to Ambrose (after 11 p.m.) at the Healer's. Learn about the Mystic weapons and armor.

Empath Abbey

- Talk to Lord Michael about Love, about Evil, and about the Grapple. Get the Grapple.
- Talk to Barbra about her vision.
- Talk to Tim to learn about Lord Kenneth and the harpsichord.
- Get free food from Cory in the kitchen (the Shark Delicacy).
- You'll find various objects hidden in the keep. Take whatever you find.

In the narrative, the Avatar takes the Moongate at Yew to Jhelom. It is also possible to sail there from Britain or from Minoc.

Jhelom

- Find a Magic Axe by opening the hidden door in the northeast corner tower. Search the rotted stump outside the city walls.
- Talk to Thorn to get the Mantra of Valor.
- Trian tells you about Goeth if you ask about the Word of Power.
- Talk to Goeth and ask about the Drow of Rewop. Also ask about Noom Senots.
- Buy a Frigate and a Skiff.

Bordermarch

- Talk to Sir Simon to learn about the Crown, Sceptre, and Amulet.
- Learn more about the Amulet from Lady Tessa.
- You'll can recruit Dupré and Sentri here.
- The Shattered Shield has some awesome weapons and armor, if you can afford the rather stiff prices.

In the narrative walkthrough, we have the party sail to Skara Brae, where they leave Geoffrey, then return to recruit Dupré. That is optional.

Skara Brae

- Use the Magic Carpet to catch Froed if you want. He'll tell you about his Father, Greymarch, who is a prisoner in Yew.
- Talk to Saul about his Friend. Also ask him about Mandrake and Nightshade.

You can talk to Flain, the astronomer in the locked observatory. He will reveal the password for the Oppression, but only if you give him the name of one of the members of the Great Council. That's not a good thing to do, but you can save the game, get the password, then restore the game. That way you avoid hurting your Virtue or causing harm to any of the good guys. You don't need the password for the Oppression, however, to complete the quest.

- Visit Kindor at the Healer's sometime after 5 p.m. Learn the Mantra of Spirituality.
- Stock up on reagents.

Shrine of Valor

- Get the Shrine Quest.

Farthing

- The Great Mage Temme has some spells you don't really need, but you might want to talk to her anyway. There's a clue about the Spyglass given by Dufus.
- Talk to Seggallion about the Spyglass. Get the Spyglass.

Greyhaven Lighthouse

- Talk to Lord Kenneth; have a harpsichord lesson.
- Talk to David about the Sextant. Get the Sextant.
- There's no real need to talk to anyone else.

Serpent's Hold

- Talk to Lord Malone about Shadowlords to learn the name of the Shadowlord of Cowardice.
- In the basement, visit the Flame of Courage and talk to Gardner. Ask about his Visions; he'll give you information about the Shard of Cowardice.
- If you need them, you can get 5 Skull Keys from Kristi, the cook.
- Maxwell will join you if you want.
- Talk to Toede, the prisoner, for information about secret doors and traps in Blackthorn's castle.

Trinsic

- Gruman has the Mantra of Honor.
- Get some Gems from a barrel near the northeast corner of the battlements.
- Talk to Sindar, the sleepwalking wizard. Find him on the battlements at night. He knows the Word of Power for the dungeon Shame.

Paws

- Glinkie has some information about restoring a Shrine. This information should not be needed; however, there are circumstances in which you could cause the destruction of one of the Shrines. If that happens, you can restore the Shrine following Glinkie's instructions.
- There are some keys hidden in the Guild shop.
- Bandaii has information about the Magic Carpet.

New Magincia

- Talk to Kaiko to learn about Hassad.

- Katrina will join the party if you wish.
- Talk to Sharita, the grave-tender, to learn about the history of Magincia.
- Talk to Wartow about Humility and learn the Mantra. Consider his questions before you answer.

Sutek's Island

- Almost due south of New Magincia is Sutek's Island. Talk to Sutek to learn about the Shards and how to destroy the Shadowlords. Take some scrolls and potions from his house.

Shrine Quests

- Complete the quests for the shrines of Honor, Humility, and Honesty. When both moons are full, enter a moongate (try Minoc) to visit the Shrine of Spirituality. Complete these quests in any order.
- When the last Shrine Quest is complete, the Codex will reveal the secret of Doom, the dungeon in the center of the Underworld.

Sin'Vraal

- Find Sin'Vraal in the southern desert, just west of Dagger Isle. From him you'll learn the name of the Shadowlord of Hatred. He can also help you locate the Shard of Hatred.

Castle Britannia (Again)

- Get the Sandalwood Box by playing the King's harpsichord. Play the tune Lord Kenneth taught you. If you meet Saduj, don't let him join the party!

Serpent's Spine

There's a place to get Glass Swords in the Serpent's Spine at location FA' EA'. Climb in from the northeastern foothills. You'll find a meadow amid the high peaks. Use the Sextant to help you find it.

When you find the first sword, have one player equip it, then search again. Keep searching and giving the swords to party members until each one has a sword. Search once more and you'll have seven Glass Swords. You can use these to kill anything except a Shadowlord with one blow. Even the Shadowlords will run if sliced by the Glass Sword, but they won't be killed.

Mandrake Root and Nightshade

You can obtain these expensive and powerful reagents by searching at particular places in Britannia. Search for Mandrake Root south of Minoc. Search at midnight at location DG' LG'. Find Nightshade south of Spiritwood, at midnight at location JF' CO'.

Stonegate

Stonegate is located north of the rat Grendel's hut, deep in the mountains. It is at location EK' JE'. Enter the mountain range from the north and climb south, then west to find Stonegate.

At Stonegate, fight Balinor. You can answer his riddle, but he'll fight you anyway.

If you haven't destroyed the Shadowlords, all three of them will be there, guarding the Scepter. Be sure to save the game before attempting to obtain the Scepter, or wait until you've dealt with the Shadowlords. It is possible to get the Scepter by using the superior speed of the Magic Carpet to outmaneuver the Shadowlords. For the more daring or impatient, that is the way to go. Otherwise, once the Shadowlords have been destroyed, the Scepter is unguarded.

You'll find the Scepter handy when exploring the dungeons. It dispels any magic field, saving you spell points and reagents.

Blackthorn's Castle

Blackthorn's Castle is located west of the Isle of the Codex. It's full of secret doors. The guards will capture you if you're careless. If you get the Black Badge from Elestaria in Windemere, you can walk freely, but to get the badge you must have the password for the Oppression. It's actually more fun to outmaneuver the guards. Be sure to ride the Magic Carpet, though.

In the narrative walkthrough you'll find a detailed description of the route through Blackthorn's Castle.

On the roof you'll find the Crown of Lord British. You should wear it at all times. It protects you from magic attacks, particularly from possession spells.

In the basement you'll find Hassad, who can give you the Word of Power for the dungeon Hythloth. He won't give it until you mention Kaiko (from New Magincia, remember?).

Gorn will give you directions for escape if you don't already know the way. He'll join you if you have room for him.

For a description of what happens if you get caught, see the narrative walkthrough, Entry 26.

Dungeon Hythloth (Mystic Weapons; Shard of Cowardice)

Have many *Blink* spells prepared: at least 15, though more is better. Also, bring as many Gems as you can afford. Save the game. For more details, follow the maps and read the walkthrough in Entry 27.

In the Underworld, take a path leading northwest from Hythloth's exit. Find the Mystic armor and weapons in the middle of the lava pool. Use Gems to find your way.

Travel south from the Hythloth exit as far as you can walk. From there use a *Blink* spell to travel west to another meadow. Walk northwest, then *Blink* again to the west. *Blink* west again, then walk west a short distance, using another Gem to line up to the next meadow north. *Blink* north, *Blink* north again, into a swampy area. Ride the Magic Carpet to the northeastern tip of this area, and *Blink* north once more. The Shard of Cowardice is to the northwest.

Ararat

To get to Ararat, find a whirlpool and sail into it. Then sail southeast until you find a waterfall. Go down the falls and you'll find an island.

Talk to Captain Johne. He will join you, and he's worth recruiting since he can cast high-level spells. If you want to recruit Johne, you must leave someone behind before you enter the whirlpool.

Johne can tell you about the origins of the Shadowlords. He also has a few items that you can take.

Underworld (Shard of Hatred)

You can leave Ararat and climb back up dungeon Despise, but if you have a *Blink* spell, you can go northeast as far as you can, then *Blink* east to the area where the Shard of Hatred is found. Enter the mountains to the northwest and wind your way through the maze, using Gems to guide you until you reach the Shard.

Return via Wrong or Covetous. Entry 28 of the narrative walkthrough describes the ascent through Wrong.

Dungeon Deceit

Use the maps or the walkthrough in Entry 29 to find your way through Deceit.

Underworld (Shard of Falsehood)

Use the Underworld map or the walkthrough in Entry 29 to find the way to the Shard of Falsehood. Use Gems to locate the paths. Basically you must make your way to the north, to the top of the great waterfalls, then slip and slide your way down to the bottom. The Shard is on an island in the middle of the lake.

East of the island, you can *Blink* into a large meadow to the east, then climb back up Deceit.

Underworld (Amulet); Destard

Find the waterfall east of Spiritwood and enter it. It takes you into the Underworld, following the path described by the scroll that comes with the game.

You can follow the path taken by the King's party, or head east at the first fork in the river and follow the path given in Entry 30 of the narrative walkthrough. If you take the eastern path, you'll need to use a few *Blink* spells, so be prepared. You'll want some Gems as well. You'll find the Amulet to the east of a vast swamp. Follow a path that leads to a large meadow with five graves.

Return by heading west and flying up the river until you reach the point where you first branched east. Retrace your steps then until you find the path to the dungeon Destard. Use the maps provided and the walkthrough in Entry 30 to help you through the dungeon if necessary.

Serpent's Hold; Empath Abbey; Lycaenum

It's time to get rid of the Shadowlords. In any order, go to Serpent's Hold, Empath Abbey, and the Lycaenum, stand before the Eternal Flame, Yell the appropriate Shadowlord's name, wait until the Shadowlord steps into the flame, and Use the appropriate Shard.

- In Serpent's Hold, yell the name of the Shadowlord of Cowardice and use the Shard of Cowardice.
- In Empath Abbey, yell the name of the Shadowlord of Hatred and use the Shard of Hatred.
- In the Lycaenum, yell the name of the Shadowlord of Falsehood and use the Shard of Falsehood.

Before You Enter Shame

Be prepared with plenty of ammunition. Your adventurers must be very strong, have plenty of magic points, and carry the best weapons you can get. Prepare a lot of *Fear* and *Confuse* spells. Wear the Crown at all times. Also, be aware that you will have to pass through two difficult dungeons, one after another. So stock up before attempting this last part of the quest.

Shame

Attack the walls to open a passage south from the first room in dungeon Shame. You must (K)limb over the rocks to get through the passage.

Use the maps or the narrative walkthrough in Entry 33 if you need help getting through this dungeon.

Underworld (The Darkness)

Walk east as far as you can, then *Blink* east again.

Ride the Magic Carpet over the water to the island in the center of the lake.

Use a Gem to find a path into the center of the island. Avoid the lava as much as you can.

Once you reach the Darkness, Use the Amulet and head for the center. You'll find the ruins of a dungeon there.

If you want, you can *Hole Up* at the center of the darkness. Lord British may even visit you there. At any rate, it's a good idea to enter the next dungeon with your characters at their strongest.

Doom

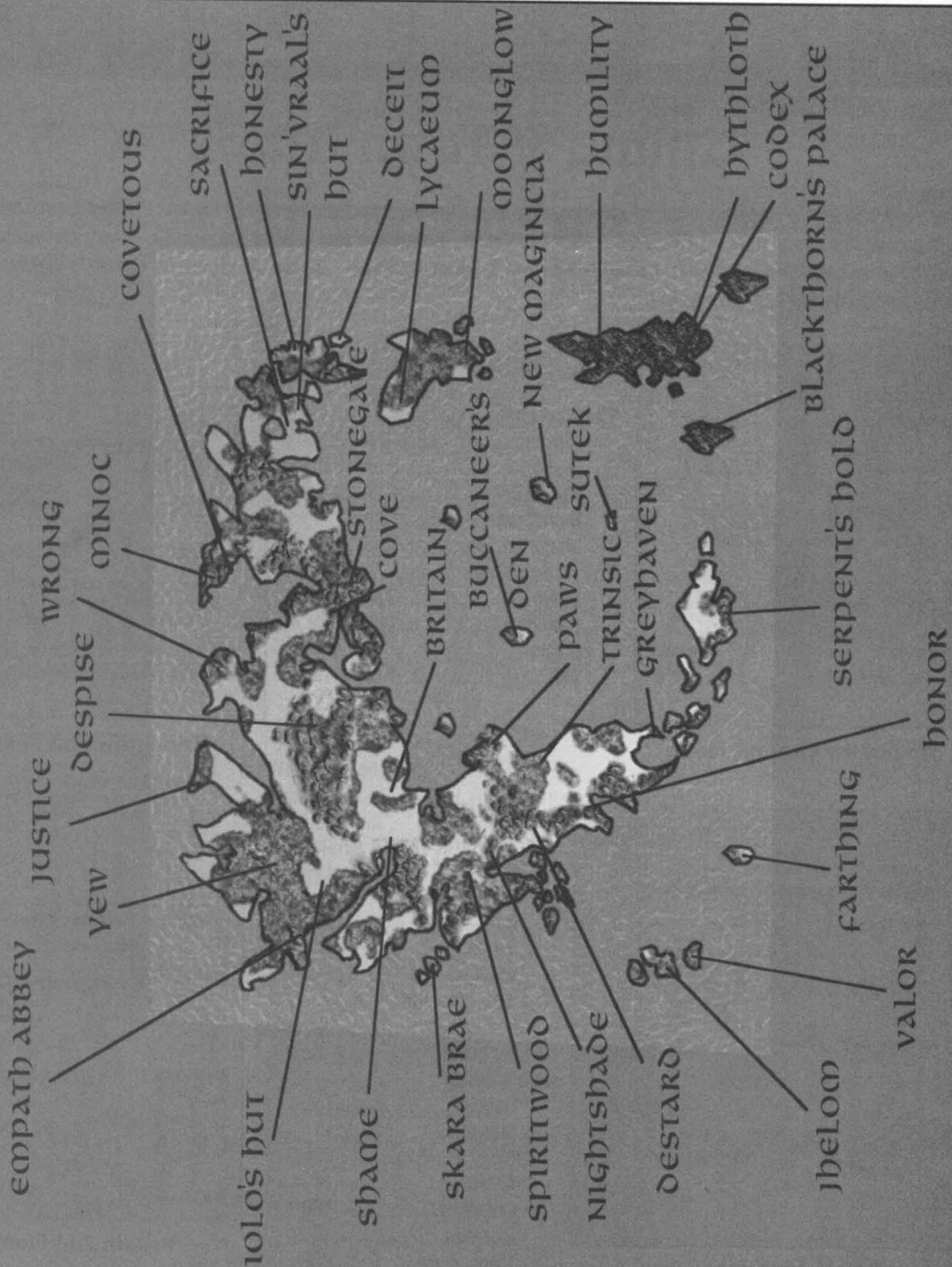
When you're ready, yell the Word of Power the Codex gave you to open the dungeon Doom.

Use the Scepter to get out of the first room. Notice that you can't go back. Hope you saved the game before you entered. . . .

If you need help with Doom, check the map or the narrative walkthrough in Entry 34. At the bottom of the dungeon, you'll find what you seek.

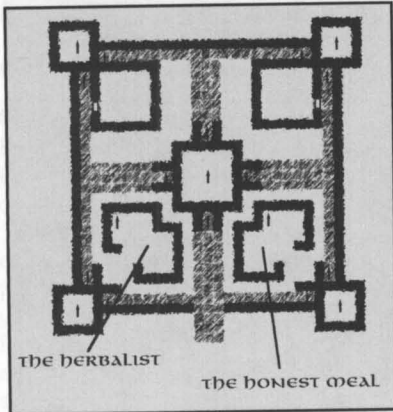
If you have followed all the steps in this chapter, you will have finished Ultima V: Warriors of Destiny. Enjoy a moment of peace and accept your reward, then get ready for more. Ultima VI: The False Prophet awaits.

The Overworld



Ultima V Town Maps

Buying items in Britannia must be a tricky proposition. Why do we say that? Because the higher the Avatar's intelligence, the better the prices he'll find. The prices we've included here are prices the Avatar was able to get when he had an intelligence rating of 30. Obviously, at the beginning of the game, his intelligence will be lower than that—and the prices will be higher. To understand the maps better, see the key on the last page.



Moonglow Ground Floor

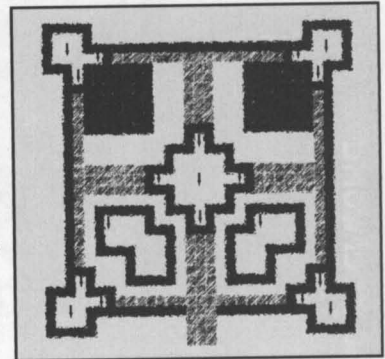
Moonglow

The Herbalist

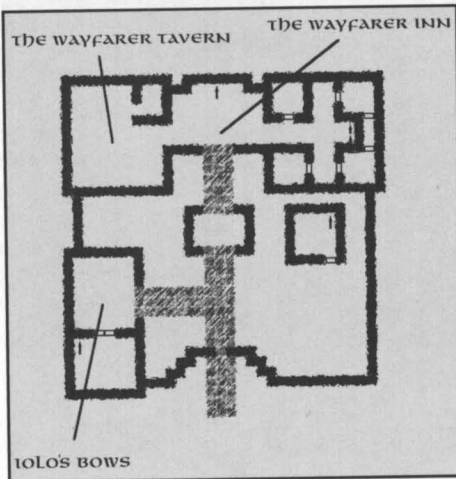
Ginseng.....	10 for 22 gold
Garlic.....	6 for 19 gold
Spider Silk.....	4 for 13 gold
Nightshade.....	13 ea
Mandrake Root.....	14 ea

The Honest Meal

Mutton.....	3 per person
Rations.....	11 gold for 25 meals
Ale.....	1 per person



Moonglow 2nd Floor



Britain Ground Floor

Britain

The Wayfarer Tavern

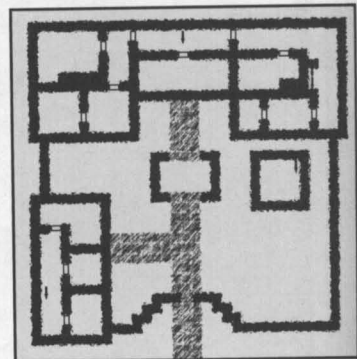
Mutton.....	4 per person
Rations.....	16 for 25 meals
Ale.....	1 ea.

The Wayfarer Inn

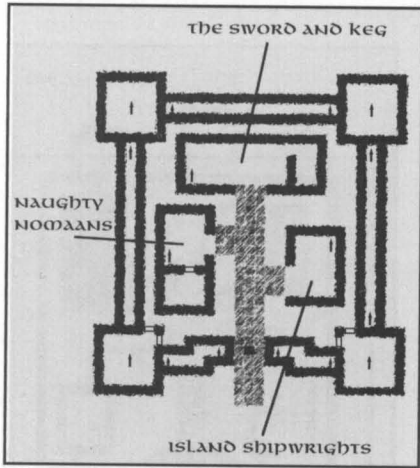
Lodgings.....	@2 gold ea. guest
---------------	-------------------

Iolo's Bows

Dagger.....	1
Sling.....	11
Bow.....	82
Arrows.....	11
Crossbow.....	150
Quarrels.....	16
Magic Bow.....	880



Britain 2nd Floor



Jhelom Ground Floor

The Warrior's Stead (inn)

Lodgings@ 3 gold per guest

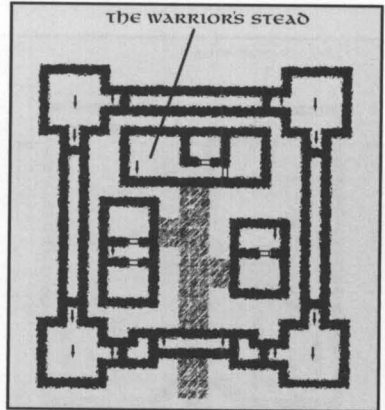
Jhelom

Naughty Nomaans

- Flaming Oil5
- Mace55
- Spiked Collar264
- Throwing Axe3
- Spiked Helm165
- Spiked Shield132
- Morning Star66

The Sword and Keg

- Mutton5 per person
- Rations22 for 25 meals
- Ale1 per person

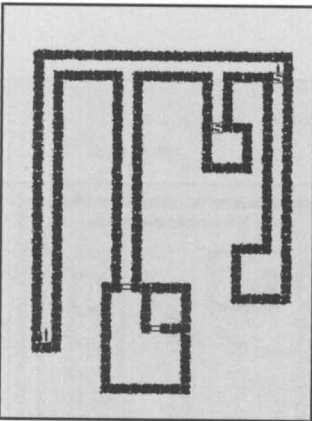


Jhelom 2nd Floor

Island Shipwrights

- Frigate660
- Skiff220

Yew



Yew Basement

The Slaughtered Lamb

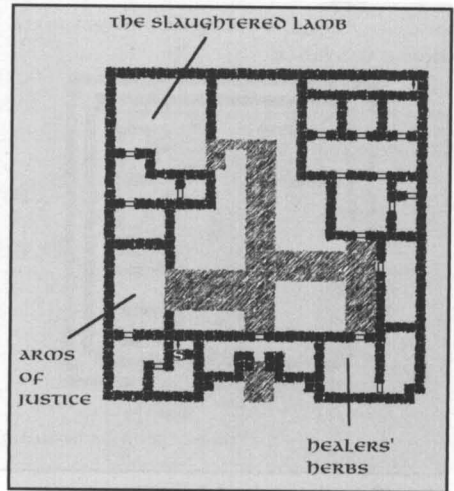
- Rum1 per person
- Wild Boar3 per person

Healer's Herbs

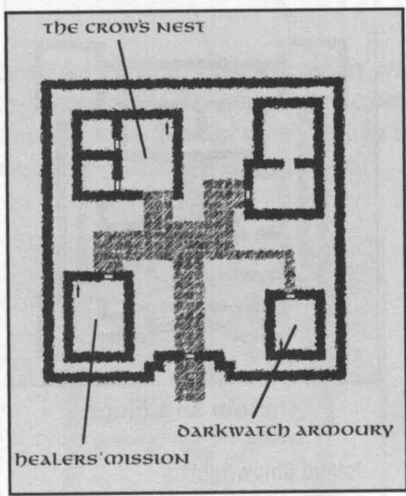
- Sulfurous Ash12 for 13 gold
- Ginseng8 for 17 gold
- Garlic8 for 17 gold
- Spider Silk2 for 8 gold
- Blood Moss4 for 22 gold

Arms of Justice

- Leather Helm16
- Cloth Armor22
- Leather Armor55
- Club5
- Spear7
- Silver Sword275
- Magic Axe1100



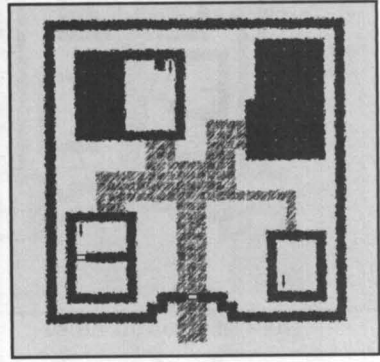
Yew Ground Floor



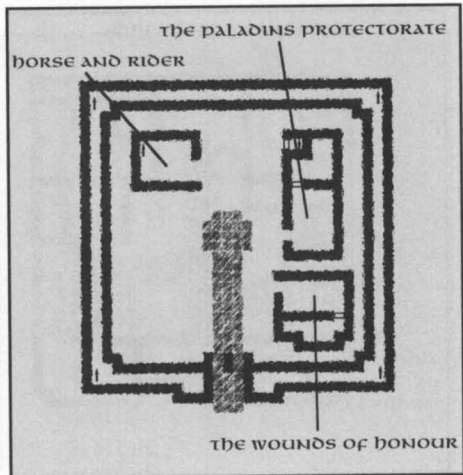
Minoc Ground Floor

Minoc

- Darkwatch Armoury**
 Iron Helm132
 Small Shield44
 Ring Mail.....110
 Short Sword.....40
 Long Sword77
 Mace55
 2-Handed Hammer...93
- The Crow's Nest**
 Frigate828
 Skiff.....192
- The Healer's Mission**
 HealingFree
 CuringFree
 Resurrection.....@ 200



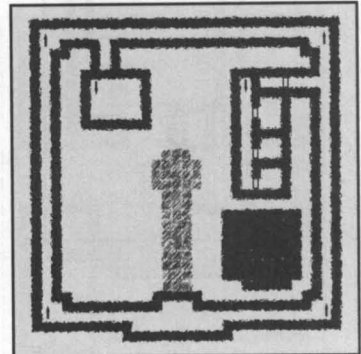
Minoc 2nd Floor



Trinsic Ground Floor

Trinsic

- The Paladin's Protectorate**
 Two-Handed Axe165
 Two-Handed Sword...220
 Halberd.....275
 Iron Helm132
 Large Shield77
 Scale Mail.....165
 Plate Mail770
- Wounds of Honour**
 Healing@ 40
 Curing@ 25
 Resurrection.....@ 215
- Horse & Rider**
 Steeds110



Trinsic 2nd Floor

Skara Brae

The Spirit Healers

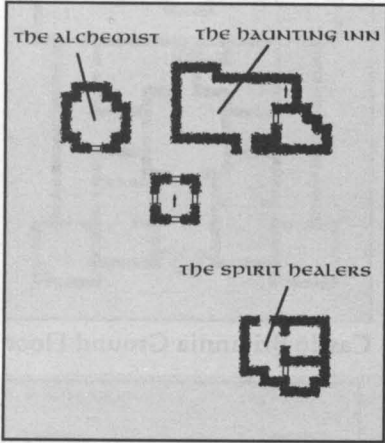
Healing@ 45
 Curing.....@ 30
 Resurrection.....@ 225

The Haunting Inn

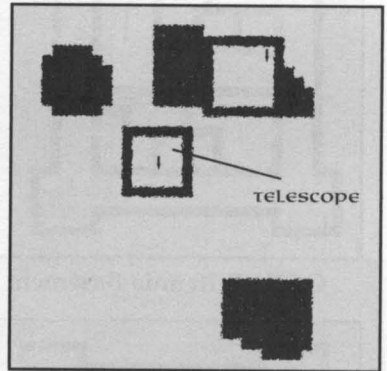
Lodging.....2 gold each
 guest

The Alchemist

Sulfurous Ash.....14 for 15
 gold
 Ginseng.....8 for 17 gold
 Blood Moss.....6 for 33 gold
 Black Pearl.....6 for 19 gold



Skara Brae Ground Floor



Skara Brae 2nd Floor

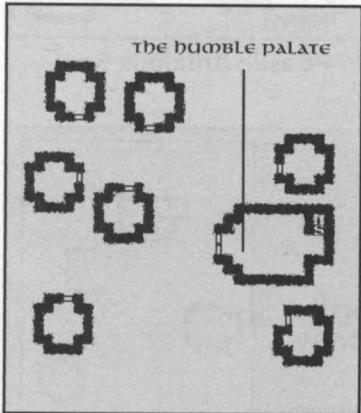
New Magincia

The Humble Palate

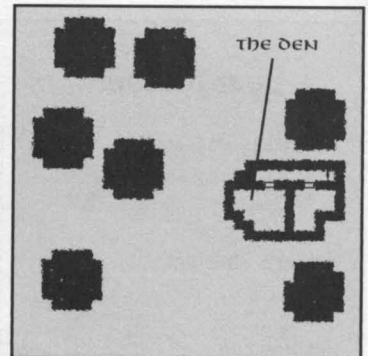
Stout1 per person
 Fruit.....2 per person
 Provisions33 for 25 meals

The Den (through fireplace in Humble Palate and upstairs)

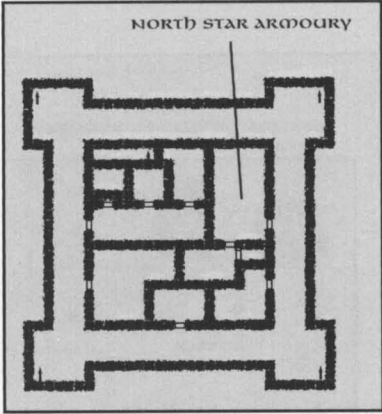
Keys3 keys: 209 gold
 Gems.....4 gems: 280 gold
 Torches.....5 torches: 13 gold



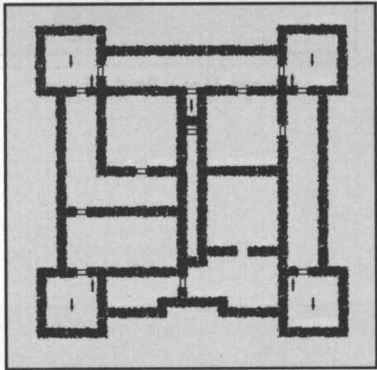
New Magincia Ground Floor



New Magincia 2nd Floor



Castle Britannia Basement

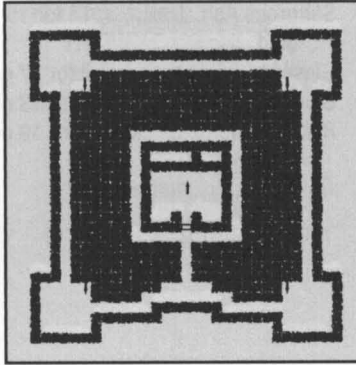


Castle Britannia 2nd Floor

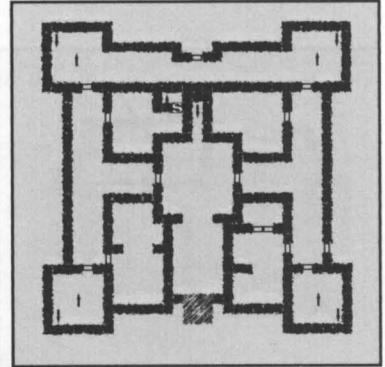
Castle Britannia

North Star Armoury

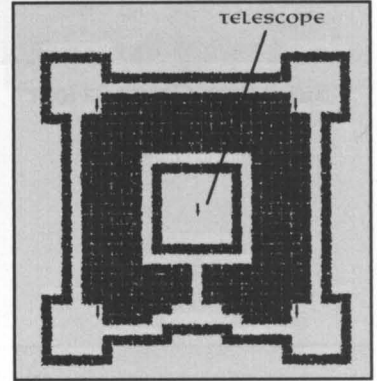
Chain Coif.....	55
Magic Shield.....	2200
Chain Mail.....	330
Plate Mail.....	770
Long Sword.....	77
Silver Sword.....	275
Ring of Protection.....	550



Castle Britannia 3rd Floor



Castle Britannia Ground Floor



Castle Britannia Roof

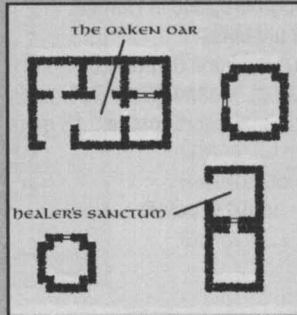
East Brittany

The Oaken Oar

Frigate.....	715
Skiff.....	137

Healer's Sanctum

Healing.....	50
Curing.....	35
Resurrection.....	237



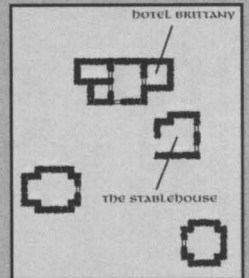
North Brittany

The Stablehouse

Steeds.....	143
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Hotel Brittany

Lodgings.....	@ 3 per guest
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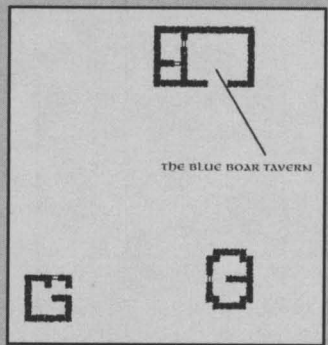


West Brittany

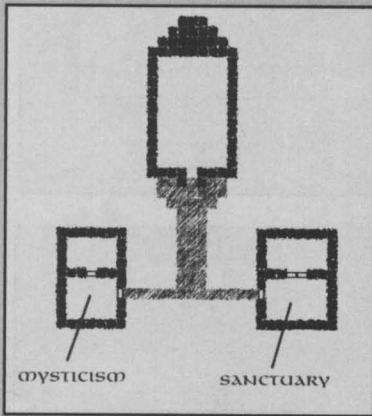
The Blue Boar Tavern

Wine List

Rosé.....	18
Claret.....	192
Sauterne.....	79
Muscatel.....	36
Moselle.....	275
Chablis.....	98
Cheese.....	5 ea.



Cove



Mysticism

Spider Silk.....	2 for 6 gold
Blood Moss.....	2 for 8 gold
Black Pearl.....	2 for 8 gold
Nightshade.....	11 ea.
Mandrake Root.....	16 ea.

Sanctuary

Healing.....	55
Curing.....	40
Resurrection.....	247

Paws



The Smuggler's Inn

Lodgings.....@2 per guest

The Guild

Keys.....	3 keys: 176 gold
Gems.....	4 gems: 220 gold
Torches.....	5 torches: 12 gold

Wishing Well Horses

Steeds.....176

The Cat's Lair

Mutton.....	3 per person
Ale.....	1 ea.
Rations.....	25 meals: 22 gold

Buccaneer's Den

The Fallen Virgin

- Rum1 per person
- Wild Boar4 per person

Buccaneer's Booty

- Leather Helm16
- Leather Armor55
- Dagger1
- Main Gauche16
- Short Sword44
- Flaming Oil5
- Ring of Invisibility495

The King's Ransom Inn

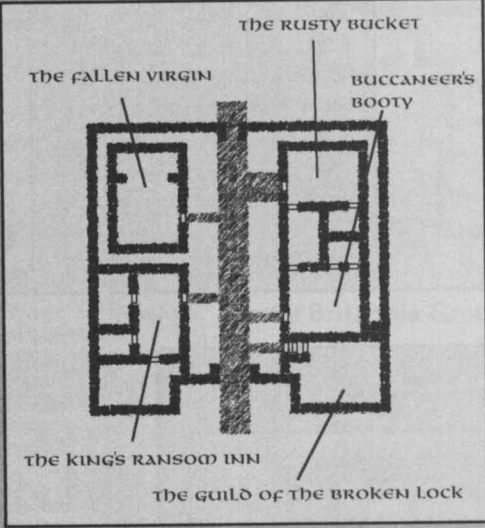
- Lodging3 gold ea.

The Rusty Bucket

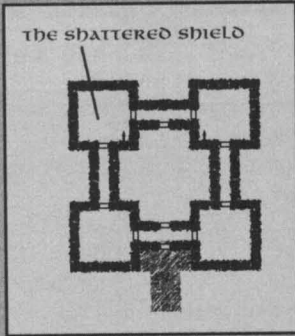
- Frigate770
- Skiff110

The Guild of the Broken Lock

- Keys3 keys: 220 gold
- Gems4 gems: 247 gold
- Torches5 torches: 27 gold



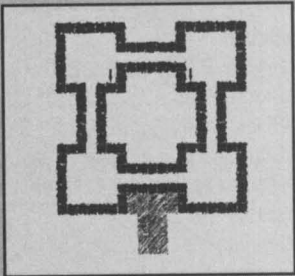
Bordermarch



Bordermarch

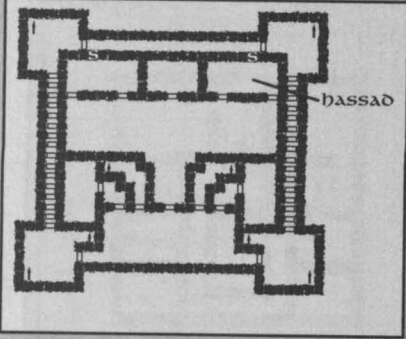
The Shattered Shield

- Magic Shield2200
- Two-Handed Axe165
- Magic Bow880
- Arrows11
- 2-Handed Hammer93
- Ring of Regeneration 220
- Amulet of Turning990

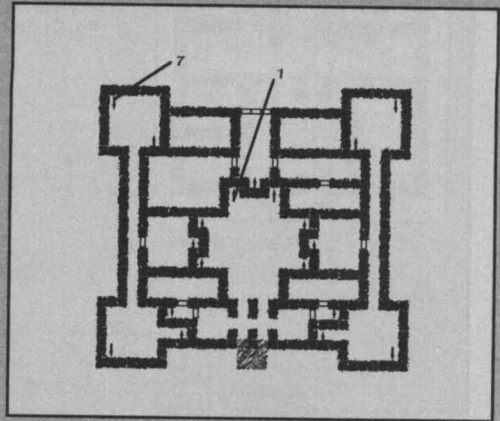


Bordermarch 2nd Floor

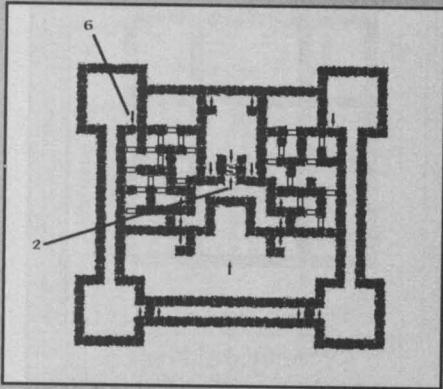
Blackthorn's Castle



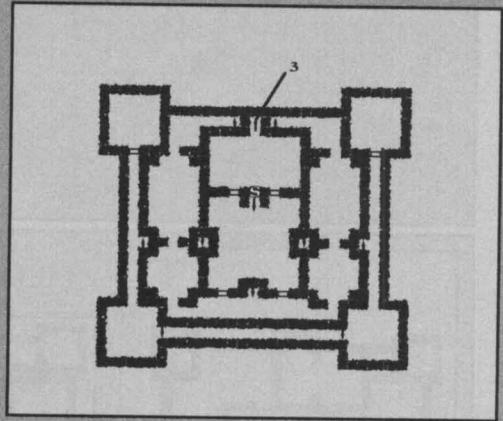
Blackthorn's Castle Basement



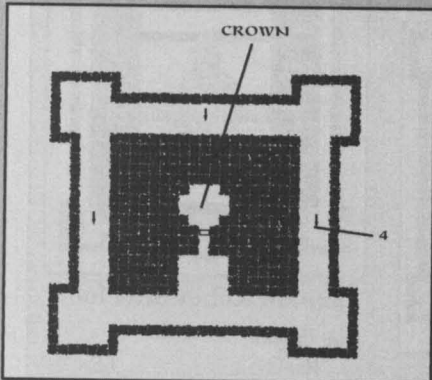
Blackthorn's Castle Ground Floor



Blackthorn's Castle 2nd Floor

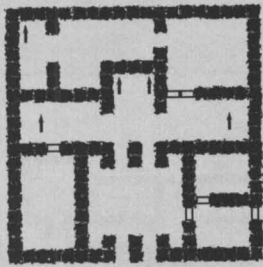


Blackthorn's Castle 3rd Floor



Blackthorn's Castle Roof

The numbers represent the Avatar's secret route.



Lycaenum Ground Floor

The Lycaenum

The Folley Tap

- Mutton5 per person
- Ale1 per person
- Rations25 meals: 33 gold

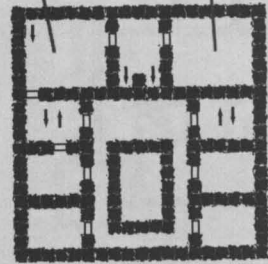
The Sharper Mage

- Blood Moss4 for 55 gold
- Nightshade33 ea.
- Mandrake Root44 ea,

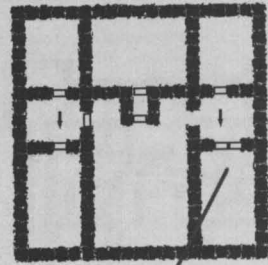
The Shield of Truth

- Healing60
- Curing15
- Resurrection249

The shield of truth
the folley tap

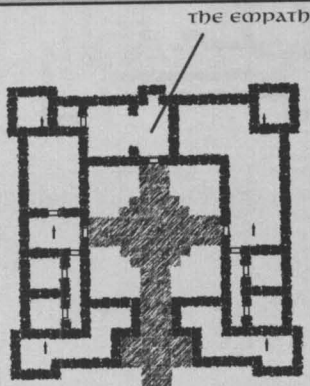


Lycaenum 2nd Floor



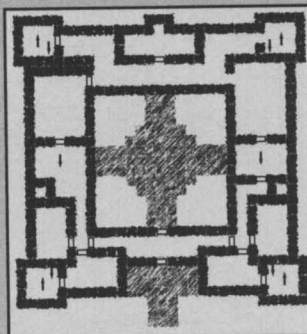
THE SHARPER MAGE

Lycaenum 3rd Floor



Empath Abbey
Ground Floor

Empath Abbey



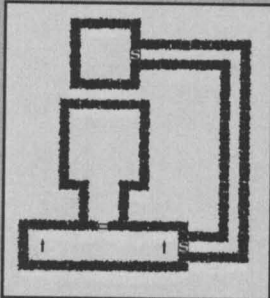
Empath Abbey 2nd Floor



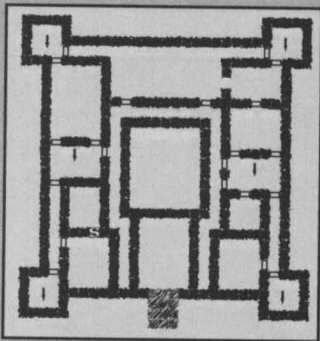
Empath Abbey 3rd Floor

The Empath

- Healing65
- Curing10
- Resurrection262

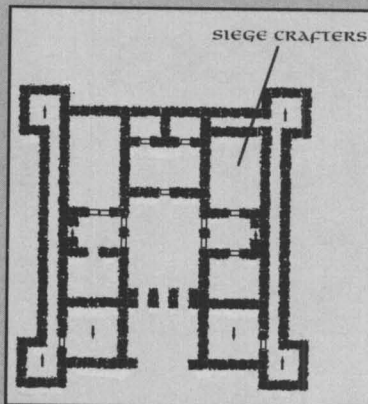


Serpent's Hold
Basement



Serpent's Hold 2nd Floor

Serpent's Hold



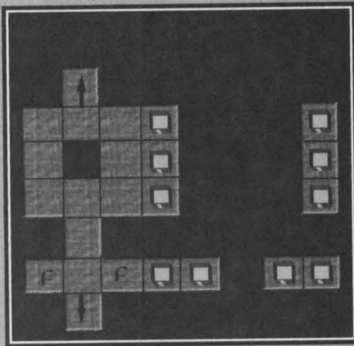
Serpent's Hold Ground Floor

Siege Crafters

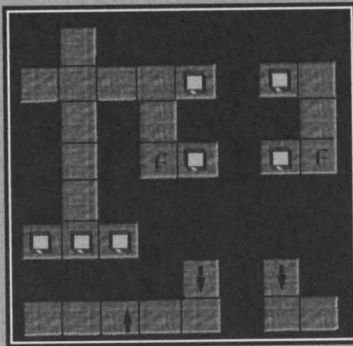
Chain Coif.....	55
Chain Mail.....	330
Crossbow.....	165
Quarrels.....	16
Halberd.....	275
Throwing Axe.....	3
Morning Star.....	66

MAP KEY

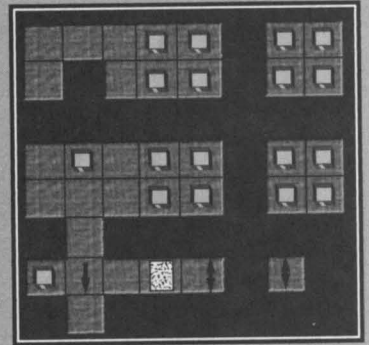
- ↓ DOWNSTAIRS
- ↑ UPSTAIRS
- ⊞ SECRET DOOR
- DOOR



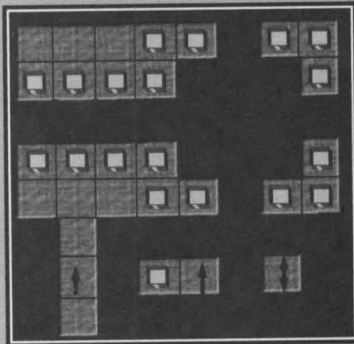
Level 1



Level 2



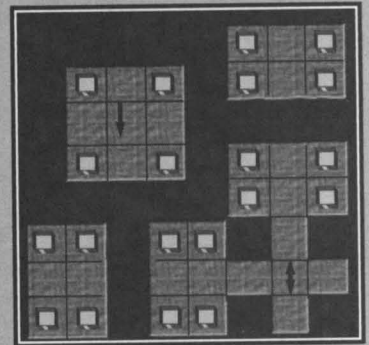
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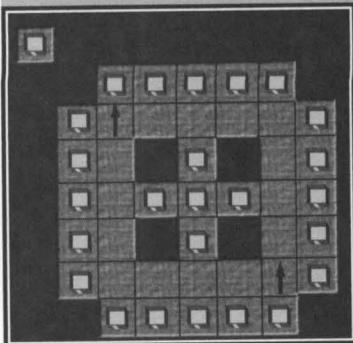
Level 4

Covetous

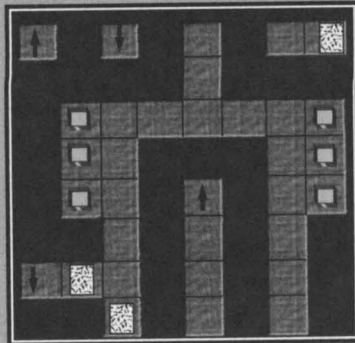
- ↓ DOWN LADDER
- ↑ UP LADDER
- FORCE FIELD
- SECRET DOOR
- T TRAP
- f FOUNTAIN
- ROOM
- PIT (DOWN)
- PIT (UP)



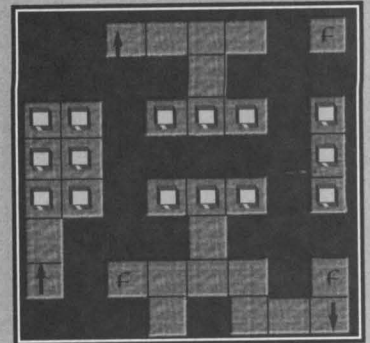
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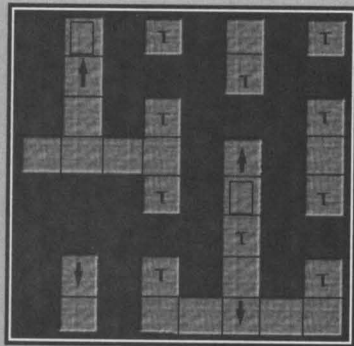
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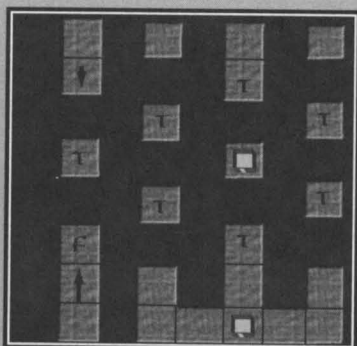
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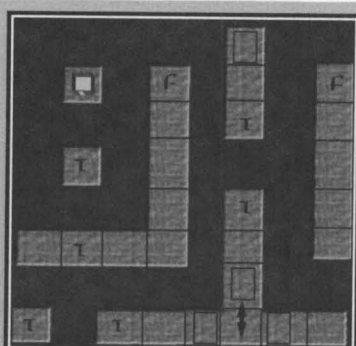
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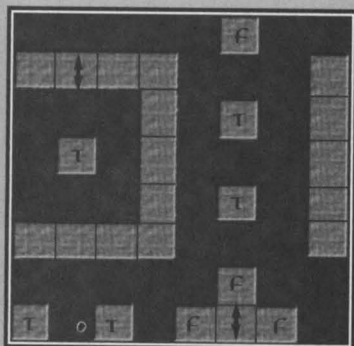
Level 1



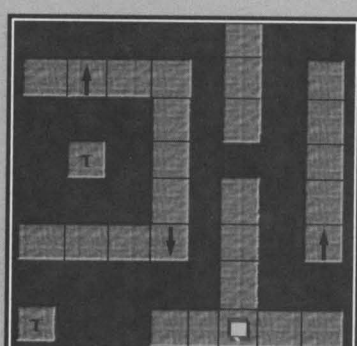
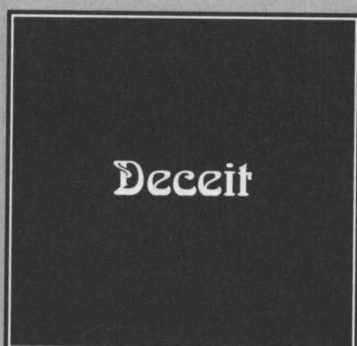
Level 2



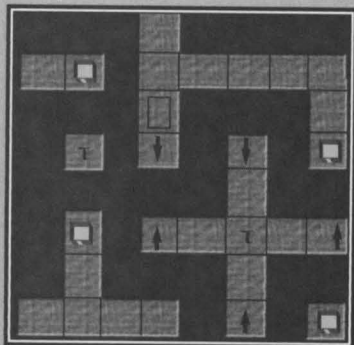
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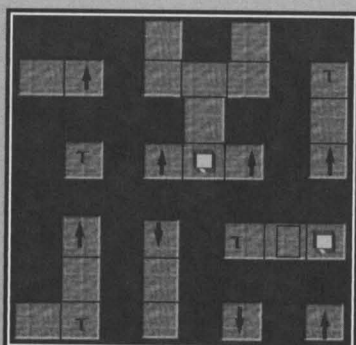
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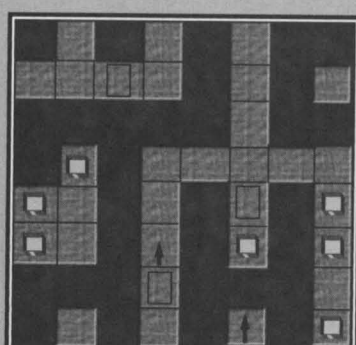
Level 5



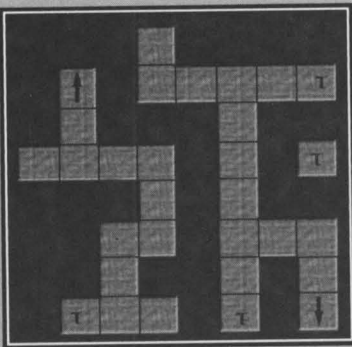
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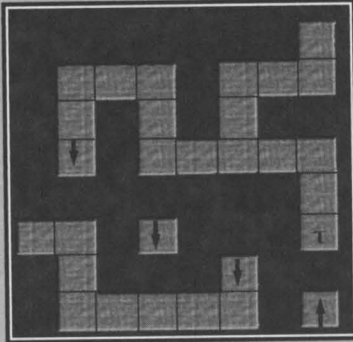
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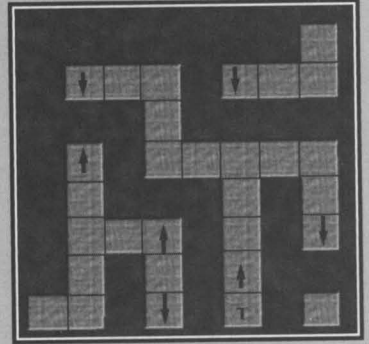
Level 8



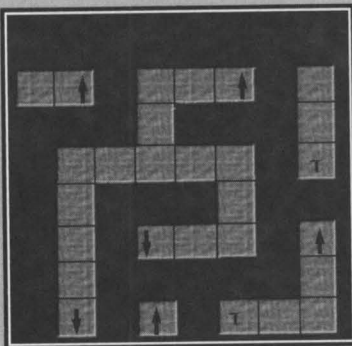
Level 1



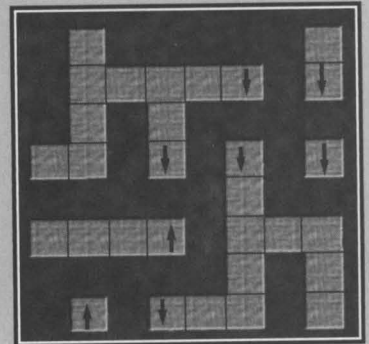
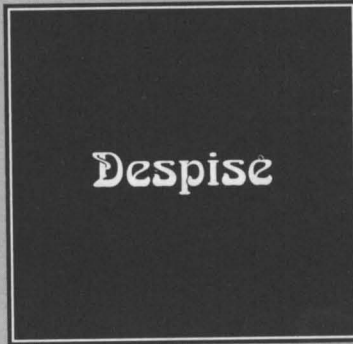
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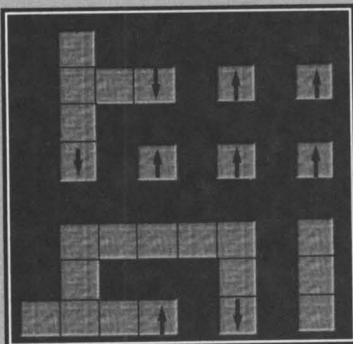
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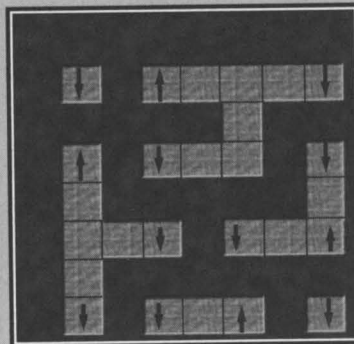
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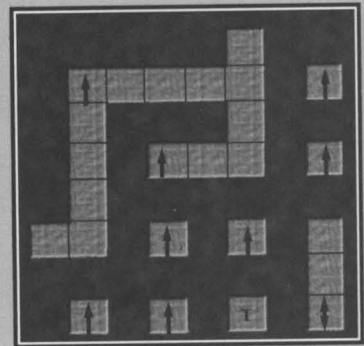
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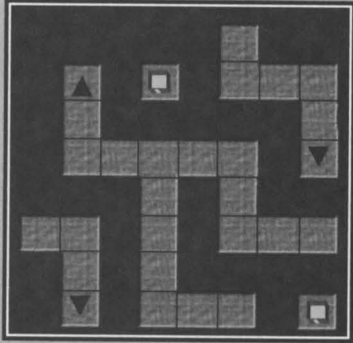
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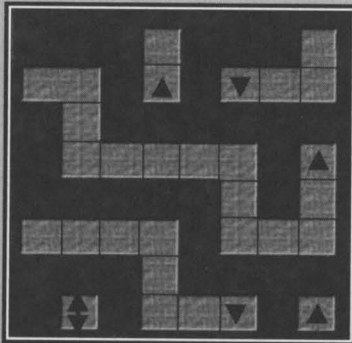
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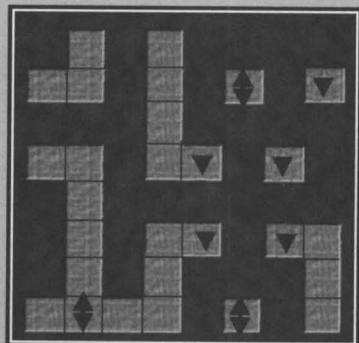
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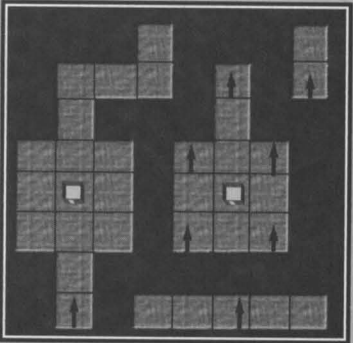
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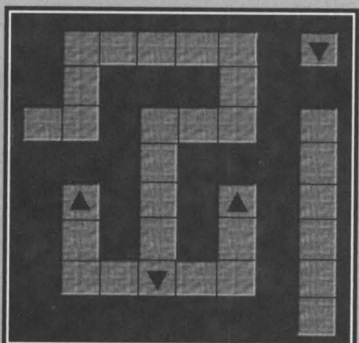
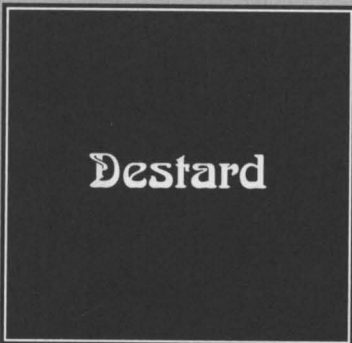
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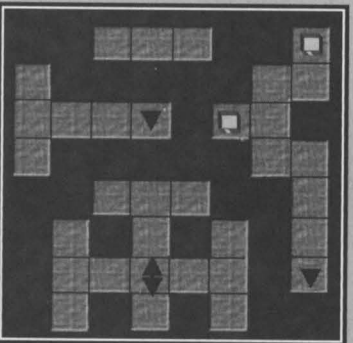
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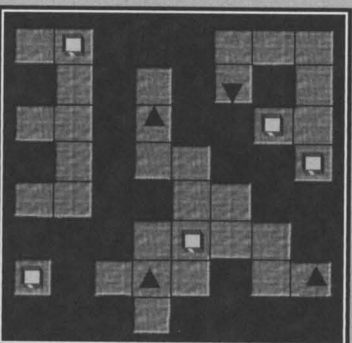
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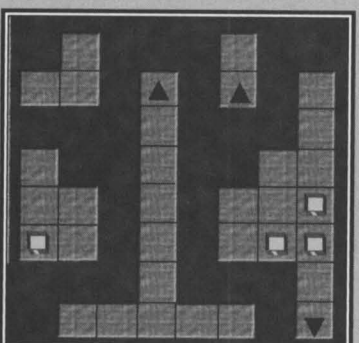
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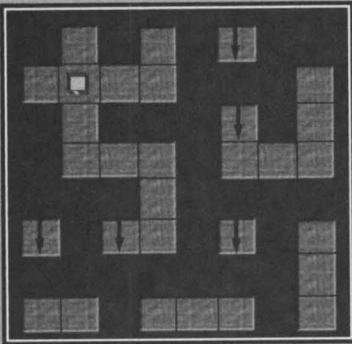
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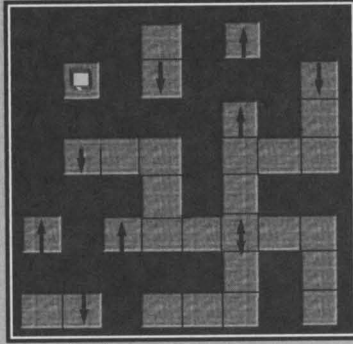
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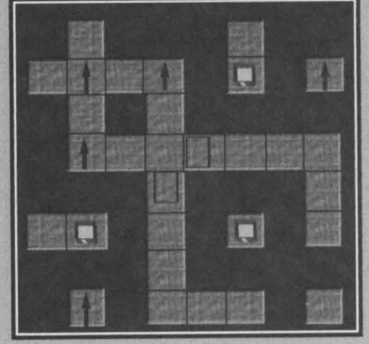
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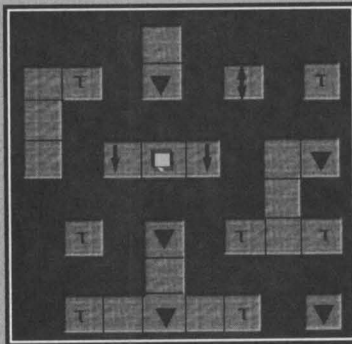
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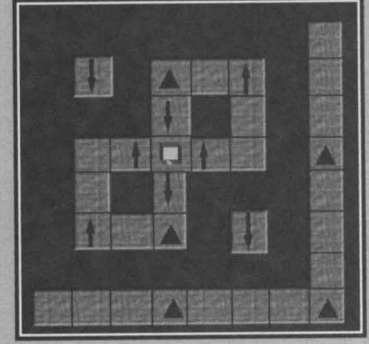
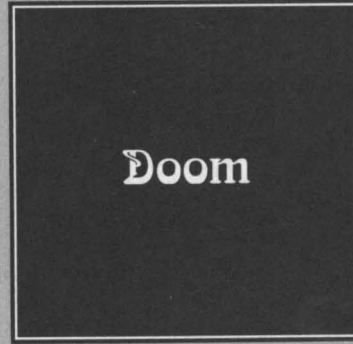
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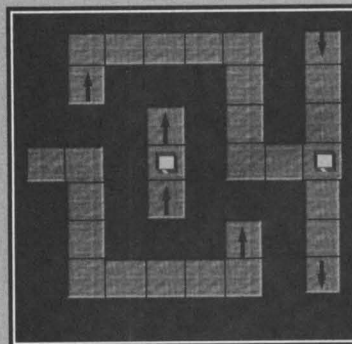
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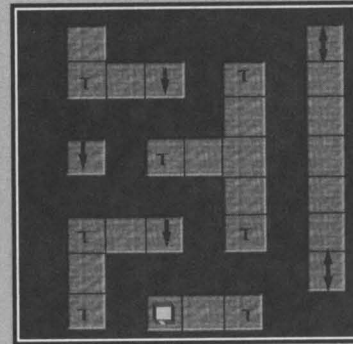
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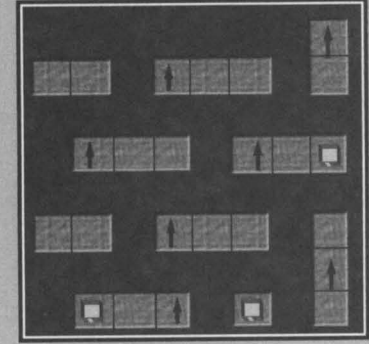
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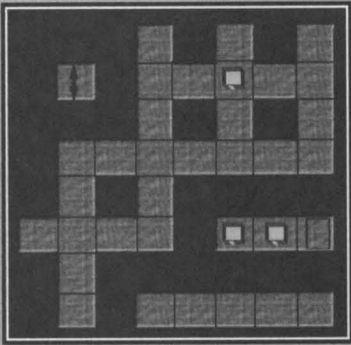
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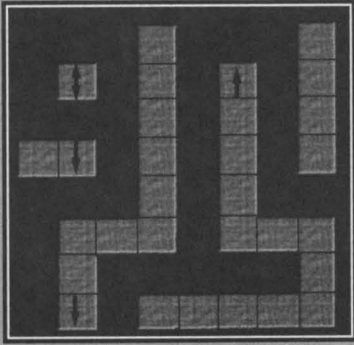
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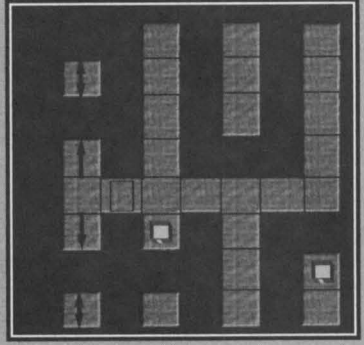
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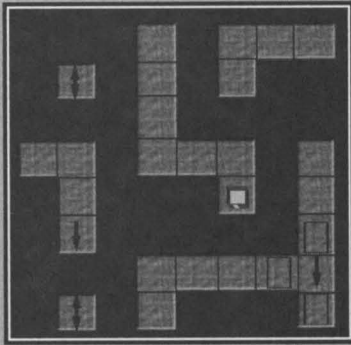
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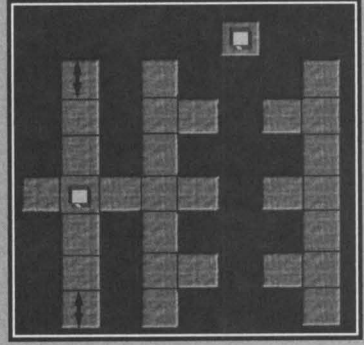
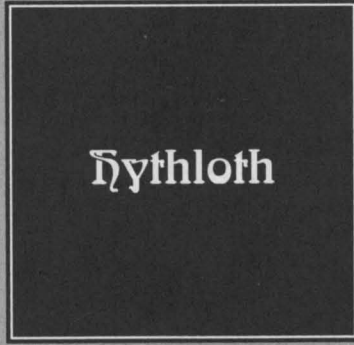
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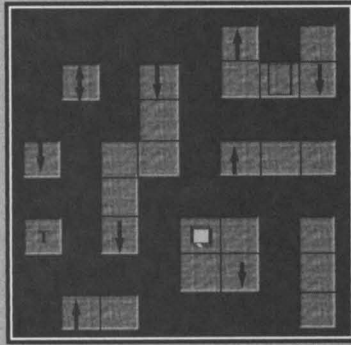
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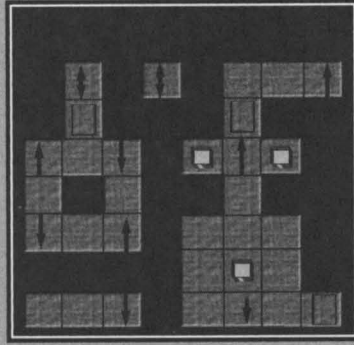
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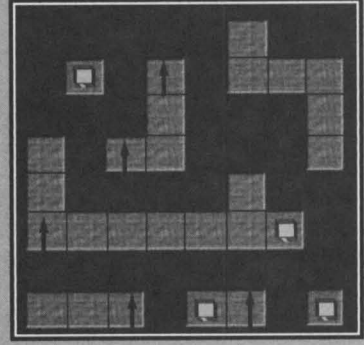
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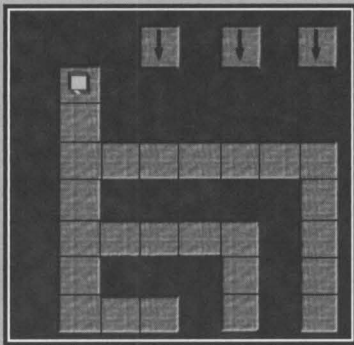
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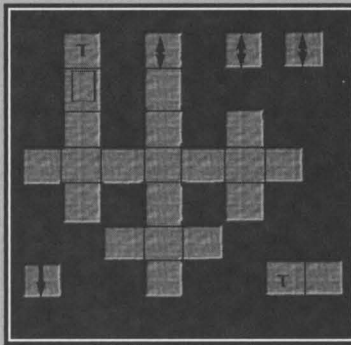
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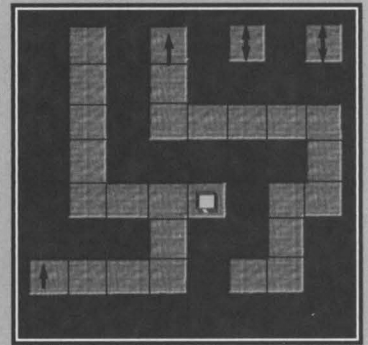
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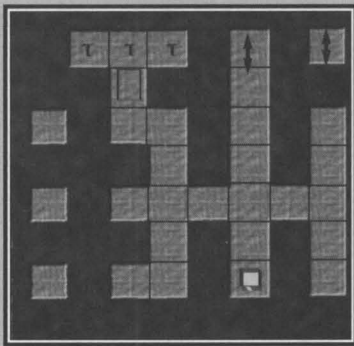
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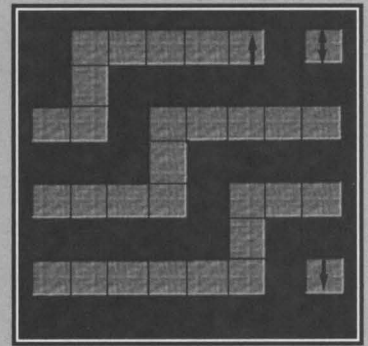
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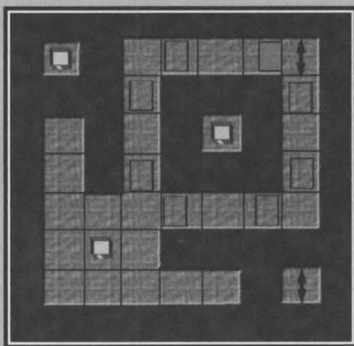
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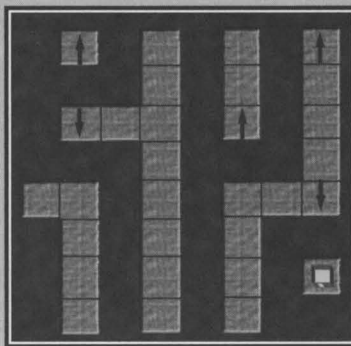
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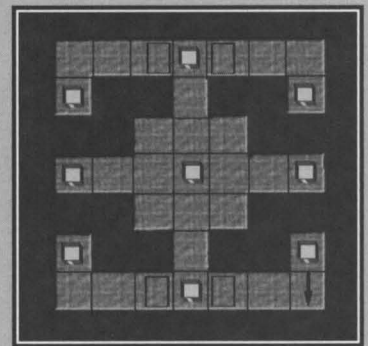
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Level 6

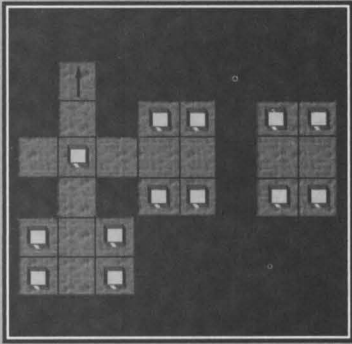


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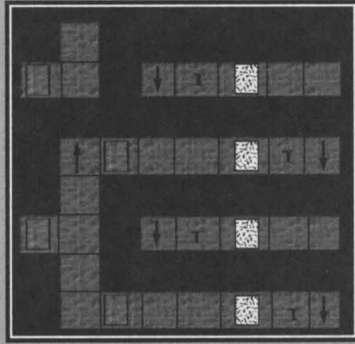


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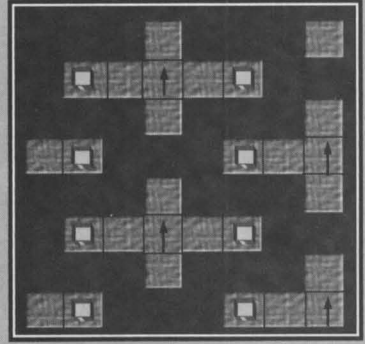
ULTIMA V: Maps



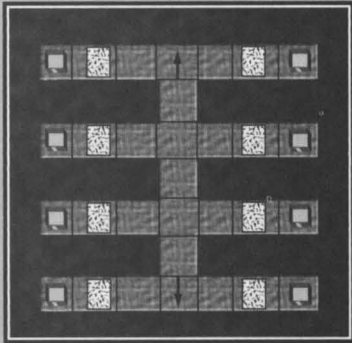
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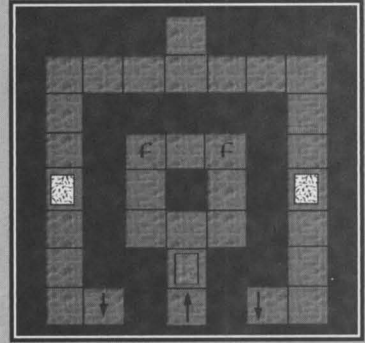
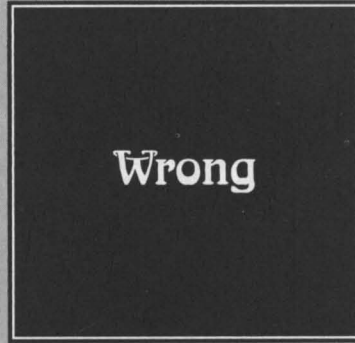
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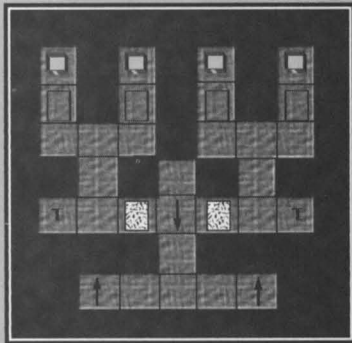
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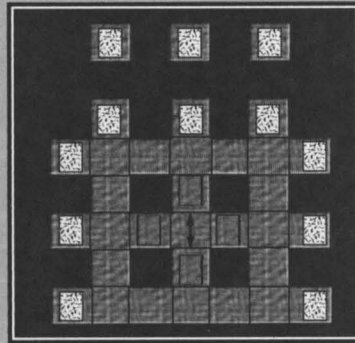
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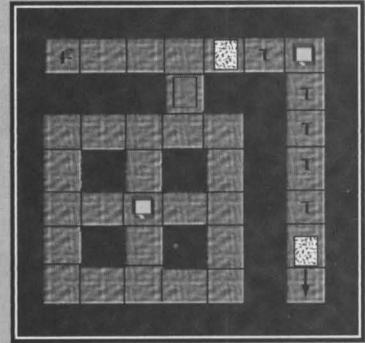
Level 5



Level 6

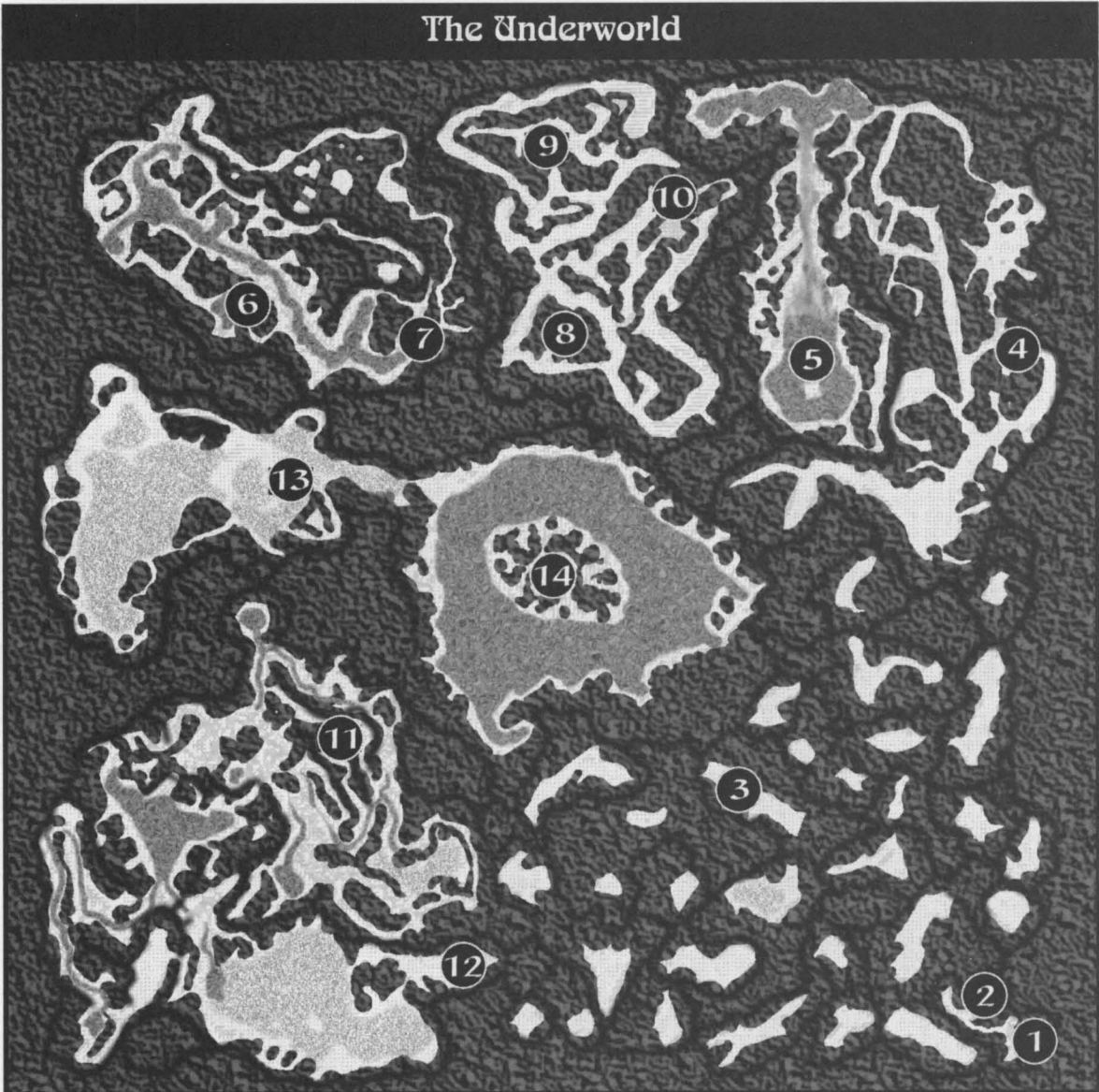


Level 7



Level 8

The Underworld



1) Hythloth	5) Shard of Falsehood	9) Wrong	13) Shame
2) Mystics	6) Ararat	10) Covetous	14) Doom
3) Shard of Cowardice	7) Despise	11) Destard	
4) Deceit	8) Shard of Hatred	12) Amulet	

Ultima V Charts

Think of this chapter as an Ultima V reference. This chapter contains information you'll find very useful while you are playing Ultima V. You'll especially find the maps helpful. Included here are handy charts and tables designed to help you understand the world of Britannia better.

Virtue Chart

Table U5-1 Cross-section of Virtues, Cities, and Clues in Ultima V

	Honesty	Compassion	Valor	Justice	Sacrifice	Honor	Spirituality	Humility
Mantra	AHM	MU	RA	BEH	CAH	SUMM	OM	LUM
Person	Maliforia	Greyson	Thorne	Chamfort	Rew	Gruman	Kindor	Wartow
City	Moonglow	Britain	Jhelom	Yew	Minoc	Trinsic	Skara Brae	New Magincia
Word of Power	FALLAX	VILIS	INOPIA	MALUM	AVIDUS	INFAMA	IGNAVUS	VERAMOCOR
Dungeon	Deceit	Despise	Destard	Wrong	Covetous	Shame	Hythloth	Doom
Person	Maliforia	Annon	Goeth	Felespar	Fiona	Sindar	Hassad	Codex
City	Moonglow	Britain	Jhelom	Yew	Minoc	Trinsic	Blackthorn's Castle	Codex Shrine

Moongates

Table U5-2 Moongate Locations and Destinations

Gate	Near	Phase	Location	Dest1	Dest2	Dest3
A	Moonglow	New	IF OA	A	B	C
B	Britain	Crecent Waxing	GG GA	D	E	F
C	Jhelom	1st Quarter	OA CG	G	H	A
D	Yew	Gibbous Waxing	CF DC	B	C	D
E	Minoc	Full	BD KG	shrine	F	G
F	Trinsic	Gibbous Waning	MC GI	H	A	B
G	Skara Brae	Last Quarter	HO BH	C	D	E
H	New Magincia	Crecent Waning	KH LL	F	G	H

Potions

Table U5-3 Potions

Yellow	Heal
Green	Poison
Orange	Sleep
White	X-ray vision
Black	Invisibility
Blue	Awaken
Purple	Turn into rat
Red	Cure poison

Creature Stats

Each creature or character you meet in Ultima V has certain abilities and statistics. Here's a complete list of these statistics.

Str	=	Strength
Dex	=	Dexterity
Int	=	Intelligence
Arm	=	Armor (protection)
Dmg	=	Damage (attack power)
Hp	=	Hit points
Max #	=	Maximum number you'll normally encounter
Treas	=	An estimation of the gold it carries (actual amounts are variable)

Table U5-4 Creature Statistics

TYPE	STR	DEX	INT	ARM	DMG	HP	MAX #	TREAS
mage	10	15	20	0	15	10	3	20
bard	15	20	10	4	12	15	9	10
fighter	20	15	10	8	15	20	6	15
avatar	25	25	25	7	30	20	1	25
villager	12	12	12	0	6	8	1	10
merchant	12	12	18	0	6	8	1	10
jester	12	18	12	0	6	8	1	10
banjoplayer ("Bard")	12	16	14	0	6	8	1	10
stocks	12	12	12	0	0	5	1	0
manacles	12	12	12	0	0	5	1	0
child	8	8	8	0	0	5	1	0
beggar	8	8	8	0	0	5	1	0
guards	22	30	10	6	30	99	8	5
wanderer	30	30	30	30	99	99	1	0
Blackthorn	30	30	30	30	30	99	1	0
Lord British	30	30	30	30	99	99	1	0
sea horse	17	20	20	2	10	30	3	0

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squid	24	20	8	0	20	50	2	0
sea serpent	17	17	8	2	30	70	1	0
shark	20	17	5	0	8	22	10	0
rats	5	20	5	0	6	10	10	5
bats	5	30	5	0	6	5	16	0
spiders	10	10	5	0	8	10	4	5
ghost	1	20	10	0	12	20	6	0
slime	6	6	2	0	4	10	16	0
gremlins	10	21	10	2	4	10	13	12
mimic	20	30	12	3	15	30	1	20
reaper	20	25	12	4	20	40	3	25
gazers	8	10	25	0	10	20	4	0
gargoyles	20	10	5	15	20	40	1	0
insects	1	30	1	0	4	5	10	0
orcs	15	13	10	2	12	10	10	11
skeletons	10	20	5	0	12	20	8	13
snakes ("Python")	5	18	8	1	8	10	4	0
ettin	20	15	12	3	15	30	6	17
headless	19	12	8	2	12	20	8	12
wisps	8	30	20	0	20	40	4	0
devil ("Daemon")	25	25	25	5	20	75	4	0
dragon	30	25	25	10	30	99	2	30
sandtraps	25	25	5	10	30	80	1	25
troll	18	17	9	4	15	15	4	15
force fields	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
whirlpools	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
mongbats	10	30	15	4	20	20	16	5
corpse	17	10	8	0	15	40	4	0
rot worms	5	17	6	0	6	5	10	0
shadowlords	25	30	30	10	30	99	1	0

Special Abilities

Most of the creatures and characters you'll encounter in Ultima V have certain abilities. It's useful to know what those abilities are. In the following chart, you'll find a list of those abilities and which creatures or characters have them.

Table U5-5 Special Abilities

A	uses magic (at range)	J	bludgeons
B	normal range attacks	J	possesses (charms)
C	teleports	K	undead nature
D	"Disappears!" on death	L	splits in two
E	invisibility	M	immortal (never takes damage)
F	gates in daemons	R	poisons at range
G	poisons	Q	steals food
H	infects with plague	P	no corpse
		Q	none

Creature	Attribute	Creature	Attribute
Mage	A	Spider	G, N
Bard	B	Ghost	E, K, P
Fighter	Q	Slime	L, P
Avatar	Q	Gremlin	O
Villager	Q	Mimic	G, I
Merchant	Q	Reaper	A, I
Jester	Q	Gazer	A, J
Bard	Q	Gargoyle	I, L
Guy in Stocks	Q	Insect	P
Guy in Manacles	Q	Orc	I
Children	Q	Skeleton	K
Beggar	Q	Snake	N
Guard	Q	Etin	B, I
Wanderer	A, C, D, M	Headless	I
Blackthorn	A, C, D, E, F, J, M	Wisp	C, J, P
Lord British	A, C, D, M	Daemon	A, F, J, K, P
Sea Horse	A, B, P	Dragon	F
Squid	B, N, P	Sandtrap	Q
Serpent	B, P	Troll	B
Shark	P	Mongbat	Q
Rat	G, H	Corpser	Q
Bat	P	Rot Worm	G, H
		Shadowlord	A, C, D, E, G, H, J, K, P

Attack Stats, Friends, and Missile Type

Each enemy in Ultima V has a range of attack as well as a type of missile. In addition, many characters tend to attack in groups together. Table U5-6 shows these values. If the Range = 1 and Missile Type is 0, then it means **no** missiles, not arrows.

Missile Types: 0=arrow; 1=cannonball; 2=axe; 3=red; 4=blue; 5=green; 6=violet; 7=rock

Table U5-6 Attack Stats, Friends

NAME	ATTACK RANGE	MISSILE TYPE	FRIENDS
mage	7	4	SKELETONS
bard	3	0	BARD
fighter	1	0	BARD
avatar	1	0	AVATAR
villager	1	0	VILLAGER
merchant	1	0	VILLAGER
jester	1	0	VILLAGER
banjoplayer	1	0	VILLAGER
stocks	1	0	VILLAGER
manacles	1	0	VILLAGER
child	1	0	CHILD
beggar	1	0	VILLAGER
guards	15	2	GUARDS
wanderer	9	4	WANDERER
Blackthorn	9	3	BLACKTHORN
Lord British	9	4	LORD BRITISH
seahorse	5	4	SQUID
squid	7	4	SEA HORSE
sea serpent	9	3	SQUID
shark	1	0	SHARK
rats	1	0	SKELETONS
bats	1	0	BATS
spiders	1	0	RATS
ghost	1	0	SKELETONS
slime	1	0	SLIME
gremlins	1	0	MIMIC
mimic	2	5	ETTIN
reaper	9	4	BATS
gazers	5	6	BATS
gargoyles	9	7	GARGOYLES
insects	1	0	SLIME
orcs	1	0	TROLL
skeletons	1	0	MAGE
snakes	3	5	SPIDERS
ettin	5	7	HEADLESS

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headless	1	0	ETTIN
wisps	1	0	GHOST
daemon	9	3	DRAGON
dragon	9	3	DRAGON
sandtraps	1	0	SANDTRAPS
troll	5	2	RATS
force fields	1	0	FORCE FIELD
whirlpools	1	0	WHIRLPOOL
mongbats	1	0	MONGBATS
corpser	1	0	CORPSE
rot worms	1	0	RATS
shadowlords	9	3	DAEMON

- These creatures like to ambush campers: troll, rat, bat, slime, spider, gremlin, and headless.
- These fellows roam the dungeon's depths: rat, bat, spider, ghost, slime, gremlin, gazer, and reaper.

Ultima 5 Weapon Ranges, Attack Values, etc.

Each weapon or item of armor has certain abilities. Table U5-7 lists these statistics. Also included in this list are stats for combat spells. Values are relative. For instance, Mystic Armor gives twice the protection of Chain Mail.

Table U5-7 Weapon and Armor Stats

		Glass Sword	99 attack		
		Jewel Sword	0 attack		
	NAME	ATTACK	DEFENSE	RANGE	MISSILE
Just	Leather Helm	0	1	0	0
Bard	Chain Coif	0	2	0	0
Guy in	Iron Helm	0	3	0	0
Guy in	Spiked Helm	4	3	0	0
Child	Small Shield	0	2	0	0
Beginn	Large Shield	0	3	0	0
Guard	Spiked Shield	6	3	0	0
Wander	Magic Shield	0	5	0	0
Black	Jewel Shield	0	0	0	0
Lord B	Cloth Armour	0	1	0	0
Sea Ho	Leather Armour	0	2	0	0
Squad	Ring Mail	0	3	0	0
Serpent	Scale Mail	0	4	0	0
Shark	Chain Mail	0	5	0	0
Pal	Plate Mail	0	7	0	0
Dev	Mystic Armour	0	10	0	0

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Dagger	6	0	3	0
Sling	6	0	4	7
Club	8	0	0	0
Flaming Oil	8	0	4	3
Main Gauche	8	1	0	0
Spear	10	0	5	0
Throwing Axe	10	0	4	2
Short Sword	12	0	0	0
Mace	15	0	0	0
Morning Star	15	0	2	0
Bow	10	0	7	0
Arrows	1	0	0	0
Crossbow	12	0	8	0
Quarrels	1	0	0	0
Long Sword	15	0	0	0
2H Hammer	20	0	0	0
2H Axe	20	0	0	0
2H Sword	20	0	0	0
Halberd	30	0	2	0
Sword of Chaos	99	0	0	0
Magic Bow	15	0	15	0
Silver Sword	12	0	0	0
Magic Axe	20	0	15	2
Glass Sword	99	0	0	0
Jeweled Sword	1	0	0	0
Mystic Sword	30	1	0	0
Ring of Invisibility	0	0	0	0
Ring of Protection	0	2	0	0
Ring of Regeneration	0	0	0	0
Amulet/Turning	0	0	0	0
Spiked Collar	0	2	0	0
Ankh	0	0	0	0
Flam Por	16	15	4	n/a
Vas Flam	30	15	3	n/a
In Corp	99	15	4	n/a
Uus Nox	18	15	5	n/a
Uus Zu	0	15	6	n/a
Uus Flam	21	15	3	n/a
Uus Sanct	0	15	4	n/a

Missile Types: 0 arrow 1 cannonball 2 axe 3 red 4 blue 5 green 6 violet 7 rock

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Item Name	Weight	Value	Buy	Sell	Location
Quiver	0	3	0	6	Quiver
Club	0	0	0	8	Club
Main Goggles	0	0	1	6	Main Goggles
Throwing Axe	3	4	0	10	Throwing Axe
Vase	0	0	0	15	Vase
Bow	0	7	0	10	Bow
Crossbow	0	3	0	12	Crossbow
Long Sword	0	0	0	15	Long Sword
Sliding S. Weapon	0	0	0	20	Sliding S. Weapon
Earl's Weapon	0	0	0	20	Earl's Weapon
Harb. S. Weapon	0	2	0	20	Harb. S. Weapon
Magic Bow	0	15	0	15	Magic Bow
Magic Axe	0	15	0	20	Magic Axe
Jawled Sword	0	0	0	1	Jawled Sword
Ring of Fealty	0	0	0	0	Ring of Fealty
Ring of Protection	0	0	0	0	Ring of Protection
Spiked Collar	0	0	0	0	Spiked Collar
Prism Pail	0.5	4	15	15	Prism Pail
in Cup	0	4	15	30	in Cup
Lot 50	0	0	15	0	Lot 50
Lot 50	0	0	15	0	Lot 50
Lot 50	0	0	15	0	Lot 50



Part III

Ultima VI

The False Prophet



Entry 3— Date Unknown

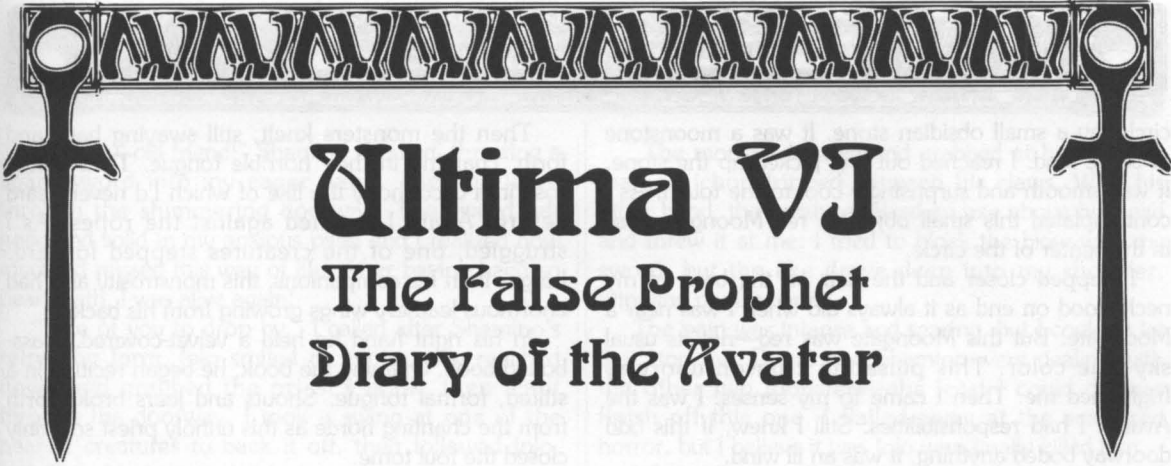
"Which way happened first—my last entry, '14935', or the date?"

I finished one of the boxes around the circle of stamps and returned to my desk. The last stroke of the pen of the clerk, kneeling behind the wall of stone, was the end of my life. The wall whirled around the pillars of the temple in every direction. The wall whirled over me, but I did not die. I was going back to Bruma. When I returned slowly at the spot where the lightning had struck, in the center of the scorch-



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Ultima VJ

The False Prophet

Diary of the Avatar



Entry 1—March 15

It has been several years now since my last visit to Britannia. Though I have accomplished much here on Earth during that time, I find myself wishing to return to Lord British's

kingdom to see how he's fared since the downfall of Blackthorn and the Shadowlords.


I miss the friendships I forged with Iolo, Shamino, Dupré, and the others during my last two Quests. Though I have many acquaintances here, there's no one with whom I can share my secret life. My trips to Britannia only make me more aware how pale and flat my life on Earth is.

The Renaissance Fair I organized after my first visit to Britannia is now running almost by itself. The proceeds from the Fair help various charities and philanthropic organizations I've found worthy. In my spare time, I've been studying the teachings of the great philosophers and teachers: Plato, Socrates, Kant, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Buddha, Mohammed, and Jesus, to name but a few. I'm searching for answers, but what I've discovered is that I don't have any questions. Or at least not the right ones.

Life is much clearer in Britannia—more straightforward. At least it was the first time I was there. The last time, well, things were a little more complicated.

There's a storm brewing outside. I've been sitting here writing and flipping through the channels on the TV. One hundred channels and nothing to watch. I should get up and unplug the computer. Even with a surge protector, I'm still nervous about losing data.

The storm is getting worse. Every lightning bolt is like the flash from a camera. I see the circle of stones for a second, then it's gone. The image lingers before my eyes. I hear something now. I know this sound, like wind chimes, only stranger and otherworldly. I've heard this tone several times before. Each time, a gate from Britannia has appeared to take me to that land. I will close now. Once again, I sense that my destiny awaits outside, in the storm.



Entry 2— Date Unknown

So much has happened since my last entry. How do I begin the tale?

I rushed out of the house toward the circle of stones with lightning flashing all around me. One bolt struck the center of the circle, leaving behind the smell of ozone and burning grass. The wind whipped around me, pulling my clothes in every direction. Rain washed over me, but I didn't mind. I was going back to Britannia.

Then I looked closely at the spot where the lightning had struck. In the center of the scorched

circle lay a small obsidian stone. It was a moonstone of some kind. I reached out and picked up the stone. It was smooth and surprisingly cool to the touch. As I contemplated this small object, a red Moongate rose in the center of the circle.

I stepped closer and the hair on the back of my neck stood on end as it always did when I was near a Moongate. But this Moongate was red—not its usual sky-blue color. This pulsating crimson doorway frightened me. Then I came to my senses. I was the Avatar. I had responsibilities. Still I knew, if this odd doorway boded anything, it was an ill wind.

The gate began to waver and dim. There was no more time for deliberation; I must act now or my chance would be lost.

“For Lord British and Britannia!” I yelled at the top of my lungs, diving forward into the gate.

The world went away and I felt the familiar lurch of my stomach as I passed through the portal. Darkness swallowed me.

• • •

When I could see again, I wished I hadn't leapt through the gate. I found myself standing on a desolate plain. In front of me was a huge stone altar covered with carved runes. But the runes didn't appear to be the those I'd learned to decipher in Britannia. Though some years had passed, I'd have recognized Britannian runes in a minute. This was another language entirely, but I didn't have time to ponder this oddity.

From off in the distance came the low murmur of voices raised in song. With each passing second the sound grew louder and louder. Something about the slow, funereal hymn made me want to flee, but I didn't run. And in a heartbeat, it was too late.

From across the plain came a daemon horde. They swayed from side to side in a rhythmic manner, as hypnotic as the undulation of a cobra. They crossed the flat expanse of land with inhuman quickness and were upon me before I could move.

Scaly claws grabbed my arms and legs and I was hoisted onto the altar, my limbs tied with stout ropes. I struggled against my bonds, but to no avail. I was trussed up tight and couldn't move.

Then the monsters knelt, still swaying back and forth, chanting in their horrible tongue. Their voices rose in a cacophony the like of which I'd never heard before. Again I strained against the ropes. As I struggled, one of the creatures stepped forward. Larger than his companions, this monstrosity also had enormous leathery wings growing from his back.

In his right hand he held a velvet-covered, brass-bound book. Opening the book, he began reciting in a stilted, formal tongue. Shouts and jeers broke forth from the chanting horde as this unholy priest solemnly closed the foul tome.

In his left claw the winged one held a sharp stone knife. While his brethren continued their ghostly wailing, he raised the knife above his head, pointing it at my chest.

Furiously I thrashed against my restraints. What an ignoble end, to die in a strange land because I'd foolishly leapt through a strange Moongate. I closed my eyes and tried to think of a way to escape.

I heard catcalls and bloodcurdling screams rending the air; then the sound of pandemonium, shrieks of rage and terror. Would I die now with this terrible din in my ears? I prepared myself for death. I was one of Britannia's chosen. I was the Avatar. And I vowed I would die with grace.

I waited for the blow.

It never came.

To my amazement, the bellowing horde fell silent.

Cautiously, I opened my eyes.

A hellish red glow filled the darkness, reflecting off the scaly hides of my captors. At my feet, I saw another of the scarlet Moongates appear. I heard the familiar wooden clack of a crossbow being fired. To my right, the daemon priest stiffened, his forehead sprouting a violet blood-rose. He collapsed to the ground, out of sight.

Then, in the red doorway, figures appeared. At first their bodies were only outlines against the light. Then I saw the faces of my dear friends Iolo, Shamino, and Dupré. Never had old friends been so welcome!

While Iolo held the foul horde back with a rain of crossbow bolts, Dupré hacked through the cords that held me, then pulled me from the slab.

"Quickly, old friend!" Shamino shouted, thrusting a spare sword into my eager hand. Then he leapt through the shimmering doorway. The sword felt good and solid in my anxious palm and I realized how much I'd missed this way of life. After having been so near death, I was alive again!

"Nice of you to drop by," I called after Shamino's retreating form. Iolo smiled at me, quickly reached down and grabbed the priest's book, then leapt through the doorway. I took a swing at one of the nearest creatures to back it off, then followed Iolo, with Dupré hot on my heels.

The howling throng surged forward, voices raised in terrible wails of frustration. The gate was closing behind me and my saviors, but not rapidly enough. From the horde's vanguard, three of the abominations scrambled toward the gate. Driven by fury, the creatures hurled their bodies into the portal's last halfspan of light.

Once again, the familiar vertigo and darkness of the Moongate engulfed me, but I wasn't comforted. Wherever we landed, we would still have to face daemons.



Entry 3—Lord British's Castle

Lord British's throne room appeared abruptly, but I didn't have time to exchange pleasantries or to ponder how we had arrived. The three daemons who had followed us through the Moongate were attacking.

I turned and drove my sword into the daemon nearest me, but to my dismay, the blow barely broke the beast's hide. Inwardly I groaned—it seemed that every time I returned to Britannia I found myself lacking most of the abilities I'd acquired during my last visit. There was no time to dwell on this problem, however, because the daemon had returned my blow with one of his own. The force of this assault staggered me and sent me flying backward. From over my right shoulder, Iolo sent a bolt into the beast's hide.

The monster howled and grabbed at his chest as maroon ichor dripped between his claws. With his other hand, the creature raised an axe above his head and threw it at me. I tried to block the blow with my sword, but the axe drove deep into my shoulder, crippling my free arm.

The pain was intense and searing, but I couldn't let that stop me. Dupré and Shamino were dealing with the other two monsters—the least I could do was finish off this one. I flailed away at the scaly red horror, but I believe it was Iolo who finally killed him.

When all was still, I looked around. The bodies of the three daemons lay scattered about the throne room in pools of blood. As the Avatar I'd defeated many monsters in my time, but I'd never really grown accustomed to the suddenness of death in Britannia. I turned away from the fallen bodies and stepped toward the throne.

There sat Lord British, looking little different than the first time I'd laid eyes on him. His hair was long and blond and streaked with white. His piercing eyes were still clear, though now punctuated by careworn lines.

"Welcome, Avatar," he said. "'Tis good to see thee again. Much hath happened since thou last departed our realm."

"'Tis good to see you again, Lord British," I said. "Please tell me the news since my last visit to your fair land."

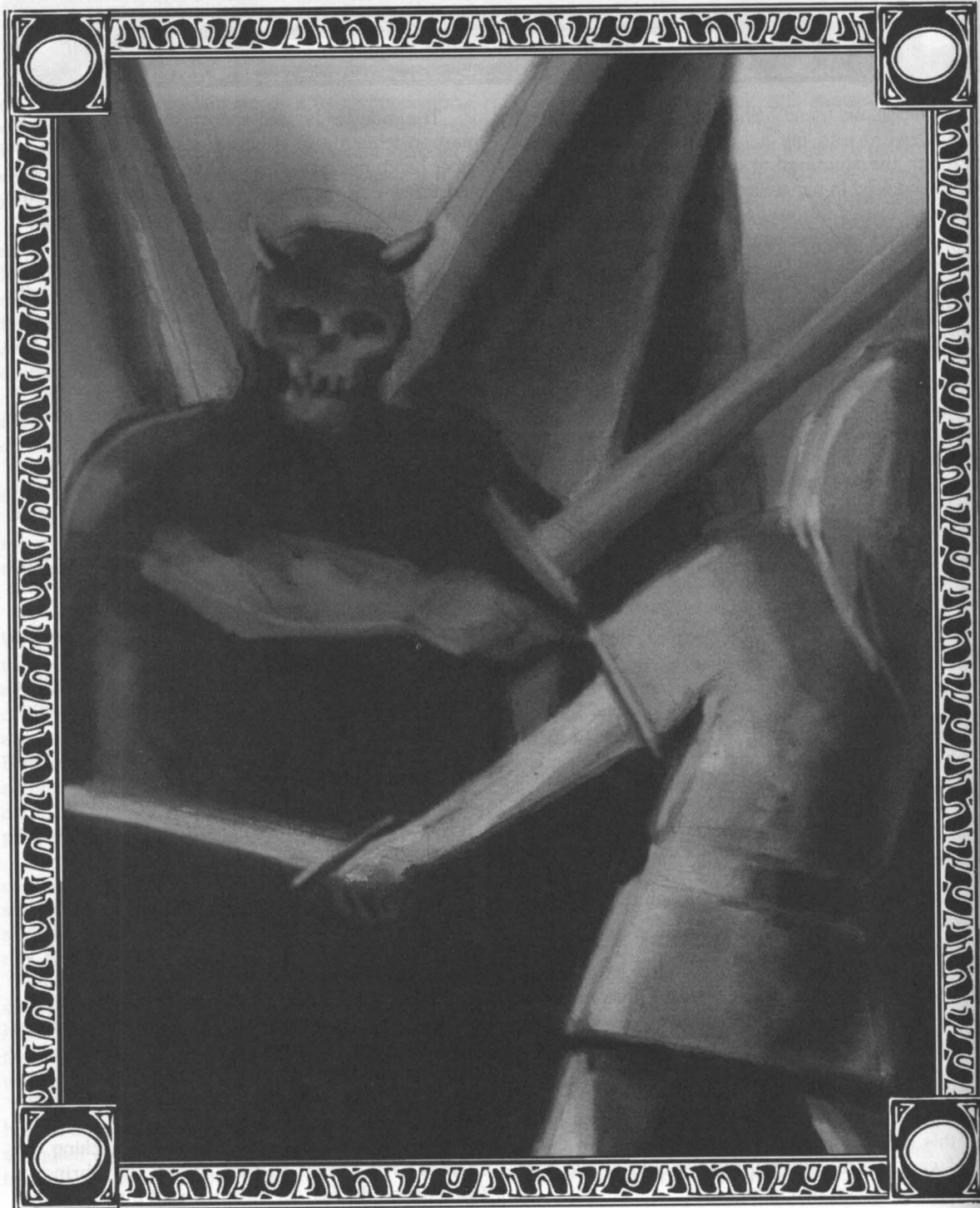
Lord British smiled. He loved it when you complimented Britannia.

"Very well, Avatar, but 'tis a troubling tale.

"The vast underworld from which thou didst rescue me hath collapsed. Yet there are still forces of evil abroad in the land. Britannia is under attack by Gargoyles such as those thou hast just now fought. They have been coming up through the dungeons."

This was interesting. I'd assumed the creatures were daemons, but they were in fact Gargoyles. I vaguely recalled meeting a Gargoyle during my last trip to Britannia, but I didn't realize the creatures who'd attacked me were of the same race.

"Thus far, they have been mainly attacking the shrines of the eight Virtues. When the Shrine of Compassion did fall, Sir Geoffrey sent a party to free



it. Do thou ask him of this mission. Perhaps thou canst provide some assistance.”

“Geoffrey?” I asked.

“Aye, he is Captain of my Guard.”

I wondered if this was my old friend Geoffrey who’d assisted me on my Quest for Avatarhood. If so, he’d certainly come up in the world.

“Whilst thou art here,” continued Lord British, “I have a room set aside for thy personal use. ‘Tis in the west wing of the castle, just south of mine own chambers. I have had my servants place some equipment there in case thou shouldst have need of it. Of course, thou mayest feel free to borrow anything in my castle if thou shouldst need it. Anytime thou dost need healing, do thou but ask me.”

I breathed a little easier knowing I could count on Lord British to heal my wounds. This kindness had proved invaluable in the past.

“Uh, I would like some healing now,” I said. “That Gargoyle swung a wicked axe.”

Lord British waved his scepter. My wounds and those of my companions vanished.

“Dost thou require more assistance?” Lord British asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “I found this black stone on the ground just before I came back to Britannia. Can you identify it?”

Lord British took the stone from my hand and examined it carefully.

“Hmmm,” he said. “I have such a stone, as thou may recall. I did not know there were more such orbs. ‘Twill serve thee well in thy travels if thou canst learn to master its powers. To make a gate, use the stone and carefully position it a few feet from thee. Thou wilt discover that placement is the key. In the proper positions the stone can conjure up gates to take thee to numerous destinations.”

This was exciting news. Traveling around Britannia was difficult and waiting for Moongates seemed endless. If I could figure out the secret of the moonstone, my travels would be easier.

“Here is a key to my castle,” Lord British said, handing me a large pewter key. “It will unlock the gatehouse by the southern entrance. Inside the gatehouse are levers controlling the portcullis and the

drawbridge. The same key will also let thee enter the sewers under the castle.”

“Thank you for your help, my Lord,” I said.

“‘Tis I who should thank thee, Avatar, for all thou hast done for Britannia.”

I bowed, acknowledging this great compliment. It was then that I noticed there were two other people in the throne room. One was a concerned-looking mage; the other was my old friend Geoffrey.

Geoffrey stepped forward and grabbed my hand, shaking it enthusiastically.

“Greetings, Avatar,” he began. “Perhaps thou canst succeed where others have not. I sent a party of ten to recapture the Shrine of Compassion from the Gargoyles. Alas, they failed dismally. The survivors are recuperating in the town of Cove.

“Thou wouldst do well to speak to them first. Mayhap they learned something which may assist thee. I confess, I fear the worst. The Gargoyles are such powerful foes and they are spreading fast. Perhaps the end of the realm is nigh.

“Good luck and pray thee, go see Gertand in Cove.”

With that, Geoffrey turned and walked away from me. I’d grown accustomed to strange and abrupt conversations in Britannia, but this was scary. Next to Dupré, Geoffrey had always been the toughest among us. To hear the fear in his voice and see the haunted look in his eyes made me want to get our gear together and go immediately to Cove to find out what had happened.

I turned away from Geoffrey’s receding back and found myself face to face with the mage. His white hair was nearly hidden by a turban; he wore a yellow robe. His face was thin and heavy lines had etched themselves into the area around his mouth and nose.

“Hello,” I said.

“Hail to thee and well met,” he replied. “‘Twas I who learned of thy peril through my mystic arts so that aid might be sent unto thee. I am Nystul.”

“Then I owe you a debt of kindness, sir,” I replied.

Nystul shrugged as though it were of no importance. “Iolo,” he said. “I saw that thou didst find a book.”

“Aye, my lord,” replied Iolo, handing the book to Nystul. “Perhaps thou canst make sense of it.”

Nystul examined the book with reverent care.

"Strange," said Nystul finally. "Its cover has a picture of a Gargoyle standing with one foot on the chest of a slain human. Interesting. 'Tis written in a language I know not. Take it to Mariah, the finest scribe on the great Council of Wizards. She studies languages at the Lycaem. Perhaps she can decipher this book for thee."

"Thank you for your help, Nystul."

"Thou art welcome, Avatar. Good luck."

Nystul turned away and began speaking in hushed tones with Lord British. I walked toward the south entrance of the throne room, intent on finding my room in the castle. I had almost reached the doorway when Iolo grabbed my arm.

"Avatar," he began. "I know thou hast been away from Britannia for many years. So forgive me for reminding thee of what thou must already know."

"Which is?" I asked.

"After battling a foe, 'tis prudent to examine the remains for valuables. In these perilous times, any equipment or food is welcome, no matter what the source."

"You're right, Iolo. I've forgotten a thing or two since last we adventured together."

Iolo smiled and slapped my back. "'Tis good to have thee among us again," he said.

We searched the bodies of the three Gargoyles and found many weapons and some leather armor. I took the armor but left the weapons since they were no better than my sword. Servants appeared with mops and buckets of water, and started the process of cleaning up the mess we'd made. I didn't envy them the chore.

My room was south of Lord British's bedroom. The castle had changed somewhat since my last visit. The furnishings were more comfortable and the colors were livelier. Potted plants brightened the corners of the room, contrasting sharply with the somber gray stone walls.

One corner of my room was dominated by a comfortable curtain-hung bed. Across from the bed stood a full-sized mirror, and next to it a large table. On the table were a candle, a bottle of wine, and a book. The book intrigued me and, as I approached the table, I saw that it was my old spell book.

"Where did he get this?" I wondered aloud as I ran my fingers over the familiar gold-embossed leather cover.

"Our liege's powers are many," said Shamino. "This is but a sample."

I opened the spell book and my excitement faded. Most of the spells I'd acquired in my last visit had vanished. The few that I could still make out would be useful, but I knew we'd be facing many dangers and a well-stocked spell book would even the odds considerably. But there wasn't time to dwell on the problem of lost spells. Of course, I still needed reagents to work the spells I had.

I turned my attention to a chest and bag next to the table. Opening the bag, I discovered that it was stocked with reagents. That solved one problem. I tied the bag to my belt and opened the chest. Inside I discovered a chain mail coif, food, wine, boots, and another bag of reagents. I tossed aside the leather helm I'd discovered on the dead Gargoyle and slipped on the chain mail coif. It fit perfectly. Another of Lord British's talents, no doubt. Then I donned the remaining parts of my gear. In moments I was tricked out in garb becoming an adventurer in Britannia.

Now that I was set, it was time to see how well equipped my companions were. "Let's see what we have and decide how we want to handle supplies."

Iolo, Shamino, and Dupré showed me their equipment. We needed to travel as lightly as possible, so I advised them to unburden themselves of every piece of equipment that wasn't necessary for our mission or for survival.

"Leave behind my wine and glass?" groaned Shamino. "'Tis barbaric."

"They'd just get broken in a fight," I replied. "Besides, we'll need every bit of our strength to carry supplies for the Quest."

"Good wine is a necessity," muttered Shamino.

"Thou shouldst not complain," said Iolo. "He is making me leave my lute behind."

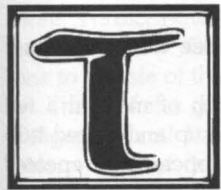
"Aye, and me . . . my cup," said Dupré.

"Enough already," I said. "Let's see what else we can find in the castle to aid in the Quest."

I confess I felt a bit squeamish rummaging through the castle and through Lord British's effects. But I

soon discovered that I suffered no ill effects from these actions, so I put aside my fears and concentrated on the task at hand.

We searched Lord British's room and found weapons and armor in the chests in his closet. Magic potions filled Nystul's laboratory and we discovered a magical wand in a chest in his room. Food from the kitchen filled our wallets. Finally I pronounced us ready to head to Cove.



Entry 4—The Shrine of Compassion

he first part of the trip to Cove was easy. Since my last visit, Lord British had obviously made building roads throughout the countryside a

priority. We left his castle and passed through Britain on our way to Cove. I commented on the new street lights, the sun dials, and the fine buildings that had changed the face of the town since my last visit.

"Aye," said Iolo. "Much hath changed in Britannia. Though 'tis good to see thee, thy presence means a time of dire consequences for us all."

This was a sobering thought. It was true that I seemed to come to Britannia only during times of trouble. I guess people could see my appearance as both a curse and a blessing.

I pondered this thought as we walked along. Staring absent-mindedly at my companions' feet pushing up small clouds of dust, I noticed Iolo's boots—soft green leather and apparently painstakingly hand-stitched.

"What kind of boots are those, Iolo?" I asked.

"Swamp boots," he replied. "Finest in Britannia. Yotomo at the Arms of Justice in Yew makes them."

"Swamp boots?"

"Aye. They protect the wearer from the ill effects of the poisonous swamps."

"I think I remember something like them, but yours seem especially well-crafted. Do you know how much they cost?"

"Yotomo's rates are most reasonable—just ten gold pieces."

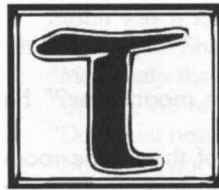
I whistled. "That's a bargain," I commented, looking over the rest of my party. None of the rest of us had swamp boots. I remembered the Britannian swamps all too well and made a mental note to visit Yotomo as soon as possible.

We followed the worn path toward the Shrine of Compassion. I knew from previous visits that the shrine was close to Cove. Quietly, we crept forward toward the shrine, but I didn't see any Gargoyles and this made me bold. I stepped into the circle of stones and approached the altar. Only then did the Gargoyles attack.

They moved as quickly here as they had across the barren plain where I'd first met them. My companions tried to help, but they seemed to be moving in slow motion. Everything we did seemed to take forever, as if only the Gargoyles were able to move at normal speed. I tried to flee, to lead us out of danger, but the Gargoyles pressed their attack. There was no place to run.

In desperation, I remembered the moonstone. A gate had saved me before; maybe it would save us now. I fumbled in my bag for the small rock. Behind me I could hear the cries of my three companions as the Gargoyles landed their blows. An axe glanced off my back and I dropped the stone in front of me, to the north. Immediately a red Moongate rose from the ground.

"C'mon," I yelled and dove through the gate. I didn't know where we would land or where we were going. All I knew was I had to save my friends.



Entry 5—The Moonstone

he Moongate took us back to Lord British's throne room. He was on his throne as usual, and didn't seem surprised to see us.

I glanced back to see if my companions had made it through the doorway. They had, but my foolishness at the shrine had led them into danger. All three had numerous cuts and were dripping blood onto the floor. I stepped forward and asked Lord British to heal us. Once again, his magic took effect.

I turned to my companions and asked their forgiveness. "My apologies, friends," I began. "It was my own stupidity that imperiled your lives."

"Nay, Avatar," said Iolo. "'Twas not all thine own doing. We agreed to follow thee on this mission and knew that our pledge included the danger of battle."

"I, for one, enjoyed it," remarked Dupré.

I smiled at them. I'd almost gotten them killed and they were trying to make me feel better.

"Well, I think it would be prudent to discover how this moonstone works. I was lucky this time, but I need to discover how placement affects where the Moongate takes us. We may need to make a quick exit again."

I pulled out my notebook and quill.

"Let's go find an open space and see where Moongates come up."

. . .

I stood on the drawbridge leading into Lord British's castle. Dupré, Shamino, and Iolo took up positions a short distance away. I placed the moonstone on the ground to the north of me, in the same place I'd dropped it at the Shrine of Compassion. A red gate rose up. If my suspicion was correct, I would step through and end up in Lord British's throne room.

"I'll be right back," I said, stepping through the door.

The drawbridge and my friends disappeared and, in an instant, I found myself once again before Lord British's throne.

He looked at me expectantly.

I waved my hand.

"Just doing some tests," I said.

He nodded knowingly. "The moonstone?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. I raced out of the throne room and back to the drawbridge. Iolo and Dupré were sitting with their legs dangling off the bridge; Shamino was looking with great interest at a tree.

"Okay," I said. "The gate position seems to be fixed by the location of the person who places the stone."

They looked at me with puzzled expressions on their faces.

"What I mean is, it doesn't matter where I am, the position of the gates is fixed."

More puzzled looks.

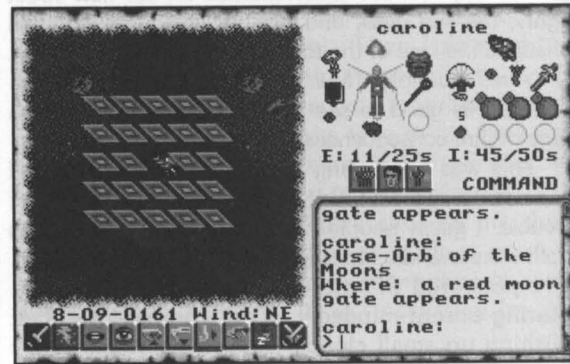
I stepped off the bridge and dropped the stone to the north of me again. A gate appeared. I stepped through the gate. A few moments later I came running back from the throne room.

"See, every time I put the stone just to the north of where I'm standing, the gate that comes up takes me to Lord British's castle."

"Ah," said Shamino. "But, Avatar, how many gates are there?"

"I don't know," I said. "Let's see what happens if we put the stone elsewhere."

I placed the stone to the south of me and a red gate appeared. I picked the stone up and placed it to the east, and still another gate appeared. I repeated this action until I was surrounded by gates two deep all the way around. I counted—there were 24 gates.



I made a small diagram of the gates and labeled the gate to the north of me "Lord British's castle." I looked at my friends.

"I'm going to find out where all these gates go. I'll come back here and label them as I go." Then I stepped toward the gate to the south.

"Wait," said Shamino. "I would come with thee."

"I too," said Iolo.

"And I," said Dupré.

I tried not to show my relief (it was unbecoming an Avatar) but I was grateful that they wanted to come.

"Thank you, my friends," I said. "Shall we go?"

"Aye," they said in unison. And together we stepped through the southern gate.

• • •

It took the rest of the day, but eventually we discovered where each of the gates led. I made notations in my journal so we wouldn't forget. Because some of the gates led to the shrines that were held by the Gargoyles, discovering the destinations of the gates was a perilous task in itself.

Some of the gates led to the towns Yew, Skara Brae, Trinsic, New Magincia, Britain, Jhelom, Minoc, and Moonglow. One led to Lord British's castle and one to the Isle of the Avatar.

Three of the gates led to the Shrines of Control, Diligence, and Passion, which I'd never heard of before. Two of the gates took us nowhere and one gate returned us to the slab where the Gargoyles had tried to sacrifice me.

Perhaps this instant access to the shrines would help us to liberate them, but I wasn't sure how. It was close to evening, so we rested, then headed for Cove the next morning.



Entry 6—Cove

We made our way to Cove, this time taking care to skirt the Shrine of Compassion in order to avoid alerting the Gargoyles there. Unlike Britain, Cove hadn't grown much since my last visit.

As we strolled through the village, we came upon a distinguished man in elegant dress. He wore his curly brown hair long and had a mustache.

"Greetings, Avatar," he said. "Welcome to the town of Cove."

"Thank you," I replied. "Who are you?"

"I am Viscount Ahrmaand. I govern here in Cove. 'Tis hard work, but my people love me for it. I always thought it a blessing to live so close to a shrine, though since the Gargoyles came, none dare go near it."

"Geoffrey told me that the men he sent to free the shrine are recuperating here."

"Aye. A party of adventurers came here after their

attempt to defeat the Gargoyles at the Shrine of Compassion. I spoke with their leader when they arrived. Thou shouldst speak to him thyself. He told of a strange violet energy field. I think mayhap 'tis similar to the force field which blocked entry to the shrines many years ago. The eight mystic runes were most useful in those days."

When I was on my Quest for Avatarhood, there had been force fields blocking my entry to the Shrines of the Eight Virtues. In order to get into the eight shrines, I'd needed the runes and the mantras.

"I remember the runes. Can you tell me more?"

"Use the Rune of Compassion whilst chanting the Mantra of Compassion. Methinks this may negate the Gargoyle's magic field at the shrine. Ask Lord British's Chancellor, Tholden, of the mantra and like as not, he will also know of the rune."

I nodded. The runes were powerful objects in Britannia. I made a note to talk to Tholden about the Rune of Compassion when we returned to Britain. I would also speak to Lord British about the other runes.

"Thank you for your assistance, Viscount Ahrmaand. Can you direct me to the place where Geoffrey's men are recuperating?"

Ahrmaand removed his hat and bowed to me, "Aye, Avatar, they are at Sasha the Healer's. Follow this road east and 'tis the last building to the south. Farewell, sir, and good luck with thy Quest."

I bowed in return and followed his directions. In minutes we arrived at Sasha's house. Pushing open the door, I stepped into the cool darkness of the healer's shop.

Sasha was a small woman with short blonde hair and violet eyes. She had a busy air about her.

"May I help thee?" she snapped.

"Uh, no. We're—"

"Dost thou need to be healed?" she asked.

"No, we're not injured we're—"

"Then why art thou wasting my time?" she asked as she turned away.

I looked over her shoulder and saw men lying on beds. Most of them appeared to be asleep. All were gravely injured. One was sitting up and seemed to be in somewhat better shape than the others.

"Hello," I said. "Are you Gertan?"

"Aye, I am Gertan," he said between coughs. "My fellows and I are recovering from a fierce battle."

"Yes, I know. Geoffrey sent me to speak to you about your battles against the Gargoyles at the Shrine of Compassion."

Gertan nodded and coughed a few more times. Several minutes passed before he was able to catch his breath.

"We sought to liberate the Shrine of Compassion," he said. "The Gargoyles did slay more than half our party. I have no doubt they use some kind of foul magic."

"That would be the only way to defeat such valiant warriors as yourself and your men," I said. Gertan brightened at my words.

"Aye, thou knowest not the full of it," he said. "A moonstone was upon the shrine surrounded by a strange, violet glow. I tried to get to it, but 'twas protected by some sort of force field. But that is a matter beyond my comprehension. I am but a simple fighter."

He coughed again and his face went pale. I took his hand and grasped it firmly in a brief shake.

"Thank you for your valor," I said. "Now 'tis time for us to leave and let you get your rest."

Gertan sank back into his pillows and smiled weakly at us.

"May thy efforts meet with more success than mine."

I patted his shoulder, then led my party back out into the sunshine.

"Whither now, Avatar?" asked Iolo.

"I think we'll return to Lord British and speak with him about the runes. Obviously we need them to free the shrines. After that, we'll talk to Tholden, who knows the Mantra of Compassion and can tell us where the Rune of Compassion lies."

I took the moonstone from my pocket and dropped it on the ground to the north. The red gate rose up and we walked through.



Entry 7—Britain

e were transported to Lord British's throne room, but he wasn't there. This was strange—he'd always been there before.

"Where is he?" I asked impatiently.

"'Tis near the supper hour, Avatar," said Iolo. "Even the King needs to eat."

"Oh," I said, embarrassed. I'd grown so used to Lord British being there that I sometimes forgot he was flesh and blood like the rest of us.

We went to the dining room and found Lord British making short work of a capon in cream sauce.

"My apologies for interrupting your dinner, Lord British," I said.

"Supper," he corrected me around a mouthful of bird.

"I'm anxious to free the shrines and I've discovered that the Runes of the Virtues will help."

Lord British wiped his mouth on a napkin, then began rinsing his fingers in a silver bowl filled with rosewater. "Aye. Ask the leaders of each town to tell thee of that. My Chancellor, Tholden, knows of the Rune of Compassion."

"Thank you," I said. I started to walk away.

"Wilt thou stay and have dessert? The cook hath made one of my favorite dishes—cheesecake." He smiled sublimely. "'Tis good to be King."

"No, thank you," I said. "I must find the runes."

Lord British nodded, then returned his attention to his supper. We made our way out of the castle and Iolo led the way to the Royal Mint where we would find Tholden.

As we entered the mint, Dupré stopped and exchanged his gold nuggets for gold pieces. The girl we met was very flirtatious and had I not been the Avatar . . . ah, well.

Tholden was seated behind a large table that served as his desk. He was preoccupied with his ledgers, but glanced up as we entered.

"Records to keep, festivals to plan . . . I can spare but a moment," he said.

"I won't keep you long," I said. "Lord British tells me you know of the Rune of Compassion."

"The Rune and the Mantra of Compassion are in the hands of the bards at the Conservatory. I entrusted them with the rune due to their compassionate nature. As for the other runes, they are no longer together as they were when the Codex was recovered. Since then, they have become scattered throughout the land.

"Each was sent to a town near its shrine. If thou dost ask the lords of each of these towns, they should be able to tell thee more. The towns are Moonglow, Jhelom, Yew, Minoc, Trinsic, Skara Brae, and New Magincia."

This confirmed what Lord British had told me. I thanked Tholden for his help and we left the Mint. The Conservatory was across the street, so we made that our next stop.

At the Conservatory we talked to a small girl who, much to my amazement, held the rune. She told us to ask her parents (who worked at the Blue Boar Tavern) for permission to use the rune, which we did. When we returned, the girl gave us the Rune of Compassion. Kenneth, who was also in the Conservatory, knew the mantra, as did a nervous bard named Nan. Thus we started the Quest. I vowed that the shrines would soon be free and the Gargoyles vanquished.

Entry 8—Moonglow and the Lycaenum

With the Rune of Compassion safely in hand, I decided we should head for Moonglow next. Not only would we discover where the Rune of

Honesty was located, but the Lycaenum was close by and we could talk to Mariah about the strange book Iolo had recovered.

I dropped the moonstone on the ground two feet northwest of where I stood, and the red Moongate appeared. It still sent shivers down my spine. I wondered if I would ever get used to these strange crimson gates. I refused to dwell on this and jumped through the gate with the others following close behind. When we emerged, we found ourselves in the circle of stones at the edge of Moonglow. Across the street was a large building, which we agreed to investigate first.

I opened the door to the building and jumped back in surprise. Covering the entire surface of the room were magical fields—protection fields, poison fields, fire fields, and sleep fields blanketed the room.

"Looks like someone doesn't want company," I said.

"Thou art a wonder of observation," remarked Shamino dryly.

I shot him a look and closed the door, making a mental note to acquire a *Dispel Field* spell as soon as possible. Once again I bemoaned the loss of many a precious hex.

Moonglow was smaller than I remembered—there were only two other buildings of note in town. One was Lord Aganar's manor and the other was the Blue Bottle Tavern. We stopped first at Lord Aganar's home.

"Greetings, Avatar. Thou must be the Avatar—I saw thy portrait in Lord British's castle."

"Indeed, I am the one called Avatar," I said. "We are searching for the Rune of Honesty to help free the shrines."

"I had it once, but I entrusted it to Beyvin's care, as he is the most honest man I know. He lives with Penumbra." Aganar's voice dropped to a low whisper. "But if the truth be told, I can't imagine what he sees in her. It is a long time since I saw him. Mayhap she can tell you where he is."

"Thank you for your help. Where might we find Penumbra?"

"Why, she is in the house to the east of the circle of stones."

I looked at the others. The house east of the circle of stones was the one with all those force fields. I was getting a bad feeling about Penumbra. We left Lord Aganar's and headed for the Blue Bottle Tavern.

I opened the door to the tavern and was immediately assaulted by smoke, loud voices, and the odor of roasting meat. Many of the pub's patrons were clumped around heavy oak tables, and some were crowded around the long bar that ran along one side of the room. My attention was immediately drawn to one customer standing by the bar. He was tall and thin with long black hair. What made him remarkable was that the image of the Codex was tattooed on his forehead. I confess I've always had the secret desire to get a tattoo, but not on my face!

We strolled over to him.

"Hello," I said. "That's one impressive tattoo you have. Might I ask your name?"

"I'm Manrel," he said, smiling and extending his hand.

"Glad to meet you," I said, giving the proffered hand a quick shake. "Where did you get that tattoo?"

"I went drinking the night we heard of the discovery of the Codex. When I woke up the next morning, I had this tattoo . . ."

"It must have been some party . . ."

"Aye, I wish I could remember it."

"I was wondering if you'd heard of a man named Beyvin."

"Oh, hast thou visited my cousin's grave?"

"Your cousin's grave? No."

"Oh, my mistake."

This took me aback. I'd assumed that Beyvin was alive. How were we supposed to find a rune in the keeping of a dead man? I had a bad feeling that the answer lay beyond the force fields at Penumbra's.

"I'm sorry about your cousin," I said. We downed a quick pint of ale and slipped out of the tavern into the cooling dusk.

"This is a problem," I said.

"Aye," said Dupré. "One pint of ale is hardly enough to quench a man's thirst."

"'Twas only ale, Dupré, not fine wine," sighed Shamino, looking at me reproachfully.

"That's not the problem," I said irritably. I was the Avatar and this was a Quest to free the Shrines of the Eight Virtues and all Dupré and Shamino wanted to do was have a petty argument about drinking.

"We need to get into Penumbra's to talk to her, but I don't have the right spell to get through the force fields. Without her, we can't find out about Beyvin and the rune. Forget about wine and ale! This is important." I spoke forcefully, maybe too much so. By the time I'd finished, my companions looked so downcast and disheartened that I felt guilty.

"I'm sorry to speak this way, but this is serious. These Gargoyles are a real menace and it's our responsibility to defeat them and save Britannia."

Iolo stared at me for a minute, then said, "Our apologies, Avatar, but surely jest can lighten such a heavy burden?"

I thought about it. Maybe I was getting a little too serious, but I was the Avatar. I had to set an example. Still, these were my friends—some levity couldn't hurt.

"You're right, Iolo. Among friends there should be

humor. But I am an example to the people of Britannia. How would it look if I played the fool?"

"Perhaps like Chuckles?" remarked Shamino.

"Nay, Shamino, the Avatar shows good sense," interjected Dupré. "He is a beacon to us all and should behave accordingly."

Shamino nodded. "My apologies, Avatar. I jest too much at thy expense. 'Tis a noble venture thou pursuest and I am happy to be of service to thee."

"Thank you," I said, thinking that maybe Shamino did have a point—I might be taking myself just a little bit too seriously.

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We walked north from Moonglow to the Lycaenum. It was a pleasant day. The sun was shining and a gentle breeze blowing through the trees carried the strange, otherworldly scent of the Britannian forest.

It was a short trip and we didn't talk as we strolled along. I was worried that I'd alienated my friends, but I realized this wasn't a hostile silence, rather a companionable one in which no words were needed. I realized that, even if they didn't always agree with me, my friends trusted me and would stand by my judgment. This cheered me up and I was feeling much better by the time we reached the Lycaenum.

The Lycaenum had changed since my last visit and I hardly recognized the place. We entered through the front door and made our way through corridors and rooms to the back of the building. In the middle of the Lycaenum was a large square room with a ladder in the center. Surrounding the ladder were protection fields. Once again I became annoyed at my lack of spells.

We found Mariah in a room in the southwestern portion of the castle. I remembered her from my previous visits, but she showed no sign of recalling me. Her red hair was still long and she had a few more freckles; her smile was as enchanting as ever and I felt a tug at my heart at the sight of her.

"Welcome to the Lycaenum," she said. "I am Mariah, the newest member of the Council of Wizards. In my free time I use the library to pursue my own studies."

That was the Mariah I remembered, very intellectual. I motioned to Iolo to remove the book from the bag he was carrying.

"Iolo took this book from one of the Gargoyles. Nystul said you might be able to decipher it for us."

Mariah took the book from Iolo's hands. Her brow furrowed as she studied the tome. After a moment, she looked up at us, a smile replacing the frown she had worn a moment earlier.

"I've seen this script before! I have part of an ancient silver tablet in my study, with writing both in our language and this. I have learned little from studying it, but I can still make out a few words. The title to your book is 'The Book of Prophecies' and it says something about 'the end of our world.' If only I had the other half of the tablet, perhaps I'd be able to decipher the rest of the book."

"Where might we begin to look for the other half of the tablet?" I asked.

"I got my piece from some gypsies I met at a pub. Mayhap they can tell thee where to look for the other piece. Bring both pieces of the tablet here and I will tell thee what I can."

"Thank you, Mariah. We'll look for the gypsies and see if we can get the other half of the tablet."

She smiled at me and I thought I detected an affectionate twinkle in her eye, but it was gone so quickly that I decided it must have been my imagination.

"Whither now?" asked Iolo as we stepped out of the Lycaenum.

"We need to get some spells before we look for Mariah's gypsies. Do you know anyone who sells spells and reagents around here?"

"Xiao lives to the north," said Shamino. "I believe she might help us."

"Good," I said. "Let's find her while there's still some daylight left."



Entry 9—Xiao's House

Xiao's house stood at the end of the road leading north from the Lycaenum. It was stately, with high walls made of fine white marble. I pushed open

the front door and walked through the magnificent foyer to a room on the north side. Stone lions like those in Lord British's castle flanked the doorway.

"Pretty impressive," I murmured, feeling a little bit intimidated.

A large Rube Goldberg-like machine was in motion at one end of the room. The machinery was huge and extended beneath the floor of the building. Xiao stood in the center of the chamber, making notes on a piece of parchment. She looked wise and scholarly.

"Greetings," she said, walking toward us. "For what purpose art thou come?"

"I'm looking to buy a *Dispel Field* spell. Do you have one?"

She smiled. "I have many spells. That is a Third Circle spell, and it will cost thee 75 gold pieces. Art thou still willing to purchase it?"

I nodded. She withdrew a piece of parchment from inside the sleeve of her robe. Iolo handed me the gold and I passed it to Xiao.

"Anything else?" she asked.

"*Mass Dispel* would be nice," I said.

"I sense that thou art not ready for that circle, but 'tis not my concern. If thou dost wish the spell, 'tis 100 gold."

I asked Iolo how much money we had left. The figure was low. Declining Xiao's offer, I started to turn away. Then I stopped.

"How many circles of magic are there?" I asked

"Thou knowest there are eight."

"What spells do you have that are Eighth Circle?"

"Thou art not ready for such knowledge. Seek out the Wisps and learn their secrets. Then thou wilt be prepared for the Eighth Circle."

I bought some reagents from Xiao and we left her house.

"Do any of you know where the Wisps live?" I asked.

Shamino nodded. "In Spiritwood, outside of Skara Brae, I've heard tales of these creatures."

"Aye, and near the mage Nicodemus' hut in the Deep Forest they've been known to appear," added Iolo.

"The Deep Forest near Yew?" I asked.

"Aye."

"We have to go there to get the Rune of Justice. Later we'll pay a visit to Nicodemus, and to the Wisps, as well."

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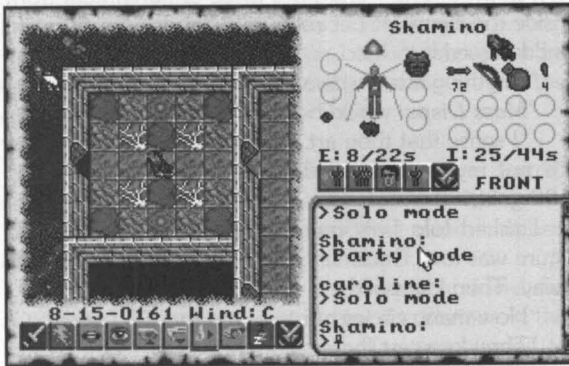


Entry 10—Penumbra's House

e camped out along the road back to Moonglow. Iolo sang a song for us, though he looked a bit forlorn without his lute. We ate and talked for a while, then

went to sleep with Dupré standing guard.

We reached Penumbra's house by mid-morning. Even though it was a bright shining summer's morning, a pall seemed to hang over her home, driving off the warmth of the sun. I pushed open her front door and was once again confronted with the room of force fields.



I cast *An Grav* and the first field vanished. Again and again I cast the spell until we reached the far end and the room beyond. Penumbra's main room was cloaked in shadows. Across the northern wall were three mirrors, the middle one shattered into a million pieces. Penumbra sat in front of a gazing globe; forming a vault over her head were the bones of some huge unidentified animal. Placed in a circle around the room were burning candles, which gave off a sickly-sweet smell. Blood and dried gore from long-forgotten evil deeds spattered the floors and walls.

Penumbra wore a hooded cloak, pulled up over her head so her face was partially hidden. Small and inscrutable, she reminded me of a spider in its web. I stood for a moment trying to decide how best to approach her, but then she spoke—before I could formulate a plan.

"Greetings, Avatar." Her voice was repellent and seductive at the same time. "I see you have yet to fulfill your destiny."

"I take it you're Penumbra," I said, trying to sound nonchalant.

"Aye, I am the daughter of the eclipse. I can foretell your future for you."

This was interesting, but it wasn't what we'd come for.

"No, thank you," I said. "I'm looking for the Rune of Honesty."

Penumbra smiled. It sent chills up my spine.

"'Twas buried with Beyvin, rest his shade." She smiled again.

"Beyvin? Do you know where he's buried?" I caught the quaver in my voice. I hoped she hadn't noticed.

"He was a terribly honest fellow. Alas, he lacked the virtue of tact. He told the truth once too often and those he spoke of did not appreciate it. He's buried in the catacombs under Moonglow now, pushing up daffodils. Even virtue has its price." She smiled again—I really wanted her to stop grinning. One more question and we were going to get out of this place. Fast.

"Uh, about the mantra. I mean, do you know anyone in town who knows it?"

"For five gold coins I can use my powers to divine the mantra for you. Shall I do this?" She stared at me with her dark eyes and I felt the chill hand of dread grip my heart.

"Yes," I whispered. I handed her five gold coins.

She closed her eyes in concentration. Many long minutes passed.

"What are we waiting for?" whispered Dupré. "She's doubtless fallen asleep and you've wasted good money for nothing . . ."

Penumbra's eyes snapped open at that moment and said, "The word you seek is AHM."

Then her eyes closed again.

"Let's get out of here," I said, edging toward the door.

"Wait," hissed Shamino. "See what I've found here."

We all tiptoed to the row of chests against the south wall. Shamino was gesturing at the open chest. Inside we could see grisly remains. One chest held a

dead dragonette, another the desiccated bones of a small human, and the last a fresh human corpse.

"Perhaps this is what happened to Beyvin," said Shamino. I glanced over at Penumbra, who was still in a trance. I wouldn't have put anything past her.

"We don't know that for sure," I said, trying to be the voice of reason. "This is just circumstantial." The others looked at me with disbelief. "Okay, okay, so it looks really bad. Let's just get out of here and find out where Beyvin was buried."

"If that wasn't him," stated Iolo, "then he is probably in the Crypts."

"Then we must find the Crypts," I replied.

We skirted Penumbra and her unholy shrine and made our way out of the house. We all agreed that what we needed most now, before anything else, was a good stiff pint of ale.



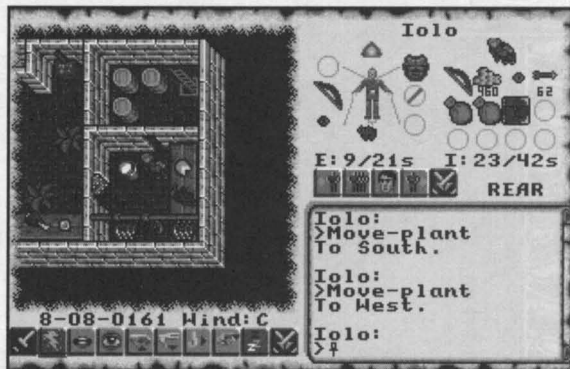
Entry 11—The Crypts

I hoisted a few ales at the pub and discussed how we should proceed next. Finally, after a fair amount of discussion, we decided to locate the entrance to the Crypts and find the grave of Beyvin. I knew there was an entrance to the Crypts somewhere in Moonglow, and since we were already in the pub, we decided to search here first.

I suggested we split up. I took the kitchen while Iolo, Shamino, and Dupré searched the main hall. After a few minutes I heard Iolo noodling on the harpsichord in one corner of the pub. He just couldn't resist playing an instrument.

I was poking around in the pantry when a slight irregularity on the north wall caught my eye. I had to move a couple of milk pails out of the way to get a closer look. There was, in fact, a secret door. I knew Britannia well enough to know that secret doors often led to interesting places.

I started to open the door, but it stopped halfway, striking something in the room beyond. Poking my head around the door, I saw that there was a ladder leading down through the floor. There were so many barrels and plants (of all things!) that it took me the



better part of a half hour to move everything around so I could get to the ladder. I went and gathered the others and together we descended into the dark.

• • •

Shamino lit a torch, driving off the gloom. The bodies tucked into niches along the walls left no doubt that we'd found the Crypts. Maybe it's just morbid curiosity, or perhaps a strange bend to my personality, but I couldn't stop myself from looking at each and every one of the corpses down there.

"Must thou do this?" complained Dupré. He didn't mind killing when necessary, but graves were not his favorite things. Meanwhile, Shamino was poking along up ahead trying to find even smaller places to crawl into. He liked spelunking, something I wouldn't have expected from such an outdoorsman.

I discovered many wondrous items people had left with the dearly departed—a firewand, a Glass Sword, a ring of invisibility, gold, gold nuggets, and more. I took items we might have some use for. Unlike taking things from living Britannians, taking items from the dead seemed to have no effect on my well-being.

We searched the whole of this level of the Crypts, but did not find Beyvin's tomb. A ladder leading to a lower level took us to a large open space with nine tombs in the center. More bodies were tucked into the walls. Beyvin's tomb, the middle one, was magically locked.

"I can't believe it! Locked! And we have no *Ex Por* spells," I groaned, annoyed at my own lack of foresight. "I guess we'd better go find out if Xiao sells that spell."



"Perhaps this might help," said Iolo, picking up a note from the ground.

He read aloud: "With love, Cousin Manrel."

"Maybe Beyvin's cousin Manrel has a key to the tomb," he said. "From the fresh flowers on the ground it looks as though he has been here recently."

This cheered me up. If we could get the key from Manrel, it would save some time, but I made a note to go visit Xiao anyway and see if she sold *Ex Por* spells. We trudged back up to the tavern and found Manrel, who did have a key to the tomb, but he was suspicious of us. He only lent it to me after I promised to return it and leave flowers at the grave.

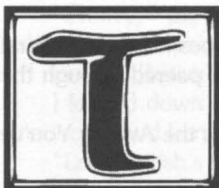
We went back down to Beyvin's tomb and retrieved the Rune of Honesty. I found gems and gold nuggets on the body, but somehow it didn't seem right to take them. The daffodils Manrel had us leave looked oddly bright and cheerful against the darkness of the tomb. I gently locked the door to Beyvin's crypt, closed my eyes and bowed my head in respect.

Exploring the rest of the Crypts took a while. We found a ladder that led to another level and we followed it downward. There was one tomb on this level, but it was magically locked. Since I didn't have a spell to counteract this, we were stuck. I grumbled a little, then decided that the best course of action would be to use the moonstone and go to Yew to retrieve the Rune of Justice. The others agreed, and in a

Eventually the Avatar did indeed reach the last level of the Crypts. There, he discovered many wondrous items which aided him in his Quest. It is suggested that those true followers of the Way of the Avatar return to Beyvin's tomb when they have learned the *Unlock Magic* spell. Venture down to the fourth level and thou mayest find something the Avatar left behind that may aid thee in thine own Quests, whatever they may be.

— The Editors

matter of seconds we stepped out of the Moongate into the twilight outside of Yew.



Entry 12—Yew

The first thing we did after arriving in Yew was to visit the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor was housed in the High Court. Her name was Lenora and she was stern, with graying red hair and a perpetual scowl on her face.

"Welcome, worthy Avatar, to the Hall of Justice. How may we assist thee in thy Quest?"

I didn't like her. Something about her reminded me of my high school principal. According to him, it didn't matter what the facts were, you were guilty until proven innocent—and sometimes even after that.

"We're looking for the Rune of Justice and we were told you might know its location."

Her face pulled into an even worse frown.

"Aye. The Rune of Justice was sent here for safekeeping. A thief stole the rune from the grave of our most respected resident, the former Lord Mayor. Even though the thief was caught, we have not yet found the rune."

"Where are you keeping this thief?" I asked.

"He is in jail awaiting the carriage of justice."

"Thank you for your help. By the way, could you tell me the Mantra of Justice?"

Lenora gave me a sharp glance.

"'Tis most strange Avatar, that thou knowest not the Mantra." Her beady eyes looked at me speculatively, then she seemed to decide to relent. "Hmmm . . . well, no matter, I suppose 'twould be improper to deny anything the Avatar requires. The Mantra of Justice is BEH."

"Thanks again, and good day," I said. I marched quickly out the door with the others falling in behind me.

"Lady Lenora is very strict," remarked Dupré.

"I don't like her," I said. "There's something about her . . . Anyway, let's go talk to the thief."

We reached the jailhouse and were informed by the jail keeper that we needed a letter of permission from Lady Lenora to talk to the prisoner. Then we

had to get the key to the cell from the jailer. After jumping through these legal hoops, we were finally able to talk to the thief.

"Hello," I said through the bars of the cell, trying to get a look at the prisoner.

A short, squat man with a bulbous nose and several day's worth of stubble on his chin peered through the bars.

"Who's there? . . . 'Strewth, it's the Avatar! You've got to get me out of 'ere."

"Not so fast. Where's the rune?"

"I'll tell ye where the rune is if ye'll let me go. I've got me little ones to think of."

"Little ones? Is it true that you've got children?"

"Even a thief like me wouldn't lie to the Avatar."

"You must take me for a fool."

The thief looked chagrined. "Oh, all right, I admit it, I haven't got any children. But that stupid cow they've got running this place won't listen to reason—a little give and take, know what I mean, guv? If I tell ye where the rune is, will ye take it away? I don't want any pompous bigots to 'ave it."

This didn't seem like a compromise of my virtue, since I'd planned to take the rune with me anyway. Besides, even though I didn't approve of the thief's behavior, I had to agree with him about the Lord Mayor's personality.

"Yes," I said. "I'll take the rune away with me."

"Go to the Slaughtered Lamb; I 'id the rune under a potted plant there. And spit on Her Ladyship for me!"

We dropped off the key with the jailer; I crumpled up Lady Lenora's letter of permission and threw it into a corner of the jail. The Slaughtered Lamb was on the edge of town and we headed there without pausing to talk to the citizens of Yew. I remembered Yew as being a much nicer place when I'd been here before. Maybe that had something to do with my recollections of Jaana.

We discovered the Rune of Justice under a potted plant just to the east of the front door.

"Except for justice, what happens in Yew?" I asked my companions.

"I know not, Avatar," said Iolo. "I spend most of my time in my home in the Deep Forest when I am not adventuring."

"Lady Lenora would know of such matters. She probably knoweth everything that happens in Yew," said Shamino.

I made a face. "Do we have to talk to her again? She's an awful pill."

"Only if thou desirest answers."

I groaned, but started back to the Lord Mayor's.

"Greetings again, Avatar. How may I help thee?"

"I know that Yew is known for its Justice." At this remark she smiled—and I'd thought Penumbra was bad. "But I was curious to know what else the town produces."

Her voice filled with pride, she said, "We produce the finest wood in all the realm. Go ask Ben the logger. He doth live in the forest to the west of town."

"Lumber? Anything else?"

Lenora glared at me. "Surely that is enough," she snapped.

"Okay, I was just wondering." But Lenora had turned away and was reviewing documents on her desk. The audience was over.

. . .

Ben the logger was a decent fellow, if a bit wary at first. We had to convince him that we weren't there to get him to fight in a war, and after that he was quite friendly. He had logs for sale, but I couldn't imagine having any use for one.

After thanking him for his time, we decided to return to Yew and get swamp boots from Yotomo, then head for Trinsic.



Entry 13—The Boots, The Staff, The Mouse, Trinsic

t Yotomo's I bought swamp boots for myself, Shamino, and Dupré. Iolo said his were in fine repair and he didn't need new

ones. I bought a few extra pairs, just in case we needed them.

Then we made a short trip to Nicodemus' hut. It was dark as we made our way through the Deep

Forest. I felt like I should be saying "Lions and tigers and bears, oh, my!" When I mentioned this to the others they just looked at me as if I'd lost my mind.

As the first fingers of dawn reached across the sky, we stumbled into the clearing where Nicodemus' hut stood. He had many spells and reagents for sale (at better prices than Xiao's, I might add), but the items that interested me most were the magical staves.

He told me that by using an *In Ort Ylem* spell on the staff, I could make it hold spells, even those of circles I hadn't yet attained. I purchased the staff and a few spells. *Ex Por* and *Vas Sanct Lor* were two spells I thought might be handy.

I decided we should drop off the extra boots in my room in Lord British's castle on our way to Trinsic. With the moonstone, dropping off items I didn't need was a simple matter.

It was after dark when we stepped through the Moongate into the throne room. The castle was very still. I led the way to my room, and was about to enter when I heard Lord British's voice. I stepped up to the doorway into his room and saw that he was reading aloud to himself. Or so I thought at first. Then I saw a mouse sitting at his feet, with its head cocked attentively to one side as though it were listening to his tale.

I went into the room.

"Lord British," I began.

"Hello, Avatar. I see thou hast misplaced thy key to my castle. Here is another." He handed me a key. I'd dropped the last key he'd given me into the moat after I'd finished with it. "What else can I do for thee?"

"Is that mouse listening to you?"

"Aye, you've heard about Sherry. I'm very proud of her. I'm sure she's the only talking mouse in Britannia."

"Talking mouse?"

"Aye. She comes and listens to me read stories every night."

"Oh," I said. I turned to the mouse, who had been looking at the two of us as we conversed.

"Hello," I said weakly.

"Squeak, squeak, squeak," she replied.

Talking mouse. Right. Lord British had a vivid imagination, but it wouldn't hurt to humor him.

"Squeak," I said politely.

"Squeak, squirk?"

Naturally, I said, "Squirk."

"Squeeeeeeek!"

"So what's your name?" I asked.

"Sherry," piped a little voice. I looked over my shoulder at Dupré, but he just shrugged his shoulders. "I am Lord British's friend," continued the voice.

I looked down at the mouse. She sat back on her haunches and her front paws rested on her hips.

"Lord British's friend?"

"He reads me bedtime stories every night," she continued. "hast thou any cheese?"

I was a bit confused by the non sequitur, but I was talking to a mouse after all.

"Uh, yeah, I think I have some here," I said as I dug around in one of the bags on my belt. I pulled out a really ripe piece of Camembert which Sherry proceeded to make short work of. She finished and started neatly cleaning her whiskers.

"Come and see me again," she said in her high-pitched voice.

"Okay," I said as I stumbled back through the door. Talking mice. Britannia sure was an interesting place.

We stepped into my room across the hall and closed the door.

"I can't believe he knows a talking mouse," I said, lifting the lid to my trunk and dumping the boots inside. "How do you like that?"

The chest was getting pretty full, so I sent Dupré out to get me the rest of the chests we'd found in the castle to help us keep track of our various possessions. I'd discovered that the housekeepers would clean up anything that wasn't in a chest.

We bedded down for the evening outside of the castle and stepped through the Moongate to Trinsic the next morning.

Finding the rune in Trinsic was pretty anticlimactic. The Rune of Honor was sitting on a pedestal in the center of town, so we didn't even need to ask anyone where it was. We found Lord Whitsaber, the mayor of Trinsic, and told him we'd taken the rune.

"Quite all right, Avatar," he said. "Welcome to Trinsic."

"Do you know the Mantra of Honor?" I asked. There was something not quite right about Lord

Whitsaber. He didn't quite meet your eye, and under all his polish there was something oily about him.

"The mantra? Hmmm, let me think. Ah, yes. The mantra is SUMM. Is there anything else?"

"No, thank you," I said. I got the feeling I was getting the bum's rush from Lord Whitsaber—like he didn't want us there one minute longer than absolutely necessary. We stepped out of his fine house into the square. I checked the items I had in my bag. We'd recovered four of the runes and the mantras that went with them. We hadn't been to New Magincia yet. I decided it would be our next destination.



Entry 14—New Magincia

Sheep, sheep, and more sheep are what I'll remember best about New Magincia. We stepped out of the Moongate into a flock of these ovine beasts and into other, more pungent, reminders of them. Cursing and shoving them out of the way, we managed to make our way from the circle of stones to the edge of town.

New Magincia was a small village made up of simple huts. We found Lord Antonio in the town hall north of the Humble Palate, the local pub. Lord Antonio sat behind a rough table delicately dissecting an orange.

"What brings thee to New Magincia?" he asked, looking up from his task.

"I—I mean we—are looking for the Rune and Mantra of Humility," I said.

"The most humble amongst us knoweth the mantra. If thou canst find who that is, I will give thee the rune."

"Maybe you're the most humble person in New Magincia," I said, venturing a guess.

Lord Antonio laughed. "Hardly. Thou shouldst not guess. Come back when thou hast discovered the most humble."

I thanked him and left him to his orange.

We spent much of the next few days talking to everyone in the village, trying to discover who was the

most humble. I quickly found that many of them thought they were humble and made quite a show of their "humility," but they weren't really humble.

I got pretty discouraged.

Early one morning, we went and sat on the edge of the pier and watched the sunrise. It was nice just to sit there and watch the sunrise without thinking about the Quest, or runes, or Gargoyles.

"Hello," came a deep voice behind us. We turned and saw a broad-shouldered man with a full yellow beard and green eyes.

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Conor Starfalcon," he replied. "Forgive me for not introducing myself."

"What do you do here on New Magincia?" I asked.

"I am a fisherman. In catching fish, as in all of life, there is something to be learned."

He didn't look like a fisherman. In fact, he looked like a fighter.

"You don't look much like any fisherman I've ever seen," I said. "You look more like a warrior."

Conor's smile was wishful.

"I no longer follow the way of the warrior," he said. He glanced at Iolo and I could swear I saw a flicker of recognition pass between them. Something was going on there, but I wasn't sure what it was.

"Do you know who is the most humble person in New Magincia?" I asked.

"Thou seekest to find the most humble one in New Magincia," he said, stroking his beard. "That's a difficult task. I would hate to commend one of my neighbors to thee and fail to do justice to the others. The one thing I can tell thee for certain is that I am not the one thou seekest."

At last, someone in New Magincia who didn't think he was humble! There was one other way to tell.

"Can you tell me the Mantra of Humility?" I asked.

"Dost thou plan to visit the shrine?" he asked with excitement.

I nodded.

"The shrine is far to the southeast. Thou mayest borrow my boat if thou wilt. And the mantra is LUM."

"Thank you," I said. "I don't think we'll need the boat right now. But we may need it later."

"Any time," he said.

We left then, and went back to Lord Antonio's house. He asked us again who was the most humble in all of New Magincia, and we said, "Conor Starfalcon." Then he gave us the Rune of Humility.

We now had five of the runes and the corresponding mantras. Yet we still lacked the other half of the tablet that would help translate the Gargoyle book. So far, the gypsies who knew where the other half of the silver tablet was hadn't appeared.

I decided that we should go to Jhelom next and find the Rune of Valor.



Entry 15—Jhelom

When the Moongate deposited us in Jhelom, the first thing we did was seek out the lord of the town. He was in the Town Hall, looking wistfully out the window like he

wanted to be anywhere but cooped up indoors.

"Hello," I said. "I am on a Quest for Lord British. Are you the lord of this town?"

"Greetings," he said, rising from his chair. "My name is Zellivan and I am lord here. Lord British has spoken fondly of thee."

"He has?" I was surprised by this.

"I have seen thy portrait in Lord British's castle. Art thou not the Avatar?"

"Yes, I have been called Avatar."

"I knew it was thee. Our liege speaks of thee with great fondness."

"To have His Majesty's praise is a high honor indeed. How do you know Lord British?"

"I grew up near Castle Britannia. 'Twas the sunset o'er Brittany Bay and the ships at rest in the harbor which drew me to the sea."

I smiled. I remembered the lure of Britannia's seas from my earlier Quests.

"We are looking for the Rune of Valor and we understand that Lord British left it in your hands."

Zellivan leaned forward and rested his elbows on the rough table.

"I held a tournament to decide who would be entrusted with the rune's care. You might say that 'no man' was the victor."

Riddles. I hate riddles. There's something unbearably smug about a person asking you a riddle.

"What about the mantra?" I sighed.

"Hear it for thyself at the Sword and Keg Pub. The songs and tales do the heart good, I say!"

"Well, thanks for the help," I said.

"Convey my greetings to Lord British the next time thou dost see him."

From the Town Hall we made our way to the Sword and Keg Pub. It was still early afternoon and the tavern wasn't crowded. We leaned against the bar and made small talk with the owner until a young girl ran by with a large tray of mugs in one hand. It was a wonder the way she handled that tray.

"Hello," I said the next time she passed by. "Who are you?"

"I am Lyssandra, but ye can call me Andy."

"Aren't you a little young to be working here?" I asked.

"'Tis rough sometimes, but I doesn't mind. Someday I'll be a great fighter, ye know."

"Do you know anything about the rune?" I asked.

One thing I knew was that people who served others were often treated like they were invisible. This meant that they saw and heard things that weren't supposed to be common knowledge.

"I know how to get it from the you-know-what."

"The what?"

"The rat," she whispered.

"Rat?"

"Shhhh!" She glanced around the nearly empty room as though we might be overheard. "See that hole in the north wall over there?" She pointed to a small rat hole where the floor and the wall met. "That's where it took the rune! They tried all manner of tricks to get it out, but they all failed. I had an idea, but none would listen to me."

"I'll listen," I said.

She smiled and my heart melted. Brave and smart—I knew she would be a great fighter one day. I hoped I'd be able to return to Britannia and see her then.

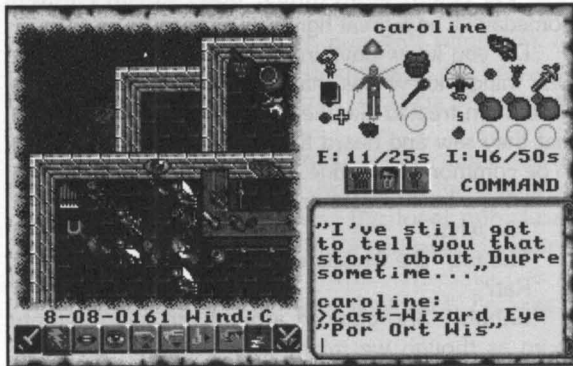
"Know ye the talking mouse? Lord British's friend?" she asked. I nodded. "A mouse could get the rune, of that I'm sure!"

"That's a wonderful idea," I said. "We know Sherry and I bet she'd come with us if we gave her enough cheese."

Lyssandra blushed with pride, then hurried off to finish her work.

"Let's go back to Castle Britannia and see if Sherry will help us," I said. The others agreed, and in minutes we were back in the castle. I couldn't find Sherry at first, but I waited until Lord British went into his room to read. Sherry appeared a few minutes later. We asked her if she would help, and after a bribe of a small amount of cheese she agreed to join the party.

We returned to the pub to find a full-scale brawl in progress. I sent Sherry into the pub alone to retrieve the rune. She came running back, dragging the rune and a ring of invisibility that she'd found in the rat hole. Then we took her back to Lord British and thanked her for her help.



We returned to Jhelom to try and get the mantra.

The tavern had settled down somewhat when we returned. A couple of the brawlers were crumpled in one corner, overcome by the fight or the ale—I couldn't tell which.

Several patrons leaned against the long oak bar. One was an angry-looking man with a short sword on either hip. Another was dressed in velvets and silks of yellow, green, and blue. The third was a small man whose vest was made entirely of seashells.

"Quite a ruckus in here a while ago," I said to no one in particular.

Just then, Shamino leaned over my shoulder and shook hands with the angry-looking man.

"This is Stelnar," said Shamino by way of introduction.

"Pleased to meet you," Stelnar said as he grasped my hand in a strong grip.

"Thanks. I'm looking for the Mantra of Valor to help free the shrine from the Gargoyles."

Stelnar grimaced like he'd just tasted something bitter.

"Monsters, you mean," he growled. "I've been killing Wisps and the like in Spiritwood. They're hard to kill, not like Gargoyles."

"You've killed Gargoyles?" I asked.

"There's one they call Sin V'raal. If I had my way, that Gargoyle would be a statue. You know they turn to stone when you slay them."

Just then the man in silks joined in the conversation.

"That's drivel, Stelnar," he said. "A Gargoyle's a flesh-and-blood beast. Stone indeed!" He turned back to his beer.

"What dost thou know, Van Kellian? Thou art just a bard. A Gargoyle is an ugly monster, and that's that."

"Ugliness is but skin deep," I heard Van Kellian murmur. I walked over to his side and asked him about the mantra, but he didn't know it. The man with the seashell vest overheard my question and interrupted.

"The Mantra of Valor bringeth great cheer. I'm not a great singer, but I love to play the Song of Valor. It makes me sing." Saying this, he launched into the following song, accompanied by everyone in the bar:

*It seemed like such an easy climb
Upon the Serpent's Spine.
I hadn't even time to blanch,
When down there came an avalanche!*

And then the mantra came to mind,

*Though boulders bounced and passed with speed
My frozen fingers gripped the rock
As sliding snow swept loose my feet.
Sing 'RA,' my friends, sing 'RA.'
'Tis a song to make thee strong.
When mountains be high and the ground be far . . .
Sing 'RA,' my friends, sing 'RA!'*

And singing the Song of Valor we left Jhelom and the Sword and Keg Pub and went on to Skara Brae.

Entry 16—Skara Brae. The Wisps

ur visit to Skara Brae was extremely strange. We had to sift through many rumors and innuendoes to get to the location of the rune. A murder

and a ghost in the town distracted us for a while, but after carefully reviewing our information, we realized that we were being kept from our true goal: to find the rune.

Trenton, the lord of Skara Brae (and a weasely sort if I've ever seen one), denied ever having the rune. He said it had been given to Quenton for safekeeping. Of course, Quenton was the murder victim and nobody seemed to know where he'd hidden the rune. Everyone was sure the Gargoyles had murdered him, but it didn't add up.

After chasing a number of false leads, I suggested we visit the house where Quenton lived with his daughter, Marney. We knocked on the door and it was answered by a tall delicate girl whose smile could put you at your ease.

"Hello," I said. "Are you Marney, Quenton's daughter?"

"Aye," she said. "May I help thee?"

"We're looking for the Rune of Spirituality."

Her easy smile disappeared and tears gathered in her eyes.

"I am sorry for our town. My father was the caretaker of the runestone. After he died, we had no way of finding out where he put it."

She dabbed at her eyes with the corner of her apron. Iolo and Dupré looked at me disapprovingly, like it was my fault her father was dead and the rune was missing. I decided to change the subject and try to cheer her up a little.

"Uh, Marney is a beautiful name. Is it a family name?" I asked. Shamino rolled his eyes and smacked his head. Okay, so it wasn't the smoothest transition. What did they want?

Luckily for me, she brightened up. "It was in a poem my mother wrote to my father when they first met," she said, opening the locket hanging around her neck. She read from the paper inside: "At first we met and dark clouds gathered, the thunder sounding your approach. Then comes the storm of hearts pounding and in the end the marney's touch."

"That's beautiful," I said. "May I?"

She held out the small scrap of cloth the poem was written on and I took it from her fingers.

I read the second verse of the poem aloud: "Remember where my love is kept: Inside a basket made of promise, you'll find my dreams of us have slept."

Marney sniffed bravely, then looked at us and collapsed sobbing. The others gave me "How could you?" looks and shifted from foot to foot awkwardly. A lot of help they were! Marney pulled herself together and apologized for crying.

"That's okay," I said. "You really loved your father. I just wish we could figure out where he left the rune."

Marney sniffled a little and I was afraid she'd start crying again. In an effort to change the subject, I started talking about the first thing that came to mind.

"We need a skiff to reach Horace the Alchemist's house. Do you have one available?"

Marney blew her nose loudly into a small handkerchief she'd retrieved from her apron pocket.

"Not to buy, but thou mayest borrow the one on the dock if thou needest it to visit him."

We thanked her and gratefully went outside to the dock. A skiff was tied to the moorings. We piled into the small boat and headed northwest to Horace's island, a trip that took only minutes.

Horace didn't have any information about the rune, but he did have spells and reagents for sale. Though he was a bit befuddled—extreme old age will do that to you, I guess—when I asked him about business he snapped back to reality right away. We stocked up on all the reagents he carried and bought spells (*In Mani Corp* and *Vas Mani*) that I thought might be useful. Even though I couldn't use them yet, I wanted them for later.

All the while, I couldn't get Marney's poem out of my head. "At first we met and dark clouds gathered, the thunder sounding at your approach." Pretty

romantic stuff. It had been a long time since I'd felt like that about anyone. Or since anyone had felt that way about me, much less someone who would commit it to verse.

"Aren't there Wisps around here somewhere?" I asked.

"Aye," said Shamino. "In Spiritwood, to the southeast, I have seen them at night."

"It's almost sundown. Let's head there tonight and find out what Xiao was talking about."

• • •

The blue sphere hovered six feet above the ground in front of us.

"What do we do now?" I whispered.

"Talk to it?" said Dupré.

"Uh, hello," I said.

The ball pulsed, then said, "Again 'you' on this plane address 'I' of the Xorinite dimension. By what name do 'you' wish to be addressed this time?"

This time? "Uh, Avatar will do fine," I said.

"Very well, 'Avatar.' Do 'you' have memory of a previous discussion with 'me'?"

"Nooooo." Curiouser and curiouser.

"So be it. 'I' must often repeat information when conversing with the life of Britannia, it seems. 'I' do not see how each unit of life here can have different memories, different desires, but again 'I' inform Britannia that it is not so in 'my' realm. Those which you know as 'Wisps' are projections of life of Xorinia. 'I' extend into many planes besides this one. Britannia communicates with 'me' very seldom and is known by those of very few other planes. Every time 'I' speak with Britannia, it seems 'I' must explain 'my' nature again. This is very strange."

"No kidding," I said.

"I do not understand," said the Wisp.

"What do you do?" I asked.

"Xorinia serves as a conduit for information between different planes. In exchange, the planes provide information that can be used to improve Xorinia. Occasionally payment is accepted in the form of substance, but this is not preferred."

"What kind of information?" I asked.

"Britannia has never participated in an interplanar

exchange of information. 'I' have presented a sample known in Britannian terms as a 'secret,' but no further interest has been shown."

"Secret?"

A scroll appeared in my hand. I unrolled it and read the incantation, then realized that what I was holding was a *Corp Bet Mani* Spell.

"Holy cow! This is . . ."

"Yes, yes," said the Wisp in a bored voice, "an Armageddon Spell. It is not very powerful, as it only affects the plane in which it is invoked. If 'you' present a reasonably dense information source to a 'Wisp' unit, arrangements will be made to transfer some suitably valuable commodity into Britannian possession."

"Got anything in particular in mind?" I asked.

"The vagaries of 'your' language are most strange," said the Wisp.

"Well, thanks anyway," I said. The Wisp pulsed again and started rambling on about not having to say goodbye every time we stopped talking, et cetera. I wondered what source of information we had in Britannia that pan-dimensional beings would want.

That night we made camp, and off in the distance the Wisps pulsed and glowed.

• • •

That night I dreamed many things. Of a murdered father and horrible Gargoyles chasing me. A beautiful woman quoted from a poem she'd written to her love. And baskets filled with promises floated everywhere.

• • •

I woke with a start. Dupré was on watch, and he turned and looked at me.

"Didst thou sleep well?" he asked.

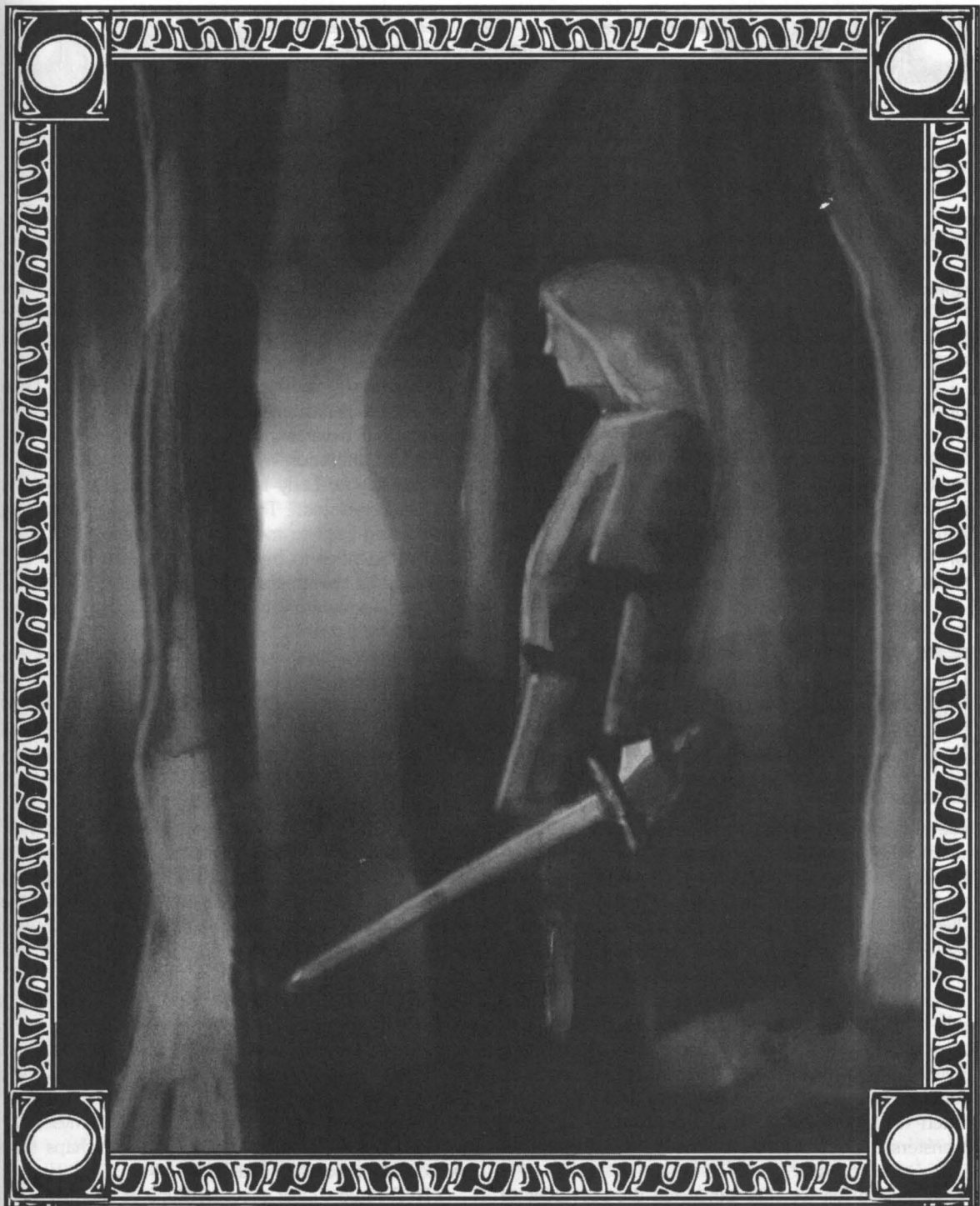
I shook my head. "No, I had these dreams. I need to figure out what they meant."

"Tell me about them," he said.

"Well," I began slowly, "there were Gargoyles. They were chasing me. And I dreamt about Marney's mother and the poem she wrote to Quenton."

"Perhaps the poem hath something to do with thy Quest," said Dupré.

"And there were baskets," I continued. "Did you see a basket in the hut?"



"Nay, only the girl's hope chest."

"Let's wake the others. I think we need to go back to Marney's hut.

• • •

Marney smiled at us when she opened her door.

"Thou hast returned," she said. "Didst thou visit Horace?"

"Yes," I said. "He's a bit crazy."

"Nay, divinely inspired," she replied.

"Do you have a basket?" I asked her.

"I have one in my hope chest. Feel free to look for thyself." She motioned to a pretty painted chest in one corner.

Searching through the chest I discovered a large basket, and inside the basket was the Rune of Spirituality. Marney also had one of the books that were scattered all over town. Gideon was responsible for this, I'm sure. I picked it up and discovered that the Mantra of Spirituality (OM) was written there.



Entry 16—The Cyclops's Cave and Minoc

With only one rune left to get, I was anxious to be off to Minoc, the City of Sacrifice.

But Shamino took me to one side and mentioned that there was a Cyclops's cave nearby that might provide us with items we'd need later on.

As usual, Shamino was right. There was a cave filled with Cyclopes which had many things we needed for our journey. I discovered packs, gold, gems, torches, and powder kegs on various levels of the Cyclops's cave. By using my ring of invisibility, I was able to battle the creatures without their being able to do me any harm. I soon discovered that being invisible prevented most Britannian creatures from being able to land a blow on me. After spending much time in the Cyclops's cave defeating these monsters, I discovered I was regaining much of the experience I'd lost.

When we felt we had exhausted the resources of

the Cyclops's cave, I dropped the moonstone two feet to the southeast and stepped through the Moongate into the circle of stones outside of Minoc.

• • •

Our first stop was the house of the Lord Mayor of Minoc. This was an elegant building with large airy rooms. In the main chamber of the building, a woman wearing a finely embroidered dress sat as though she were expecting us. She rose and walked toward us as we entered.

"Greetings," she said. "I am Lady Isabella. Thou art the famous Avatar, of course. I have heard of thy exploits, but never expected to meet thee in person. 'Tis indeed an honor."

"Thank you, Lady Isabella. Your kind welcome is indeed appreciated." The Britannian style of greeting was coming back to me. "Lady, I am looking for the Rune of Sacrifice to free the shrine. Lord British said you might be able to assist me."

"Aye, we were entrusted with the care of the Rune of Sacrifice. I gave it to Selganor, the Artisans' Guild Master. He's a fine musician. He lives just across the road from here."

"Thank you for your help, Lady," I said, and kissed her hand. If I were not the Avatar on such an important Quest—oh well. I'd been feeling like this a lot lately.

We strolled over to the Artisans' Guild. As we drew closer, the sound of music floated out from the hall. We opened the door and the music swelled. A slender, graceful man was tuning a lute in one corner as another man played a tune upon a harpsichord on a stage in the center of the room. Iolo walked toward the dark-haired woman seated next to the stage and embraced her.

"Who's that?" I asked Shamino.

"'Tis Gwenno, Iolo's wife," he replied.

"Do you know which one's the Guild Master?"

"I believe 'tis the man in the corner tuning the lute."

I walked over to the man and introduced myself.

"Hail and welcome. I am Selganor. Perhaps thou wouldst like to join the Guild?"

"No," I said. "I just need the Rune of Sacrifice."

"I'd be glad to lend thee the rune, but only Guild members may handle it," he said. "Art thou certain thou hast no interest in joining?"

Obviously I wasn't going to get the rune without being in the Guild.

"I'm not really a musician, but how do I join?"

"First thou needest a set of panpipes. Julia can teach thee how to make them. Thou also needest to commit 'Stones' to memory. 'Tis a simple tune; ask Gwenno to play it for thee."

"Where can I find Julia?" I asked.

"She lives just across the road, next door to Lady Isabella. She made my lute, and most of our other instruments as well."

We thanked him, then spent a few moments talking to Gwenno. She and Iolo were holding hands and staring into each other's eyes. She told us the numerical notation for 'Stones,' which I note here: 678987 8767653.

With that settled, we went to Julia's shop to see if she could help me make the panpipes.

Julia was seated behind a large wooden table, working on a lute.

"Aye, and wha' can ye be askin' of me?" she hollered as we entered.

"Hello, Julia," I said. "Remember me?"

She squinted against the sunlight filtering in through the doorway behind us, then a look of recognition flickered across her face.

"Well, the rumors are true! 'Tis well and good that ye have returned to our land, Avatar!"

I hadn't realized I'd been holding my breath until that moment. Julia had always been pretty outspoken and wasn't shy about making her opinions known. If there was any rancor over my return, she'd let me know about it.

"An' wha' can I be doin' for ye?" she continued.

"Selganor sent me to you for panpipes."

She brightened and a rare smile lit her face.

"Sent ye to me, did he? Aye, I can believe that . . ."

Now the panpipes are a tricky instrument. Ye must have the freshest wood if ye want to learn how to make the pipes. Ye'll need a yew board, but it must be fresh cut."

"And how am I supposed to get a fresh-cut yew board?" I asked.

"Go to Yew, where they grow the best wood in Britannia. Buy a freshly cut yew log and take it to a sawmill. Have them cut it into a board and bring it back here. Then I'll show ye how panpipes are made!"

Great, back to Yew. Thank goodness I have the moonstone, otherwise this would take forever.

We thanked Julia for her help, then went to an open area to use the moonstone. In moments we were back in Yew and walking through the forest to Ben the logger's hut. He gladly sold us a fresh-cut yew log, which I made Dupré carry since he was the strongest among us.

I used the moonstone again to transport us back to Minoc. There was a sawmill on the edge of town near the circle of stones—I'd noticed it when we first came to town. For a price, Aaron, the man who ran the sawmill, cut the log into a board. We took the log back to Julia, who whittled it into a fine set of panpipes for us.

With this portion of our task complete, we returned to the Guild and showed Selganor the panpipes.

"Very nice," he said. "'Tis a fine set of panpipes. Now, tell me the sequence of 'Stones' and I'll induct thee into the Guild."

I read off the notation I'd taken from Gwenno, and Selganor played the tune on his lute. The he took the lute and tapped each of us lightly on the shoulder with it, saying, "Thou art now a full member of the Artisans' Guild."

Then he reached into his belt-pouch and pulled out the Rune of Sacrifice. "I'm sure you'll be needing this in your travels. I know you'll find a solution to this Gargoyle problem."

I was about to leave when he held up his hand. "Oh, by the way. There's something you might want to know."

"What is it?" I asked.

"CAH . . ."

"Cah?"

"The Mantra of Sacrifice. You'll need to know it."

Well, that about did it. There seemed nothing more to do with Selganor. We might have stayed for a jam session, but we had other tasks ahead. We thanked him and walked into the dying daylight. We had all the runes—all we needed to do now was free the shrines.



Entry 17—Freeing the Shrines

pondered for the rest of the evening and into the next day about how we should go about freeing the shrines. Finally, I hit upon a plan. I'd accumulated four invisibility rings during my Quest. It was my hope that, like other creatures in Britannia, the Gargoyles were unable to detect you when you were invisible.

We put on our invisibility rings and I dropped the moonstone in the spot that would take us to the Shrine of Compassion. We stepped through the Moongate and were transported to the shrine. In an instant, we stood next to the altar. On the altar was a moonstone surrounded by a glowing violet field. Enormous winged Gargoyles stood guard everywhere, but they didn't seem aware of our presence. I pulled out the Rune of Compassion and chanted the Mantra of Compassion. There was a ringing noise and a flash of light as the violet force field vanished.

I snatched the moonstone off the altar and dropped my moonstone on the ground where it would take us to the Shrine of Valor. Again we stepped through the Moongate. At the Shrine of Valor, I repeated my actions, using the proper rune and mantra, and freed the shrine. This all took a matter of minutes. So quick were we that the Gargoyles had no time to react.

From the Shrine of Valor I went to the Shrines of Justice, Sacrifice, Honor, Spirituality, Humility, and Honesty. At the Shrine of Honesty, I dropped the

moonstone onto the ground and transported us all back to Lord British's throne room.

I'd freed the shrines, but there was a hollow sensation about it. Like I hadn't completed the Quest. But I had! I'd freed the shrines—wasn't that why I was here?

I stepped up to Lord British.
 "Sire," I began. "I have freed the shrines of the Eight Virtues."

"I see thou hast misplaced the key to my castle," he said, handing me another.

"No, I threw it away. I didn't need it anymore," I said, tossing the key over my shoulder.

"Here's another key," he said.

"Thank you, my liege," I said, jamming the key into my pocket. All this talk about keys was making me impatient. I'd just freed the shrines and here we were nattering on about keys.

"Look, I've completed the Quest, I've freed all the shrines, and I'm ready for feasting and accolades, and then you can send me home."

"The Gargoyle menace hath not yet been put down," said Lord British. "Thou must hurry."

"Aren't you listening? I've freed the shrines. That was the Quest. Wasn't it? Well I've done it, and now I'm finished."

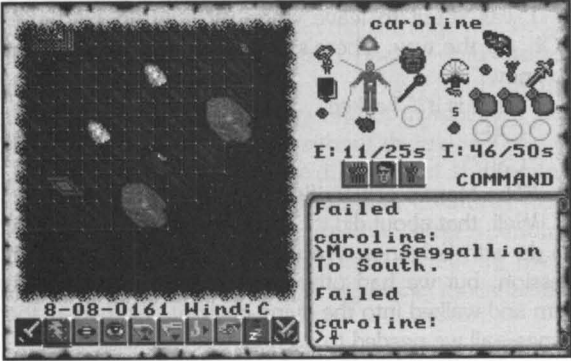
"Nay, Avatar. The Gargoyles still threaten Britannia and thou must find a way to stop them."

This really burned me up. I'd had a funny feeling for a while now that freeing the shrines wasn't all there was to this situation, and now a more ominous thought occurred to me. Maybe Lord British didn't know what was really going on; maybe I was stuck trying to figure this whole mess out by myself.

I thanked him for the key, then went back to my room. I had the eight runes and the eight moonstones from the altars. My own moonstone came from somewhere else. Maybe the Gargoyles had used this stone to bring me from Earth.

"lolo, give me that book," I said.

He handed the leather-bound book to me. I stared at the cover. The picture of the Gargoyles standing over the dead human looked all too familiar, like what had almost happened to me. I had to discover why the Gargoyles wanted me dead. The secret was in this



book, and without the other portion of the silver tablet we would never find out the meaning of the book or why I was here.

"Let's go try to find the gypsies," I said.



Entry 18—The Gypsies

I spent days looking for the gypsies. In each town the story was the same: "They were just here; sorry thou hast missed them."

Outside Trinsic I thought we'd discovered them, but I soon found that these were not the gypsies we sought. These gypsies were more interested in telling our fortunes than in answering questions. Or, more to the point, interested in relieving our purses of gold.

One wench, Wicked Wanda, made me an offer that any red-blooded man would have had trouble refusing. Luckily, Dupré was with me; otherwise I might have been tempted by her charms. The expression on his face when she made her . . . proposal almost made it worth refusing her.



"Go on, wench," said Dupré, waving the gypsy away with his hand and huffing indignantly. "Leave this man alone."

Wanda sniffed, stuck her nose in the air, and turned her back on us. "Come back when thou hast permission from thy mother," she called over her shoulder.

"Wait," I said. "Come back."

She turned, and a very naughty smile spread across her lips. "Changed thy mind, eh?"

"No," I said. Her smile faded. "We're looking for a silver tablet. Do you know anything about it?"

"Andreas has a silver tablet, but I have something much sweeter." She leaned toward me and I caught a whiff of the hot, spicy fragrance of her skin.

"No, thank you," I said, backing away. I bumped into Lolo, who grabbed my elbow.

"Steady, friend," he laughed. "'Tis but a common wench."

"Yeah, but it's been a long Quest."

Andreas was the younger of the two male gypsies. He had curly black hair and brown eyes.

"I see thou hast met Wanda," he said. "Is she not to thy taste, or dost thou prefer something . . . else?" He looked me over boldly.

"Uh, no. No. Nope. Unh unh. Just too darned busy with this business for Lord British," I said, dropping my voice as deep as I could. Unfortunately, I just ended up sounding like Walter Brennan with a head cold. "Do you know anything about a silver tablet?"

"I overheard a bard in a tavern say that it was somewhere on the Isle of the Avatar. Perhaps Arturos, my father, could tell thee more." He pointed across the campfire to a short man with curly hair streaked with gray, wearing a strange cap.

Arturos looked up from his cards as we approached.

"Hey, paisan!" he exclaimed. "Iffa you were looking t'getta you fortune told, you came to the right place."

He reminded me of someone, but who?

"No fortune telling, thank you. We're looking for a silver tablet."

"The silver tablet? I donna know anything about it. But hey, maybe there's something in the cards about it."

The oldest trick in the book, and I was about to pay through the nose for it.

"Okay," I sighed. "How much?"

We bickered back and forth—eventually I paid what he asked and he told me my "fortune." Ha! What he did was bilk me out of lots of gold.



"Look," I said finally, leaning across the space between us. "What about the tablet?"

"The cards didn't say nothin' about the tablet. Guessthat means you're not gonna find it. That's a life, you know?"

"This scoundrel knows nothing and is trying to cheat thee," interjected Shamino.

"Hey! Whatsamatta with you?" cried Arturos, jumping to his feet. The cards scattered as they fell.

"Never mind, Shamino," I said, putting up my hand in a warning gesture. "He doesn't know anything about the tablet. Thanks for the reading."

"Attsa all right," replied Arturos.

"Whither now?" asked Iolo as we left the gypsy camp.

"I'm not sure. Maybe if we stay here a while, they'll catch up to us—rather than the other way around."

We took lodgings in Trinsic for a fortnight, and at the end of that time, the gypsies we were looking for appeared.

• • •

There were five of them: a pretty young girl who danced like an angel; a shaggy dog who said the most amazing things if you asked him to speak; Taynith, a mysterious woman who told fortunes (*real* fortunes); a young juggler; and Zoltan, the king of the gypsies.

Though the other members of this group had much to tell me, particularly Taynith, it was Zoltan who knew about the silver tablet.

"Hello," I said, extending my hand. "I've been looking for you."

"Huzzah!" he cried. "I am Zoltan, king of the gypsies. Why do you seek me?"

"I am looking for the silver tablet you brought to Mariah at the Lycaenum. I understand that you know about the other half."

"I'll be glad to help you out. But 'tis a hard life, sometimes, being a gypsy. Would you be willing to pay ten gold pieces for the information?"

I pursed my lips. This constant demand for money was wearing. "Yes," I said, and handed him ten gold pieces.

"Some gorgio called Captain John brought us the silver tablet and paid us to take it to the Lycaenum,"

said Zoltan. "While we were on the way there, we were ambushed by Captain Hawkins and his crew. The tablet was broken in two during the scuffle. The pirates got away with the bigger half. Hawkins took my finest earring as well—I spit on his mother's grave! Most likely they went to the Buccaneer's Den with their loot. We took the corner of the tablet that they missed to the Lycaenum and sold it to Mariah."

I groaned—not Buccaneer's Den! Nobody there would give you a straight answer about anything. It was a hideout for pirates, thieves, and assorted shadowy types. I hated trying to get information from them.

Dupré slapped me on the back. "'Tis not so bad," he said. "We can purchase a boat in Britain, then transport back here to set sail."

"And how are we supposed to get it here?" I asked.

"I shall carry it," Dupré replied.

"Very well," I said, rummaging through my bag for the moonstone. I dropped it on the ground and we stepped through the gate.



Entry 19— Buccaneer's Den

e'd planned to set sail from Trinsic and head due east to Buccaneer's Den. Luckily, I checked the map and saw that we should make our way from

Paws instead. Dupré put the dinghy we'd bought in Britain into an enormous sack and slung it over his back.

Paws was one of my favorite towns in Britannia. I wished we could stay and look around, but time was of the essence. A small pier jutted out from the coast at the edge of town. Dupré dropped the skiff into the water and we all piled in, elbows and knees poking over the side or into someone else's ribs.

Within a few hours, we landed at Buccaneer's Den.

• • •

I pushed open the door of the tavern on the north side of the road leading into town. It was just after sundown and the place was packed. We pushed our

way to a table and managed to secure seats. I told the others to wait for me while I tried to find out about the silver tablet.

Many of the pub's patrons were former pirates, but it took me a while to track down anyone who knew about Hawkins—or would admit to knowing him. At last I sat down across from a shifty-eyed man who had a cane propped up on the table next to him.

"Buy you an ale?" I asked.

"What d'ye want?" he snarled.

"Well, I'm looking for a silver tablet."

His eyes narrowed and he looked me over. "Who sent ye?" he asked suspiciously.

"Zoltan the gypsy said that Captain Hawkins and his pirate crew made off with the tablet."

"Hawkins," he spat, "that heartless bastard! He was killed by his men. Of course, I had nothing to do with it."

"Who said you did?"

"Nobody. What did ye say ye wanted again?"

"The silver tablet."

"Ye're not a member of the Guild. I don't have to tell you anything."

"What Guild?" I demanded, getting frustrated. Buccaneer's Den was always like this—lots of strange conversations.

"Go ask Budo. And ye didn't hear that from me." With that, he rose from the table and grabbed his cane. Using the cane for support, he limped out of the pub.

I went back to the table where Iolo, Shamino, and Dupré sat. Two women had joined them.

"Hello," I said as I sat down. "Who are your new friends?"

Iolo pointed to the woman on his right, who was smartly dressed. "This is Leonna, captain of the Golden Hind. Her ship is in for repairs." He gestured to the woman who sat across from him. She looked slightly seaworn and wasn't as nattily dressed as her companion. "This is Leodon, a mate on the Golden Hind. They are looking for something to do while the Hind is being repaired."

I looked the women over. They appeared to be well-seasoned, and both had a competent air about them. We were in need of some help with the Quest.

"Would you like to join us?" I asked.

They glanced at each other, then looked back at me.

"Aye, I'd be honored to join thee," said Leonna.

"I think it would prove interesting," said Leodon.

"Good, that's settled," I said. "Does either of you know anything about a man called Budo?"

They shook their heads.

"Stay here while I look for him," I said, rising from the table.

I left the pub and spent the next hour searching through the town. Budo was nowhere to be found. Wearily, I made my way back to the pub—called the Fallen Virgin Tavern—and joined my companions. They were pretty much in their cups and had no interest in talking about the silver tablet.

I was hungry and decided to try to get some food from the cook. The kitchen was small and hot, and the cook didn't feel much like talking. On the north wall of the kitchen, I noticed a secret door. I had to move the cook out of the way to get to it, but that wasn't a problem. Slipping through the door, I found myself outside a small cottage. I pushed open the door and saw a chubby man seated at a small wooden desk.

"Hello," he said jovially as I entered. "Do you need supplies?"

"Are you Budo?" I asked, ignoring his question.

"Aye, Budo is my name. Though some call me 'the Den,' but I don't think that's my name."



Strange. I wondered what guild would hold this bubbly merchant and someone as shiftily as Homer.

"I'm interested in the Guild," I said.

A startling change came over his features. Suddenly, the good-natured bumbler who sat before me was transformed into a shrewd, sharp, dangerous-looking man.

"Who sent ye?" he asked. He leaned forward and stared into my eyes.

"Homer," I replied.

"Uh-huh. Well . . . were ye hoping to join?"

Then it hit me—what an idiot I was—this was the Thieves' Guild I was about to join. The Avatar a member of the Thieves' Guild. Good grief! But there was no other way to get Homer to talk about the silver tablet.

"Yes," I said. "I'd like to join."

Budo nodded and leaned back in his chair. "All right, maybe ye've got what it takes. We'll see. To be a member of the Thieves' Guild, ye have to get your own belt.

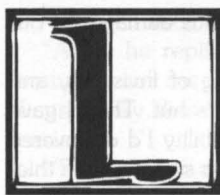
"Now we have a limited membership, so there's only so many belts in the world. If ye want one of them, ye have to 'retire' a member of the Guild. Luckily for ye, it just so happens that there's a member we'd like to see 'retired' soon. Her hideout is deep below Britain, in the sewers. Ye'd best watch out for the rats down there!" He paused and looked me over again, as if to be sure I was worthy of membership.

"One last thing. It would be an embarrassment for the Guild to have bodies turning up inconveniently. So don't get too violent, unless ye have to. I'll talk to ye when ye get back."

"What kind of supplies do you sell?" I asked, curious about his cover.

"Gems, lockpicks, torches, backpacks, bags, shovels, and powder kegs."

I bought a few items I needed from him, then left. I finagled a leg of turkey from the cook on my way back to the tavern. The others were nodding off at the table and I suggested we spend the night in the attached inn—the King's Ransom. That's about what it cost too. The next morning, I dropped the moonstone to my north and we stepped into Lord British's throne room.



Entry 20— The Pirate Map

eodon and Leonna gawked at the throne room. They curtsied awkwardly to Lord British and he bowed somberly to them. When their backs

were turned he winked at me.

"Hast thou made any progress in ridding the land of these dreaded Gargoyles?" he asked me.

"No, not yet," I said. "I'm working on it."

"Thou must hurry. Time is of the essence."

I nodded and replied, "I am close to discovering the location of the silver tablet Mariah needs to translate the Gargoyle book."

"Very good," he said.

We went to the ladder leading down into the sewers in the southwest tower of the castle. I'd discovered this entrance when I came back to Britannia this last time.

"Whew, what a foul odor," said Shamino, waving his hand in front of his face.

"Well, it's a sewer," I snapped. I wasn't looking forward to this trip into the Britannian underworld. We climbed down the ladder and I asked Shamino to light a torch. The slimy walls leapt into view. Greenish-brown moss hugged the slick rock. A pack of huge rats ran past and Leonna gasped. My sentiments exactly.

We wandered around the tunnels on this level, looking for any sign of human life, but we only found rats. Some of the hungrier and bolder rodents attacked us, but we dispatched them with ease.

We found a ladder leading down to the next level and made use of it. There was no sign of human inhabitants on this second level either, so we made our way to the third level. It was here that we discovered the thief.

This level housed a large underground lake. A passageway led to the north from the large cavern into another, smaller cave, where the thief had built her house. As we passed through the tunnel leading to this cave, we discovered the trap that the thief had set for unwary explorers. An invisibility spell cloaked a

bear trap, which inflicted horrendous damage on our party before we realized it.

In my anger, I donned my ring of invisibility and moved the bear trap into the thief's hut. Then I gave the others the extra rings of invisibility I'd discovered in my travels and instructed them to surround the thief as I placed her on the bear trap. She was unable to escape and was soon destroyed by her own trap. We recovered the Thieves' Guild belt from her, as well as many other fantastic items.

I was not proud of this deed, but I experienced none of the usual pain or dishonor I had grown accustomed to feeling when I did something against my Avatar principles. I'd let my anger and my pride get the better of me and it didn't seem to bother me. *What's wrong with me?* I wondered. There was something fundamentally wrong with the world, but I couldn't put my finger on what it was. This sense of nagging dismay had stayed with me, and was growing with each passing day.

I shoved it aside for the moment. Then I pulled the moonstone from my pocket and dropped it to the ground.

• • •

Back at Buccaneer's Den, I went to the secret door in the kitchen of the Fallen Virgin and entered Budo's hut. He looked up with his jovial idiot face, but when he saw it was me, he dropped the charade.

"Ye have the belt?" he asked.

I pulled the belt from my bag. It was stained with blood.

"Things got a little nasty, did they?" he said. "Oh, well, it happens. Congratulations and welcome to the Guild. I can offer ye the standard member's discount on all supplies from now on. Just remember, whatever ye do, don't tell anyone about our Guild."

I thanked him and left. In the Fallen Virgin, I found Homer seated at his usual table. As I sat down across from him, I slapped the belt down on the table. A gleam came into his eye.

"Welcome, brother thief," he whispered, then shoved the belt back at me. I picked it up and returned it to my satchel.

"Enough of the game, Homer," I said. "Tell me about the silver tablet."

"It's part of Captain Hawkins' treasure that was buried in a small cave."

"Where's the cave?" I asked impatiently.

"After Captain Hawkins passed away, we tore his treasure map into nine pieces. The plan was, when nobody was looking for us anymore, we'd get together and dig it up. Splitting up the map was my idea," he said, grinning at his own cleverness.

"I figure after all these years the others must have given up, so it's all right for me to search for the treasure by myself." He leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table, and I caught a whiff of his fetid breath.

"Ol' Hawknose set out for the Dry Land, to kill the daemon that is said to live there. Sandy, the ship's cook, went to Trinsic with the first mate. Old Ybarra said he was headed for the dungeon Shame, looking for more treasure. I think one of the men died in a shipwreck.

"Trouble is," he continued, "I've got a bit of gout in one leg and I can't travel much any more. Maybe we can help each other out. I know where my piece of the map is hidden, and if ye bring me the other eight pieces, perhaps we can make a deal. I'll tell ye all I know about where the other pieces might be." He leaned back in his chair and started rubbing his injured leg.

"All right," I said. "Tell me what you know." He grinned and sat forward, resting his elbows on the table.

"Then there was one more. Can't remember his name, but I've heard tell he settled in Jhelom. He'll be easy to recognize—he had a hook in place o' one of his hands.

"That's all I know. Perhaps in your travels ye can find out where the others have gone. Remember, only I know where the ninth piece is, so come back here when ye've got the other eight."

He rose and grabbed his cane, then hobbled out of the tavern. I sagged in my chair. In a few minutes, my companions joined me.

"What hast thou discovered?" asked Iolo.

"That the tablet was buried with Hawkins' treasure and the map was ripped into nine pieces—eight of which have been scattered to the four corners of Britannia."

Just then, Shamino slapped a mug of ale on the table in front of me. I took a long pull on it and continued. "Seems two of the pirates went to Trinsic—Sandy, the cook, and the first mate. One went to Jhelom—he's missing a hand and has a hook instead."

"We were accosted by a one-handed man outside the pub in Jhelom. Dost thou not recall?" asked Dupré excitedly.

I thought for a moment. Then I remembered. There was indeed a one-handed beggar who asked for coins outside the Sword & Keg.

"You're right!" I exclaimed. "Let's get to Jhelom, then on to Trinsic."

I pulled the moonstone from my bag and dropped it on the ground.



Entry 21—Jhelom

e found the one-handed man outside the Sword & Keg in Jhelom. I gave him a few coins and asked him about the map.

"That bit o' news will cost thee twenty coins. What say thee, matey? Aye or nay?"

Iolo stood behind Heftimus and shook his head, but we had a fair amount of gold from our trip into the Cyclops' Cave and we needed the information.

"Here," I said, handing over the amount he asked.

He dropped the coins into his small purse and said, "Thank you kindly, matey. The last I saw o' that bit o' parchment . . . I needed it to start a fire in a dungeon. But afore I could apply sparks to the tinder, a huge swarm o' rats drove me away. The scrap o' paper lies in the dungeon Wrong, matey."

I closed my eyes. The dungeons. I was doomed to spend my life under Britannia.

When I opened my eyes, the beggar was gone.

"Let's go to Trinsic," I said.

I figured if Sandy had been the cook for Captain Hawkins, he might still be plying that trade. The logical place to look for him would be at the local tavern—the Fool's Pair o' Dice.

Sure enough, he was there, just shoving a large meat pie into the oven when we arrived.

"Hello," I said. "Are you Sandy?"

"Aye," he replied. "I am Sandstone Angus. But most folks call me Sandy. I cook for Lord Whitsaber. He especially likes my fish in white wine sauce. It's my specialty."

"That's fascinating, but you wouldn't know anything about a pirate map, would you?"

His face went pale and he turned away, muttering, "Hmmm, I better get back to my cooking. Now to make Magincian pastry . . ."

"Wait," I said, grabbing his arm. "What about Magincian pastry?"

Sandy smiled. At least he was still talking to me. "Truly, it shall be a magnificent dessert! I could do thee a favor if thou didst one for me first."

Now we were getting somewhere.

"Okay, name it," I said.

"Let's see . . . A golden orb on a crystal sea, in box sans hinges, lid, or key. I'll give thee one guess to this riddle."

I smiled. Usually I hated riddles, but this one was easy. "An egg," I said.

"Very good. To make Magincian pastry, I require one dragon egg."

"A dragon egg?"

"Only a dragon's egg will do. There's a lair in the dungeon Destard, to the northwest. It's not far."

"What about the first mate?" I asked, but Sandy wouldn't answer any more of my questions.

I turned to my companions. "Looks like we're going to visit some dungeons."



Entry 22—The Dungeons

here were three dungeons we knew we needed to enter in order to get some of the pieces of the pirate map: Shame, Wrong, and Destard.

I didn't want to face the dragons in Destard right away, so I suggested we try Shame first. Iolo agreed, pointing out that Shame had once been a gold mine and we might be able to pick up some extra gold for arms and armor while we were down there.

The entrance to Shame was in the mountains west of Britain, near the Cyclops' Cave. I was glad of the swamp boots I'd thought to buy; there were many swampy areas in this dungeon.

Iolo was right about Shame—there were lots of gold nuggets scattered about the floors of the tunnels. We encountered rats, bats, and alligators, but nothing we couldn't dispatch quickly.

Level after level we descended, until at last we reached the fourth floor of this dungeon. Down here we discovered fountains that would grant you food if you wished for it. We also found the pirate Ybarra.

He'd made camp in a small cavern. From his emaciated appearance and sunken, wild eyes, I surmised that he'd spent a long time lost in these tunnels.

"Food!" he cried. "Have you any food for a starving man?"

I gave him our food, but his hunger was insatiable.

"Do you have the map?" I asked.

"Map?" he asked around a mouthful food. "Ah yes. It should be worth some food, shouldn't it?"

I looked at the remains of all our food that Ybarra was finishing. Though I had an *In Mani Ylem* spell, I went to one of the fountains and wished for food. Then I returned and gave it to Ybarra, who gave me the piece of the map.

"Come with us," I said.

"Hast thou any more food?" he asked.

"No, we have no more food," I said, "but we can take you out of here."

"Then thou shalt die too," he wailed.

"Canst thou not see his wits have left him?" whispered Shamino. "There is nothing we can do for him, poor wretch."

I nodded. As much as I hated to admit it, Ybarra was too crazed to bring along with us. I dropped the moonstone on the ground to take us to Yew; from there we would make our way northeast to the dungeon Wrong.

"This is the dungeon Covetous/Wrong," said Shamino as we entered the dank cave that led into the tunnels below.

"I thought they were separate," I said.

"Not any more," interjected Iolo. "Since the Gargoyles started appearing, many things have changed in the Underworld."

I pondered this while we made our way down. This dungeon was less like a tunnel and more like a maze. The walls were made of brick and were in better repair than either the sewers or Shame.

On the second floor I discovered that I needed an *Ort Por Ylem* spell to open the portcullis that blocked the doorway leading to the ladder to the third level.

Oddly enough, we discovered no monsters roaming loose; they were all locked up in the various rooms of the dungeon. I also found that shutting the door behind us prevented them from escaping to attack our rear.

On the third level we found the map piece. It was behind a secret door, which was protected by a hydra. I thanked my lucky stars that I'd spent time at the Shrine of Spirituality after we liberated it in order to increase my ability to use the various Circles of magic. Using the staff I'd bought from Nicodemus, I defeated the monster with an *In Corp* spell I'd placed on the staff.

We entered the small hidden room and recovered the map piece and various other treasures we found there. Then it was time to brave the dungeon Destard.

• • •

Before we went into Destard, I wanted to ensure the safety of my companions. With this in mind, we went to the Mint in Britain and exchanged all our gold nuggets for gold coins. From there, we went to the Paladin's Protectorate in Trinsic to buy magic armor. To my dismay, we didn't have enough gold to buy armor for the entire party. Depressed and despairing, I went and sat on the edge of the dock next door to the armory.

"I don't know what to do," I said to the others. "If we try to face the rigors of Destard without better protection, we'll die."

This worried the others as much as it worried me. We all sat along the edge of the dock, chins in hands, elbows on knees. After a long silence, Dupré spoke.

"What about the Wisps?" he asked.

I looked at him. He was staring off at the horizon, his eyes focused on some point in the distance.

"The Wisps?" I asked. "What do you mean?"

"Did they not say that they would reward us with substance if we provided information?" he asked.

"Yes, but what's your point?"

"Why don't we ask for gold for information?" he said.

"And what information would we have that they might want?" interjected Iolo.

"Books," said Dupré.

"Books?" I asked. Then I realized what he was saying. "The library at the Lycaenum! There must be a book down there that they might want."

"Aye, but which one?"

"Wait a minute," I said. "Xiao knew about the Wisps. I'll bet she knows what information they might be interested in, too."

• • •

My suspicion was correct. Xiao did know about the Wisps. But she couldn't tell us more than she had already. However, she sent us to Thariand, the librarian at the Lycaenum, for more information. He recommended a number of volumes, and I chose one that sounded likely. After I made my selection, he sent us into the library under the Lycaenum. The Maze, it should have been called instead.

There was much convoluted going up and down ladders to reach the book we wanted. Eventually we discovered *The Lost Book of Mantras*, which we hoped to trade to the Wisps for gold. During our search, we also came across my favorite book from childhood, *The Wizard of Oz*. I don't know what prompted me to take it, but I slipped it into my satchel.

We left the library and went to Spiritwood to see the Wisps.

• • •

The blue light pulsed, then turned white.

"Do 'you' have a previous memory of a conversation with 'me'?" asked the Wisp.

"Yes," I replied. "And I think I have some information you're interested in."

I pulled *The Lost Book of Mantras* from my sack. The Wisp glowed brighter.

"The volume 'you' bear is a prime source of high-density information. Do 'you' wish 'me' to locate a client who is willing to make an exchange for it at this time?"

"Yes," I replied. "And I'm interested in substance rather than information."

The Wisp glowed brighter again.

"Very well. Rklbwm have expressed a desire for this information and have agreed to the terms asked. Though you have sent only a few life forms and cannot carry much."

As the Wisp said this, all of our packs grew heavier. I looked inside my bag and found that I now possessed more gold nuggets than I'd ever seen before. The others confirmed that they were likewise burdened.

We made camp in Spiritwood and watched the dancing lights of the Wisps until we fell asleep.

• • •

With our money problems taken care of, we exchanged our nuggets for Britannian gold coins. We didn't need all that gold now, so I placed some of it in bags and secured these in the chests in my room.

We went back to Trinsic and outfitted the party with magic armor, then headed out to Destard.

The Wisps will only exchange information for gold once. Before you visit them, unburden your party in your room in Lord British's castle—making sure to put away your weapons and armor in a chest so they won't get picked up.

Though the Avatar asked only Leonna and Leodon to join him, there are two in Serpent's Hold who will prove to be most valuable—Segallion and Sentri. They are hale and hearty fellows who are also very strong.

—Editor's Note



Entry 23—Destard

Swooping down out of the sky, the dragon attacked as we walked to the entrance of Destard. One minute it wasn't there, the next minute the air was full of claws and teeth.

"Get back!" I yelled to the others as I pulled out my staff. I'd enchanted it with an *In Corp* spell; I hoped against hope that it would work. The staff glowed with a violet light. The dragon let out an anguished wail, then dissipated into a million pieces.

"I think we should use our invisibility potions now," I said. Iolo, Shamino, Dupré, Leonna, and Leodon nodded eagerly. Shamino pulled several black potions from the bag on his belt, and we quaffed down our potions eagerly. In seconds we had all become invisible.

"Keep close," I whispered. "The going will be treacherous."

Drakes flew about the open caverns in this dungeon. Pools of lava covered the floor. The heat was stifling.

The invisibility potions wore off Leodon and Leonna, and I had to cast *Sanct Lor* in order to keep them from being attacked by the drakes. The constant stress of exploring the cavern and trying to keep my companions invisible took its toll on me. By the time we reached the third level of the dungeon, I had to rest and regain my magical strength. We hid at the end of a long tunnel near a ladder leading to the fourth level.

When I felt like I could go on, we climbed down the ladder. We found ourselves in a huge open cavern. Dragons flew about the space like enormous predatory bats. I prayed their magical abilities would not extend to detecting us.

At the northern end of the great cavern was a smaller chamber. The dragons were drawn to this room, and I wondered if the eggs we sought were being tended there. Summoning all our courage, we sprinted for the slender opening.

Inside, the floor was covered with the leathery eggs. Some had already burst open and the clear, viscous fluid that had once encased the embryos

puddled on the floor. Most of the eggs were motionless, but a couple pulsed with their horrible contents.

The remnants of the hapless adventurers who had had the misfortune to stumble into this den were scattered over the ground. Dupré and Leodon each grabbed an egg and the rest of us gathered as much of the dragons' booty as we could carry.

The dragons must have sensed that we were in their lair, because their actions became more and more frenzied. They began attacking each other and flying wildly about the cavern.

Not willing to risk any more time down here than we absolutely had to, I fumbled for the moonstone and dropped it on the ground to paces south. The gate rose, and for once I was anxious for its crimson light.

**Entry 24—
The Missing Mate**

Sandy was whipping cream in a big copper bowl when we arrived.

"That big, carefully wrapped bundle could only be a dragon's egg," he exclaimed. "Now I can make Humble Pie!" He gave me a sticky hug. "So, the subject of pirates interests thee?"

He wiped his hands on his greasy apron, then picked up a wooden spoon and tapped it thoughtfully against his temple.

"Well, first there is one in Serpent's Hold. I cannot recall her name, but she has a piece of the map with her. There is one on Dagger Isle. A third I know of is at Empath Abbey. Nathaniel Moorehead is his name.

"The fourth . . . but then, maybe I've said too much already."

This was too much. We'd risked life and limb to get that damn egg so he could make Magincian pastry (which I had learned was also called Humble Pie), and now he was claming up on us. It was too much.

"Tell us about the fourth pirate," I ground out between my teeth. Pulling myself up to my full height

and dropping my hand to my sword, I glared across the butcher's block at the skinny cook.

He blinked in surprise, then said, "Before Lord Whitsaber came to Trinsic to be our mayor, he had another job—as first mate to Captain Hawkins himself. His real name is Alastor Gordon."

"Thanks," I snapped, turning on my heel and stalking out of the kitchen. I was fit to be tied. I strode across the town square and kicked open the door to the Lord Mayor's house.

He didn't look like a pirate—more like a fat *bourgeois*.

"Welcome, Avatar!" he exclaimed all unctious and smarm.

"Okay, where's the map?" I demanded abruptly.

"What dost thou insinuate?" he asked, leaping to his feet.

"I know who you are—Alastor Gordon."

He collapsed into his chair, face pale and mouth working furiously.

"Wh—what did Sandy tell thee?" he finally asked.

"That you were once first mate to the infamous Captain Hawkins."

He slid from the chair and dropped to his knees in front of me. "Please, Avatar, have pity. I have changed since those days, truly I have!"

"Then prove it and hand over the map!"

With shaking fingers he pulled the piece of parchment from his vest pocket. "I'll give it to thee if thou wilt promise to keep my secret."

I plucked the parchment from his fingers and said, "Very well, but you'd better be on your honor."

Relief swept across his face. "Of course, Avatar. Whatever thou sayest. . ."

I know he said something else, but I didn't catch what it was. I'd already turned and walked out of his house.

"What ails thee?" asked Iolo.

"Something is wrong, but I'm not sure what," I said over my shoulder. "I guess I'm tired."

"Aye," he replied. "I sense something is amiss, too. Where do we go from here?"

"To get the map piece from the woman in Serpent's Hold."



Entry 25—The Ghost Ship and Serpent's Hold

or once, luck was running our way. On the way to Serpent's Hold, we discovered the shipwrecked *Empire* on the

Cape Islands. Sandy had mentioned that one of the pirates who held a piece of the map had died in a shipwreck. Fortune had smiled upon us, for this was his ship.

The ghosts of the pirates still roamed the decks, and animated skeletons attacked us as we put ashore. We dispatched them with ease. In searching the ruined hull of the ship, we discovered another piece of the pirate's map.

. . .

It was dark when we arrived at Serpent's Hold. The local tavern was full of fighters who were boasting about their battles. We grabbed a table and ordered dinner and ale.

I spoke with many of the patrons, but none knew about the map. They were almost all members of the Order of the Silver Serpent, or trying to become members.

A heavy-set, tough-looking woman pushed open the door to the pub. She glared around the room. A few of the soldiers yelled to her, and she answered them with a universal gesture of contempt. She walked over to the bar and ordered an ale.

"I'll be back," I said, as I rose to speak with her.

"I don't envy thee thy task," said Shamino looking at the woman and shuddering.

"Aye," echoed Duprè. I glanced over at Iolo, and he smiled sympathetically.

I squared my shoulders. *How hard can it be?*, I thought.

"Greetings, madam," I said.

She started insolently at me. This was one tough customer.

"I'm looking for something. Maybe you can help me with it."

"I doubt that," she said shortly, turning back to her ale.

"I'm looking for a piece of a map," I continued.

She glanced furtively about the pub. "Well, now, I might have seen the likes of that in me travels." She looked over at the table where the others sat, and pointed at the shield resting next to Dupré. "Isn't that a shield of the Order of the Serpent?"

I nodded. "We found it in the dungeon Destard. Why?"

"Usually ye have to be a member of the Order of the Silver Serpent to get one. It's a tricky process to make one; only Gherick can do it. Ye must bring him a curved heater and gems, and only then will he make one for ye. Tell ye what, matey. Give me the shield and I'll tell ye about the map."

I retrieved the shield from Dupré (who wasn't too happy about parting with it) and gave it to the woman. She pulled a small box from a fold of her coat. Inside was the piece of the map.

"I was going to give this magic shield to Caradon, but methinks I'll keep it for meself instead!" She tucked the shield under her arm and left the pub.

I returned to the table.

"In the morning we'll continue our search for the remaining three map pieces," I said. "I think we need to pay a visit to Nathaniel Moorehead at Empath Abbey."



Entry 26— Empath Abbey

of much time to spare today.

At Empath Abbey we learned that Nathaniel Moorehead had passed away. His widow told us about a piece

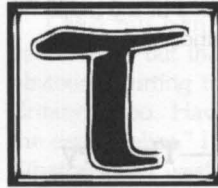
of a chart that Nathaniel had left her that would make her rich. It had to be his part of the map. She says gypsies came by and stole it, along with a locket he'd given her. I suspect these are the ones who camp outside Trinsic. We'll go there now and find out.



Entry 27—same date

fter haggling with Arturos, I managed to buy the map piece from him.

Our next stop is Dagger Isle.



Entry 28—same date

he Shrine of Honesty was on Dagger Isle, and I dropped the moonstone on the ground to take us there.

I was shocked to discover that there were still Gargoyles

near the shrine. They managed to inflict some light damage on us before we could respond to their attack. We killed them all, and I felt a stab of sadness. *Why were they still here? What compelled them to attack us? To attack me?*

I didn't ponder this. I just knew we had to find the rest of the map and get the silver tablet. Maybe when Mariah translated the book we would find out the meaning of all this.

The pirate's hut was nestled against the mountains on the eastern shore of the island. He was outside tending to his garden when we approached. Catching sight of us, he turned and started running to his house. We heard him screaming, "I knew ye'd come to steal me shoes someday! But I was too smart for ye! Ye see, I HAVE NO SHOES!" His hysterical laughter chilled me to the bone.

I tried to talk to him, but it was to no avail. He was mad and made little sense. I did manage to figure out that the map was hidden in his hut. We left him outside, dancing between the rows of corn and yelling about his shoes.

I entered the small hut and looked around. The place was surprisingly neat and tidy, not what I'd expected from such a confused mind. I looked everywhere I could think of in the hut, but couldn't find the map. Iolo sat at the harpsichord and began to play 'Stones.'

"Do we have time for that?" I asked impatiently.

Iolo shrugged. "I wonder that a pirate has so fine an instrument. He doesn't have the hands of a musician."

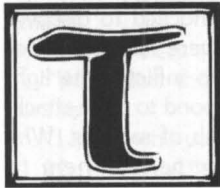
"You're right about that," I said. "Wait a minute, help me move it."

Iolo and I shoved the harpsichord to the south and discovered a trap door underneath.

We climbed the ladder down into the tiny basement and found the seventh piece of the map.

"Whither to now?" asked Shamino.

"The Dry Land," I said.



Entry 29—The Dry Land

he Shrine of Sacrifice sat at the northern edge of the Dry Land. We stood at the edge of the desert and peered out across its expanse.

"How are we going to find this pirate?" asked Leodon.

"Well, he came looking for a Gargoyle who lives here in the desert. I suppose if we find the Gargoyle, we'll find him."

"But how will we know if it's the right Gargoyle? I mean, they all look alike," said Leonna.

The others nodded in agreement. But I disagreed. I saw each Gargoyle, even those we'd met in battle, as unique. Still, I kept my thoughts to myself.

We started out into the desert.

• • •

After wandering around the desert for several hours, we came to the southern border of the wasteland. A small cottage sat here. Outside, carrying on the mundane task of sweeping his step, was the Gargoyle. The others instinctively dropped their hands to their weapons, but I felt that we had nothing to fear from him.

Motioning for my companions to stay their hands, I walked toward the beast.

"Greetings," I said. "Who are you?"

"I am Sin'Vraal," he replied. "What seekest thou?"

Yes, I definitely remembered this fellow. The one with the booming voice.

"I'm looking for a pirate," I told him.

The Gargoyle smiled, showing his long, pointed incisors. "Yes, I once met a pirate here in the desert. He seemed to be hunting me, but he got dragged off by the ants."

During our trip through the desert, we'd passed holes in the ground that spewed forth giant ants. These must be the entrances to the ant mound. It looked like we were going to go underground again.

After all I'd been through so far, I was curious about Gargoyles. Maybe Sin'Vraal could shed some light on them.

"What do you do, Sin'Vraal?" I asked.

"No job. Here I am free to wander where I wish."

"Free? Here?" It astonished me that he would feel free here, where his kind were so hated.

"Among my people, those who can fly rule," he said. "Though I have wings, I cannot fly. Here I am free!"

"Your people are strange to me," I said. "Please tell me more." Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that my companions were also listening with great interest.

"I am not a daemon, though humans think so," he said. "I am a Gargoyle. I fled here to the Underworld because I was not free among Gargoyles."

"Maybe you can decipher this book for us," I said excitedly, motioning to Iolo to pass me *The Book of Prophecies*.

Sin'Vraal shook his scaly head. "Because I could not fly, I was never taught to read," he said sadly.

"That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard," I exclaimed. "What does flying have to do with reading?"

"There are two kind of Gargoyles: winged ones and wingless ones. Wingless ones are mute and unintelligent. They do all the manual labor. Winged ones are smart, and do all the planning and leading. Being able to fly is, to them, a sign of intelligence. Even the Temple can only be reached by air!"

"But you have wings—doesn't that count for something?"

"Remember, I cannot fly."

"But that's stupid."

"Yes, it is a strange concept. There are some in Minoc who can tell you that flying can be achieved by anyone."

His world sounded so strange and so different from ours. It fascinated me and I wanted to know more.

"We have temples here in Britannia too. Please tell me about your temple," I said.

"The great Temple of Singularity held the Codex," he began. A sudden wave of cold passed over me at the mention of the Codex. Could it be . . . ?

"The Temple is the most holy Gargoyle place. A human could learn much by traveling there. But you could never get to the temple. Not only is it deep below the surface, but it can only be reached by flying. And you cannot fly any more than I can."

A suspicion was forming in my mind. A feeling of such profound and deep unease that I could barely allow myself to think about it. Drawing a deep breath, I heard myself asking, "Have you heard about *The Book of Prophecies*?"

"*The Book of Prophecies* says a False Prophet will come to destroy the Gargoyle race. Only the sacrifice of the False Prophet will save us."

A wave of nausea passed over me. I knew now why the Gargoyles were trying to kill me. Why I'd been overwhelmed with a sense of foreboding and despair since my return to Britannia. Why everything seemed wrong with the universe.

I was the False Prophet.

I had taken the Codex from the Gargoyle shrine. Though my intentions were pure, in my carelessness and ignorance, I had taken the most holy item from the Gargoyles' most sacred place.

"What is the sacrifice?" I whispered, unable to bring myself to speak louder.

"Sacrifice' means many things in my language," Sin'Vraal said. "You should seek a Gargoyle scholar to learn more. Travel to the other side of the world, and you should be able to find one. You can go down through Hythloth to get to the realm of the Gargoyles."

I nodded and staggered away from him. My companions gathered around me, their faces lined with concern.

"What is it?" asked Leodon.

"The Codex," I said as I loosened my cloak. I opened my canteen and splashed some of the water on my face.

"What about the Codex?" asked Leonna.

"I took it from *them*," I said. "The Codex was in their temple and I stole it."

"Surely not!" exclaimed Dupré. "Thou art the Avatar. Thou wouldst not do such a thing."

I ran my hand over my wet face. "No, not deliberately, but that doesn't matter. My ignorance is obviously hurting them in some way. And damaging Britannia too. Haven't you noticed? The Dry Land, the earthquakes." I turned away from them, ashamed. What a fool I was! A proud, ignorant fool. The very virtues I thought I'd been upholding were being swept away by my hubris. There was only one way to rectify the situation. I steeled myself and spun to face them.

"I did this and I must fix it," I said. "I don't know how yet, but maybe the answer lies in *The Book of Prophecies*. We must find the other half of the silver tablet."

My friends looked at me with compassion on their faces. The disgust that I feared would be mirrored there wasn't, and I felt a wave of relief. I couldn't bear to hurt anyone else. We stood there for a long time, the silence growing. At last Dupré shattered the awkward moment.

" 'Tis time to find that eighth map piece," he said simply.

With the tension broken, we started talking as we made our way across the desert to the Ant Mound.



Entry 30—The Ant Mound, the Final Map Piece, the Pirates' Treasure

hardly remember our trip into the Ant Mound, so preoccupied was I with my guilt. We found the dead pirate on the lowest level in the Queen's Chamber. The parchment map piece was in his pocket. We retrieved it and went back to Buccaneer's Den.

As we sailed toward Buccaneer's Den, Shamino came and sat beside me. "Thou hast been troubled lately," he said.

I toyed with the strings of my cape. "Yes," I said. "My conscience weighs heavily on me."

"Did thou intend harm to the Gargoyles when thou didst take the Codex?" he asked.

I shook my head, "No. You were there, you know I didn't. But still . . ."

He put his hand on my arm in a comforting gesture. "I know thy heart, Avatar. Thou art pained because thy actions, however well intended, have had an ill effect. Does this sound like the actions of an evil man?"

"No," I said, slowly, "but they aren't exactly the actions of an Avatar."

"Thou art Avatar here, friend, but who is to say what thou mightest appear to be to others."

I leaned back and looked at the night sky. "I know I'm overreacting, but I just feel so bad."

"Maybe thou hast substituted self-pity for action," he said.

I glanced at him; his face was hidden by the night. "What do you mean?"

"Thou hast been so absorbed by thy plight that thou hast not been here"—he slapped his wooden-slat seat—"with us. Maybe thou hast grown so used to thy guilt it is now a habit."

I started to protest, then thought about what he'd said. Maybe I had been wallowing in self-pity. That certainly wasn't the action of the Avatar—or of anyone who would right a wrong.

"You're right, my friend," I said. "I thank you for your honest words."

"Thou art welcome," he said.

We sailed on into the night.

• • •

Homer was seated at his usual table when we entered the Fallen Virgin.

"So, have ye found the eight pieces of the map yet?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, waiting to hear what dungeon we'd be going into next.

"Right. The ninth piece of the map is hidden . . . right here in my pocket!" He grinned wickedly. "I had to keep it safe while ye were off gathering the others, didn't I?" He handed me the last piece of the map.

The island in the upper left-hand corner is Buccaneer's Den."

He rested his elbows on the table and peered intently at my face.

"Ye'll keep your word and come right back here with the Magic Storm Cloak, won't ye?" he asked.

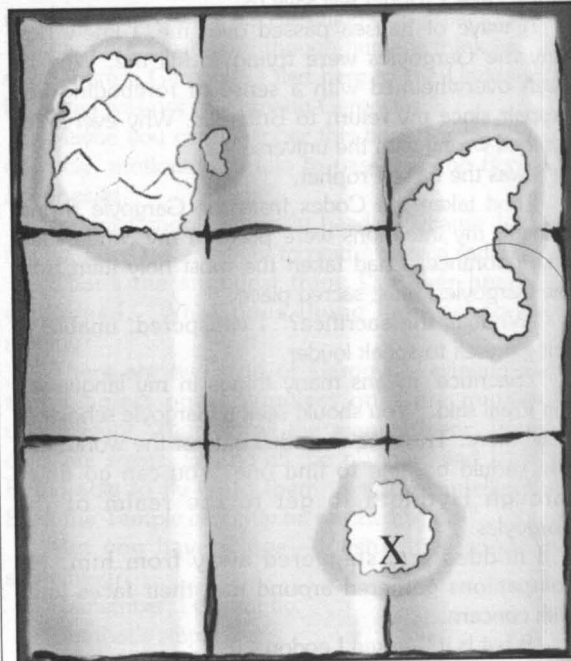
"Yes, you misera—yes," I said containing my temper.

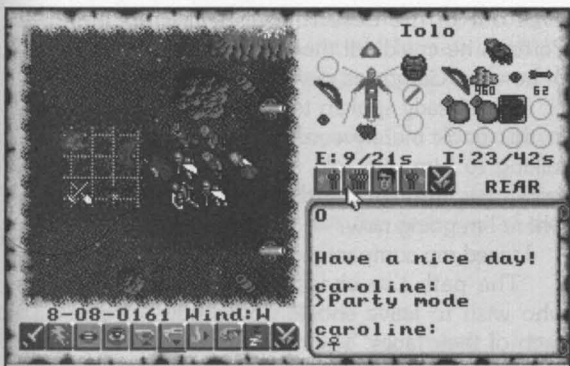
"Good, then I'll tell ye this: When ye reach the island marked with the X, find the three stones and stand in the center. Walk three paces due south, nine paces due west, and twelve more paces south. That should put ye right next to an old dead tree. Dig in the patch of dirt just south of ye, and ye'll find that treasure. Now go get it!"

Without bidding him farewell, I left the tavern.

• • •

Outside, we gathered around and tried to fit the pieces together. It took a while to get everything to match up, but at last we succeeded. This is what the map looked like:





"Let's go," I said.



Homer's instructions were excellent, and soon we located the dead tree. Dupré began to dig, and in moments a hole leading down into a cave appeared.

Though this cave didn't match Destard's dragon for deadliness, the acid slugs that lived on the fourth level were deadly in a slower way. The pirates' treasure was in a hut in the center of a large cavern on the fourth level. We had to blast our way through the steel door, which made me glad for the powder keg we'd taken from the Cyclops' Cave. We found more powder kegs inside. To keep the acid slugs at bay, we placed these kegs across the gaping doorway.

The other half of the silver tablet was here, as well as an enormous amount of treasure. Among the items we found were a magical fan that controlled winds, the Storm Cloak, gems, magical wands, magical armor, and other items an adventurer might need.

On our way back to the Lycaeum, we stopped by Buccaneer's Den and gave Homer the Storm Cloak. He cackled malevolently about his plans, then ran off into the night.

Entry 31— Pirates Island

The island where the pirates had buried their treasure was a swampy mess. Hydras and alligators bred here, and weren't pleased by our company.

Entry 32—The Prophecy Revealed

burst into Mariah's study at the Lycaeum. Her eyes widened in surprise. "Hast thou discovered the other half of the silver tablet?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied. "Can you translate *The Book of Prophecies* now?"

She fitted the pieces of the tablet together and placed them on the table.

"With both pieces I should be able to work out a translation," she said.

A look of concentration crossed her face. I paced as she ran her fingers along the lines of text. Finally, she began to read in a slow, halting voice: "An ancient prophecy tells of the final days, when the end of our world shall come. Three signs shall precede the end. Thrice shall a being of great evil come unto our land, and by this it shall be known that the end is nigh.

"This evil one is of another race, which considers the evil one a great prophet. Yet this false prophet follows not the principles of Control, Passion, and Diligence.

"One day the false prophet will come and desecrate our most holy shrine. And the false prophet will steal our most holy artifact, the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom. This shall be the first sign."

My blood ran cold and I felt the eyes of everyone in the room upon me. What I had feared most was true—in my desire to do good, to become the Avatar, I had created destruction and evil.

"Then, it is written, the false prophet shall descend deep into the bowels of the earth and shall cause the Underworld to collapse. This will cause great earthquakes to tear our world asunder, and there will be a time of plague and famine. This shall be the second sign."

No wonder the Gargoyles wanted to kill me—if what was told in the prophecy was true, their world was coming apart and it was all my fault. But there was more.

"One last time shall the false prophet come. This time, the false prophet will come with a band of warriors and they will destroy all that remains of the Gargoyle race. There is only one way this prophecy may be averted: That is by the sacrifice of the false prophet."

Mariah looked up from the text at me. "When they refer to 'the false prophet,' they must mean thee," she said. I nodded miserably. "It would seem they had reason to think thee evil, from their perspective. This is a difficult matter to resolve. I think thou must seek out more information. A Gargoyle named Sin'Vraal

lives out in the desert. He speaks our language. Perhaps he could tell thee more about this book, and of how the Gargoyles view us."

"I've already spoken to Sin'Vraal," I said. "What is in this book merely confirms what I suspected after talking to him. He told us the way to the Gargoyle world was through the dungeon Hythloth, and that's where I'm going now."

I faced my companions.

"The path I've chosen will be treacherous. Any who wish to leave should do so now." I glanced at each of their faces. Their countenances were somber, but I saw no condemnation there. "Well," I said, relieved that they wanted to stay. "Let's go to the other side of the world."

• • •



Entry 33—Hythloth

Hythloth was by far the worst dungeon we'd been in. Between the volcanoes and the drakes, I thought we'd never get out alive. On the last level of the dungeon we discovered

Captain John, a scholar who told us about the Gargoyles and who taught us their language.

From him I learned that the Gargoyles' land, once as extensive as Britannia, had been reduce to a single city. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and other cataclysms had destroyed their world. Disasters I'd brought about.

He instructed us to wait outside Hythloth at noon, when we could meet the young Gargoyle named Beh Lem. According to Captain John, Beh Lem could guide us through the Gargoyle land. With mounting trepidation, I led my companions into the pale daylight of the Gargoyle world.



Entry 34—Beh Lem and the House of Valkadesh

As Captain John had told us, the Gargoyle Beh Lem arrived at noon. He was smaller than the other Gargoyles we'd

encountered so far—I guessed him to be roughly the equivalent of a twelve-year-old human child. He rushed up and started talking eagerly in Gargish, the Gargoyle language.

“To greet you, human,” he said. “To recognize you as the False Prophet.”

This made me feel wonderful, I can tell you. Even Gargoyles children thought I was the destroyer of their world.

“Is your name Beh Lem?” I asked.

“No name,” he said, “just Beh Lem.”

“But I thought Beh Lem was your name,” I said, beginning to get confused.

“To not receive true name until I prove myself worthy. To be called Beh Lem, which means ‘just one.’ But to get one someday like my father, Valkadesh!”

His chest puffed up with pride. It was clear he was proud of his father.

“What does Valkadesh do?” I asked.

“He is a scholar. To want to be a scholar someday, just like him.”

“I know your people believe I’m the False Prophet. Why aren’t you afraid of me?” I asked.

Beh Lem smiled. “To be feared by everybody—everybody except me and Valkadesh. To find the house of Valkadesh my father, go through the pass in the mountains east of the Hall of Knowledge.”

“Why should I go see Valkadesh?”

“To avoid the Hall! To talk to Valkadesh first!”

Beh Lem was getting pretty agitated. I decided that calming him down was a priority. Besides, it was better to talk to someone who wouldn’t automatically try to cut me into pieces.

“Lead the way to your father’s house,” I said.

• • •

We skirted much of the Gargoyle city, but still I got a glimpse here and there. Their houses were exotic—shaped like pyramids, made of white marble. I wondered what they would look like inside.

Beh Lem led us through a narrow pass and out into a small clearing. Trees pressed up against the sides of the house, and to the east we could see the sea.

I walked into the house. Hovering in midair were three globes, which glowed and illuminated its interior. I’d never seen anything like it, even on my own world. The floor was covered with tiles laid out in an intricate pattern. There were no fireplaces, only a cube in one corner that produced a gentle, even heat.

This place was so different from Britannia, or even from my own world. What forces had shaped these beings and their culture? They’d managed to devise such advanced sources of heat and light, yet were unable to halt the destruction of their land. I had no more time to ponder these questions, for standing in front of me was a huge, winged Gargoyle.

“To offer greetings, False Prophet,” he said, bowing slightly. “To have waited long for you to return to this side of the world. To believe *The Book of Prophecies* is wrong. To believe I can reason with you, persuade you to spare my people. To wish to address you honorably.”

Relief coursed through me. Maybe there was a way to rectify what I’d done. I was ashamed at having felt such anger and hostility toward the Gargoyles. In their eyes I was the force intent on the destruction of their world; no wonder they’d tried to kill me. And here was one who wanted to help me even though he knew nothing about me.

“I am here to set to rights that which I have harmed,” I said. “It is my intention to do whatever is necessary to fix things.”

Valkadesh nodded. “To see that you are a being of honor and respect. To not betray that honor—to return the Codex! To save my people from the prophecy!”

“But how? I can’t enter the Shrine of the Codex unless I’m on a holy Quest. I couldn’t get the Codex even if I tried!”

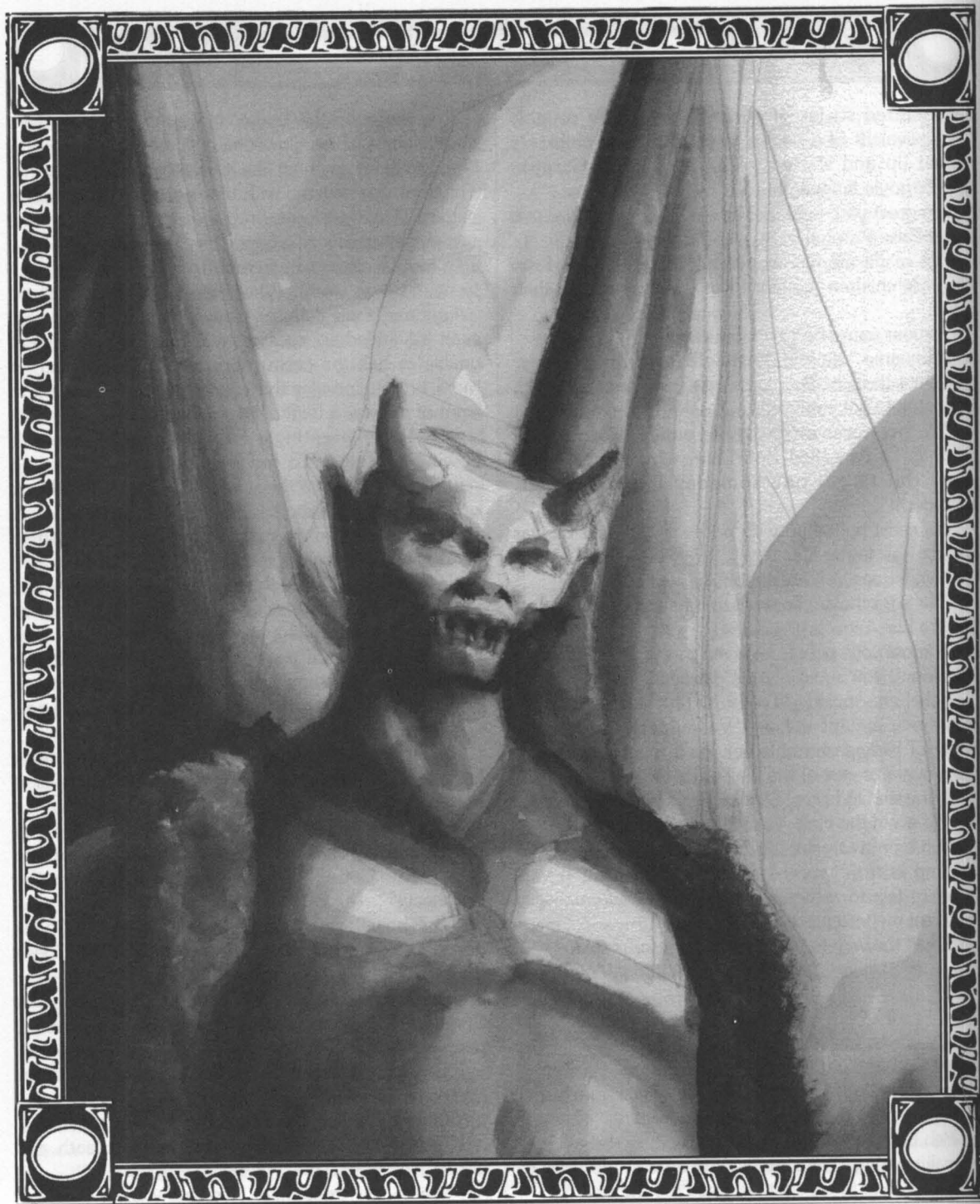
Valkadesh frowned. “To beg you to return the Codex! Avert the prophecy! To save your life and my people’s as well!”

“But I can’t!” I exclaimed. “Is there any other alternative?”

“Only a sacrifice from the False Prophet will do.”

“Sacrifice?” I asked. This smacked of death and dismemberment to me.

“Wait!” He exclaimed. “To know that ‘sacrifice’



has three meanings: of self, of others, and of valuables. Perhaps to find a better answer in one of those other meanings. To suggest you seek out Naxatilor himself for further enlightenment.”

“Who is Naxatilor?” I asked.

“Naxatilor is the wisest Gargoyle. To find his chambers just to the northeast of the Hall of Knowledge. But perhaps . . .”

“Perhaps what?”

“To show honor, the False Prophet must surrender to Draxinusom, the Inquisitor. Then to be considered no longer a threat by my people. To be able then to speak to my people freely.”

I really didn't like the sound of this. “Are you sure that's the only way?”

“To know that the moons are not yet aligned properly for the ritual. To assure you that you will not be sacrificed for many weeks. To assure you further that surrender is the only way you can travel among my people.”

I thought about it. Perhaps if I learned about the Gargoyles and learned their ways, I would discover some way to alter the prophecy.

“Very well,” I said. “I will go to Draxinusom. Where is he?”



Entry 35— The Gargoyle World

I stood outside the Hall of Knowledge at the southern end of the Gargoyle city. To the west was the house of Draxinusom ; to the east, the abode of Naxatilor. My stomach was doing enough rolls to convince me that anxiety wasn't all that good for my digestion. Better to face a flock of dragon drakes than this.

“Well,” I said. “Here goes nothing.”

“I'm coming with thee,” said Shamino.

“I, too,” said Dupré.

“Do not forget about me,” Iolo said with a grin.

“To go with you,” said Beh Lem.

“We're in it for the duration,” interjected Leonna, with Leodon nodded in agreement.

“Well then, let's go.”

It was surprisingly warm inside the building. Like Valkadesh's house, this one also had a heat source in one corner. Draxinusom was seated behind a large table. His skin was darker than Valkadesh's and he had sharp, piercing eyes.

“To express astonishment at your audacity, False Prophet,” said Draxinusom. “To demand to know why you have come before me. To have refrained from slaying you only because of the presence of the child.”

“I have come to surrender,” I said, hoping the quaver in my voice wasn't noticeable.

“To be here to surrender?”

“Yes. Valkadesh said it was the only way.”

He lifted a crystal amulet hanging from a leather cord off the table.

“Hssss. To consent to wear this?” he asked.

“You mustn't,” whispered Dupré. “It's some sort of magical trap.”

Draxinusom waited patiently, the amulet swinging back and forth from the ends of his scaly fingers. I reached up and pulled off the ankh. I'd worn it since the time I came to Britannia and became the Avatar; my neck felt naked without it. Plucking the amulet from the Gargoyle's hand, I slipped the leather loop over my head. A startled expression crossed his features.

“To surprise me with the nobility of your deed. To no longer be a threat to my people. To bid you to travel among my people and talk to them, learn our ways. To inform you when the time of your sacrifice is near.”

“Thank you,” I said. I led the others from Draxinusom's house.

“Hast thou lost thy mind?” asked Shamino.

“No,” I said, stroking the amulet and feeling right for the first time in quite a while. “This was the thing to do. Now let's go see what we can find out from Naxatilor.”

We walked across the small clearing to the house of the Gargoyle Seer.

Naxatilor was much darker than either Valkadesh or Draxinusom. He reminded me of the stone gargoyles I'd seen on churches in Europe.

“To greet you, Avatar of the Underworld. To see the Amulet of Submission around your neck. To



consider your acceptance of this both noble and wise. To observe by your aura that you are not a being of evil. To regret for your sake, then, that you are fated to destroy the world."

"Thank you," I replied. "But I haven't done so yet. Valkadesh told me to talk to you about the prophecy."

"To have spoken to Valkadesh. Then surely to know what harm you have caused my world. To have no choice but to return the Codex."

"Is there no other choice?"

"To give up the Codex, or your life."

"But a sacrifice . . ."

"Hsss. Yes, to know the three meanings of that word. To ask which type of sacrifice you prefer: self, others, or items of value."

I thought. To sacrifice others was no good. To sacrifice myself wasn't appealing either. But items of value—there was a possibility.

"Items?"

"To know only one item of true value—the Codex itself . . . but surely not to destroy the Codex!"

"Then what?"

"To direct you to go to the Hall of Knowledge. There read *The Book of Ritual*. There also to get the Vortex Lens. Then to return here, where I will tell you what must be done."

"But the Codex is valuable to my people as well," I said.

"To remember that Captain Bolesh has just returned from the Codex. To suggest you seek him. To try the healer's house."

"All right, I'll do as you suggest."

The Hall of Knowledge dominated the Gargoyle city. In here they displayed their most prized possessions, as well as items from Britannia. It was funny and strange to see a rolling pin and a woman's dress displayed as though they were precious artifacts.

The Caretaker was an old, winged Gargoyle. He was slightly hunched over, and his skin was almost as dark as Naxatilor's. Upon his stubby nose he wore spectacles. He reminded me of my grandfather when he looked over the top of his glasses as he spoke to us.



"Yes? To inquire about the reason for this interruption."

"I'm looking for the Lens and *The Book of Ritual*."

"To find what you seek, look in the Vortex Chamber and the Librum Chamber."

We read from *The Book of Ritual*, then went into the Vortex Chamber. We caught our breath as we entered. It reminded me of the Shrine of Spirituality. Both felt like they were hovering in the void. A bridge led to the Vortex Lens. As I approached, I noticed that the Lens had been shattered. *Was this my doing?* I wondered. Gently, I gathered up the pieces and placed them in my bag. I noticed there was another pedestal opposite the Vortex Lens, but it was empty. "The Vortex Cube," read the small engraved sign attached to it.

As we left the Hall of Knowledge, I asked the Caretaker what had happened to the Vortex Cube. He

informed me that it had been stolen by humans who said they were taking it to Stonegate.

• • •

Naxatilor then instructed us to take the Lens to the lens maker, who would be able to repair it. While he ground the Lens, we went and talked to Bolesh at the healer's house. He told us about an impervious force



field around the Codex, and said that only those on a Sacred Quest could enter the shrine and view the Codex. Of course I already knew that.

He also told me I could receive a Sacred Quest from the Temple of Singularity.

We picked up the finished Lens from the lens maker and returned to Naxatilor's house.

"Okay," I said to the ancient Gargoyle. "I know that to reach the Codex, I've got to be on a Sacred Quest and the Temple of Singularity can give me one. But I can't get into the temple except by air."

"Excuse me, Avatar," said Leonna. "But when we met the daem—the Gargoyle Sin'Vraal in the desert, he told us that someone in Minoc knew something about flying. Would that not allow us to reach the Temple?"

I could have kissed her and almost did, but was afraid of what Naxatilor would make of such an action.

"You're right!" I said excitedly. "Naxatilor, how may I solve this riddle of the Codex?"

"To be able to see the Vortex from both sides of

the world. To benefit both races equally if the Codex is returned there."

"How would that be possible?"

"A human Lens—the opposite of the Gargoyle Lens. Show the human lens maker the Vortex Lens. Be sure to tell the lens maker that his Lens must be concave. Then the Codex shall reveal how the ritual is to be completed."

"Thank you, Naxatilor," I said. "I will try my best to prove myself worthy of the honor you bestow by allowing me to know your name."

Naxatilor smiled (an awful sight) and returned to warming himself in front of his heat source.



Entry 36— Sutek's Castle

in'Vraal had told us that there was someone in Minoc who knew how to fly. We went there and talked to Lady Isabella about flying, and her instructions led us to Selganor. He told us the balloonist had last been seen heading for Sutek's Castle.

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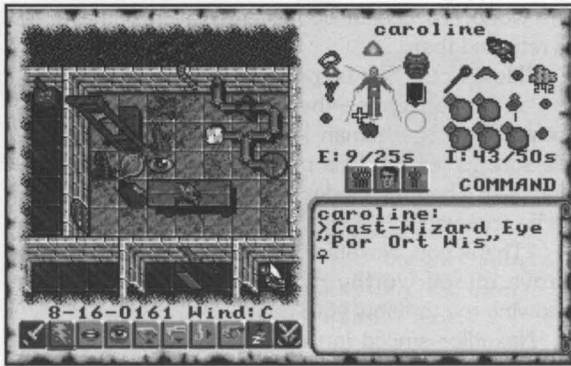
Sutek's Castle was on an island to the west of the Isle of the Avatar. There were no guards, no protection of any kind that we could see as we docked.

"Look," said Leonna. "Rabbits."

White, fluffy rabbits clustered at the end of the pier. I'd expected monsters, not bunnies.

"Let's go," I said, heading for the entrance to the castle. Whereupon I was attacked by those sweet little hares. They leapt through the air and went for the jugular. I cast a couple of *Kal Ort Xen* spells, which made short work of them. By then I'd realized all was not as it seemed at Sutek's Castle.

Sutek's castle was full of secret passageways, hidden doors, and nasty "pets." His experiments on his "pets" were horrifying. I wouldn't let the others see the carnage of his laboratory. Sutek himself was mad and I decided it was best to leave him alone. We



discovered the remains of the balloonist on the fourth level of the tunnels under the castle. In the pocket of his tattered jacket I found plans for a balloon.

. . .

The plans called for a basket large enough to carry eight people, a silk bag, rope, and a cauldron to heat the air for the balloon.

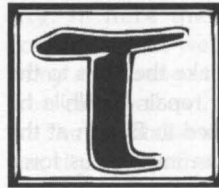
For a price, Michelle in Minoc wove the basket. The rope we bought from the rope maker in Paws. The cauldron we took from the kitchen in Lord British's castle. Getting the silk bag was a little more difficult. It required 40 pieces of spider silk, for which I made a visit to Xiao's. The thread maker in Paws spun this into silk thread. Charlotte in New Magincia wove it into cloth, and the clothes maker back in Paws sewed it into a bag.

We assembled the components according to the instructions, and within minutes had a balloon.

During our trip to Xiao's to get the spider silk, Dupré mentioned that he knew of an astronomer who lived outside the Lycaenum. The astronomer's name was Ephemerides. We showed him the Gargoyle's Lens and he agreed to make the human Lens. He told us he would need a Glass Sword to make the Lens. I still had a Glass Sword—one of the ones we'd recovered from the thief in the sewers. I handed the Sword over and he ground it into a Lens.

We went to Stonegate and got the Vortex Cube. The male Cyclops required that we fish—yes, with a pole and everything—before he would give us the key to the room housing the Cube. Once we'd retrieved

the Cube, I felt it was time to return to the Temple of Singularity.



Entry 37—Altar of Singularity

he balloon floated over the mountains and we landed in front of the Temple. Silence had fallen over the party—part reverence, part fear. The Altar of Singularity was a finely carved stone pyramid.

I faced the altar and a voice rang in my head. The fear left me then; this was familiar territory.

"Thou hast far to travel and much to achieve. May the wisdom imparted here help to purify thy inner flame. What do you seek, Avatar?"

"The Codex of Ultimate Wisdom," I replied.

"For whom dost thou seek the Codex?"

I stopped. I'd never thought about it. I knew it was important for the Gargoyles—they needed it to save their race. But I had retrieved the Codex for Britannia during my Quest to become the Avatar. Who had more right to it? Humans or Gargoyles? Both valued it above all else. Then it came to me.

"I seek the Codex for both the Gargoyle and the human races."

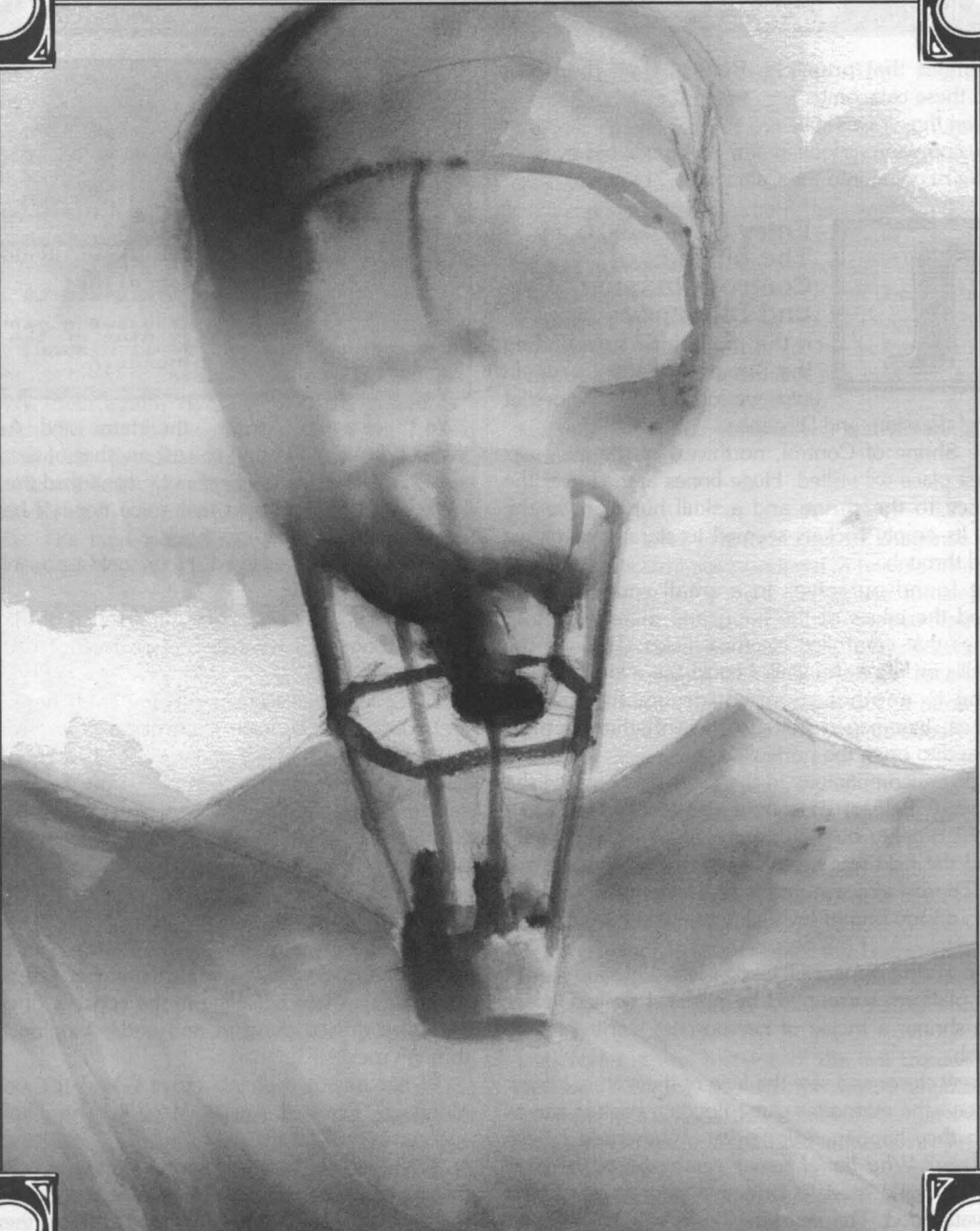


"Thy answer is wise," said the Voice. "But how canst thou truly work for the good of a race whose ways thou dost not understand? Go to the Catacombs of Control, Passion, and Diligence. In each thou wilt find the final resting place of a being who best

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exemplifies that principle. Return when thou hast visited these catacombs.”

Then the air was still.

My companions looked at me with anxious eyes.

“We’re going into the Catacombs,” I said.



Entry 38— The Shrines of Control, Passion, and Diligence

In the mountains surrounding the remains of the Gargoyle city, we located the Shrines of

Control, Passion, and Diligence.

The Shrine of Control, northwest of the city, was the first place we visited. Huge bones arched over the entrance to the shrine and a skull hung above the entry. Its empty sockets seemed to stare at us as we passed through.

We found ourselves in a small room. Levers covered the edges of the floor, and there were four switches that controlled electrical fields. Through the portcullis on the north wall, I could see a long hallway leading to another room. By trying the various switches, I managed both to turn off the electrical fields and to open the portcullis.

I left my companions in the room and entered the hallway. A field of poisonous gas blocked my way, which I quickly dispelled with an *An Grav* spell. Behind the field was a drake, which I killed using my staff. There were a number of drakes living here. I slipped on my ring of invisibility to avoid having to kill them.

The shrine appeared to consist of a statue on a raised platform surrounded by pillars. I walked closer to the shrine, a trickle of nervousness starting in my stomach.

I drew closer and saw the face of the statue. I knew this face—the memories came flooding back to me as though they happened yesterday. *How could I have forgotten? Why had I never remembered before?* Three times I’d been to Britannia prior to my Quest for Avatarhood. The first time I’d defeated the wizard Mondain, whose countenance was on this statue. But the other two—the memories wouldn’t come.



“We meet again, Avatar,” the statue said. As if by instinct, I raised the staff to cast another of the deadly spells I’d laid upon it. “Fear not,” continued the voice. How well I remembered that voice now! “I have but one task now, and am no threat.”

I took a step backward. How could I possibly trust this monster?

“Mondain,” I said, disliking the sound of the name on my tongue. “I have no reason to trust you. Why are you here?”

“The Gargoyles enshrined my spirit here as the embodiment of control. Control was the essence of my soul—control of self and control of others. But the desire for more control overcame me. I forsook my self-control in my hunger for conquest.

“Control must start with the self and expand outward. Contemplate what thou hast learned and repeat the Mantra of Control with me . . . UN . . . UN . . . UN . . .”

I found myself repeating the mantra with my old foe. Its hypnotic yet soothing rhythm relaxed me and my mind was freed. Taking in the concept of control. My spirit drifted outward and understanding flowed through me.

“I can teach thee no more,” said the voice of Mondain. “Farewell, Avatar. May thy control help thee succeed in thy Quest.”

I stood for a moment more, pondering the idea that my once-mortal enemy could be enshrined as the representation of a force for good. I knew then that even with my Avatarhood, my knowledge was limited and flawed. Humbled by this new-found insight, I

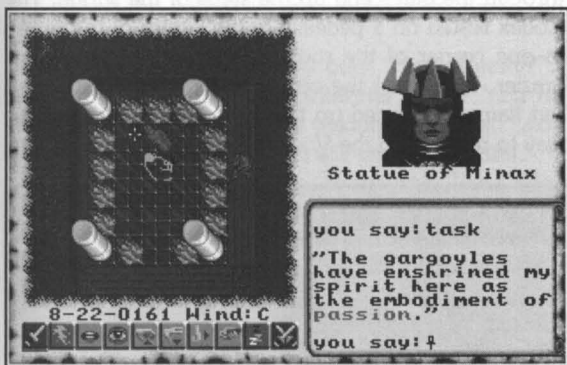
ULTIMA VI: The False Prophet

hurried back to my companions to tell them of my discovery.

• • •

The Shrine of Passion was to the northeast of the city. As with the Shrine of Control, there was a challenge to be met in order to reach the shrine. At this shrine I had to walk through lava. As before, I left the rest of my party just inside the entrance to the shrine. I wore my invisibility ring to avoid having to fight the daemons that surrounded the shrine. To think I'd once considered the Gargoyles members of this horrible breed of monsters!

"We meet again, Avatar," said the statue as I approached. I saw the face on the statue and I could almost feel the adrenaline pumping through my veins. It was the evil witch Minax, whom I'd defeated on my second visit to . . . but it wasn't Britannia then, it was Sosaria. The land Britannia had been before Lord British had united it.



"Fear not! I have but one task now, and am no threat."

These were the same words Mondain's statue had used.

"The Gargoyles enshrined my spirit here as the embodiment of passion. Passion was the essence of my soul. But that passion knew no bounds. I wanted everything, and because of this I strove to conquer all. Passion must be directed, focused. Unbridled passion leads to chaos. The Gargoyles understand passion. Their society is based on the passion leading those who lack motivation. Contemplate what thou hast

learned. Repeat after me the Mantra of Passion...OR...OR...OR..."

Again I fell into the soft chant of the mantra and was swept away. The voice of Minax snapped me back.

"I can teach thee no more," she said.

I turned away, then looked back over my shoulder for one last glimpse at my former foe. Was it the dim light in the cavern, or had the harsh lines on her face been eased somewhat? The cruelty I'd once witnessed for myself was tempered by something else. Understanding? Wisdom? But this was just a statue, after all—cold stone, unchanging.

I returned to my companions and we went to the Shrine of Diligence.

• • •

The first level of the Shrine of Diligence was a maze. We would have wandered in here forever, but it was as if some force were guiding our footsteps. We went south from the entrance through two doors, then west through another door. Just inside was a secret door, which led to a ladder down to the second level. Once again I left my companions out of harm's way. And glad I was, for this shrine was guarded by more daemons than I'd ever seen in one place. Never had I been more grateful for my ring of invisibility. Only a Glass Sword could destroy these monsters quickly, for they were impervious to my *In Corp* spells and I was reluctant to try any other spells upon them.

I approached the raised platform where the statue of the embodiment of Diligence rested. And for a final time the hand of fear gripped my heart. *How had I forgotten this terror?* Maybe the mind does protect us from that with which we're not strong enough to bear.

Before me was a statue of the evil Exodus. Of all the foes I'd battled, this was the most frightening. For no mere mortal was this creature, but an inhuman monster, a machine. I'd tricked it into destroying itself, having no other way to defeat it. It was not in the form of a machine now, though. Rather, an artistic interpretation of the soul of Exodus.

"We meet again, Avatar, but fear not. I have but one task now, and am no threat.



"The Gargoyles have enshrined my spirit here as the embodiment of diligence. Diligence was the essence of my soul—cold, unswerving diligence in my path of conquest. But in my devotion to achievement I lost sight of my original goals. Diligence without a goal is as worthless as a goal without diligence. The means cannot replace the end, and diligence cannot be the goal. The Gargoyle society is based on the diligent leading the wayward.

"Repeat after me the Mantra of Diligence...US...US...US..."

And again I succumbed to the lure of the mantra. Episodes from my life when I had and had not been diligent ran across the screen of my mind.

"Contemplate what thou hast learned. Thou wilt need diligence to succeed in thy Quest, Avatar. But thou wilt most of all need a clear vision of thy goal to be worthy."

Then the statue was silent once more.

I had what I needed to know to return to the Temple.

• • •

I stood before the Altar of Singularity. Bowing my head, I freed my mind and reached out to the altar.

"Hast thou completed thy journey to the Catacombs?" asked the altar.

"Yes," I replied.

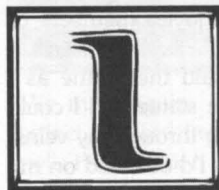
"What is the Mantra for Singularity?"

"UNORUS."

"Let the Principle of Control guide thy Quest," said

the altar. "Let the Principle of Passion drive thy Quest. Let the Principle of Diligence maintain thy Quest. Then thou wilt truly achieve the unified spirit and singularity of purpose that is necessary for success in all endeavors. This is the Gargoyle way; let it be thine as well."

The altar began to glow with a cold blue flame. The urge to seek out the Codex surged through me. I knew my final Quest had begun.

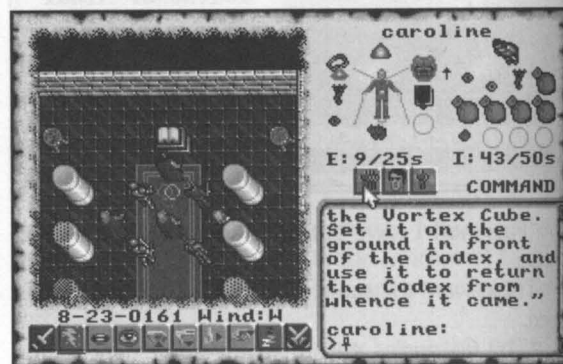


Entry 40—The Shrine of the Codex

stepped out of the Moongate with Iolo, Shamino, Dupré, Leodon, Leonna, and Beh Lem at my heels. Before us rose the stone statues leading

into the shrine.

This time my entry was not denied. I strode through the gates and up the steps of the shrine. The Codex rested on a pedestal in the center of the room. In one corner of the room a blue flame burned in a brazier. Its twin in the opposite corner glowed with a red flame. I stepped up to the Codex to discover the way to return it to the Vortex.



Printed on the pages before me was the solution to my dilemma.

Working quickly, I pulled the red, convex Gargoyle Lens from my bag and positioned it between the Codex and the Flame of Singularity. Light poured out of the Lens, bathing the book in a scarlet glow.

From another bag I retrieved the blue, concave Lens Epherimides had made and set it up between the Codex and the Flame of Infinity. Blue light from the Lens spilled over the Codex, combining with the red.

The Vortex Cube had settled to the bottom of another satchel and it took me a few minutes to find it. When I did, I dropped the eight moonstones I'd recovered from the shrines into it. I positioned the Cube in front of the Codex. I concentrated on sending the Codex back to the Vortex. In the blink of an eye there was the roaring of a thousand winds, the world twisted, and the Codex vanished.

At that moment, a portal sprang from the floor. Framed in its crimson depths were Lord British and the mage Nystul. Nystul's normally worried expression was replaced by sheer panic. Lord British directed a steely gaze at me and said, "Thou didst have cause to purloin our Codex, I trust? But for Virtue's sake, WHAT HAST THOU DONE WITH IT?"

I picked the concave Lens up from its stand and placed it in his hands.

"Was the Codex ever truly ours, Your Majesty?" I asked. "Was it written for Britannia alone? You no longer hold the Codex, but its wisdom is not lost. Look into the Vortex and the Codex will answer for itself."

Lord British raised the Lens to the wall. The Codex of Ultimate Wisdom leapt into view against a myriad of shimmering stars. But the book remained closed. The hair on the back of my neck rose, heralding the appearance of a Moongate. I was not disappointed. Another portal appeared, and from its shimmering depths strode Lord Draxinusom, flanked by a contingent of his wingless servants. Like Lord British, I could see that he was restraining his rage only through a supreme act of will. Grabbing my shoulder in his scaly hand, he leaned toward me, saying, "Thy time hath come, thief!"

The Amulet of Submission glowed warmer and I knew that soon it would become unbearably hot. Snatching the concave Lens from its resting place I thrust it into his claws.

"Join my lord in his striving for peace," I said.

Reluctantly King Draxinusom raised the Lens before him. The Codex opened and its wisdom poured forth to all who stood there.

• • •

As I write these last lines I feel myself being pulled back again to my world. Will I ever return to Britannia to see for myself what the Codex has wrought? Will my friends remember me and our adventures together?

I'm leaving this diary with Shamino so that my deeds, in my own words, shall not be lost. He has been instructed to take these pages to the Lycaeum. I hope that one day the scholars there shall find it in their hearts to treat me kindly.

This concludes the story of the Avatar's adventures in Britannia. Nobody has seen him for many years, and we can only wonder what became of him. Perhaps he returned to his original homeland. Perhaps he still resides in Britannia somewhere. Perhaps he was killed on some so-far undocumented quest. We continue to research his legend and hope always to find new evidence to support our belief that these are the true documents of the Avatar himself!

**Robert DeMain
and Carlotta Stein,
Editors**



Ultima VI

Tips and Quick Solution

Down and Dirty Ultima VI Walkthrough

As usual, this walkthrough gives you the steps you need to take to solve the mystery of Ultima VI. Don't read this unless you really want to know the answers. We suggest that you keep trying to understand a puzzle or solve a mystery before using this walkthrough.

Ultima VI is broken up into three parts: The Runes, The Pirate Map, and The Gargoyle Land. The walkthrough is divided basically into sections that correspond to these parts.

When you start the game, you have a moonstone that will take you to almost every important location in Britannia. A diagram showing where each placement will take you appears on page 309.

The Runes

The runes are needed to free the shrines from the gargoyles' control. At each shrine, will Use the appropriate rune and say the appropriate mantra. This will free the moonstone from the force field surrounding it and you can take it. Since you need the moonstones to complete the game, hold onto them.

Compassion: Ariana holds the rune; you need to get permission from her parents. The mantra is MU.

Honesty: The rune is in Beyvin's tomb. Manrel has the key. The mantra is AHM.

Honor: On the pedestal in the center of Trinsic. The mantra is SUMM.

Humility: The mayor in New Magincia has it. When he asks you who the most humble is, say "Conor." The Mantra is LUM.

Justice: Under the plant in the tavern in Yew. The mantra is BEH.

Sacrifice: Selganor has the rune. To get it: Get a log from Ben in the forest outside of Yew. Take the log to the sawmill in Minoc and have it made into a board. Take the board to Julia in Minoc and have her make it into a set of panpipes. Take the panpipes to Selganor and give him the notation to "Stones." (678987 8767653). The mantra is CAH.

Spirituality: The rune is in Marney's chest. Ask her about the basket. The mantra is OM.

Valor: The rune is in a mousehole in the tavern. You'll need Sherry the Mouse to get it. The mantra is RA.

The easiest way to free the shrines is to cast an invisibility spell or have all the party members wear invisibility rings. Use the moonstone to take you to the shrines.

The Pirate Map

You'll need the pirate map to get to the pirates' treasure. To get Homer in the Buccaneer's Den to talk to you, you have to be a member of the Thieves' Guild. Talk to Budo behind the kitchen in the Fallen Virgin. He'll send you into the sewers under Lord British's castle to get a Guild belt from Phoenix.

Killing Phoenix will affect your Karma, but if you Move the bear trap in the corridor outside her home into her house and Move her on to it, it'll kill her without affecting your Karma. She has magic armor, glass swords, and the Guild belt. Or you can use the *Pickpocket* spell and just make off with the belt.

Bring the belt back to Budo and you'll become a member of the Guild. Talk to Homer and he'll tell you where some of the map pieces are. Sandy, the cook

in Trinsic, knows where the others are, but won't tell you until you bring him a dragon's egg. The dragon's eggs are in Destard.

To find the map pieces:

- Search the shipwreck on the Cape Islands.
- Ybarra, on the fourth level of Shame, has another piece. You will need food to trade with him. Use the fountains and wish for food.
- Heftimus, the one-armed beggar outside the pub in Jhelom, left the map piece on the third level of the dungeon Wrong.
- Arturos, one of the gypsies outside of Trinsic, has a piece. If you haggle with him, he'll sell you it for 50 gold pieces.
- Morchella in the Serpent's Hold has another piece. She wants a shield of the Order of the Silver Serpent. There's one in Destard. Conor Starfalcon in New Magincia has one (under a plant in his back yard), but if you take Conor's shield, it's stealing. Or you can have one made by joining the Order of the Silver Serpent and getting instructions from Corona.
- On Dagger Isle, there's a pirate who holds a piece. Move the harpsichord and under it you'll find a trapdoor.
- The Mayor of Trinsic also has a piece; ask him about pirates, then say Sandy sent you.
- On the fourth level of the Ant Mound, there's a dead pirate who has the eighth piece. Unless you want to be fighting ants all day, use your invisibility potions, rings, or spells.
- After you have all eight pieces, go back to Homer, who will give you the ninth piece. He'll ask you to give him the Storm Cloak out of the treasure. Say "Yes" and bring the cloak back to him after you've gone through the Pirates' Cave. You get lots of Karma points for giving him the cloak, so be sure to do it. Homer will give you directions on where to dig once you've reached the island.

Assemble the map on the ground. Buy a shovel and a powder keg from the Provisioner in Britain. (Powder kegs can also be found on the third level of the Cyclops' Cave.)

The treasure room is on the fourth level; you'll have to blow the door up with a powder keg. To keep

the acid slugs at bay while you look through the room, Move the barrels in the room in front of the door. The missing half of the Silver Tablet is in this room as well as lots of other goodies. Take whatever treasure you want—there is no Karma penalty for this. Be sure to take the fan—you'll need it later.

Take the half of the Silver Tablet back to Mariah at the Lycaenum and have her translate *The Book of Prophecies*. Ask her about the Book.

Once the book's been translated, you'll realize you need to go into the Gargoyle land. To get to the Gargoyles' kingdom, go through Hythloth on the Isle of the Avatar. Use the moonstone to take you to the Shrine of Humility. On the fourth level, you'll find Captain John, who will give a scroll to help you learn Gargish, the Gargoyle language. Use the scroll before you exit into the Gargoyle land. You'll need to have Beh Lem, a young Gargoyle, join your party. He only shows up at noon, so you may need to wait for him.

About Hythloth. A very deadly place. Not only are there flocks of drakes, but there are also mini-volcanoes down here. *Mass Protection* couldn't hurt, and if you've managed to get to seventh level, Enchant the staff from Nicodemus with several *Resurrect* spells. Your party may need them.

The Gargoyle Land

You must have Beh Lem in your party to avoid being attacked by the Gargoyles. Go talk to Beh Lem's father, Valkadesh, first. Then go to Draxinusom's house and agree to wear the Amulet of Submission. Talk to Naxatilor next, who will send you to the Hall of Knowledge and to the Healer's to talk to Captain Bolesh.

Read *The Book of Rituals* and get the broken Vortex Lens. Ask the Caretaker about the Vortex Cube. He'll tell you thieves stole it and took it to Stonegate. Take the Lens to the lens grinder and have him fix it. Go talk to Naxatilor again.

Talk to all the Gargoyles. They have interesting information and some will even give you gifts.

At this point you'll need the following:

- The Vortex Cube.
- A balloon to take you to the Temple of Singularity
- A human Vortex Lens.

The Balloon

- Go to Minoc and ask Lady Isabella about the balloon. She'll send you to Selganor, who will send you to Sutek's Castle. In Sutek's Castle you'll need to lower the drawbridge with a *Telekinesis* spell (see attached map).
- Find the room with the Hydra and kill it. There's a secret door to the south. Go down the ladder and to the room in the northwest corner with the wooden door. Use the electrical switch on the far right; go to the room with the down ladder at the southernmost door. Go down the ladder and use the secret door to the north. Use the ladder down to the right (don't use the ladder to the left!).
- The dead balloonist is on the fourth floor. Search him and find the balloon plans.
- To make the silk for the balloon bag, get 40 pieces of spider silk. Have the thread maker in Paws spin it into thread. Take it to Charolette in New Magincia and have her weave it into cloth. Go to the clothes maker in Paws and have her sew the cloth into a balloon bag.
- There's a rope maker in Paws you can buy rope from, or you can pick up some rope in the Cyclops' Cave.
- Michelle in Minoc will weave the basket.
- You can get a caldron in the Cyclops' cave or in the sewers below Lord British's castle.
- Use the plans and you'll have the balloon. Use the fan from the pirates' treasure to control the winds.

After you have all the stuff for the balloon, you need to get the Vortex Cube and the human Vortex Lens. Epherimides, to the east of the Lycaenum, can make the Lens. He'll require a Glass Sword. Dale, in Minoc, can make a sword out of five Gems. Since you have maps of all the locations in Britannia, we suggest you have as many Glass Swords made as possible. You might need them against the daemons in the Catacombs later on.

After you have the Lens, Use the moonstone to take you to Minoc. Go south through the mountains to Stonegate. Be nice to these Cyclopes—they have the key to the room where the Lens is located. You'll have to go fish before the male Cyclops will turn over the key. The Vortex Cube is on the fourth level of Stonegate.

Use the moonstone to transport you to the Slab (see diagram page 309). Use the balloon to take you over the mountains to the Temple of Singularity. Talk to the altar, which will send you into the Catacombs to the three Gargoyle shrines to get the Mantra of Singularity, which is a combination of the Mantras of Passion, Control, and Diligence.

These shrines are pretty deadly, so after you go into them, go into solo mode and use any invisibility enchantments you have.

The Shrine of Passion has you walk through a pool of lava to reach the shrine. The Shrine of Control has you figure out a series of switches and levers (see diagram). There are drakes and daemons here.

The Shrine of Diligence is a maze of doors (see diagram). There are also daemons here. Talk to the statue in each shrine and it will reveal its mantra.

Return to the Temple of Singularity and speak the mantra UNORUS. This triggers your Sacred Quest.

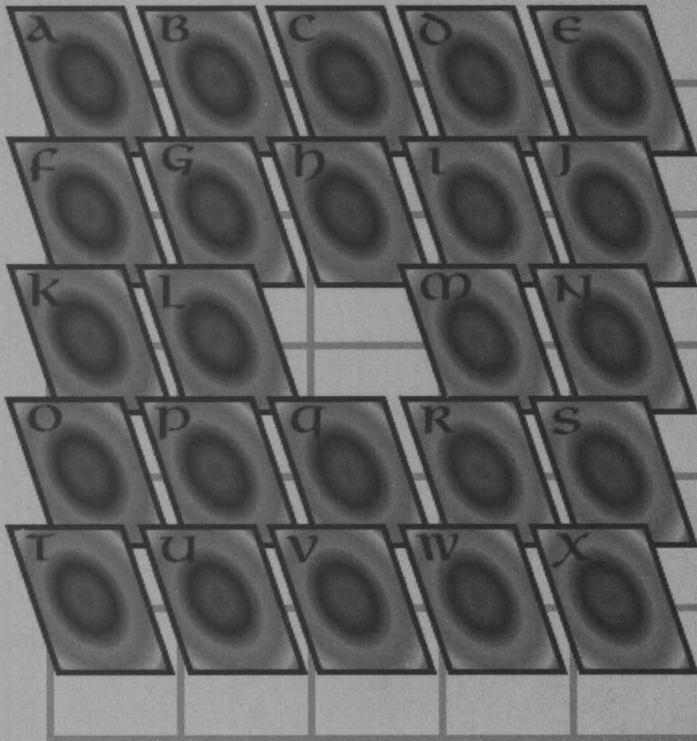
The Finale

Use the moonstone to take you to the Isle of the Avatar. Go to the Codex and read the instructions. Place the Lenses according to the instructions from the Codex. Put the eight moonstones you freed from the shrines into the Vortex Cube. Place the Vortex Cube in front of the Codex and Use the Cube.

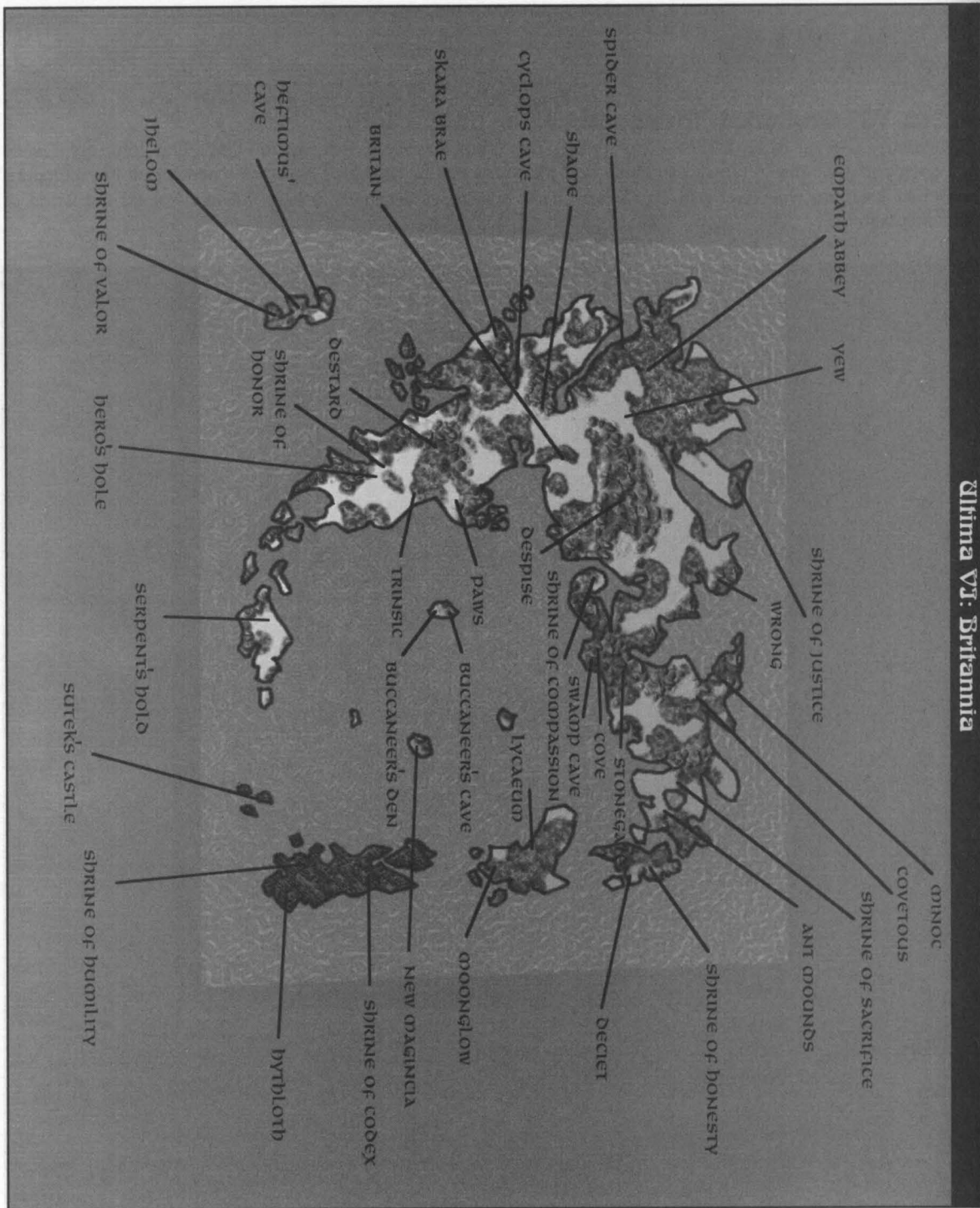
Ultima VI—Statistics, Maps, and other Useful Info

Think of this chapter as an Ultima VI reference. This chapter contains information you'll find very useful while you are playing Ultima V. You'll especially find the maps helpful. Included here are maps for all the dungeons and other locations, handy charts, and other charts and tables designed to help you understand the world of Britannia better.

Orb of the Moons

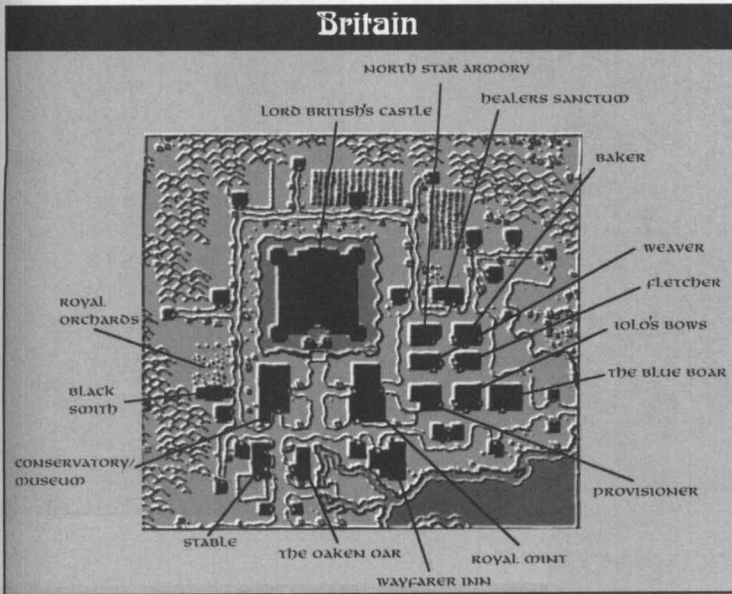


A	Moonglow	J	Shrine of Passion	Q	Shrine of Diligence
B	Shrine of Honesty	J	Shrine of Valor	R	Isle of the Avatar
C	Britain	K	Rew Magincia	S	Shrine of Justice
D	Shrine of Compassion	L	Void	T	Skara Brae
E	Jhelom	M	Void	U	Shrine of Honor
F	Shrine of Humility	N	Yew	V	Trinsic
G	Shrine of Control	O	Shrine of Spirituality	W	Shrine of Sacrifice
H	Castle of Lord British	P	The Slab	X	Minoc



Maps, Maps, Maps

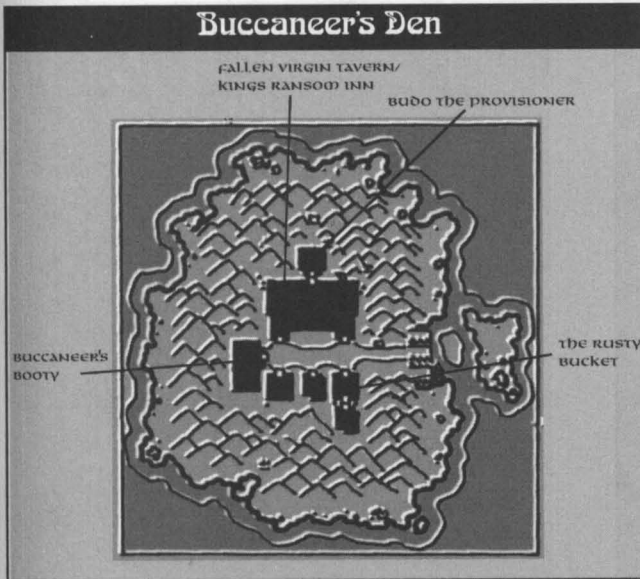
Britain



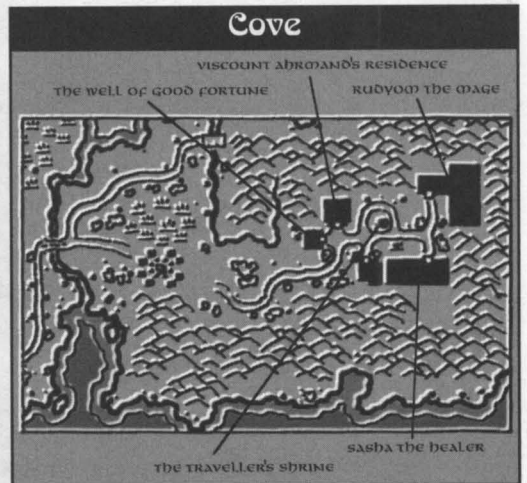
In this section you'll find pretty much all the maps you'll need when playing the game. They're mostly in alphabetical order, although the Gargoyle World maps are at the end.

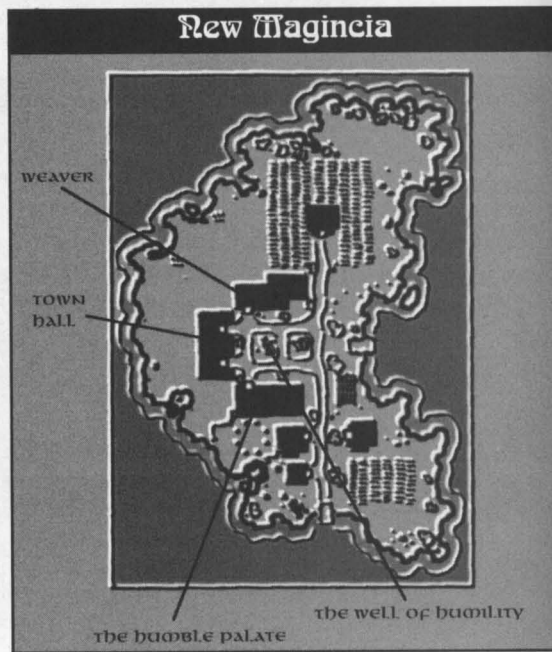
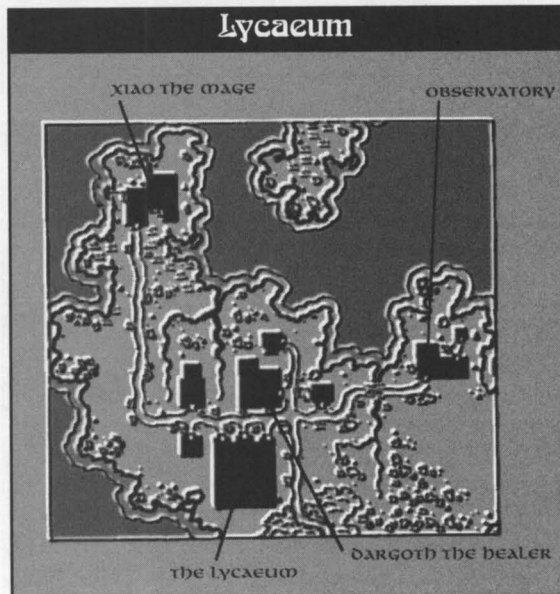
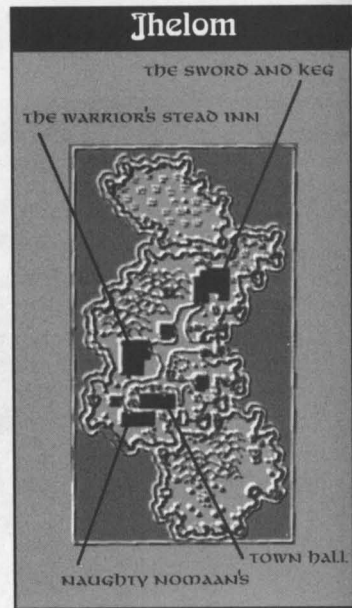
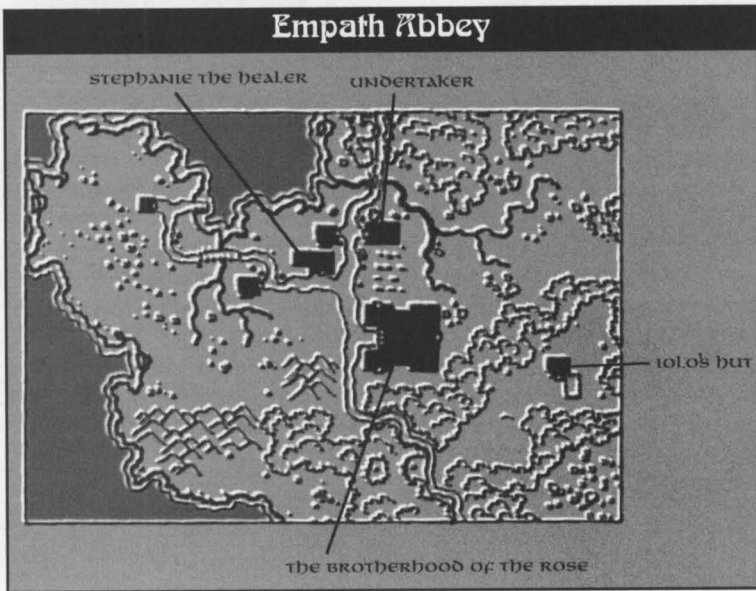
First are the Britannia town maps. Because there are so many maps, we've had to stuff them into these pages; otherwise we'd have had to call this book the Encyclopaedia of Ultima!

Buccaneer's Den

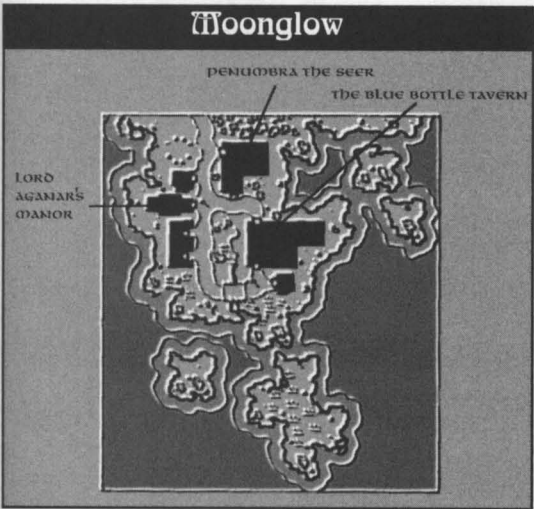
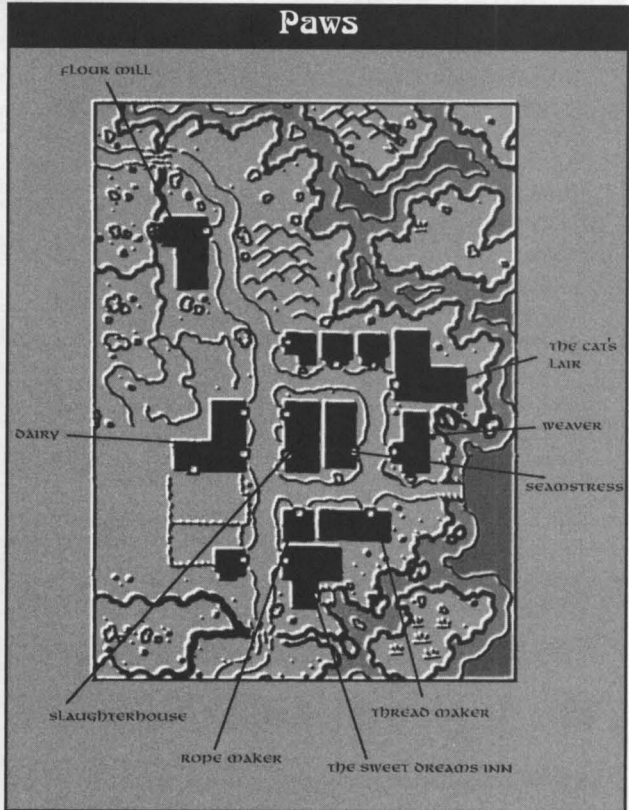
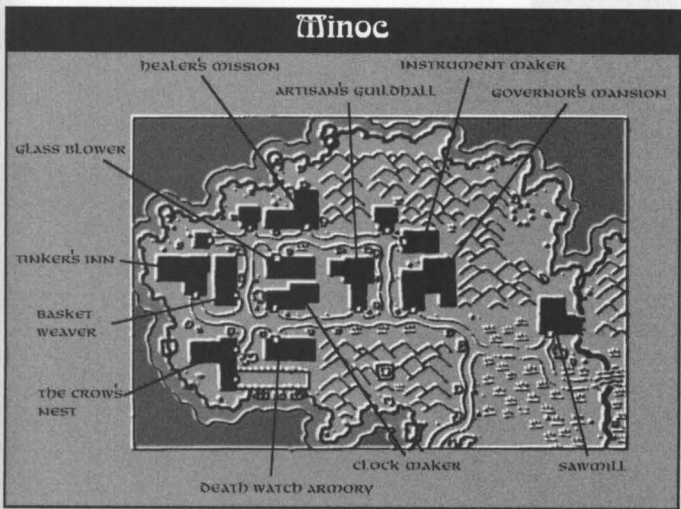


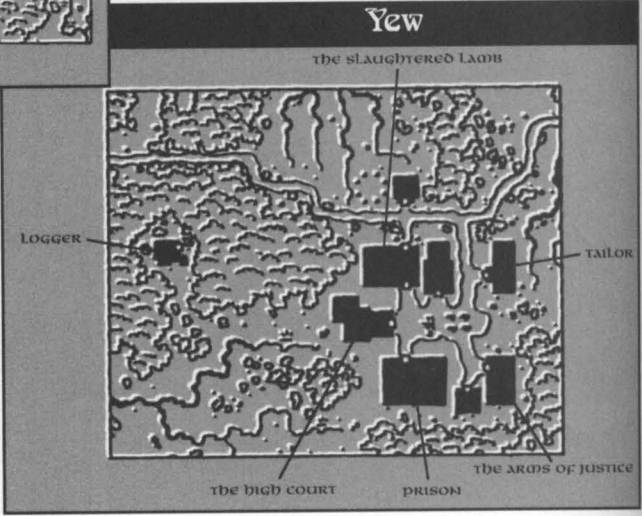
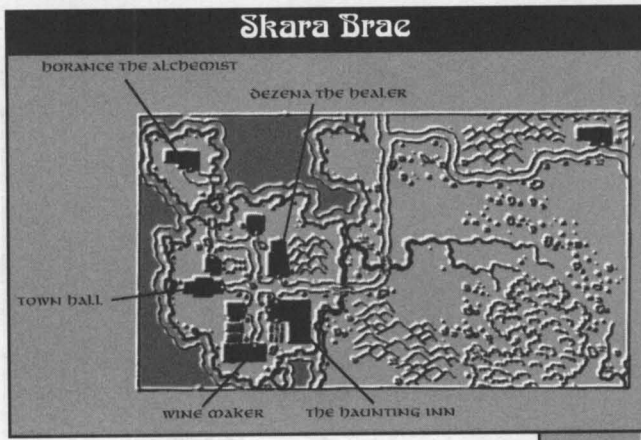
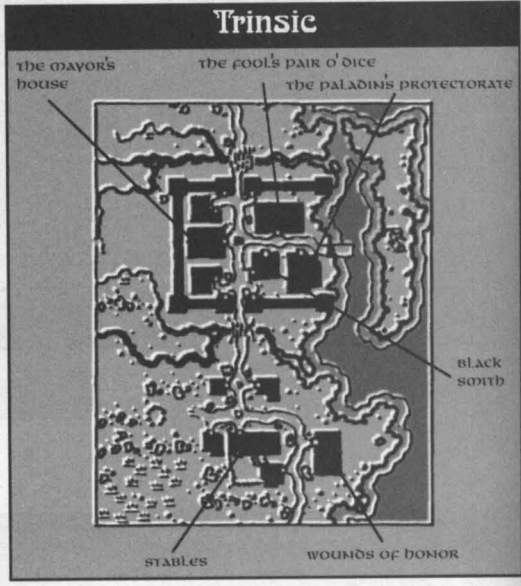
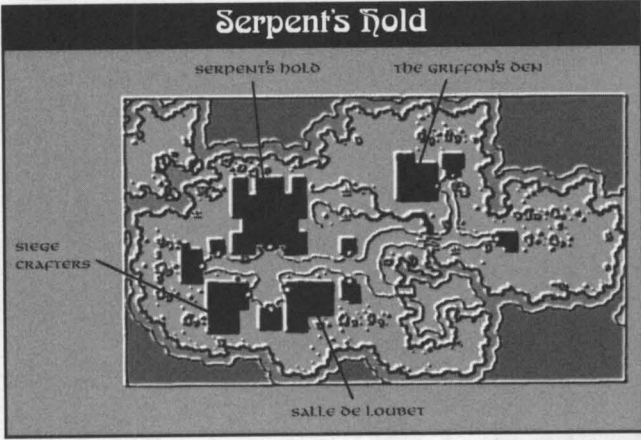
Cove





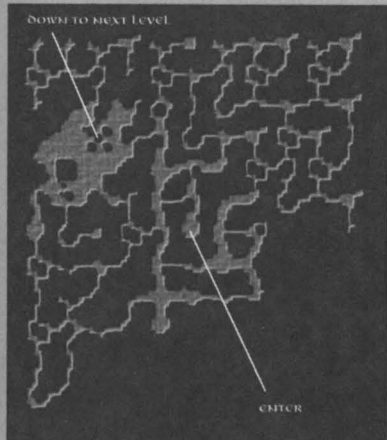
ULTIMA VI: Maps and Charts



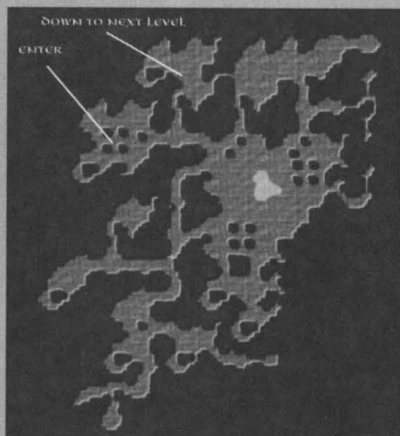


ULTIMA VI: Maps and Charts

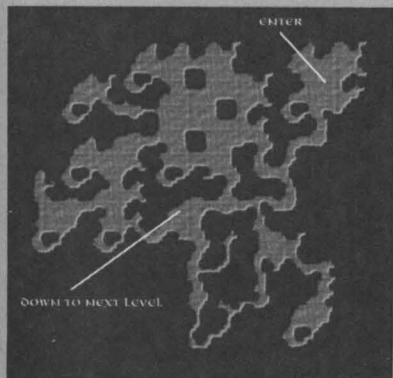
AntMound



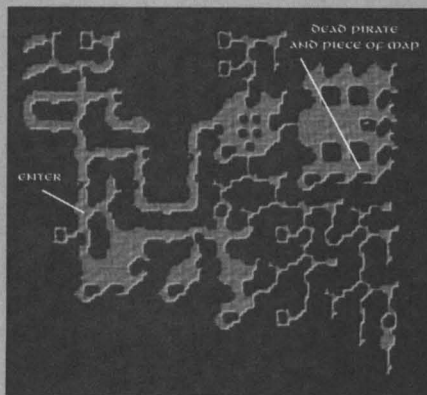
Level 1



Level 2



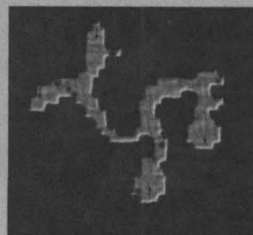
Level 3



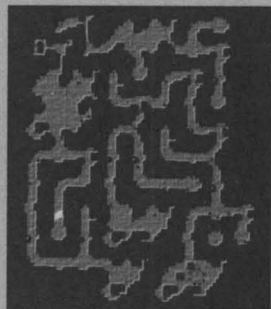
Level 4

Buccaneer's Cave

Level 1

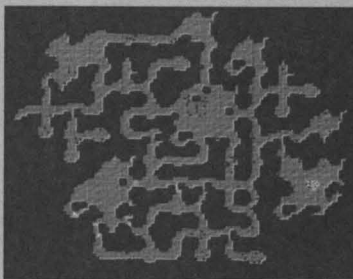


Level 2

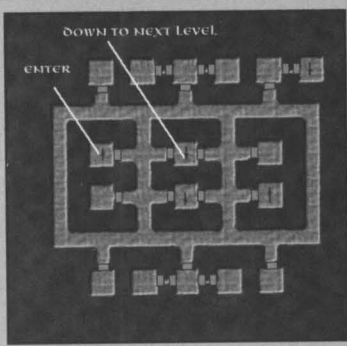


Buccaneer's Cave

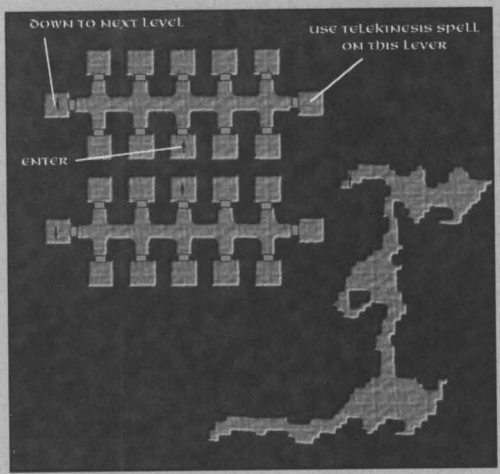
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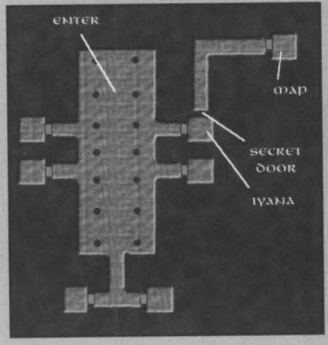
Covetous/Wrong



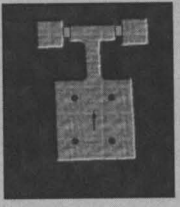
Level 1



Level 2



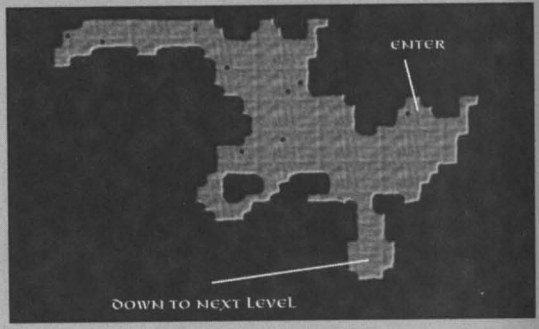
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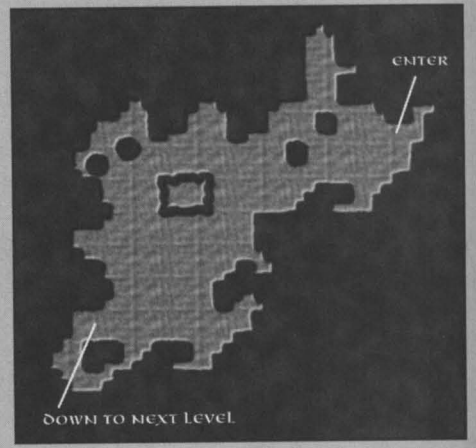
Level 4

**Oops. We goofed.
You'll find the
Crypts after the
Swamp Cave!**

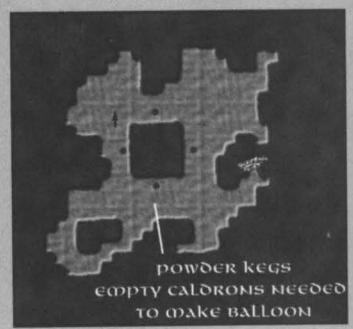
Cyclops Cave



Level 1

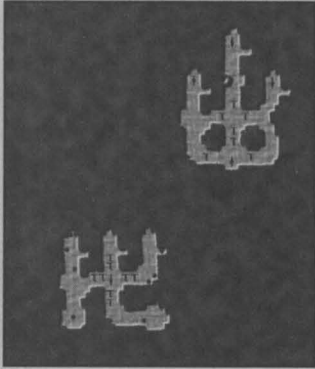


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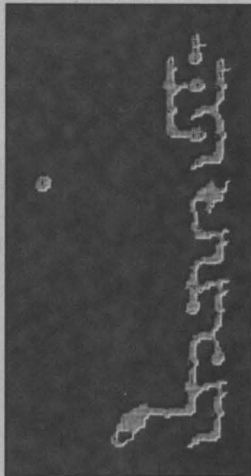


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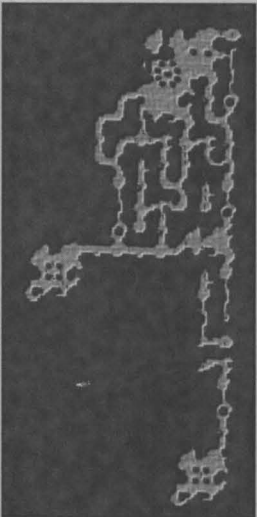
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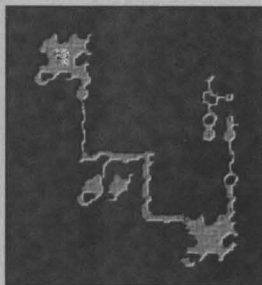
Level 1



Level 2

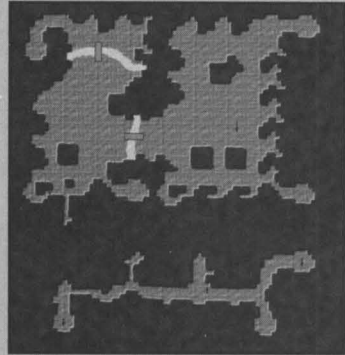


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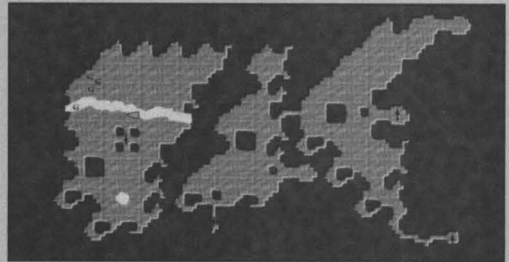


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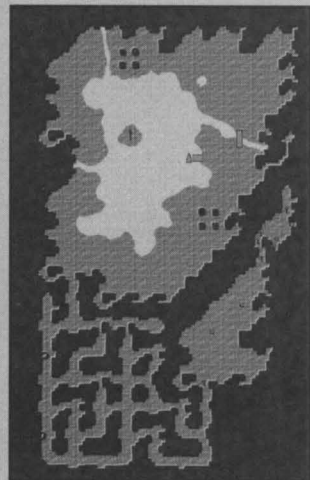
Despise



Level 1

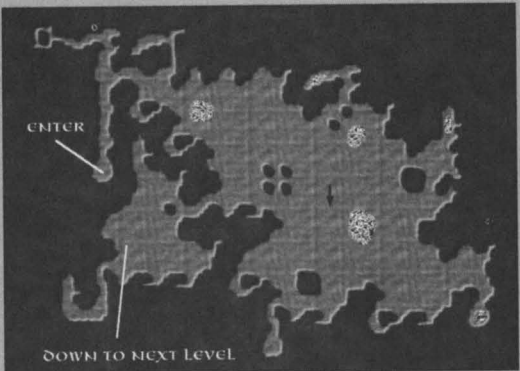


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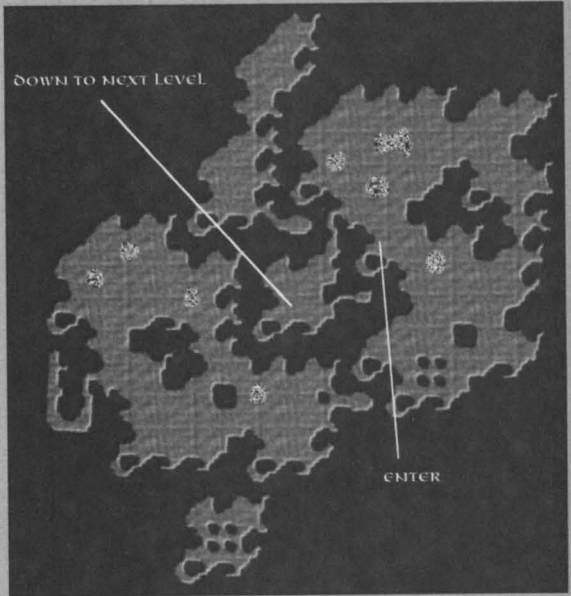


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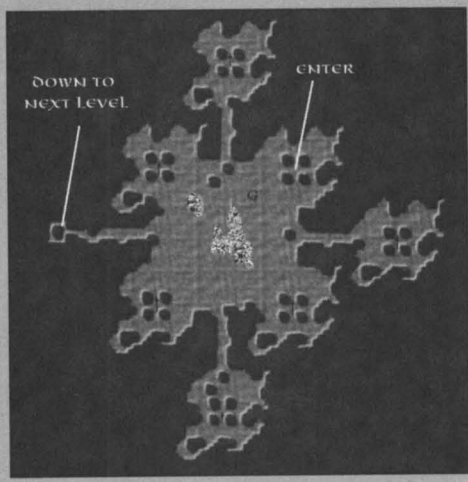
Destard



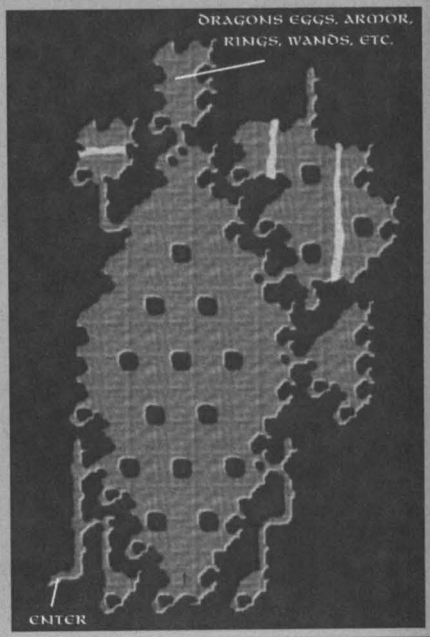
Level 1



Level 2

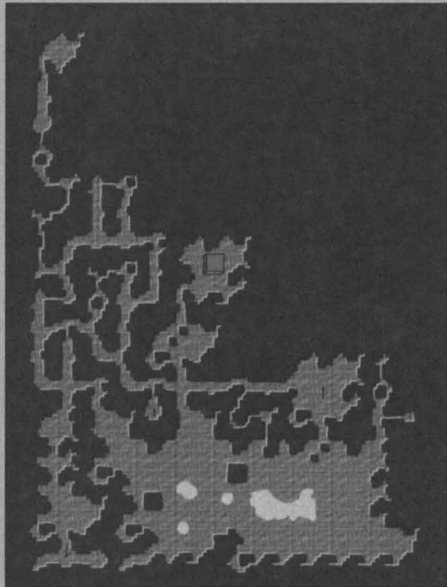


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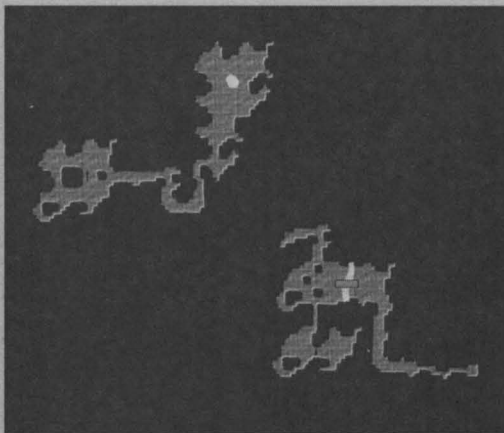


Level 4

Heroes' Hole

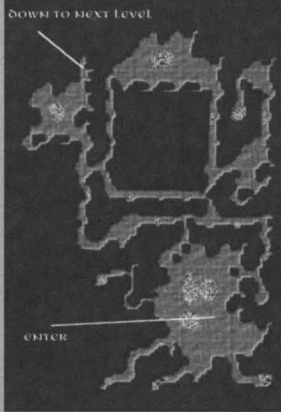


Level 1

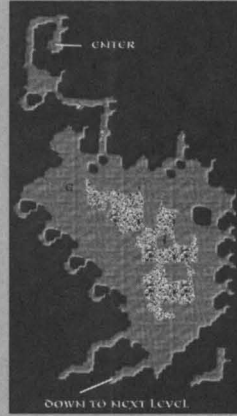


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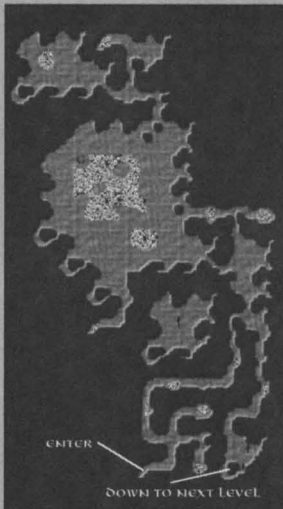
Hythloth



Level 1



Level 2

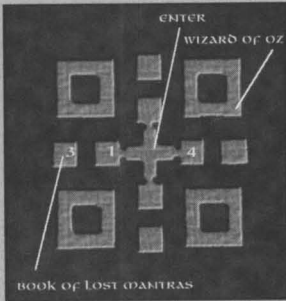


Level 3

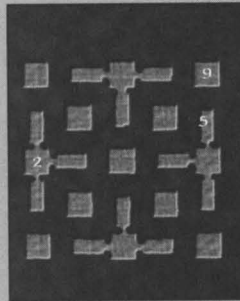
Level 4



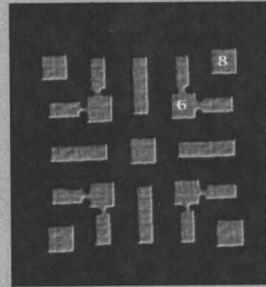
Library



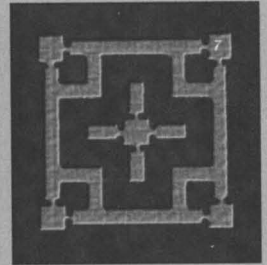
Level 1



Level 2

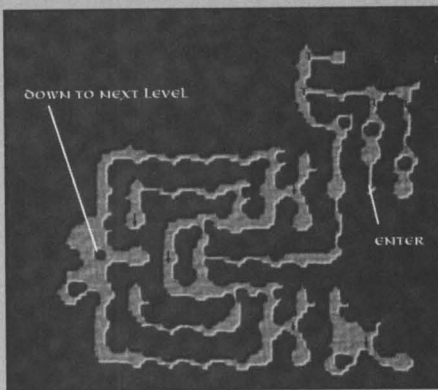


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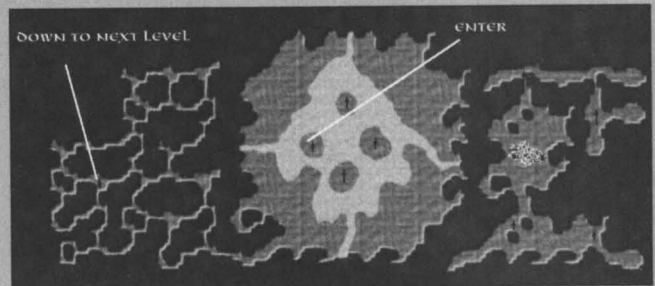


Level 4

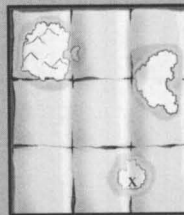
Pirate Cave & Pirate Map



Level 1

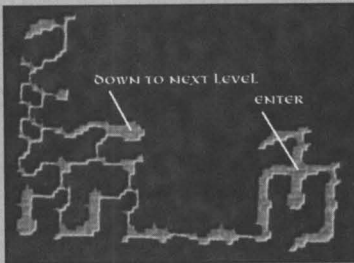


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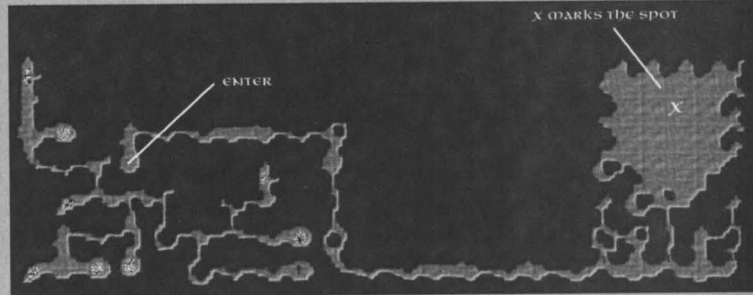


Pirate Map

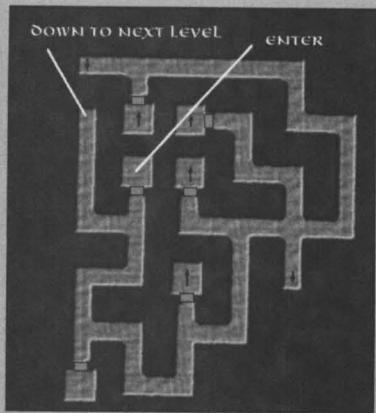
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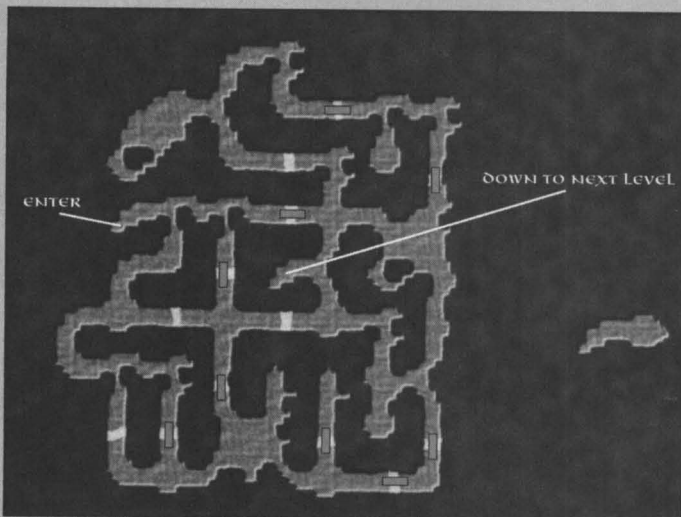
Level 4



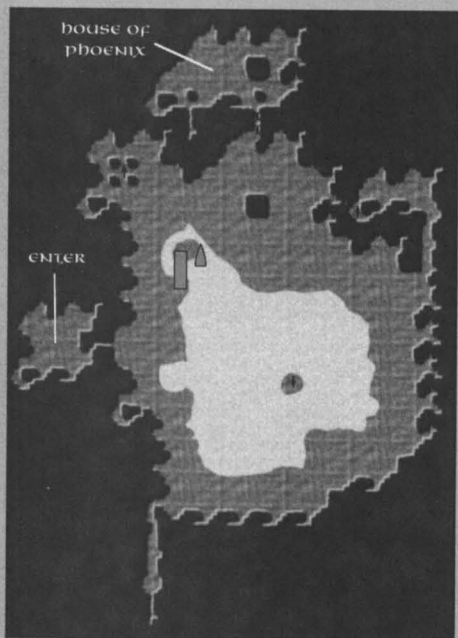
Sewer



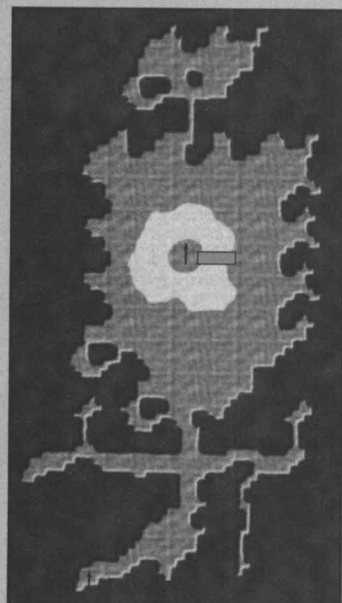
Level 1



Level 2

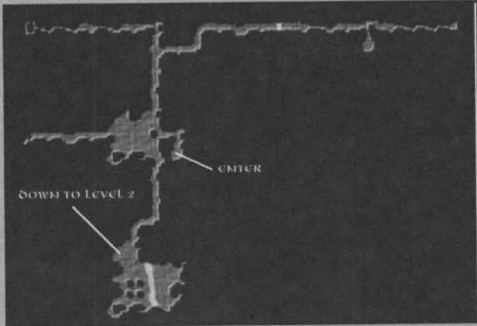


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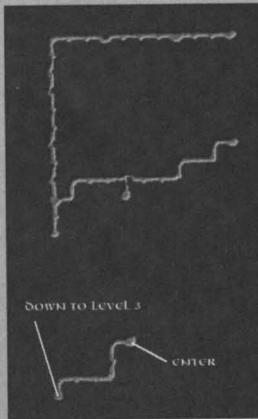


Level 4

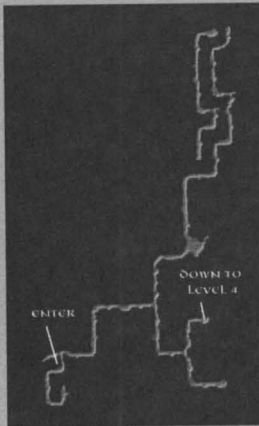
Shame



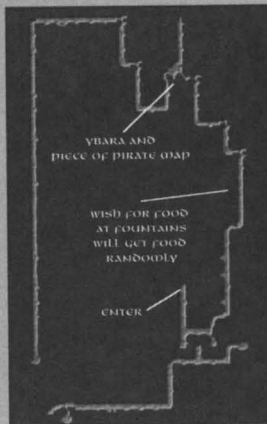
Level 1



Level 2

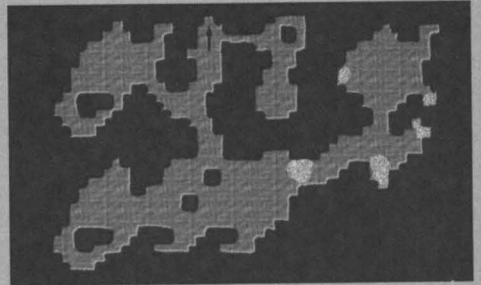


Level 3

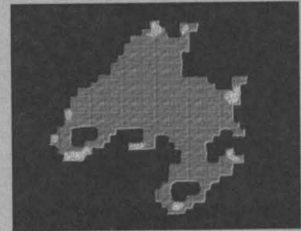


Level 4

Spider Cave

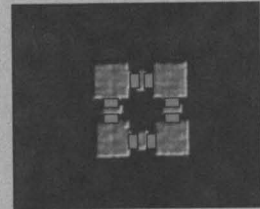


Level 1

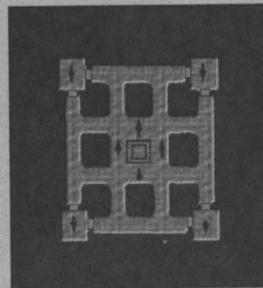


Level 2

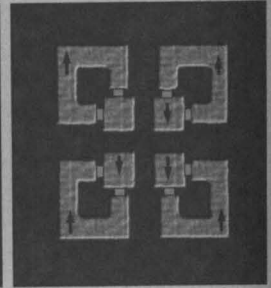
Stonegate Basement



Level 1

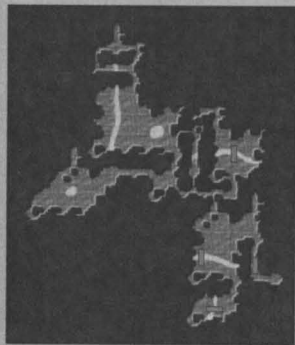


Level 2

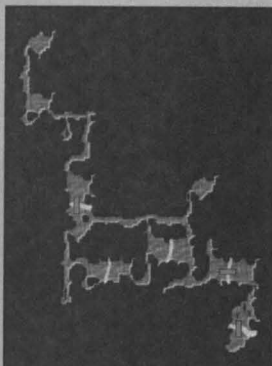


Level 3

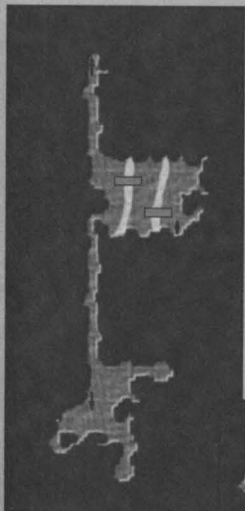
Swamp Cave



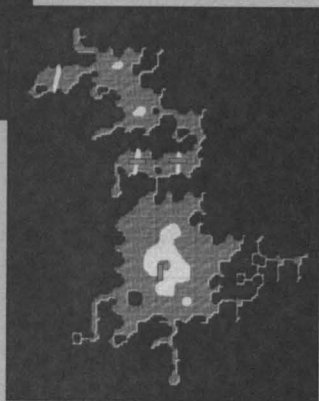
Level 1



Level 2

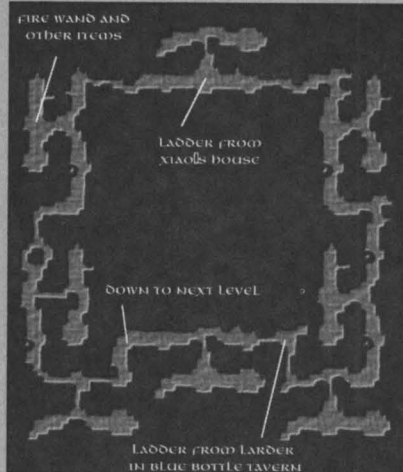


Level 3

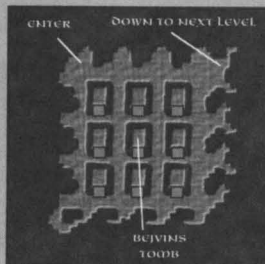


Level 4

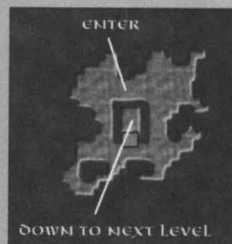
The Crypts



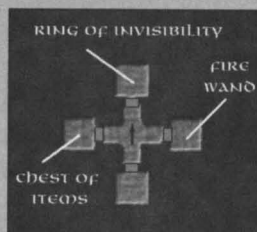
Level 1



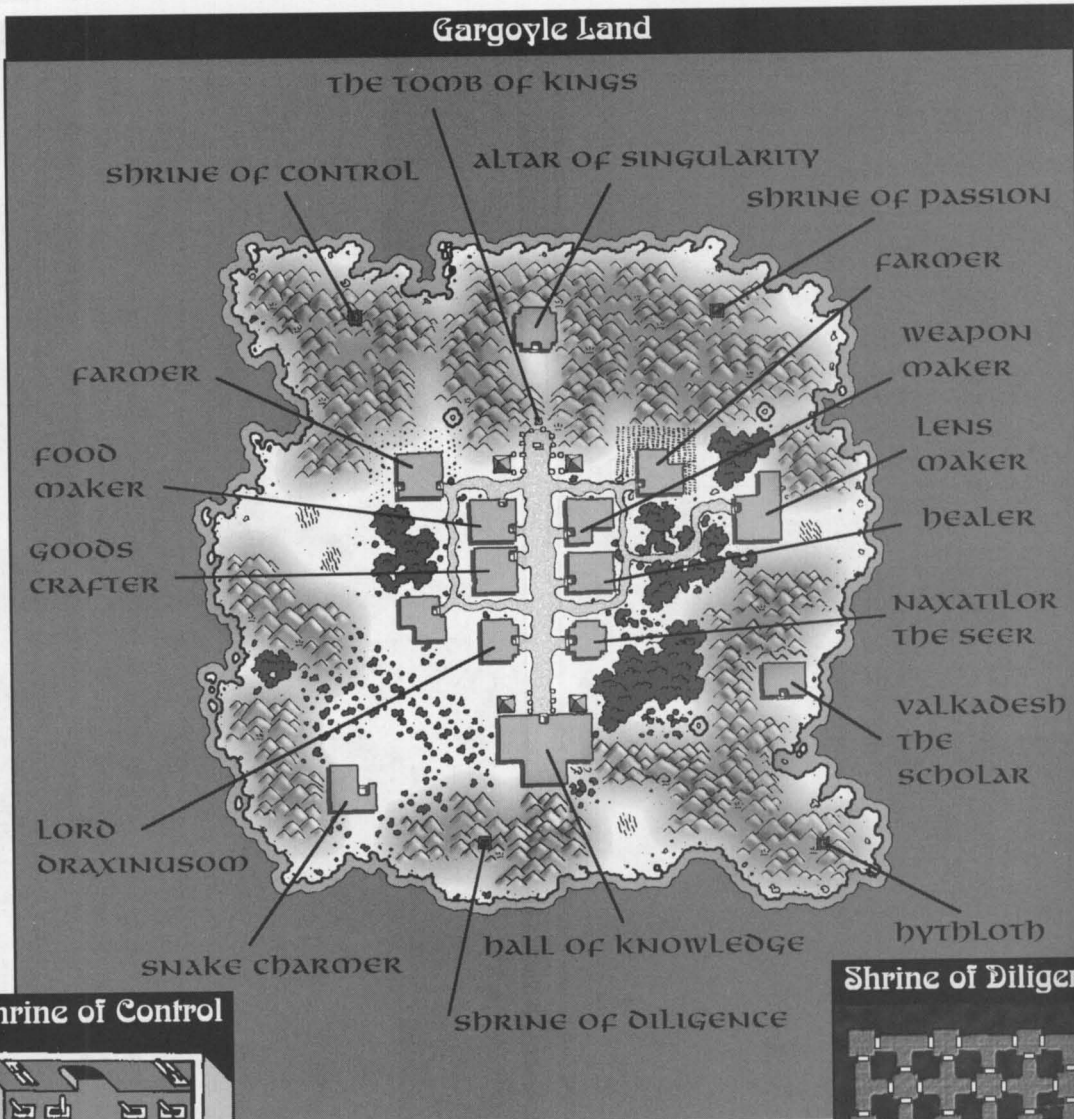
Level 2



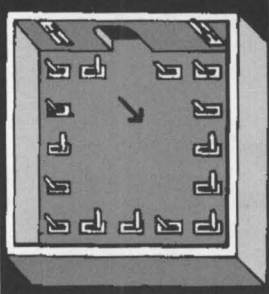
Level 3



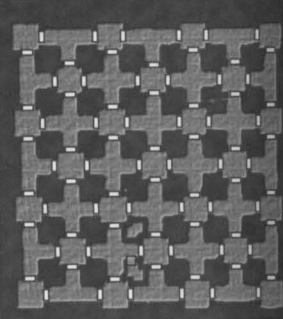
Level 4



Shrine of Control



Shrine of Diligence



Getting Around by Moongate in Ultima VI

The chart on the previous page indicates the locations you can reach using the Orb of the Moons. Simply Use the Orb, then move the cursor to a location relative to the Avatar's position. When you click on that location, a Moongate will appear. It will take you to the place indicated on this chart.

Creature Data

This monster data is taken from one of the source files for Ultima 6. This is how to interpret the tables:

The first table gives the average stats for monsters that hatch from eggs. The actual stats may vary from 50% to 150% of this value. For example, alligators with average strength of 20 can range from 10 to 30. The values in this table are:

STR strength **DEX** dexterity **INT** intelligence **ARM** armor (defense value) **DMG** damage (attack value) **HP** hit points

Other notes: The monster listed as "Chest" is really a Mimic. The "Zu Flower" is just the central part of the Tangle Vine.

Table U6-1 Monster Stats

Name	STR	DEX	INT	ARM	DMG	HP	ALIGNMENT	Char #
Acid Slug	5	5	2	0	1	10	CHAOTIC	000
Alligator	20	10	3	6	10	30	CHAOTIC	001
Giant Ant	16	15	2	3	8	10	CHAOTIC	002
Avatar	25	25	25	0	4	30	GOOD	003
Giant Bat	5	25	4	0	6	5	CHAOTIC	004
Beggar	8	8	9	0	3	6	CHAOTIC	005
Bird	1	28	4	0	1	3	NEUTRAL	006
Child	8	8	9	0	2	6	CHAOTIC	007
Corpser	17	6	3	0	15	40	CHAOTIC	008
Cow	14	7	5	0	3	10	NEUTRAL	009
Cyclops	27	8	7	4	20	40	EVIL	010
Daemon	35	26	31	10	20	100	EVIL	011
Deer	11	18	5	0	2	8	NEUTRAL	012
Dog	5	16	8	0	3	6	NEUTRAL	013
Dragon	40	35	27	12	30	150	EVIL	014
Drake	22	22	13	4	10	50	EVIL	015
Dress Wearer	10	14	15	0	4	8	NEUTRAL	016
Farmer	15	15	10	0	4	8	NEUTRAL	017
Fighter	20	17	11	0	6	20	CHAOTIC	018
Gargoyle Leader	15	32	33	5	6	50	EVIL	019
Gargoyle Worker	25	19	8	10	15	30	EVIL	020
Gazer	2	10	21	0	1	20	EVIL	021
Ghost	1	10	9	0	12	20	EVIL	022
Gremlin	2	26	7	0	1	5	CHAOTIC	023

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Guard	30	30	9	0	8	100	EVIL	024
Headless	19	13	8	2	12	20	EVIL	025
Horse	22	27	7	0	3	15	NEUTRAL	026
Horse Rider	22	27	7	0	3	15	NEUTRAL	027
Hydra Center	26	11	2	0	15	50	CHAOTIC	028
Insect	1	40	1	0	1	1	CHAOTIC	029
Jester	14	16	12	0	4	8	CHAOTIC	030
Lord British	30	30	30	30	255	255	GOOD	031
Lute Player	12	16	14	0	4	8	CHAOTIC	032
Mage	10	14	22	0	4	30	EVIL	033
Merchant	12	12	18	0	4	8	EVIL	034
Chest	22	9	8	5	15	30	CHAOTIC	035
Mongbat	20	27	13	4	20	30	EVIL	036
Mouse	2	25	3	0	2	5	NEUTRAL	037
Rabbit	3	9	3	0	2	5	NEUTRAL	038
Giant Rat	5	13	4	0	6	8	CHAOTIC	039
Reaper	21	20	16	4	20	30	CHAOTIC	040
Rot Worm	3	17	2	0	2	5	CHAOTIC	041
Giant Scorpion	13	13	3	3	8	20	CHAOTIC	042
Sea Serpent	17	17	9	2	30	70	EVIL	043
Sheep	5	10	4	0	2	6	NEUTRAL	044
Ship	30	30	30	30	30	30	CHAOTIC	045
Silver Serpent	60	21	8	15	60	200	CHAOTIC	046
Skeleton	10	14	7	0	6	20	EVIL	047
Slime	6	6	2	0	4	15	CHAOTIC	048
Snake	3	7	6	1	2	5	CHAOTIC	049
Giant Spider	9	11	4	0	8	10	CHAOTIC	050
Giant Squid	24	20	8	0	20	50	EVIL	051
Swashbuckler	15	18	12	0	4	15	CHAOTIC	052
Tangle Vine	20	25	1	4	1	30	CHAOTIC	053
Troll	18	14	9	4	6	15	EVIL	054
Villager	11	12	12	0	4	8	CHAOTIC	055
Wisp	1	40	20	0	1	40	CHAOTIC	056
Wolf	8	16	8	0	4	8	CHAOTIC	057
Zu Flower	20	5	1	4	1	30	CHAOTIC	058
Skiff	20	20	20	20	20	20	CHAOTIC	059
Raft	10	10	10	10	10	10	CHAOTIC	060
Balloon	10	10	10	10	10	10	CHAOTIC	061
Cat	4	18	8	0	2	6	NEUTRAL	062
Stocks	11	12	12	0	4	8	CHAOTIC	063

ULTIMA VI: Maps and Charts

The second table gives a list of immunities and other attributes of each monster type:

- A** immune to sleep
- B** immune to death spells
- C** immune to poison
- D** immune to fire
- E** takes double damage from fire
- F** uses strength rather than dexterity to hit in combat
- G** causes poison damage on a successful attack
- H** takes half damage from nonmagical weapons
- I** can fly
- J** can move through water
- K** can move through any terrain, including walls
- L** leaves no body when killed
- M** fizzles away when killed
- N** leaves blood when killed
- O** can walk through doors, etc.

Table U6-2 Monster Abilities

Acid Slug	A	E	M					
Alligator	F	N	L	C				
Giant Ant	A	F	N	L				
Avatar	F	N	O					
Giant Bat	I	L	N					
Beggar	F	N	O					
Bird	I	L	N					
Child	F	N	O					
Corpser	A	E	L					
Cow	F	N	L					
Cyclops	F	N						
Daemon	A	B	D	F	I	H	N	
Deer	N							
Dog	N							
Dragon	D	I	M					
Drake	D	I	N					
Dress Wearer	F	N	O					
Farmer	F	N	O					
Fighter	F	N	O					
Gargoyle Leader	A	F	I	N				
Gargoyle Worker	F	N						
Gazer	A	F	I	M				
Ghost	A	D	B	C	K	H	M	
Gremlin	L							

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Guard	F	N	O			
Headless	F	N				
Horse	F	N	L			
Horse Rider	F	N				
Hydra	A	D	F	M		
Insect	A	I	L			
Jester	F	N	O			
Lord British	F	N	O			
Lute Player	F	N	O			
Mage	F	N	O			
Merchant	F	N	O			
Mimic	C	A	F			
Mongbat	I	N				
Mouse	N					
Rabbit	L	N				
Giant Rat	C	G	L	N		
Reaper	A	E	F			
Rot Worm	C	A	E	G	L	
Giant Scorpion	A	G	L	N		
Sea Serpent	J	L				
Sheep	N					
Ship	J					
Silver Serpent	G	M	A	D	B	F
Skeleton		C	H			
Slime	A	E	G	M		
Snake	G	N				
Spider	G	N				
Squid	A	G	J	L		
Swashbuckler	F	N	O			
Tangle Vine	A	E	F			
Troll	F	N				
Villager	F	N	O			
Wisp	A	B	D	F	K	M
Wolf	N					
Zu Flower	A	E	F			
Skiff	J					
Raft	J					
Balloon	I					
Cat	N					
Stocks	L					

ULTIMA VI: Maps and Charts

Original Equipment

The third table is a list of equipment generated with the monster when it is created. The special abilities in the first row are mostly the names of spells that it can cast. *Bet Sanct Lor* is an invisibility spell that makes only the caster invisible.

Table U6-3 Equipment Inventories

Beggar	Dagger, Club, Cloth
Cow	Mutton
Cyclops	Two-Handed Hammer, Sling, Club, Scale Mail, Iron Helm, Spiked Shield, Chest
Daemon	<i>Ort Jux, Bet Sanct Lor, Por Flam, An Xen Ex</i>
Deer	Mutton
Dragon	<i>Por Flam, Flam Hur, Ort Grav, Vas Ort Grav, Kal Xen Corp, Chest, Gold, Gold</i>
Drake	<i>Por Flam, Ort Grav, Gold, Gold</i>
Dress Wearer	Dagger, Cloth, Gold
Farmer	Hoe, Pitchfork, Cloth Armour, Gold
Fighter	Sword, Crossbow, Chain Mail, Curved Heater, Iron Helm, Plate Mail, Gold, Gold
Garg Leader	<i>Ort Grav, Vas Por Flam, An Xen Por, Two-Handed Sword, Bow, Halberd, Boomerang, Leather Armour, Leather Helm, Spell</i>
Garg Worker	Club, Boomerang, Throwing Axe, Leather Helm, Wooden Shield, Leather Armour, Scale Mail
Gazer	<i>In Zu, Ort Grav, An Xen Ex</i>
Ghost	<i>Bet Sanct Lor, Quas Corp</i>
Guard	Crossbow, Halberd, Plate Mail, Curved Heater, Iron Helm, Gold
Headless	Club, Spear, Cloth Armour, Wooden Shield, Gold
Hydra	<i>An Xen Por, Vas Ort Grav, Grav Hur, Ort Grav</i>
Jester	Dagger, Sling, Cloth Armour, Gold
Lute Player	Bow, Sling, Sword, Ring Mail, Leather Helm, Wooden Shield, Gold, Lute
Mage	<i>Ort Jux, Por Flam, In Zu, Kal Xen, Ort Grav, An Xen Ex, An Xen Por, Flam Hur, Dagger, Cloth Armour, Leather Helm, Spell, Chest, Gold</i>
Merchant	Dagger, Sword, Cloth Armour, Leather Helm, Gold
Mimic	<i>In Nox Por, An Xen Ex, Chest, Chest</i>
Mongbat	Dagger, Sword, Spear, Throwing Axe, Wooden Shield, Cloth Armour, Leather Armour, Chest, Gold
Rabbit	Dead Animal
Reaper	<i>Ort Jux, An Xen Ex, Kal Bet Xen, Ort Grav, Spell, Gold</i>
Sea Serpent	<i>Por Flam, Flam Hur, In Flam Grav</i>
Sheep	Mutton
Skeleton	Sword, Spear, Throwing Axe, Bow, Dagger, Wooden Shield, Leather Helm, Gold
Spider	<i>In Des Por, Mutton</i>
Squid	<i>Ort Jux, Ort Grav</i>
Swashbuckler	Sword, Bow, Sling, Ring Mail, Leather Helm, Wooden Shield, Gold, Gold
Troll	Throwing Axe, Spear, Sword, Bow, Club, Wooden Shield, Leather Armour, Leather Helm, Ring Mail, Chest, Gold, Gold
Villager	Sword, Sling, Cloth Armour, Gold
Wisp	<i>In Zu, An Xen Por, Ort Por</i>
Zu Flower	<i>In Zu</i>

Weapon Ranges, Attack Values, etc.

The fourth table gives armor protection ratings while the fifth and sixth tables reveal weapons range and damage ratings, respectively.

Table U6-4 Armor Ratings

Defense value of armor:

Leather Helm	1
Chain Coif	2
Iron Helm	3
Spiked Helm	3
Winged Helm	2
Brass Helm	2
Spartan Helm	3
Magic Helm	5
Wooden Shield	2
Curved Heater	3
Winged Shield	3
Kite Shield	3
Spiked Shield	2
Black Shield	2
Door Shield	4
Magic Shield	5
Cloth Armour	1
Leather Armour	2
Ring Mail	3
Scale Mail	4
Chain Mail	5
Plate Mail	7
Magic Armour	10
Main Gauche	1
Spiked Collar	2
Ring of Protection	5

Table U6-5 Weapon Range Ratings

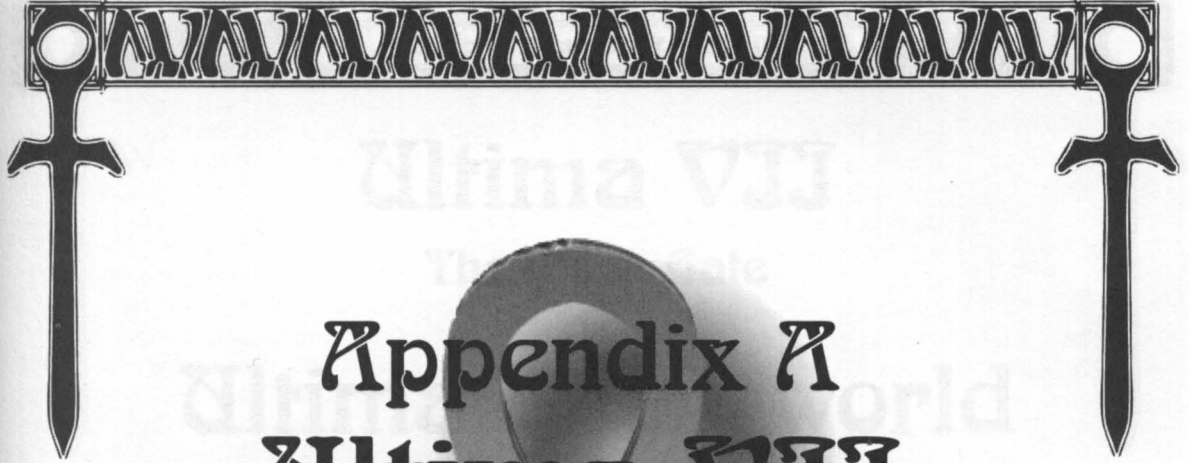
Weapon ranges:

Morning Star	2
Halberd	2
Dagger	3
Oil	5
Sling	4
Throwing Axe	3
Spear	4
Bow	5
Crossbow	7
Spellbook	7
Charge	5
Boomerang	5
Triple Crossbow	7
Ship	5
Sleeping Powder	4
Magic Bow	7
Lightning Wand	7
Fire Wand	7

Table U6-6 Weapon Damage Ratings

Weapon damage values:

Spiked Helm	4
Sling	6
Club	8
Main Gauche	8
Spear	10
Throwing Axe	10
Dagger	6
Mace	15
Morning Star	15
Bow	10
Crossbow	12
Sword	15
Two-Handed Hammer	20
Two-Handed Axe	20
Two-Handed Sword	20
Halberd	30
Boomerang	8
Triple Crossbow	12
Glass Sword	255
Spiked Shield	4
Cannon	90
Oil	4
Magic Bow	20
Rolling Pin	2
Scythe	6
Pitchfork	4
Pick	4
Shovel	4
Hoe	4
Cleaver	4
Knife	4
Decorative Sword	4
Ship	30
Sleeping Powder	0
Staff	4
Lightning Wand	30
Fire Wand	20



Appendix A
Ultima VII
The Black Gate

&
Ultima Underworld

ULTIMA: The Avatar Adventures

Weapon Ranges, Attack Values, etc.

Weapons with glass armor restriction (all) are also listed with their armor weakness type and armor range, respectively.



Ultima VII

The Black Gate

&

Ultima Underworld

Introduction

Carlotta can be a bit excitable. When I point that out, she gives me one of those looks. You know the type . . . Her eyes go all narrow and her mouth curls into a pout and she looks at me from an odd angle. I've learned not to argue with her unless I can back up my contentions.

Don't get me wrong. Carlotta is a fine researcher, but she just wants to believe every Avatar legend she hears. Me, I try to keep some objectivity. I don't believe everything I hear.

On the other hand, the man we met in Cove that night has me doubting my own skepticism.

He was, in every way, the kind of person I had always thought the Avatar would be. Not loud and boisterous, nor terribly haughty or superior. He seemed a determined, strong-willed individual, but fair. So I am inclined to give his story some special consideration. Carlotta, of course, is ready to put the official seal on it today . . .

Robert, you're so conservative. "Special consideration" my astrolabe! We are truly blessed. Here we have been researching the legends of the Avatar, spending our lives wondering at the truth of our findings, arguing over the merits of this bit of rumor or that story. We have devoted so much to the study of the Avatar without hope of ever confirming anything. Then, as we are passing through the small village of Cove, who should happen to visit the Inn but the Avatar himself!

Or so he claimed . . .

Oh, Robert! How can you have any doubt? You had only to hear him talk to know he was what he claimed to be.

As usual, we put it to you, the reader. Here is the story the reputed Avatar told us.

—Robert DeMain and Carlotta Stein



Entry 1—Trinsic

e sat by a fire at the Emerald in Cove, Carlotta and I, with the man who called himself Avatar and his companions. The light danced along the walls and our shadows danced with it.

Around the fire with us were the Avatar (I shall call him that from now on, though I retain some reservations), Iolo, and Jaana. The young boy, Spark, lay just behind them, and Shamino and Sentri played a game of chess by the light of a lantern in the northern alcove of the room. I have only their own claims that they are who they say they are. However, I am near to being convinced.

The Avatar sat near the flames and his face was often shrouded in darkness. When I saw his face at all, it seemed to shift, as if he were many people—his features were never the same from moment to moment. I know it was nothing but an illusion of the dim light, but it struck me nonetheless.

He began his tale in his home world, speaking of a visitation, a voice, and a fearsome image he had seen. It was this phantasm that had brought him once again to Britannia.

The Avatar spoke in low, even tones, obviously lost in his memories.

• • •



I only knew that Britannia was in trouble. Many years back, I would have dismissed the apparition as nothing more than a strange dream. But, though some time had passed since my last visit to Britannia, this fair world was never far from my thoughts. I could not ignore a threat to this enchanted land of adventure. I could not pretend it was a dream.

Of course, the fact that a red Moongate awaited me in the circle of stones left me no doubt that “the game was afoot,” to quote Doyle. There was no time to consider. I flung myself into the pulsating doorway, felt myself wrenched in that familiar way, my stomach turning over and my vision blurring; then I stepped out onto the street of a city at once familiar and strange.

As the gate slowly receded behind me, an old man accosted me. At first, I failed to recognize him. He had changed much. But his voice . . . it could only be Iolo!

“Avatar! If I did not trust the infallibility of mine own eyes, I would not believe it! I was just thinking to myself, ‘If only the Avatar were here!’ Then . . . Lo and behold! Who says that magic is dying! Here is living proof that it is not!”

I must have stood there seeming dumb struck and dazed, because my friend felt obliged to explain. “Dost thou realize, Avatar, that it hath been 200 Britannian years since we last met? Why, thou hast not aged at all!”

Of course we both knew why he had aged and I had not. He had stayed in Britannia. I had been . . . elsewhere.

My reunion with Iolo was interrupted by Petre, a young peasant, who mentioned the stables. Iolo’s joy suddenly turned to concern as he glanced over at a nearby building.

“Ah, yes. Our friend Petre here discovered something truly ghastly this morning.” Iolo walked up to me and began to guide me toward the nearby doorway. “Take a look inside the stables. I shall accompany thee.”

As I was about to enter the stables, a burly man approached us. Iolo introduced him as Finnigan, the Mayor of Trinsic. Did I mention that I was in Trinsic?

The Mayor, though skeptical of me, accepted Iolo’s assurances and asked me to help investigate what was apparently a grisly murder. Of course I agreed, though I was still unsure whether this murder had anything to do with the circumstances that had brought me once again to Britannia.

It was cool and dark inside the stables and it took a minute for my eyes to adjust to the dim light. When they did, I took an involuntary step back from the horror before me.

Splayed out was the body of Christopher—or rather, what was left of him. Black candles had been placed at his hands and feet. The monsters who had performed this foul deed had eviscerated him. They’d pulled his entrails from his body and disposed of them heaven only knew where. To the right of his body was an overflowing bucket. I stepped

close to see what it held and put my hand up to my mouth to keep from retching. Red-black and clotted, it contained blood.

I staggered away from the body, past the stalls. On the ground, mixed among the hoof prints were bloody footprints criss-crossing over one another.

In the small tack-room I discovered yet another outrage. Hanging from the northern wall was a dead gargoyle. His body sagged forward against the binding that held him, cutting cruelly into his scaly flesh. A pitchfork protruded from his stomach. From the expression on his face, I knew he had suffered greatly before he met his death.

Steeling myself, I turned from the body and walked back to Christopher's corpse. *There might be a clue to his murder somewhere around here*, I thought. I looked the body over, trying hard to remain dispassionate. I discovered a key resting on his leg. Snatching it from its grisly resting place, with a shudder I wiped it off on my pants leg.

Who in Britannia would perform such a deed? What had happened to Britannia since I'd left?

I left the stables on unsteady legs, I can tell you. I sought out Finnigan again and he asked if I had searched the stables. I was surprised he had to ask; my expression should have told him I had. But he asked what I had found. What should I tell him? A body? A bucket of blood? I told him I had found a key and he seemed pleased at my progress.

"Hmmm, a key. Perhaps if thou dost ask Christopher's son about it, he may know what it is for."

Of the murder, Finnigan entreated me to talk to the townsfolk and try to piece together the mystery. He asked that I report to him when my investigation was complete. Oh, and he added one comment I thought significant.

"Actually, I have seen something like this before. It was about four years ago, in Britain," he told me in a conspiratorial whisper. Obviously he didn't want to upset the townsfolk.

I asked him to tell me more about the events in Britain and he said, "'Twas before I came to Trinsic. There was a murder with strikingly similar aspects. A body was found mutilated exactly like poor Christopher. It appeared to be a ritualistic killing. I would wager that whoever was responsible for that murder is the culprit behind this one."

I asked the good Mayor some additional questions

about the folk in Trinsic, but his answers did little to solve the mystery. So I took my leave of him and, with lolo, headed to the northwest corner of town to find the murdered man's son, whose name was Spark.

o o o

Just then a small boy, who had been dozing in the corner of the room, sat up and said, "Milord Avatar? Didst call me?"

"No, Spark. I merely mentioned the time we first met. Rest now."

But the boy was wide awake and began to push his way nearer the fire. "May I tell it? Please? May I tell the story?" he entreated.

It was obvious the Avatar had a soft spot for this young lad, and he smiled as he told the boy to proceed.

o o o



When I seen him coming . . .
"When I saw him coming," corrected lolo.

Like I said, when I seen him coming, I was afraid, but I wasn't going to show it. I knew why he had come, him and his friend there. They came to take me away to a orphanage. I had my sling ready. I'm good with it, I am.

My father was a good man. He . . . he raised me good. I didn't need no one telling me nothin'.

Then he tells me he's the Avatar! Thou couldst 'a' blowed me down . . . He might as well 'a' told me he was Lord British hisself. That I would 'a' believed, maybe.

Well, his friend here, lolo, vouches for 'im, and I guess I was glad he wasn't some Fellowship flunky tryin' to take me somewhere I didn't want to go. And he did look familiar, like a painting I remember of the Avatar.

After that, I told him everything I knew. He asked a lot of questions. I told him about the dream I had and about running out in the night and seeing the man with the hook and the wingless gargoyle. And of finding . . . Father.

At this point the boy began to sob and the Avatar patted him on the back to comfort him, taking up the story.



He's a brave lad. He led us to our first clues. Of particular interest was his mention of an argument between his father and the Fellowship head, Klog.

At one point the boy asked to join us. Neither lolo nor I was much in favor of taking so young a child on our quest. From past experience, I knew my adventures in Britannia to be dangerous for even the most hardy warrior. But then the boy did something to change our minds. He shot a fly from the air above lolo's head. Whether it was a masterful shot, or just lucky, we could not tell. But it was bold, and the boy passionately wanted to avenge his father. Rarely have I seen lolo so taken by surprise.

lolo interrupted. "I am not accustomed to allowing people to shoot in my direction...and live."

Yes, my friend. But it gave me a good laugh. Anyway, I decided to let the boy join us, and I think we have been his family ever since.

Upstairs we found a chest, and opened it with the key from the stables. There was a large sum of gold, a Fellowship medallion, and a scroll which spoke of a delivery and a payment. There was no point in leaving these items, so we took the gold and the medallion, with Spark's permission, putting both in my pack. We also learned of Christopher's shop, and we decided to head down to the southwestern part of town with Spark as a guide.

Before we left Spark's house, we heard the parrot squawking something about a treasure. "I know where the treasure is!" it said.

I didn't think much about it, but then Spark did something that surprised me. He took the hammer from the table near the bed and hit the parrot over the head with it. I

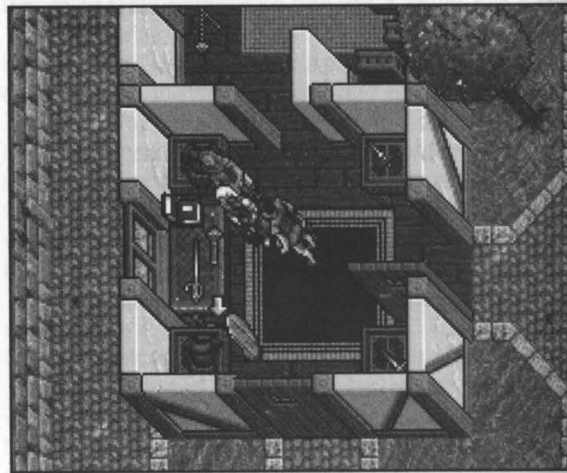
was about to reprimand him when the parrot spoke again. This time it told us the coordinates for a treasure. I wrote them down somewhere. Perhaps we'll find this treasure on our quest, though it is probably of little importance.

But we were still in for some surprises. On the way to the blacksmith's shop, we stopped at the weapons shop. The proprietor was a surly man named Dell. He seemed impatient either to sell something or to see the last of us. But it was when I told him I was the Avatar that he said something really strange.

"Oh, art thou really?" he asked. "I did not know there were so many of thee! Why, only last week did an 'Avatar' come through here! He took me for 20 gold, too! An expert trickster, he was!"

This was the first I had heard of an Avatar impostor. Unfortunately, it was not to be the last. I almost purchased a two-handed sword, but I didn't like the man's attitude. I decided to wait until I found a more civil shopkeeper before I equipped myself. We did buy something, though—some additional crossbow bolts for lolo. Even then, this was one shopkeeper who was hard to please. As we concluded our business, he had the audacity to tell us to spend more money next time.

By the way, I noticed a strange lever near the front of the shop. I think it opens a secret door through the wall in the back of the armory.



Dell's Secret Lever

The blacksmith's shop was eerie. First I thought I heard maniacal laughter. I glanced at my companions, Iolo and the boy, but they seemed not to have heard anything. Before I could mention it, my attention quickly shifted to the room itself. I could swear the place was haunted. Chairs moved by themselves, doors opened and closed, and torches suddenly burst into flame. There was little of use here; a little gold, that's all.

From the smithy, we went to the healer's, just to the northwest. Here we interviewed Gilberto, the guard on duty when the murders occurred. He told us what he'd seen, but the most important clue he gave us had to do with the ship, *The Crown Jewel*, that had sailed out that night.

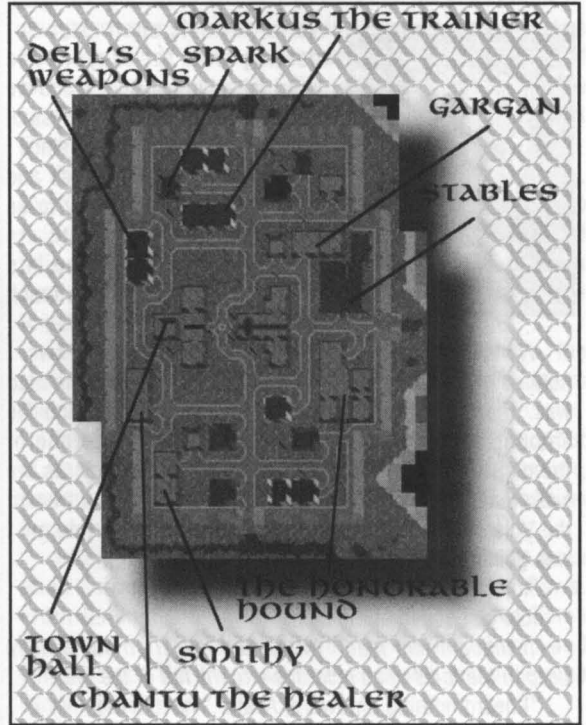
We left Gilberto and searched more of the city. We spoke with many people, but learned little else. I remember seeing some swamp boots in a small house in the northern part of the city. Spark remarked that they'd be useful, but I didn't know their owner. Besides, I told him, we could buy our own from Dell, if we wished. Spark made a face when I mentioned Dell's name. "I have no desire to see him again," he told me.

We met Klog, the head of the Fellowship in Trinsic. This was our first encounter with the Fellowship, and I was quite curious about it. Though he seemed in many ways a genuinely kind man, I couldn't help wondering about him. Already I was getting conflicting impressions about the Fellowship. But Klog mentioned some Fellowship visitors who had recently left and then spoke of an argument Christopher had had with the Fellowship. I found myself putting pieces together. Spark had also said something about that.

Spark sat up then, saying, "They killed him, I know it."

And the Fellowship itself . . . What was this Fellowship all about, anyway? I thought of staying around for one of their meetings, but neither Iolo nor Spark wanted to wait. Besides, Klog had recommended that I meet Batlin, the Fellowship's founder, in Britain. Iolo and I agreed that we had best follow the trail to Britain.

After taking our leave of Klog, we found the Mayor in his office and told him what we had seen. We told him about the man with the *hook* and the *Crown Jewel*, and he seemed satisfied that we had done all we could in Trinsic. He handed me a fair sum of gold, which I knew would come in handy, and told me the password to get past the guard at the city's entrance.



Trinsic

• • •

By this time Spark had nearly fallen asleep on the floor, obviously comforted both by proximity to the Avatar and by the warmth of the fire. I watched, feeling very sorry for the boy, as Carlotta laid a light blanket over him. The Avatar paused in his story and I was afraid he too would grow tired before finishing his tale. But Carlotta, obviously sharing my concern, fetched a fresh draught of ale, which he took gratefully. As she handed it to him, she said, "You were telling us about the password . . ."

I don't think our obvious attentions escaped his notice—I, poised with my notebook in hand; she, catering to his thirst for ale as he catered to our thirst for knowledge. His amusement was evidenced by a slight grin and by the sparkle of his eyes in the flickering illumination.



We left Trinsic soon after our meeting with the Mayor. The guard raised the portcullis and we stepped out into the wilderness of Britannia. It had been long since I had seen the Britannian sea and forest. I admit I was happy to be away from Trinsic, with its gruesome murders and its Fellowship. Outdoors I was much more content.

We walked north along the rutted path toward Paws. I noticed how much wider and more heavily traveled the road was. There had been many changes in 200 years, and the amount of traffic on the roadway seemed to be one of them. But my reverie was to be short-lived, for, as we walked along the road leading to Paws, once again I heard the Voice that had called me to this adventure. It told me I was going in the right direction. It was unnerving.

"lolo!" I cried. "Did you hear that?"

Iolo just stared at me then.

"I thought him mad," interjected Iolo from somewhere deep in the folds of an eiderdown to the left of the fire.

"I heard nothing untoward, Avatar," he told me.

"Iolo, my good friend," I entreated. "You mean you didn't hear a voice just now?"

But by now I knew the answer, so I hastily interrupted his reply. "Never mind. It was nothing. Let's not waste time. Look! Young Spark is running ahead. He'll be in danger if he reaches the swamp up ahead. Come, let's catch up with him."

And so I distracted my friend from thinking any more about my hearing things he could not. The truth was that I'd heard the voice of a creature speaking to me, but I must have been the only one. Yet it was definitely the same voice I'd heard before, the one that had brought me here. Of that I was sure. Why was this voice trying to give me advice, however useful? I'm sure you can see I had more questions at this time than answers.



Entry 2—Paws

The Avatar paused for a moment, sipping his ale, as the fire crackled and a sudden wind blew through the chinks in the walls, sending a chill up my

spine. Iolo got up and poked some new life into the fire, then added a split log. There was a brief moment of darkness as the new log blocked the flames, then the fire began to lick along its edges. We all watched, in that most human fascination with fires that we all share, as the flames toyed with the new log. Then it reached its kindling temperature and the whole fireplace roared back to life.

A few moments later, the Avatar continued his tale.



We arrived at Paws almost without further incident, although there was one small occurrence of note. I had put the mysterious voice behind me, but we had all decided to bypass the road through the swamp and try to go around to the west of the area. So we began to walk along the western edge of the swamp.

The day was pleasant, and we walked slowly. Meanwhile, Spark kept searching for stones for his sling. He practiced shooting at some of the small creatures that lived in the pools and fens of the swamp.

Well, when we were about midway through the swamp, near a small stream on our left, Spark bent down to gather some stones from a pile of debris. He let out a low whistle.

"Avatar, come look!" he cried.

At first I was alarmed, but then I saw the bluish glow of a magically enchanted object peeking from beneath the pile of stones. Spark triumphantly handed me a pair of magic gauntlets.

"Well done, lad," I said.

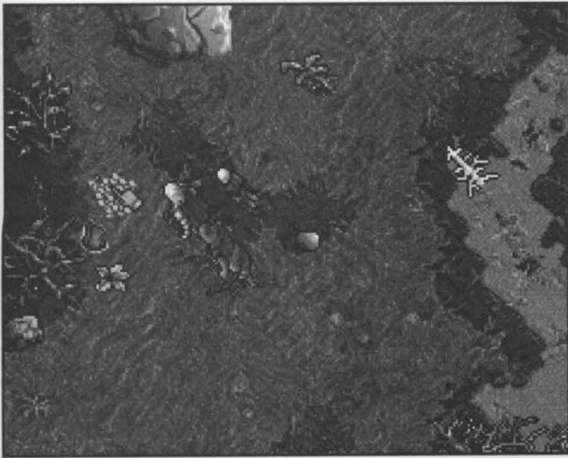
"They won't fit me, but they may fit thy hands," he said seriously.

"Yes, Spark. I believe they'll fit me perfectly. Thank you. You've got a sharp eye."

I think the lad was pleased. I know I was. The gauntlets fit perfectly and I knew they would protect me well.

From there, we made it quickly to the edge of the little village of Paws. I entered, enjoying a certain sense of nostalgia. Paws was still small. It had grown a little, but not so much as to have become unrecognizable.

We came along the western edge of a slaughterhouse and saw a man working there. A cow grazed in the field



Secret Gauntlets

outside. I can't say I liked the looks of this man—he had a shifty look about him—but it was my habit to speak with people as I met them. This man, Morfin, turned out to be even ruder than Dell!

"Oh, there must be a traveling show in town!" he tells me. "That is a very nice clown costume! Who art thou?"

Imagine my surprise at such a greeting! But I answered honestly. "I am the Avatar," I said. Usually people treated me well once they knew my identity, but Morfin's response reminded me that times had changed—not necessarily for the better.

Sneering as he began to turn away from me, he said, "Thou art a vile fool, desperate for others to like thee. I would pity thee, were it not that I loathe thee even more!"

I could feel lolo getting ready to raise his crossbow and give this man a lesson in civility, but I was not anxious to rise to such foolish bait. The man was walking away, but I approached him again. This time I smiled as I greeted him, you know, as if I really liked being insulted. It seemed to confuse the man a moment. I don't imagine he was used to people smiling at him after their first meeting. Whatever the reason, this time he was civil in his greeting. And when I asked nicely for an apology, he gave it, though I still was not satisfied it was genuine.

But Morfin had quite a tale to tell. I learned, by asking him many questions, that he was a diversified merchant who prospered in the small village of Paws. His

slaughterhouse was doing very well, and he did a lucrative business selling silver serpent venom, which people used to enhance their strength. The venom had less desirable side effects, however, and the longer I listened, the less I liked the substance.

It turned out that some of this venom had been stolen. Morfin was quite distressed about it. In fact, he asked me to help investigate the crime, and I agreed to do so. I cared little for Morfin's own loss, but the silver serpent venom itself seemed a dangerous substance, and I thought it wise to get to the bottom of the situation.

At Morfin's suggestion, we sought out Feridwyn, the local Fellowship leader. We found him across the bridge to the northwest.

Feridwyn looked no more friendly than Morfin had, but at least he was civil as he greeted me. He did, however, express his doubts as to the authenticity of my claim to be the as Avatar.

After some small talk, Feridwyn turned out to be a good source of information about the people in Paws. From listening to Feridwyn, I was able to make some guesses about who was friendly to the Fellowship and who was not. But I was no more sure who had stolen the venom than before.

One of the men Feridwyn mentioned was Merrick, a farmer who had turned to the Fellowship in hard times. We found him in the Fellowship shelter. The man was obviously a nervous wreck, though he claimed to have been much improved by the Fellowship. Like Morfin, he started out by insulting me.

"Thou art a most pathetic little worm. Really, all this Avatar nonsense is nothing more than a sad plea for attention," he told me. I found myself wondering if there was an epidemic of psycho babble running rampant throughout Britannia. People seemed to be trying to analyze my personality. But, like Morfin, Merrick then apologized. He also mentioned the Avatar impostors, something I found even more distressing than the amateur psychoanalysis. Besides that he told me little, other than to regale me with the Fellowship credo, the so-called Triad of Inner Strength—Strive For Unity, Trust Thy Brother and Worthiness Precedes Reward.

Before leaving the Fellowship shelter, I chanced to speak with Alina, an impoverished young woman—a mother with a newborn child. She told me of her husband,

who had been imprisoned in Britain. And what she told me of the Fellowship only added to my already growing distrust of them.

North of the shelter, I came across a young boy playing in the meadows. This was Garritt, the son of Feridwyn and Brita. He seemed friendly enough, but he displayed an arrogance that I found less than appealing. He had nothing good to say about the people of Paws, and I cut our conversation short as soon as I could.

Just north of the Fellowship shelter, we came upon a small farm and, working in the field outside, an attractive young widow named Camille. Unlike the others in this town, she recognized me immediately as the true Avatar. We spoke of the Fellowship, and I must say she had adopted an enlightened attitude. Though she had some doubts about the Fellowship itself, she recognized the good that some of its members did.

Camille asked me to deliver a bag of wheat to Thurston, at the mill. Since I was going to have to see Thurston anyway, I agreed.

Tobias was Camille's son. An unhappy lad, he worked by her side in the field, but would not look me in the eye. However, when I asked him about the Fellowship, he certainly heated up. And I have to say that he was much more thoughtful than I had expected. Despite his occasional rudeness, by the time I had left the lad I'd grown to like him.

As I left the small farm, I had a vivid picture of a town divided in two. There were those who prospered and those who suffered. There were those who followed the Fellowship's guidance, and those who disdained it. I felt sad for the people of Paws. It had once been an innocent little village. The petty politics and personalities that I had witnessed were a sad commentary on the evolution of Britannian society. In the days of Blackthorn, an evil force had shifted the meaning of the Virtues, oppressing the people. Now the Virtues were passé. Now I was passé. Now the Fellowship and its Triad of Inner Strength were the light that people followed.

We all shifted uncomfortably before the Avatar's anger. If this man was an impostor, he did a very good imitation of righteous indignation. I was silent, brooding over the picture of our fair land this man had painted.

Carlotta was not so retiring. "What did you do next, Avatar?" she asked.



Well, I took the grain to the mill and delivered it to Thurston, of course. I'd promised to do so. Thurston had little to say, though. Outside the mill I met two beggars, Komor and Fenn. These were embittered men, particularly Komor, and yet their independence and self-reliance, even in adversity, had to be admired.

I decided to return to Camille's farm to tell her I had delivered the grain, but as I was passing the shelter, Feridwyn came running out after me. "Avatar! Oh, Avatar! I have news!" he shouted. "Garritt, my son, told me that Tobias was in possession of some silver snake venom. I went to investigate and found Tobias with it!"

This disturbed me. I had liked Tobias, but it looked as if he'd been the thief all along. Who could blame him, after all? Paws was so full of bitterness, it would not surprise me if some had rubbed off on the youngster. Still, after listening to Feridwyn gloat over his discovery, I resolved to investigate further.

When I returned to the small farm, Camille ran over to me and protested her son's innocence. I would have expected no less. But she was convinced that someone had placed the venom in Tobias' possession to frame him. This too seemed plausible.

I returned to Morfin, who had promised to keep his eyes open. Though I had no reason to like the man, I thought he might have something to say about Tobias. What he said surprised me, however. For when I told him the news about Tobias, he responded, "I am not so sure Tobias was the one who stole the venom. I have not seen any of the signs of venom use in Tobias and I am quite familiar with its symptoms."

He went on to mention that Garritt had seemed very tired of late, alternating between hyperactivity and lethargy. Morfin suggested that I search Garritt's belongings. Coincidentally, Morfin had found a key Garritt had dropped while playing in the area. He gave it to me.

• • •

"Hmmm," I muttered. "That seems a great deal of coincidence."

The Avatar smiled. "Yes, perhaps. But remember, the silver serpent venom can also affect the mind. If a child as young as Garritt had used it, he might have grown quite careless and would sometimes have trouble concentrating on what he was doing. Anyway, when one is out on an adventure, one accepts all assistance offered. Sometimes the smallest coincidence may spell the difference between life and death, or, as in this case, guilt and innocence."

"So I suppose you found the evidence you sought among Garritt's possessions," Carlotta guessed.

"Yes," answered the Avatar, smiling again. "The key opened a chest, and inside the chest was a bag containing the venom. When I confronted Garritt, he confessed. Feridwyn promised me that it would never happen again. I wasn't convinced that anyone had really learned a lesson, though. Feridwyn seemed still to blame Tobias for leading his son astray, and Garritt himself attempted to justify his actions, claiming he was trying to help the Fellowship by forcing Tobias and his mother to join. It is unfortunate that some people cling so tightly to their delusions. Still, there was little more I could do for them.

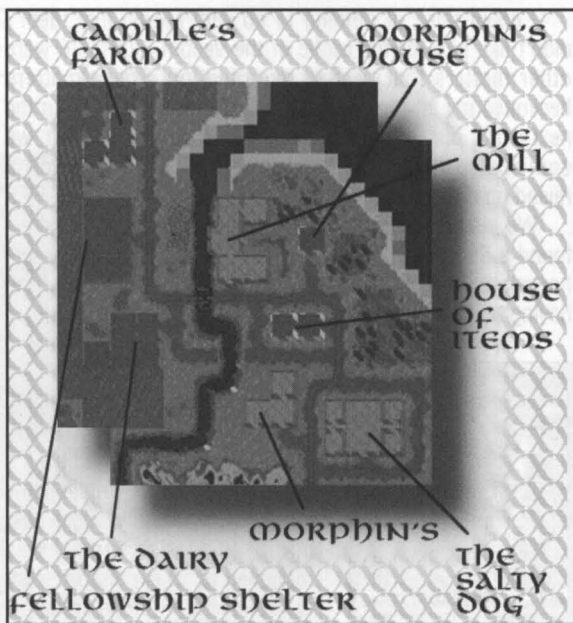
"But I was not quite finished in Paws," the Avatar continued, as Iolo poked at the fire once again.



This whole business of the venom bothered me, so I decided to investigate a little more. I found Morfin's house at the far north edge of town. In it I found a key, which I borrowed. Andrew at the dairy—did I mention him already? Anyway, Andrew had told me about the locked storeroom. I wanted a look inside.

In the slaughterhouse, I investigated a little and discovered another key, hidden under a bucket of blood. The first key opened the storeroom. The second opened a chest containing many gold bars, a ledger, and a quantity of silver serpent venom.

I discovered some interesting sales in the ledger and went to confront Morfin with my discovery. First he expressed his gratitude that I had returned the stolen venom. But then, with



Paws

the evidence of his ledger before him, he admitted selling the venom to the Britannian Mining Company, which was not strictly legal. He seemed unconcerned with the effect the venom would have on the gargoyles who worked for the mining company. He also revealed that he got his supply from friends in Buccaneer's Den.



Morfin's Slaughterhouse

I could think of nothing to do with Morfin just then. I didn't like him, or his traffic in the venom, but there were other matters that needed my attention. These matters beckoned me and my companions to Britain. We began the next leg of our journey immediately. But before we left, we confiscated the vials of venom from the chest. Morfin raised no objections.

We also chanced to stop at a local curio shop. There I found a Sextant at a reasonable price. There was an ornate hourglass there that lolo admired, but we didn't purchase it, having no idea what we would do with it on our adventure.



Entry 3—Britain

I was surprised at how quickly we reached Britain. On my previous visits, Paws had been a good distance from Britain. Now the great capital city began just north of Camille's farm. I was reminded of an expression from my homeland—"urban sprawl."

We walked north along one of the main streets, passing an

open-air food market on our left. Soon we came to a shop that carried the sign of an apothecary.

"Could this be the place Morfin has been selling his venom?" I asked lolo.

"Verily, Avatar, 'tis possible," he agreed. "This may be the same place."

So we entered the shop and spoke with Kessler, the apothecary. I was curious why he'd been purchasing the venom in the first place. At first I'd suspected some nefarious scheme or some less than virtuous purpose. After all, he had been dealing with Morfin. But Kessler was working in conjunction with Lord British to learn about the effects of the venom and to warn people.

"People need to be alerted to how dangerous silver snake venom is," he told us earnestly. "To this end I wish to announce my findings before Lord British and a consortium of lords and mayors, but to do that I must first finish my study."

When Kessler offered to purchase any venom I could supply, of course I offered the vials I'd confiscated from Morfin. He wouldn't take them free, but insisted on paying me for each vial. I promised to put the money to good use

and he promised to work hard to complete his studies.

From the apothecary shop we continued northward until we reached the next corner, where lolo stopped me.

"My friend, we've arrived at the Blue Boar. Let us down an ale and rest a moment," he suggested.

"I really want to go see Lord British," I began to say, but lolo interrupted me.

"The King? Aye, we'll see him soon enough. But he's grown set in his ways. He'll be there waiting, but I'll be in the mood to meet him better with a bellyful."

I laughed, but Spark poked lolo in the back and asked, "What about me? I could use a drink or something to eat!"

"Have no fear, little one," answered lolo. "We'll find something for ye. Perhaps a good plate of carrots?"

"Ugh!" responded Spark, kicking lolo playfully in the shins and running down the street.

"Ill-begotten urchin," yelled lolo, hopping on one foot.

"He's a brave lad to challenge me so," lolo added. "But he won't catch me unawares so easily next time."

So we followed Spark through the front door of the Blue Boar, but before we had gone a step, Spark turned in amazement and told me, "Britain sure is big!"

"The city has grown much in 200 years," I told him. I suppose that the Blue Boar was very large by comparison with anything Trinsic had to offer.

Finally we entered the front room of the tavern. There we found an old friend sitting behind the harpsichord. A somewhat older friend than I remembered.

"I heard that," called Shamino from the alcove. We all laughed, but the Avatar continued his story.

Yes, it was Shamino.

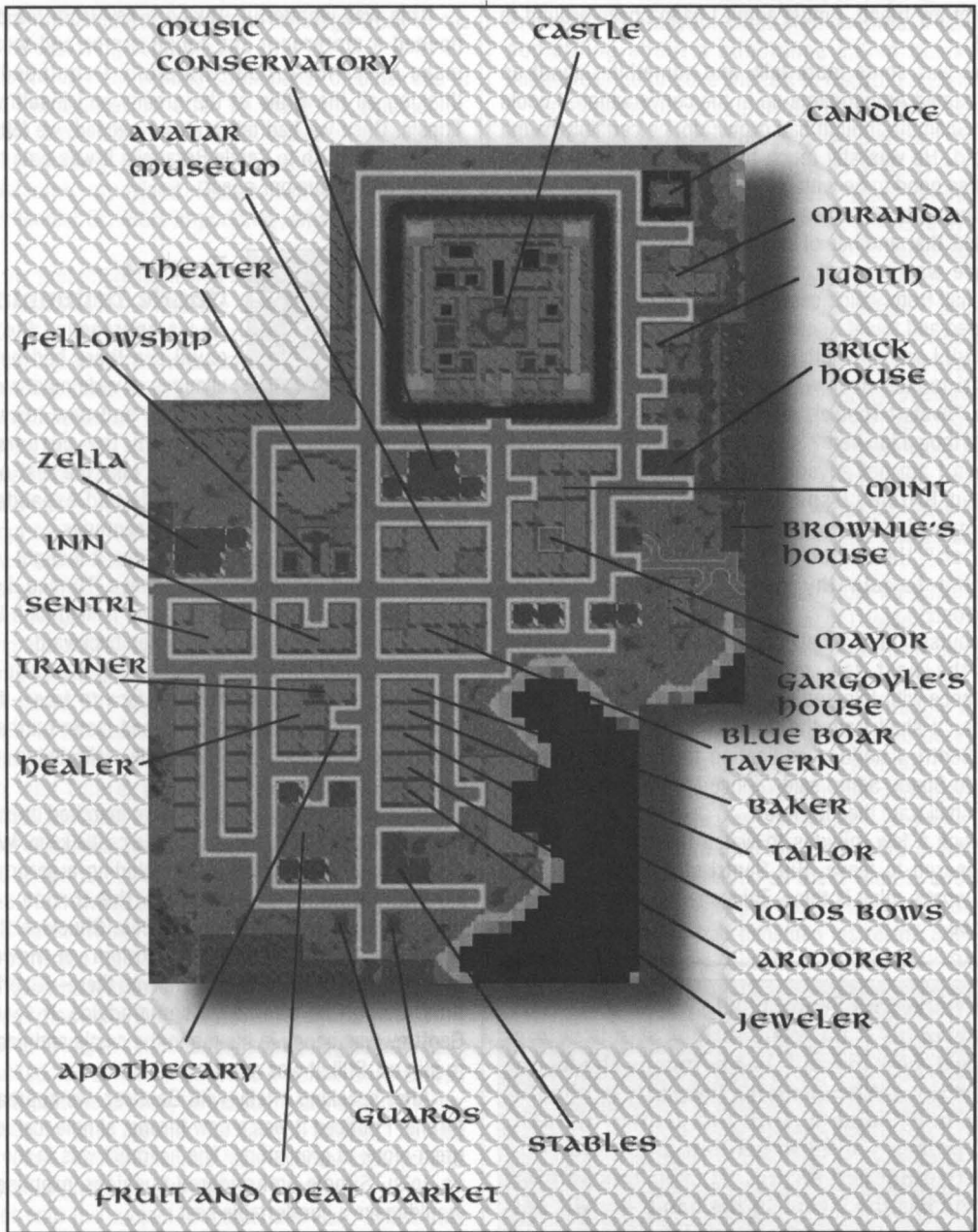
"Avatar!" he called when he spotted me. "What bringeth thee to Britain?"

I told him of the events in Trinsic and of the red Moongate.

I remember he remarked that the Moongates had given him trouble. And he was very interested in the Trinsic murders.

He told me, "I would be honored to join and help thee in investigating this matter." So of course I invited him to join lolo, Spark, and me.

Soon we all adjourned to the bar to order a drink and I continued my discussion with Shamino. It was then that he returned my pocket watch. It is something remarkable to have an item returned to you after 200 years! Of course, in



Britain

defense of my friend, I must admit I hadn't been around to collect it.

There was some more talk, and something about an actress named Amber came up in the conversation. I could see that Shamino though had grown up, he certainly hadn't grown old. He was still much the same as I remembered him. It was good to be with my friends again.

We were about to head for the castle when Shamino mentioned that another of our former companions was in town. We walked west, past the Wayfarer's Inn, to a training hall from which came the sounds of heavy activity. We entered and found Senti practicing his archery.

"Senti! Look who hath come to visit!"

Senti looked over while casually shooting another bullseye. "Avatar! Thou art returned."

"Hast thou a job here?" asked Iolo.

"When I am not adventuring with old friends, I am a trainer in Britain. I specialize in combat involving swordsmanship. I am quite good at that, as thou dost remember." He smiled broadly. "But I would drop everything to join thy group if thou art not too encumbered."

"Of course," I cried, delighted. "Join us!"

For the next few minutes Senti renewed his acquaintance with Iolo and Shamino, and met Spark for the first time. "I shall train the young one, if it is thy wish," offered Senti. I nodded, indicating that he might do so. Turning to Spark, Senti said, "Since I am a member of thy group, I shall train thee for free!"

We took a few minutes to watch the training session, then prepared to leave. But Senti stopped me, saying, "Avatar, what's mine is thine. Take anything you wish from my shoppe."

When you recruit Senti, talk to him when he has the bow in his hand. Wait until he stands before the target, bow in hand, just before he shoots for the first time. When he joins the party, he should have a bow, some quantity of arrows (though you'll probably need to get him more of them), and a two-handed sword. If you talk to him when he has the sword in his hand, he will not have the bow among his possessions.

This was wonderful. Taking a key from his dresser, I opened a storeroom and found armor and weapons to make a warrior proud. Gratefully I equipped myself, thinking all the while of the greedy and insulting Dell in Trinsic. Once we had taken all we needed, we left together and headed north to Castle Britannia. It was time to see the King and continue our quest.



Entry 4— Castle Britannia

As we approached the castle, I could see there had been some changes. A wide moat surrounded the keep and new towers jutted out from the corners of the fortress. Like the rest of Britain, the castle had expanded in the past two centuries.

As we marched up the drawbridge, I thought I caught a movement out of the corner of my eye. Turning, I spotted a giant tentacle piercing the water and flailing high in the air. Spark gasped, and even I took a step backward.

Whatever Lord British had guarding his moat, it wasn't something I would want to meet face to face—if it had a face, that is. Our footsteps drummed faster on the wooden bridge as we quickly put the castle walls between us and the moat creature.

Once our pulses had slowed, we marched directly to the throne room, toward the back of the castle keep. We passed several people along the way, including a gargoyle and a familiar-looking mage. Inside the throne room we discovered some old acquaintances. Chuckles the Jester was there, though we didn't talk to him yet. However, one of our former fellow adventurers was there—Geoffrey. This time, though he offered us some advice, it seemed that Geoffrey was happy in his job in the castle and had no wish to join us. Still, it was good to see him.

After speaking briefly with Geoffrey, we approached the throne. I noticed it was a new throne, simple, carved from a great block of gray stone. The headrest was in the shape of an ankh. Simple embroidered cushions promised that it would make a comfortable seat.

But there was no Lord British in the new throne room, so we went off in search of His Majesty. We found him

busy with important (or important-looking) work in his office in the east wing of the castle.

He looked up from signing some paper or other and at first didn't recognize me. Then he made the connection. Funny how a mere 200 years can make people forget, however temporarily. But then he embraced me heartily and said, "Welcome, my friend. Please. Tell me what brings thee to Britannia! Or, more importantly, what 'brought' thee here?"

Now my first impression was that the King had grown a bit older—and wider. I had the sudden thought that he might spend more time adventuring and less time at the table eating his favorite cheesecake. But then I just found myself smiling. Lord British had that effect on me. It had been a long time since I had last spoken with him. He was a man of great strength and charisma.

I made small talk to hide the depth of emotion I felt at once again being with Lord British. At first, I asked the King about his Job, but he laughed that standard question off. He was more interested in speaking of other subjects. So we talked briefly about our mutual Homeland, and he offered his Aid to me, as he always had—including healing and curing and such, as well as Equipment. He told me of a storeroom in the battlements where I could find a spellbook and other items. The key, he said, was in his study in the western end of the castle.

We talked then of Britannia, of my friends, Iolo, Shamino, and Dupre, and of the improvements to the castle. While the King and Iolo were getting reacquainted, the subject of the murders in Trinsic came up.

I told British about my adventures so far. He seemed concerned. He frowned as he listened and fingered the ank around his neck. When I had finished my tale, he told me he was happy that I had taken an interest in solving the murders. Then he told me a little more about a murder that had taken place in Britain several years earlier. I remembered Finnigan's mentioning something about that.

We talked for some time. When I asked Lord British about the Orb of the Moons, he asked if I had brought mine. I had not, so he gave me his, "Be careful, though," he said in a low voice. "The Moongates have become dangerous." *Then why is he giving me the stone?* I wondered.

We got onto the subject of magic, and Lord British told me of the problems that had occurred. He also told me of a mad mage named Rudyom in the village of Cove. I

remembered Rudyom from another time. The King said something about a substance called blackrock. He suggested I go to Cove and talk to Rudyom myself.

From some of his comments, I'd begun to fear that the King had lost touch with his people. I had seen the signs of discontent among my friends as well as among the villagers, especially in Paws. I also suspected the Fellowship of being, if not the cause, at least a symptom of something. But British was not quite as removed as I had thought, and he told me of his concerns. "There is something wrong in Britannia," he began, "but I do not know what it is. Something is hanging over the heads of the Britannian people. They are unhappy. One can see it in their eyes. There is nothing that is unifying the population, since there has been peace for so long. Perhaps thou couldst determine what is happening. I implore thee to go out amongst the people. Watch them in their daily tasks. Speak with them. Work with them. Break bread with them. Perhaps they need someone like the Avatar to take an interest in their little lives."

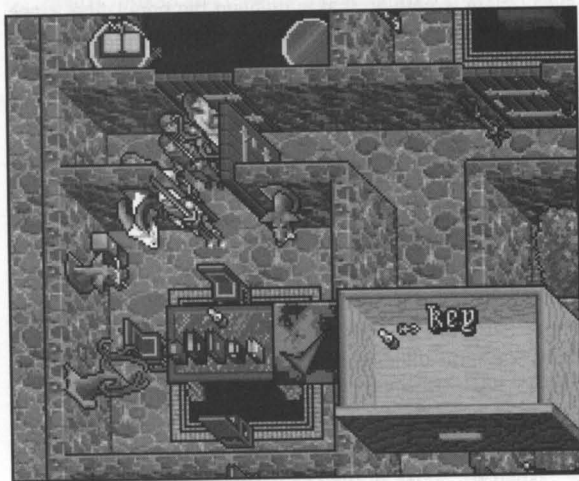
I did not know if I had the antidote for what ailed "the people," but I was willing to do what I could. This had been such a fine place. I'd always faced so much danger here, but the people I'd met had always seemed so content. There had never before been a class struggle or such a sharp cultural division among the people here; just the healthy differences of men and women of different occupations and widely separated regions. British was right about one thing. There was something wrong here.

When we spoke of the Fellowship, Lord British seemed to have a higher opinion of them than I, and I briefly wondered if I had misjudged them. He named some of the ways the Fellowship had benefited his realm. Still, I wasn't convinced. The King told me I should visit Batlin, the founder of the Fellowship, and I resolved to do so as soon as I could.

Before leaving the King's study, I met some of his close associates. Two gargoyles were there—Wislem and Inwisloklem. After speaking with them, I spent some time talking to Miranda, one of the members of the Great Council. Miranda told me about her son, Max, then spoke of a Bill she had drafted to stop the dumping of wastes in Lock Lake, near Cove. Since I was planning to visit Cove anyway, I agreed to take the bill there for signing and to return it later.

We said our good-byes and headed across the courtyard toward the west wing. On the way, I saw Nystul. I must say, my conversation with him was disturbing. He was disoriented and couldn't even hold on to his magic wand! But he did offer to sell me some reagents and spells. Not having my spellbook, I declined the offer for the time being. I knew I'd be back eventually.

Lord British had made something of a game out of our finding the key and the storeroom, so we began to search the rooms in the castle's western wing. We found the key in the drawer of a night stand in the King's study, a room whose walls were adorned with the King's hunting trophies. Now all we had to do was find the storeroom.



The Key to the King's Storeroom

I had no idea where to look, and neither did my companions, but as we searched, we happened to pass through the throne room once again. I spotted Chuckles and decided that he might, perhaps, know something.

As usual, I find it difficult to describe the conversation we had. It didn't help me find the storeroom, but it was most interesting. It seems that Chuckles wanted to play something he called "The Game." He promised me a clue if I would play, and, thinking he might tell me what I sought to know, I agreed.

To the best of my ability, I will recount our conversation. I admit it makes no sense to me now, nor did it at the time. I began by asking him about *The Game*.

"Thou must play *The Game* to get the clue!" he said, pirouetting on his toes.

So I said, "What are the rules?"

"Thou must just learn *The Game* and then jump in and play it!" He tossed a ball high in the air.

Knowing Chuckles, I decided the best way to proceed was to plunge right in. "I know *The Game*," I told him.

"Then just play it!" He caught a ball behind his back.

"Of what do we speak?" I asked.

Chuckles bowed low with a sweep of his right arm, as if beckoning me to enter a room. "Of what thou wouldst like," he said.

"Thou. Let us speak of thee, Chuckles," I replied. This man and his game were impossible.

"Why dost thou want to speak of me? Canst thou not think of a thing much more fun of which to speak?"

Of course I could. "Food. What about food?" I asked.

By now Chuckles was standing on his hands. "There is good food at the pub!" he exclaimed, upside down. "As for me, I like to eat on the floor of my room!"

Indeed. I can believe it. But I kept my tongue civil and said, simply, "Where is the Blue Boar?" though I knew the answer well enough.

"Thou canst get a good meal there! But I could give thee a good clue!"

So I asked him about the clue and he asked me if I was sure I could play *The Game*. I thought that was what we had been doing already! I said yes. It seemed the only answer that would please him.

"Then prove it. Talk to me," he said.

I didn't know what to say. I just blurted out, "Hi, Chuck."

He didn't even blink. "Hi there! What is on thy mind?" he replied.

"Too much is on my mind," I told him, quite truthfully.

"Ah, I do know what thou dost mean! Thou dost need help, yes?"

"Yes, I do," I said.

"Hmmm. I might could give thee a clue," he said, yet again. I was trying my best to keep my exasperation under control, but I was less patient.

"I would like to give Chuckles a black eye!" he exclaimed.

I tried not to show my agreement or break out in a fit of laughter. Instead I answered, "That would be big of thee!"

So then he asked me, "What wilt thou give me for a clue?"

I thought about it for a moment while Chuckles spun around, the bells in his jester's cap ringing in my ears. "I'll give you a smile," I said finally.

And that's when he gave me the scroll. I also think I learned something, though I couldn't explain it then and still can't. In some way, though, this silly game had benefited me.

"So long, my friend!" said Chuckles. "Do not forg... I mean, do not lose how to play The Game!"

We passed through the throne room then, heading for the rooms in the northwestern corner of the castle. In what looked like the King's own apartments, Spark's sharp eyes spotted a lever near a wall in a small study. Before we could stop him, he had pulled it back.



Secret Lever

There was a nearly silent click and suddenly the walls opened, rolling smoothly on silent casters. Spark had found a secret passageway. We discovered that the entire castle was ringed by a secret hallway, with levers that opened hidden doors into nearly every room!

Our searches eventually revealed a staircase leading up to the battlements. We climbed and began to search the upper story of the castle.

In the southwestern corner we came upon an unfortunate prisoner. His name was Weston.

"Avatar," said lolo. "Weston is a familiar name. Where have we heard it recently?"

"You're right, lolo," I replied. "It was the poor woman at the Fellowship shelter in Paws. She mentioned that her husband was named Weston."

Our conversation with the prisoner was frequently interrupted by the derisive comments of the guard, but we eventually discovered that there was more than a little corruption going on, and that Weston was probably more a victim than a criminal. We agreed to tell the King about his problem.

In the northwestern tower we found the storeroom the King had mentioned. The key unlocked the door, as the King had promised, and we helped ourselves to armor and weapons, food, and anything that looked useful. I picked up the spellbook.

We searched some more and found another storeroom in the northeastern tower, but there was no apparent doorway into it. The King liked his games. But we knew there had to be a way in, so we searched.

It took a while, but we eventually found a lever on the first floor, just under the northeast tower. It seemed to do nothing, but when we pulled it and climbed back to the second floor, we found that it had opened a hidden door.

Behind this door was a second storeroom, loaded with weapons, including a musket. By the time we left this storeroom, we were all heavily loaded with weapons, shields, armor, and other items. But we were feeling ready for whatever dangers awaited us. At least I think we were. I, for one, was feeling the weight of plate mail, great helm, and the other paraphernalia hanging all over me. I could hardly walk, but I didn't want to complain. Besides, I knew I'd eventually get used to the extra weight. I just wasn't looking forward to all the sore muscles I'd have for the next few days.

The castle was a busy place. There were people everywhere going about their business. I could tell you some interesting stories about these people, but most of it would be sheer gossip. We did get a good meal from Bennie, the head servant, and we also learned a thing or two about the people in Britain. One special occasion came when we renewed our acquaintance with Sherry the Mouse. She told us a delightful story about a lion named Hubert, but I'll save that, too, for another time.

Before leaving the castle, we sought out Lord British and told him of Weston's situation. He immediately issued a

pardon for the man and promised to look into Figg's administration of the Royal Orchards.



Entry 5— Britain Again

The time had come to move onward. Our next stop would be the Fellowship Hall. I knew I would have to meet this Batlin character that everyone was talking about. I admit I felt a little trepidation. No monster I've ever met was nearly as soft-spoken, but has bad intentions. Such a man could conceivably be a real threat. Of course, I had no proof that there was anything unsavory about Batlin. I just had a bad feeling about the Fellowship.

On the way to the Fellowship Hall, we met a pretty woman named Millie. We wouldn't have stopped to speak with her, but she practically beckoned us over when she noticed us. She was near the southern corner where the Blue Boar and the Wayfarer's Inn meet.

It was fortuitous that we met Millie just then, because she turned out to be a Fellowship recruiter. That explained her aggressive friendliness. I had often found that people who were overly friendly had something they wanted from you or wanted to get you to join them in something.

But Millie was also informative. When we spoke of her job, she said, "I spend all my time trying to recruit, er . . . spread the word of the Fellowship. It is better than having a job! I learned how to do this at the Meditation Retreat."

"What is this Meditation Retreat?" I asked her.

"'Tis located on an island in south Britannia near Serpent's Hold. Most new Fellowship members spend some time down there learning the tenets of the group. One can also learn to hear 'the voice' at the retreat."

I felt a chill and the hair on my arms and neck stood up. "And what is 'the voice'?" I inquired, none too steadily.

Millie never noticed my discomfort, however, but continued blithely on with her story. "Fellowship members have an inner voice which speaks to them. I have not heard it yet, but I am working toward it. I may need to spend another few days at the Meditation Retreat in order to do

so. Batlin tells me not to be discouraged, though. He says I will hear it when I have made myself worthy."

We left Millie then, as she seemed to know nothing more. As I turned away, she called to me to attend the nightly Fellowship meeting.

It was some time in the afternoon when we arrived at the Fellowship Hall. The place was nearly empty, but we found the man we sought quickly enough. He was wandering about the hall, straightening this, rearranging that.

Batlin was a portly gentleman with florid cheeks and a wise, perhaps cunning, look in his eyes. He sported a goatee and wore a gold earring in his left ear. He was sweating a bit in the afternoon heat. But his look was kindly as he spotted us, despite our obviously martial wardrobe.

I had half expected to receive the kind of reception Morfin and several others had given me when I met Batlin, so I was quite taken by surprise when he told me, "My name, good friend, is Batlin. And indeed it is truly a privilege to meet the Avatar in the flesh."

He was certainly in a good humor as he told me of his background and his formation of the Fellowship, and I listened intently to his description of the Fellowship ideals. As he spoke, he guided me to the back of the chapel, and, as if by mutual consent, my companions lingered near the front. So I was alone with Batlin, though I thought I noticed lolol listening in from time to time.

First things first. I asked him about Elizabeth and Abraham, the Fellowship representatives who had been in Trinsic at the time of the murders.

"Ah, my good colleagues Elizabeth and Abraham were just here," Batlin told me. "They left this morning for Minoc on Fellowship business. They deal with the distribution and collection of funds."

Batlin then turned the topic toward his favorite subject—the Fellowship itself. Of course, I couldn't put my finger on anything specific about their philosophy, but there was something wrong with it. Of that I was sure. The Virtues I had learned and mastered had brought me a great sense of fulfillment. And though the three main principles of the Fellowship sounded like good sentiments, in my opinion they would fall short of being the keystones for a virtuous life. I was particularly put off by his rejection of older virtues.

"We strive to avoid the mistakes made by mystics and sages since the dawn of time. They apply the standards of

the past, such as the virtues, for example, to qualify the present, and thus they do not perceive it correctly. We seek to examine our present lives each on our own terms and see the world the way it is."

That statement hit pretty close to home, so I asked him what he thought of the Virtues.

"They are perfectly adequate for those who feel that they still need them for whatever reason," he told me sincerely, without a hint of sarcasm or rancor. "But no one, not even thyself, thou must admit, Avatar, can fulfill them perfectly." I wasn't ready to admit any such thing, but he didn't give me a chance to reply. "Therefore they are a philosophy that is ultimately based upon failure. We have never claimed that our teachings are a substitute for the virtues. However, ours is a belief that is based upon success, not failure."

Batlin was very good at explaining his credo, and I found myself wondering. Could this Triad of Inner Strength truly help the people who followed it? Could he be right when he described the Virtues as a goal that people couldn't reach? After all, how many true avatars were there? To my knowledge, there was only one. Me.

When Batlin had finished telling us about the Triad of Inner Strength, I asked him some of the questions most on my mind.

"I've heard something about a Meditation Retreat," I probed.

Batlin raised his hands as if to throw all his cares to the heavens. "It is a retreat from the pressures and distractions of everyday life," he told us proudly, "where new members of the Fellowship may go and study the philosophies of the Fellowship. It is located on an island east of Serpent's Hold."

Now came a question I was really worried about. "I've also heard something about a 'voice.'"

Now Batlin's brow creased a little and for the first time I think he showed some concern, but he quickly turned it into an advantage. "Only active or potential Fellowship members are privy to the concept of 'the voice.' I can tell thee more when thou dost take the Fellowship test."

I thought a moment about this test. I decided to ignore it for the moment. "And what if I did want to Join the Fellowship?" I asked.

Now Batlin positively beamed. "Ah, but first things first. I recommend that thou takest our Examination to determine

if thou art truly in need of The Fellowship's teachings. Dost thou want to take the test?"

There was that test again. I hardly gave it much thought before I found myself saying "Yes." After all, what kind of test could they give that I could not pass? I had already passed a great test in becoming the Avatar, and had survived the greatest evils Britannia had ever known.

Little did I know what a truly harrowing experience this test could be. I won't repeat it all to you, but the questions were impossible, and the answers . . . Well, I don't think there were any good answers to some of the questions. And worst of all, Batlin's sanctimonious assessment of me made me want to split him in half with my two-handed sword. But I restrained myself. I had to know where this all was leading.

Finally it was over. I could sense my companions growing restless nearby. And Batlin was giving his summation of my personality.

"Thou art a person of strong character, Avatar, but one who is troubled by deep personal problems that prevent thee from achieving thy true potential for greatness. In short, thou art precisely the type of person for which The Fellowship was created." I was hardly delighted to hear myself summed up so curtly. Nor was I pleased to be deemed "the type of person for which The Fellowship was created."

Well, in a rather magnanimous gesture, Batlin waived the usual sabbatical of study, but he did ask that I perform one mission for them, following the tenet Worthiness Precedes Reward.

"I need thee to deliver this sealed package unopened to Elynor, the leader of our Fellowship branch in Minoc. Elynor will reward thee upon receiving it, thou dost have my word. May I trust thee to do it?"

Once again, I agreed to do as he wished. As soon as I had agreed to deliver the package, he gave it to me and turned as if to dismiss me. But I wasn't quite through. I asked him again about the 'voice,' and this time his answer was more complete.

"Once a person has walked with The Fellowship long enough and applied the Triad of Inner Strength to his life, he has cleared his mind of all conflicting, counterproductive thoughts to the point where he may actually hear his internal voice of reason. This voice of reason is the core of thine inner mind which guides thee through pure instinct, wisdom and irrefragable logic. Once one starts to listen

to it and follow its guidance, one has achieved the height of enlightenment. Perhaps thou shalt hear it one day.”

Then I took my leave of Batlin. I didn't tell him that I might have already heard his precious 'voice.'

My friends had been busy in my absence. When I rejoined them they all began to talk at once, but I silenced them with a gesture. As we left the Fellowship Hall, they were barely able to contain themselves.

“We have discovered some interesting information, Avatar,” said Iolo as soon as we were back in the streets.

“Yes,” continued Shamino. “Young Spark here located a key in one of the rooms. It opened a chest in the room where the apples are, and we took a look inside.”

“We found a scroll that said, ‘Once the construction is complete, store the blackrock in the hold of the *Crown Jewel*,’” said Sentri.

“‘Tis a plot of some kind, Avatar. I like these people not at all,” Iolo told me. The others agreed. “So tell us, friend, ‘he went on, ‘what did the ‘good’ Batlin have to tell thee?”

I told my friends about Batlin's philosophy, about the Fellowship test and its strange result, and about the mission I had agreed to. Iolo and Shamino frowned when I told them I had volunteered to join the Fellowship.

“Ware these people, Avatar. They are dangerous fanatics,” warned Iolo.

“Aye. There's more to these folk than meets the eye,” added Shamino.

“Don't worry, friends. I have no intention of being fooled by their rhetoric. Nor do I intend to become embroiled in their power struggles. But I must have information, and pretending to be one of them is a good way to find out what they're up to.”

“Quick, then, let us open the sealed box and see what's within,” suggested Shamino.

We carefully undid the seal, but I'm afraid we ruined it in the process. Oh, well. I felt it was important to know what was in the box.

We found a scroll inside. It had instructions for some kind of monument. It said, “The stone pedestal should be four feet high, three feet wide and two feet deep. Atop each of the three pedestals shall be set the three receptacles: the tetrahedron, the sphere, and the cube.

“All of these items for the defense mechanisms of the portal have already been constructed by the Trinsic blacksmith.”

This was serious. For one thing, it linked the Fellowship with Christopher. We had to restrain Spark from rushing back to the Fellowship Hall to attack Batlin himself.

“Hold on there, lad,” I told him. “Don't go running into trouble without preparation. We'll deal with this Batlin in good time. But there's more to this than meets the eye. Don't worry, Spark. We'll avenge your father.”

Well, I was able to calm the boy down, just barely, and we continued on our way. Our next stop was Iolo's shop, where we bought some arrows from his young protégé Coop. Then we explored some more of the town, mingling with “the people” as Lord British had asked us to do. I won't go into detail about everyone we met, but it was instructive. There were more rumors about a false Avatar, and even some thoroughly embarrassing tributes to me—a play about the Avatar, for instance. They wanted me to audition as an understudy. Can you believe that? And then there was a well-meaning, if offbeat, musical group who called themselves the Avatars.

Also of considerable interest to me was the Avatar Museum. No doubt you two are very familiar with it.

Carlotta and I both nodded enthusiastically.

Yes. Well, I found the whole thing a bit embarrassing, but it did bring back memories. Oh, and I examined the artifacts. They are genuine, by the way. I “borrowed” back a few of them. There was a useful musket there. Perhaps more significant were the Virtue Stones. I think they have some power similar to that of the moonstones. I mean to examine them more closely very soon.

I also earned some extra cash helping out in various establishments. For instance, I met a baker who taught me to bake wonderful bread, and it was a relief to do something so simple and unpretentious.

At the Mint, I discovered that we could turn in gold bars and gold nuggets for coin of the realm. That might come in handy, as I was always turning up treasures on my adventures. In fact, I thought about the gold bars I'd seen in Morfin's chest.

In the eastern part of Britain, I met a farmer named Brownie who needed help picking pumpkins and another farmer named Mack who needed help gathering eggs. Mack was known locally as a loony, for he claimed to have seen creatures from another world. However, he showed me the proof, right there in his field. In fact, the strange craft he showed me looked somewhat familiar, and his story rang a

bell somewhere. But I had no idea how it would affect my quest until he mentioned his hoe. It seemed that his hoe had been magically transformed into a formidable weapon—the Hoe of Destruction. A weapon such as that might prove very useful on our journey, but though he told me it was locked in his storeroom, he also claimed to have lost the key somewhere near Lock Lake. He seemed pretty unconcerned, however, and I guessed that the Hoe of Destruction had less meaning to a farmer than it would to an adventurer like me. He was much more excited by his close encounter. I had to admit it was quite a sight, that strange vehicle. I recommend that you look into it, if you have the time.

Well, we found Mack's storeroom, but were unable to get through the door. Nothing we tried would work.



Mack's Storeroom

"We should search for that lost key near Lock Lake, Avatar," suggested Iolo.

"Aye," agreed Shamino. "It sounds like a useful weapon."

"'Tis but a hoe," argued Senti, "a farmer's tool. Whatever enchantment it carries, 'tis no suitable weapon for a warrior."

But I said only that we'd worry about it later. There were other tasks to complete for now.

There's also the story of Patterson, the mayor of Britain. From Brownie I had heard some unflattering things about

the mayor, while from Patterson himself I heard only how honest he was. But there was some reason to doubt his sincerity, and, in fact, I later caught him with Candice late at night. He admitted that he was having an illicit affair, but promised to reform. I don't really expect much from him, but I was glad to pop his bubble of self-importance and hypocrisy. I'd found all too much of that kind of behavior in Britannia since my return. And if there's one thing I can't abide, it's a hypocrite!

Before leaving Britain and heading toward Cove, which we would visit before heading for Minoc, we decided to test our new weapons and armor. Senti had heard of some brigands who frequented the road just west of Britain, so we all headed that way to test our mettle and to help the town a little at the same time.

We left Britain by a muddy track that led westward, running between two large pumpkin patches. We walked confidently, if a little slowly due to the weight we carried. Soon we sensed danger and all of us readied ourselves for combat. I instructed Spark to hang back and use his sling from a distance. The rest of us readied our weapons—Iolo his crossbow, Senti his bow, Shamino and I our two-handed swords. I declined to use the musket for now.

Suddenly a crossbow bolt flew past my ear and simultaneously I spotted our brigands. There were three of them, but by far the most dangerous was the one with the crossbow. While Iolo and Senti sent an accurate barrage of return fire, Shamino and I charged forward. A bolt lodged in the shoulder joint of my armor, barely piercing my skin, but the pain caught me by surprise. It had been a long time since I had endured the singular effects of Britannian battle. I swung a mighty blow at the man's head, but missed. Shamino, however, caught him full in the chest, caving in his armor. Meanwhile, the man's companions were charging us. One was dressed as a paladin, and I turned to engage him. His first blow crashed off my great helm, causing my ears to ring and my eyes to cross momentarily.

I returned the favor, but the man's plate armor turned aside my first blow. I quickly reversed my grip and, putting my entire body behind it, I brought the blade up and into his chinplate. The man staggered backwards as a bolt from Iolo's bow caught him full in the eye. He died instantly, blood spurting from the hole in his helmet where his eye had been. I turned quickly to attack any remaining enemy, but there were none left. All three brigands lay dead on the ground.



Battle!

We examined the men, finding some money and, of course, more armor and weapons. Though we were already very well equipped, we took what we thought would prove useful, then left the corpses to their fate.

I decided it was now time to leave Britain, but on the way out of town, we visited Lord British once more to avail ourselves of his healing powers. Since it was near supper time when we arrived, we were treated to a free meal by Bennie, the head servant.

The Avatar stopped then. For the first time I noticed that the fire had almost died down. There was a chill in the air, the chill of very early morning. I thought I heard a cock crow in the distance. Faint snoring filled the room. I realized we were the only ones left awake.

"We must be off early today," he told us. "We must head back to Britain to return the signed bill to Lady Miranda; then we'll start our journey to Minoc."

"Can you not tell us the rest of your tale?" Carlotta asked. "There's little left to tell," he said, but I thought he was hiding something, so I pressed him.

"Come, Avatar. The story is almost up to date. Why not tell us the rest?"

He shrugged. "I can see that I'll get no rest at all. But I do want you to know the truth."



Entry 6—Cove

Our trip to Cove was uneventful. We simply headed east until we'd crossed a pair of bridges. I noticed a circle of stones with an active Moongate in its center. It was just off the path we took to Cove, and I noted its location in my journal. I thought I might investigate it later, despite the warnings I'd heard about the unreliability of the Moongates.

We found Cove, a lovely little village, at the edge of a sea of filth. I could see why the bill I carried from Britain was needed. I felt ashamed of the Britanniens who had let this happen.

When I arrived in Cove, I sought out Lord Heather, Cove's mayor, and spoke with him about the situation in Lock Lake.

"It has gotten so putrid that on hot summer days the stink is suffocating. I believe that the Britannian Mining Company in Minoc is the source of the problem. Mining waste is being deposited in the Lake. Thou shouldst be glad it is nearly winter!"

Heather signed the bill for me most happily, and then we talked of other things. I was amazed to find that Cove had acquired a new reputation over the years. In addition to its guardianship of the Shrine of Compassion, it could also boast that it was the city of passion, of lovers. In fact everyone in town was involved with somebody. Almost everyone, that is. The mayor mentioned Nastassia, his voice becoming quite sad. He suggested I talk with a bard named De Maria about her.

As we were talking, Lord Heather mentioned a familiar name—Jaana, who had once been a rather close friend of mine. It seemed that some romance had built up between the mayor and my former companion. Of course, I immediately sought out Jaana as soon as I could politely take my leave of Lord Heather.

Jaana looked well and very fit. It was a pleasure to see her again. I asked if it was true about her and the mayor and she did confirm it. I was happy for her, though a little sad as well. We had been rather close, you know, and at one time...

However, Jaana did seem anxious to renew her life of adventure, so I asked her to join us. I suspected that her healing skills would be needed before we were done.

We had heard from Lord British about the wizard Rudyom, and so I looked for him. He was in his magic shop, moving about with apparent purpose. We stood in the doorway, watching, and he did not notice us for some time. Finally I greeted him.

Rudyom had grown older and seemed disoriented. I was reminded of Nystul, back at the castle. He admitted that there were problems with magic these days. He also told me about the magic carpet, which had been borrowed and lost somewhere in the Serpent's Spine. But it was the mention of blackrock that most got my attention. He told us of his experiments with the substance.

"I wrote them all down in my notebook," he told me, looking about distractedly, "which is somewhere around here. Thou art welcome to look at it. But stay away from that damned transmuter—'tis dangerous!"

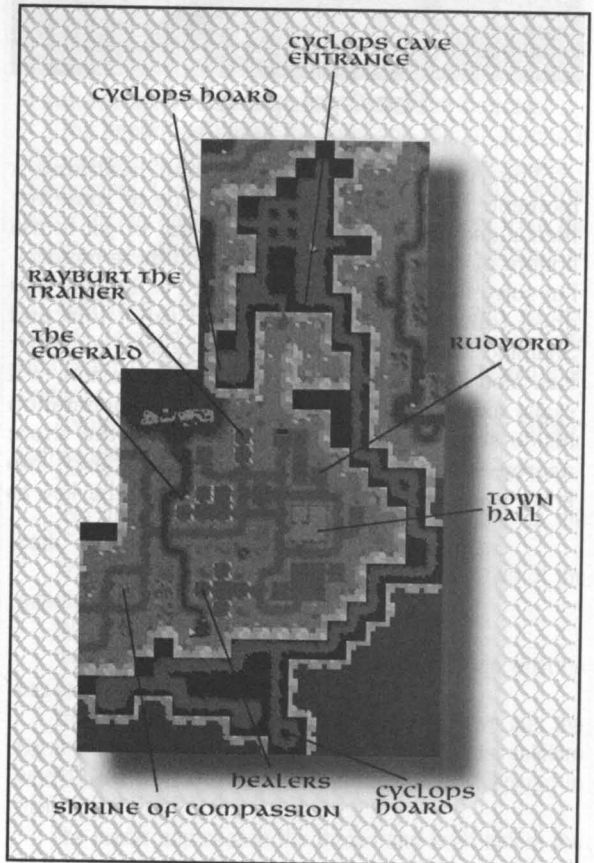
"What is a transmuter?" I asked.

"'Tis that wand-like thing. It was supposed to magnetize and magically transmute blackrock, but it doth not work correctly. Try pointing it at a piece of blackrock and thou wilt see what I mean. But do not stand too close! Thou art welcome to take it if thou dost want a piece of garbage!"

My curiosity was piqued, and my companions and I searched the wizard's place, eventually finding both the notebook and a wand that could only have been the transmuter he had mentioned. We read the contents of the notebook. It was surely full of clues, if we had only known what it was all about. I wrote some notes in my journal. Something about blackrock being shaped by magic and the transmuter causing it to explode. Anyway, we found a wand on the table near the notebook and assumed it was the transmuter. Since Rudyom didn't want it, we took it with us. There was also a quantity of what we took to be blackrock. We took some of that as well.

At the Emerald, the local tavern, we met the bard, De Maria. He was rather a character. Flamboyant and exceedingly courtly, he did, nevertheless, sing a song, which told me much more about the unfortunate Nastassia. A most amusing fellow. De Maria told me to seek Nastassia at the Shrine of Compassion. I was intrigued, so, late in the day, I headed for the shrine.

"I think I've told enough of my tale for now. There's just one small detail to add. We explored a cave north of Cove. It was the home of many hostile Cyclopes, but it also yielded some useful items. It's a dangerous place, though. Not a place to go if you're not well prepared. We did, however, find some very powerful items there—the Magic Leggings I'm wearing, for instance. However, we were forced to slay many of the dumb brutes in the process, and we barely made it through without serious mishap. There was one chest that gave us some trouble, I remember. But Shamino simply hacked it apart with his two-handed sword. Sometimes that works, when all other efforts fail."



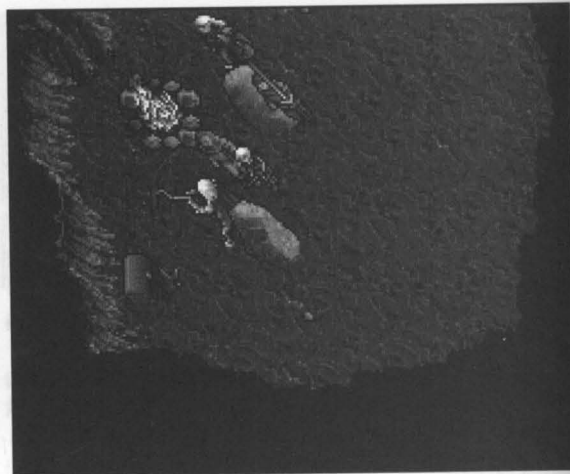
Cove

Here the Avatar hesitated. Then, when he finally spoke, his voice was low, almost inaudible.



The Cyclops Cave

The Avatar began to rise, then hesitated a moment. "Well, I think it's about time to rouse my friends and get going again. We've got to get to the bottom of this Fellowship business and these murders. I'm sorry I can't stay longer. I think I've brought you good folks up to date, though. I think Iolo and Shamino wanted to go hunting for the key the farmer lost. You know, to get that Hoe of Destruction, if it really exists. Spark found a Ring of Regeneration inside some carcass or other up along the shore nearby—young boys will mess with anything, you know—and I think Iolo's hoping to find the key as



Hacking Apart a Chest

well. But we have no time to waste . . ."

I could see that the Avatar was getting ready to leave. He was halfway out of his chair when Carlotta stopped him, asking, "Avatar, is this really the first time thou hast been back to Britannia in 200 years?"

He looked in surprise back at Carlotta, settling slowly back into his chair. "Funny you should ask . . ."

Why don't I tell this part, Robert?

Be my guest, Carlotta. What thou lackest in accuracy thou makest up for in enthusiasm.

Ultima Underworld

Despite Robert's aspersions, I remember the events of that morning perfectly well. As Robert has said, the Avatar did look at me in surprise.

"It's quite strange you should ask," he said. "I was here one other time. But how did you know?"

I shrugged.

"One hears tales," I said. "If one listens, that is."

I glanced over at Robert to see his reaction. He had that "Hummmph, there she goes again" look on his face.

"The ravings of lunatics are not always reliable barometers, Carlotta," Robert sniffed.

"Tell us of this adventure," I implored, ignoring Dr. DeMain's remark. "The rumors are that you conquered the Stygian Abyss."

"How do you come by such information?" asked Robert with no small amazement.

"Gossip," I replied. "But I know how you disdain it." I turned back to the Avatar. "Please, tell us . . ."

"Very well," he said. "But it's a tale I do not relish."



For three nights my sleep was interrupted by terrible dreams. I'd awaken with my body covered in sweat and the sheets twisted about me. Each time, the memory of my dreams eluded me.

On the fourth night, I dropped off to sleep dreading the nightmares I knew would follow. A sickening sense of *deja vu* slid over me. In my dream, a spectral

form hovered in front of me—the ghostly face of a man long-dead. His lips moved, but I heard his voice in my mind.

"Treachery and doom," he moaned. "My brother doth bring a great evil upon the land. Britannia is in danger. You must hurry."

The apparition wavered and turned into a mist which swirled into a vortex. I felt myself drawn toward the center of this whirlpool and knew that I had but to follow it to be transported to Britannia.

In the slow-motion of a dream, I floated forward reaching for . . . something. Then the world went black.

The next thing I knew, a terrible scream was ripping through the air. The cry of someone terrified for her life.

I was in a tower room of a castle. Standing next to the window across the room was a figure draped in a blood-red cloak. Though its face was hidden by a hood, from the shadowy depths I could see that its yellow, demonic eyes burned with a mad passion.

"I would have thought my brother had sent you, if he were not dead," the creature said. Its voice was raspy and deep. "But it matters not, for thou wilt throw the hounds off the scent."

The apparition raised its arms and the air around it shimmered. A blue light enveloped the creature and it disappeared. I ran to the window and looked down. A troll was running down the dirt road leading away from the castle. Over one shoulder it carried a sack. There was something, someone, thrashing about in the bag.

Just then, the door to the room flew open. Armed guards dressed in chain mail burst into the room and grabbed me. The insignia of a royal house decorated their uniforms. They spread out through the room.

"What hast thou done with my lord's daughter, Arial?" demanded their leader.

"I . . ."

"No doubt he threw her to that troll running up the path," said another soldier standing by the window.

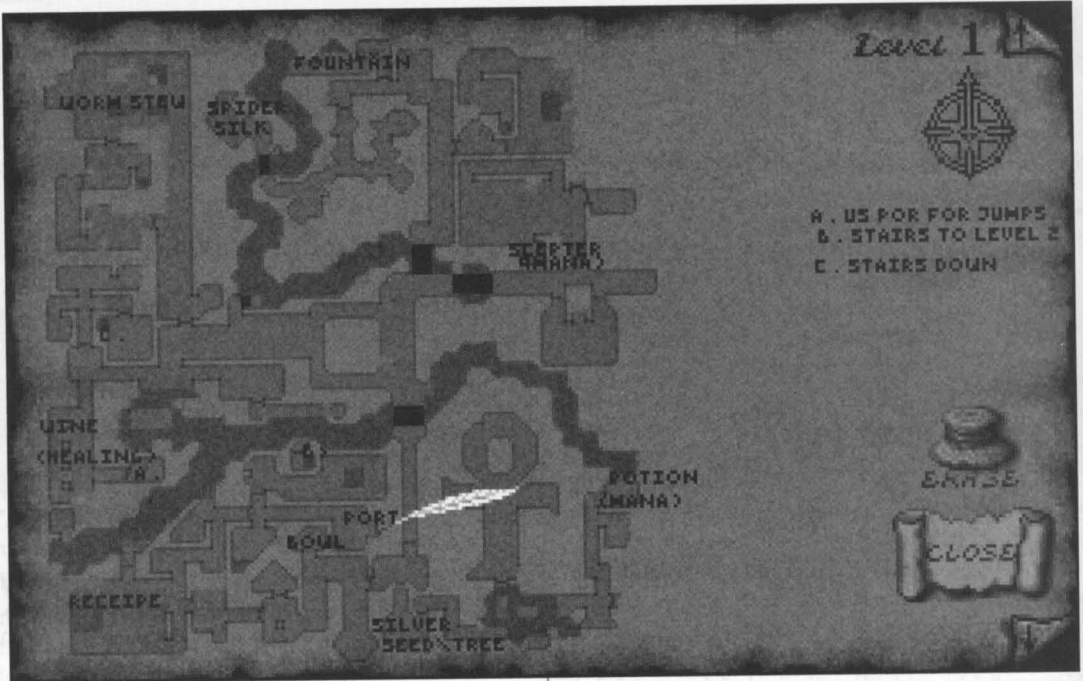
"You and you," said the leader, pointing at two of the guards. "Go after them."

"No, I'm . . ."

"We will take you to see Baron Almríc and see what he has to say about this."

They dragged me through the halls and down into the Baron's throne room. A few minutes later, the two soldiers who'd been sent after the troll appeared and whispered in their leader's ear.

The leader approached the throne and knelt before the Baron. Ignoring me, the Baron addressed his questions to the soldier's leader.



Underworld Level One

“Corwin,” he began, “what hast thou found? What of my daughter?”

“This person was in the room,” he jerked his thumb at me.

“He tossed the Lady Ariel from her window to a troll who was waiting on the ground below. The troll took her to the Stygian Abyss. My men tried to follow, but were set upon by all manner of foul beasts. I fear there is no way to recover thy daughter.”

The Baron turned his steely gaze upon me. “For three nights a ghostly figure has come to me warning me of an evil one who will come to steal my daughter. Well, what hast thou to say?”

I explained that I was the Avatar, but he didn’t seem impressed.

“It has been many years since the Avatar visited these parts,” he said. “I know not if thou art he. There are none of my people who have survived the Stygian Abyss. Corwin shall take thee to the Abyss and lock thee in. If thou art truly

the Avatar, thou wilt survive and save my daughter. If thou art lying, thy falsehood shall bring thee low.”

He waved his hand in a gesture of dismissal and turned away. I thought for a moment I saw tears in his eyes, but then I was dragged from the room.

Corwin tossed me through the enormous double doors leading into the Abyss.

“This is the only way out of the Abyss,” he said. “When I hear Lady Ariel’s voice, I will let thee out.” With that, he slammed the doors shut. In the darkness which pressed against me, I could hear the clanging of the lock. Then all was still and black.

It took a few moments, but eventually my eyes adjusted to what little light there was in this hole. The Stygian Abyss. I’d been in this dungeon before and knew its dangers

well—or so I thought. On the floor to my right I spied a bag. Picking it up, I discovered parchment and quill, a torch, food, and a small dagger.

I lit the torch and the walls of the Abyss leapt into view. Uneasiness snaked around my stomach. Or maybe I was hungry. Nervously, I bit into the apple I'd found in the bag and glanced around the room. Things had changed in the Abyss since last I'd visited. There was nothing familiar about the walls surrounding me. I tied the bag onto the waistband of my trousers and was going to tuck the dagger into the top of my boot when I discovered that somewhere along the way I'd lost my shoes.

In fact, I had no armor and only the dagger as a weapon. Not an auspicious beginning. I followed the hallway north. A few paces along there was a door to the east. I decided not to open it right away. You never knew what might be hiding behind doors in the Abyss. The corridor curved around to the west, and lying on the floor at the end of this hall I discovered two rune stones: *Ort* and *Jux*. I knew that combined they would cast a *Magic Arrow* spell, but without a rune bag, I couldn't make the spell work.

I wandered south and found the bones of another hapless visitor to the Abyss. Next to the skeleton was a backpack. Though I was loath to paw through these belongings, I realized there was little to be gained by being squeamish. If I hoped to survive this foul pit and rescue Arial, I needed all the help I could get.

Luck was with me, for in the knapsack I found a runebag with the *Bet*, *In*, *Lor*, and *Sanct* stones. There was also a key and a scroll. The scroll was a love letter, probably written to the unfortunate soul whose bones I'd discovered. Carefully, I placed the scroll on the skeleton. The key I kept, hoping it would unlock any doors I might encounter.

The parchment I'd found in the first bag turned out to have magical properties. Each time I unrolled it, I discovered that wherever I'd walked now appeared on a map with perfect detail.

I decided the best course of action was to make my way through as much of the dungeon as possible and get an accurate map. I ran through the corridors, jumped into the water and swam, and, in general, mapped out as much of the dungeon as I possibly could. Occasionally, I did stop to get my bearings and mark what I'd discovered on the map.

The Avatar pulled a piece of parchment from his bag. On it was a detailed map of the Stygian Abyss. He had made notations on various parts of the maps regarding the things he'd found there.

"This is amazing," I said.

"Yes, Dr. Stein. If not for this map, I would have been doomed in the Abyss," said the Avatar.

"What is this?" I asked, pointing at a section of the map. "Worm Stew?"

The Avatar laughed.

"That was a recipe I learned from the goblin Lanugo. You need a Bowl, a Bottle of Port, a Green Mushroom, and a Dead Worm. Luckily there were plenty of dead worms in the Abyss."

"You . . . ate Worm Stew?" I asked. My stomach threatened to invert itself at the thought.

"No, but I hear it's quite tasty. I traded the stew to Sethar on the fourth level of the dungeon for Dragon Scales."

I was getting confused. "But why did you do that?" I asked.

"With the Spider Thread I got on the first level of the Abyss, I had Marrowsuck, who lived on the fifth level, make me Dragonskin Boots. They are impervious to lava, which I discovered on the lower levels of the dungeon."

"But, how did you know you would need the spider thread?"

"Ketchivall, a goblin on the first level, told me. I discovered that you had to be careful talking to the different people in the Abyss—some, like the Goblin King, really liked flattery while others, like Goldthirst, the Mountain-Folk King, preferred straight talk.

"I also discovered a Shrine on the first level, to the east of the main entrance. A secret switch to the south of the shrine opened the door to the shrine. It could only be reached by leaping across the great chasm."

"You mentioned goblins and Mountain-Folk. Are there many different types of folk living in the Abyss?" Robert interjected. A good question.

Thank you, Carlotta.

"Yes. And many wished favors in return for information," answered the Avatar. "Goldthirst wanted the Gazer living in the mines killed so that his people could continue to work the gold there. I

obliged him, but only after I had acquired armor and better arms."

"But where could you find such things?" I asked. "I understand that the Abyss has few people and fewer resources."

The Avatar nodded. "It was hard going at first. I found leather boots and leggings on the first level, but I knew I needed better arms and armor. I discovered some chain mail on the second level, but that was by accident."

"Accident?"

The Avatar blushed, then said, "I went to kill the Gazer for Goldthirst. I'd had some luck in defeating the hostile creatures on the first level of the Abyss; I was full of myself and thought defeating it would be easy. It eluded my blows at the same time it dealt me grievous harm through magical means.

"I tripped over the chain mail as I was trying to run away and save myself. It was like something out of a Monty Python movie."

"A what?" I asked.

"A Monty Pyth . . . never mind. Sometimes I forget that Britanniains don't know anything about my world."

I didn't answer him. I rose and went to pour him some more ale.

"Tell me more about the Abyss," I said, handing him a fresh mug. I sat down across from him.

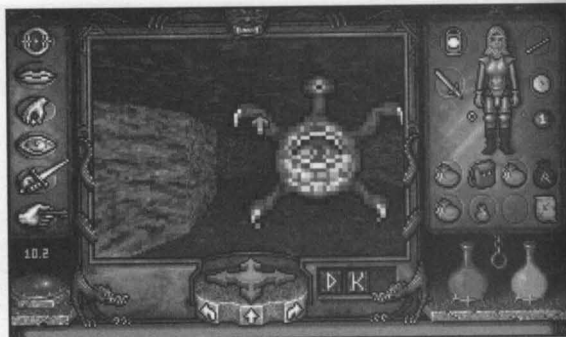


After exploring the first level, I spent some time meditating at the shrine. I'd discovered that different mantras raised different attributes, but it wasn't until I had explored the lower levels of the Abyss that I discovered all the mantras and their combinations.

After my meditations, my strength and magical abilities had increased, but not as much as I

would have liked. It took much of my strength to defeat the creatures I encountered. I knew I must gain insight and more experience in the Abyss if I was to survive and find Arial.

I soon found that by walking about areas of the Abyss I was unfamiliar with, I gained greater abilities. The lower I explored, the more insight I gained. This also made the time I spent at the shrine more productive.

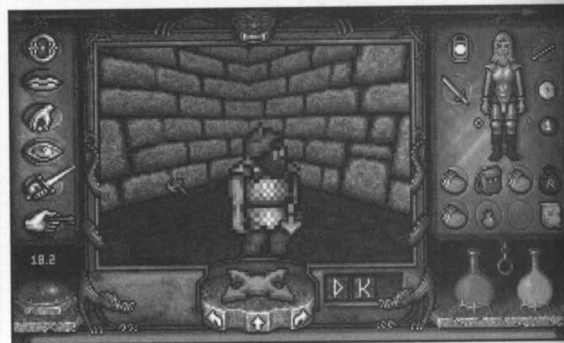


The Gazer

On the second level of the Abyss I discovered the home of the Mountain-Folk. I've told you a bit about Goldthirst, the king of the Mountain-Folk. If you should ever meet him, whatever you do don't call him a dwarf!

In the southeast corner of the mines I found Shak, who would repair all kinds of arms and armor (except for that of goblin workmanship, which he disdained). He also knew of the Sword and Shield of Valor. Oh, and I discovered that having a pick was necessary in this section of the Abyss for there were always falling rocks and cave-ins to dig through.

If you should ever find yourself in the Abyss, there is a healing fountain in the northeast corner of the second level.



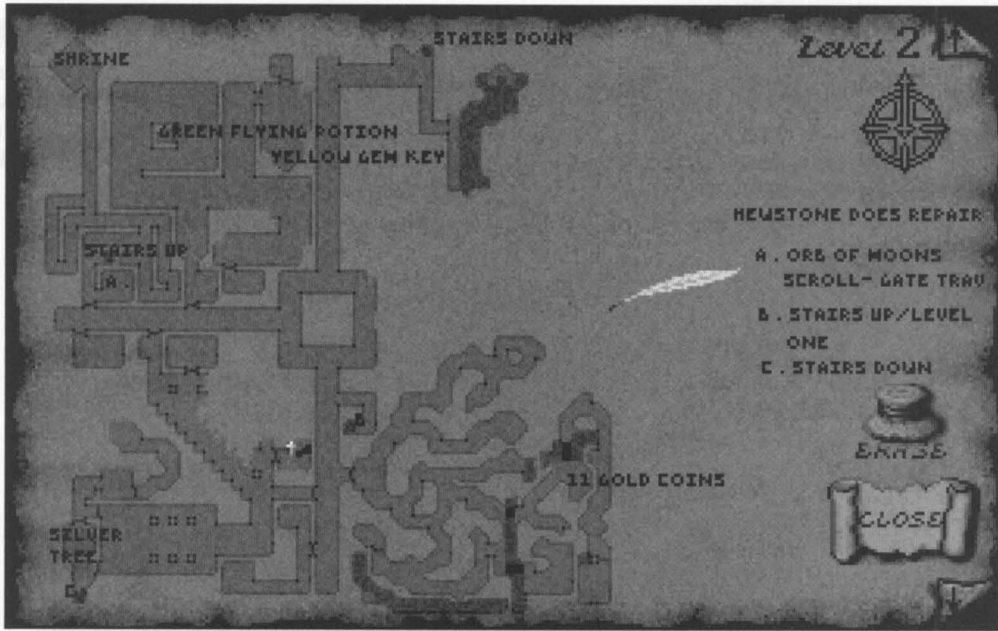
Shak

"But what of the Baron's daughter?" I asked.

"Ah, the Baron's daughter, Arial," he began.

At that moment, Spark woke and called out.

"I see that my young friend has awakened," said the Avatar with a nod in the boy's direction.



Underworld Level Two

"But what happened?" I asked anxiously. "What about Ariel?" I hated not knowing what happened next.

"The rest of the tale will have to wait until another time," he replied.

o o o

Perhaps I should complete the story, Carlotta.

As thou wisheth, Robert. I've quite done for now.

As Carlotta said, Spark awakened, and this seemed to remind the Avatar of his current Quest. He turned to us and said, "I really must go now." He stood up then and yelled, "Iolo! Shamino! Senti! Come! Let's get moving. Shamino, aren't you up yet?" There were all kinds of grunts and groans as the tired adventurers stretched themselves out of sleep. Spark was already by the Avatar's side, and Jaana joined us shortly.

We all ate a hearty breakfast in the Emerald dining room, and the companions spoke of old times. It was

remarkable. Their understanding of the events of the Avatar's adventures was very much in accordance with our records. Later, as I stood watching the band of adventurers walk down the path toward Britain, I caught myself holding my breath.

"Ooof!" I yelped as Carlotta dug her elbow into my ribs.

"Now tell me that isn't the Avatar, Robert," she dared.

Laughing, I told her, "You'll get no argument from me."

But she wasn't listening. Suddenly she was running up the path after the Avatar's band. Was she defecting, leaving our research for the life of an adventurer? I couldn't believe it, but there she was running down the path after them.

Then I heard her yelling, "Avatar! Wait a moment."

He stopped and turned to face her. "What is it?" he asked.

"Avatar," she cried. "Promise thou wilt come back and tell us the rest of thy story when thou art done. Promise!"

He smiled then. "There's no assurance I'll even survive the experience, you know."

"Thou wilt," answered Carlotta in that self-assured way she had. "I know thou wilt!"

"Then I promise. I'll return, and I'll tell you the whole story."

"Thou wilt find us at the Lycaeum when thou art ready."

Without another word, the Avatar turned and strode off. I ran up to Carlotta and together we stood there and watched him go. I found it hard to doubt anymore, but just to get on her nerves I said, "One could almost believe he's the real Avatar."

I can't print Carlotta's reply.



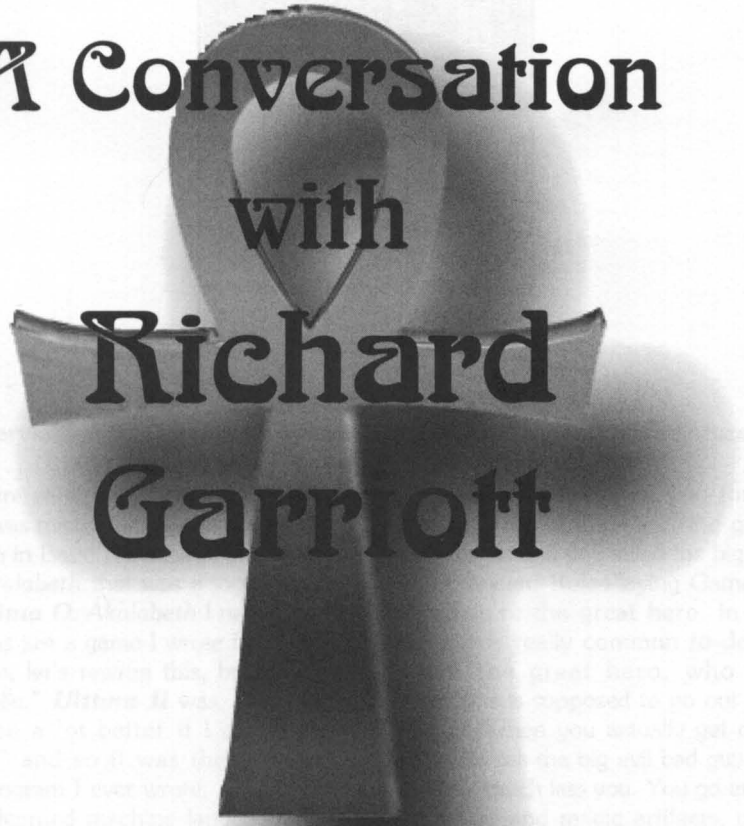
Appendix B

A Conversation

with

Richard

Garrriott





ULTIMA: The Avatar Adventures

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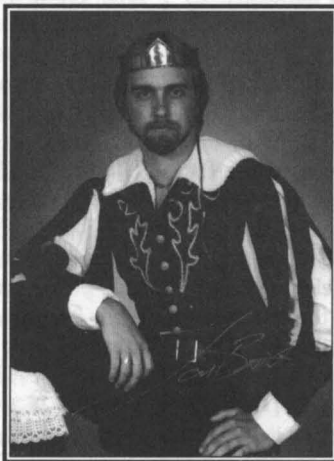
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A Conversation with Richard Garriott



Part I: Discussing Ultimas 1-6 (Interviewed by Caroline Spector for *Ultima: The Avatar Adventures*)

Opus I, II, and III were all written during a period of time when, really, it was me learning how to program.

Ultima I was written in Basic. There was one written before that called *Akalabeth* that was also written in Basic; it was like **Ultima O**. *Akalabeth* I never wrote to be published. It was just a game I wrote for myself.

Ultima I was, "Gee, let's rewrite this, but make it accessible to the public." **Ultima II** was, "Hey, this game could sure run a lot better if I only knew machine language," and so it was the very first machine language program I ever wrote. **Ultima III** was, "Hey, I finally learned machine language," but the one I wrote for **Ultima II** was really crummy. I could sure do it a lot better if I rewrote it. I'll start over again because now I've learned machine language.

The whole point of that description is to say that in **Ultimas I, II** and **III** the stories were incredibly simplistic. In fact, there really wasn't a story to them. They were really just a collection of odd tasks that had

to be completed before you finally collected the biggest magical artifact that the game had in it, and you went off and you killed the big evil bad guys. I call it the Standard Role-Playing Game Scenario Number One: You're the great hero. In fact, in computer games it is really common to describe it this way: You're the great hero, who you read in the instructions is supposed to go out and kill the big evil bad guy. When you actually get down to the world, you never see the big evil bad guy do anything to the peasants, much less you. You go around collecting lots of treasure and magic artifacts, usually taking great advantage of all the people you meet along the way, doing far more destruction than the bad guy ever did, until you finally become powerful enough to get all the magic stuff you need, go to the bad guy's castle and kill this person that you've never seen before in your life for no particularly good reason except that you were told to.

CS: So you end up being worse than the bad guy.

RG: Oh, absolutely. All the computer games out in the world still do that. You just go around and you take and steal and kill everything you can along your path to win the game. Also, *Akalabeth* had randomly generated terrain. *Ultima I* was my old fantasy game that I used to run back in high school. *Ultima II*, well, another thing that is important is the books you pointed out as source material, like the *Wizard of Oz* and *Chronicles of Narnia*, and also *Lord of the Rings*. In fact, I have never read the *Wizard of Oz*. The only two fantasy books I have ever read are the *Chronicles of Narnia* and *Lord of the Rings*. I have not read any other fantasy book in my life. So, yes, you've hit the nail on the head for source material.

Combined with that, I've borrowed elements from the movie *Time Bandits* - that's where the Moongate concept came from. The reason I bring that up is that in *Ultima II*, that's where moongates first appear. Since I wanted to have time travel in *Ultima II*, when *Time Bandits* first came out, before it was on video, I actually went night after night to the dollar theater with pad and pencil to draw a copy of their map, to see if it had any logic to it. It sort of did, but not really. After I did all this it came out on video, so it was a total waste of time.

Anyway, it's easier to have time travel in the real world than it is in an artificial world, because the real world at least gives you a frame of reference for events to take place in. So where *Ultima I* took place in my old *D&D* world, *Ultima II* took place on Earth. Then for *Ultima III*, since I wasn't going to be doing the time travel theme again, I didn't need Earth. So I went back to a modified Earth, this place *Sosaria*. It really didn't look much like the first one, but I know it was, because when I built the first one I drew in my old *D&D* world and cut rivers through it and cut it up into separate land masses. *Ultima I* actually had four maps on it, but they are just a flip and translation of the ones you see for *Ultima III*. Pretty close to it, just cut up. *Ultima III* is actually a truer representation of my old *D&D* world. So that's *Ultima I, II* and *III*.

CS: So what I'm wondering is, in terms of *Ultima IV* and beyond, does this have a very great impact

on the Britanniens at all?

RG: This is part of their mythos. *Ultima I* took place on *Sosaria*, *Ultima II* on Earth, *Ultima III* on *Sosaria*, and now *Ultima IV, V, VI, VII, VIII* and *IX* all take place on Britannia. *Ultima I, Ultima II* and *Ultima III* really took place on Britannia too, but since the events of the games are based on current mythology, people believe something that is different from the truth.

CS: So basically what you are doing now is that you are rewriting the history so that what happened in *Ultima I, Ultima II* and *Ultima III* is part of a larger, cohesive system.

RG: Exactly. Right.

So here we have the evil wizard, Mondain. Just to give you a two- or three-sentence plot summary for what happened in there, this guy is supposed to be this really big nasty person who is beating up all the peasants. The big change between *Ultima I, Ultima II* and *Ultima III* is that in *Ultima I* Lord British is only one king (i.e., territory owner) out of about eight. The kingdoms are not united at this time. So you as the player go around performing quests for a number of different people, not just Lord British. There is no specific place to start. Mondain is supposedly immortal. Therefore, all the heroes throughout history have been failing to remove this guy because he's not been removable. While you play the game, technology actually slowly progresses. There's kind of an artificially fast time that it's travelling through. You start out with medieval swords and eventually technology builds up to space travel after a period of 100-200 hours of play. And you go out into space and shoot down some bad guys, and you discover a time machine, and you take this time machine back in time to when Mondain was becoming immortal, and it turns out that he was becoming immortal due to this gem that he was creating. So the time machine takes you right back to the room and the time of the creation of this gem, and you have this big battle and you destroy the gem and the room, and you kill the guy, and that's how you win the game. That's Mondain in a nutshell. That's important only because we intentionally take little fragments of history up into the current games.

CS: So what's the fall-out from the events of *Ultima I*?

RG: The gem that you destroy at the end of *Ultima I* breaks into three pieces. You have three of these crystalline shards that look something like this. Each of the gem shards is probably as big as your drink here, and shaped like a dagger.

Also it turns out that his skull re-emerges in *Ultima IV*. It's a magic artifact you find that is capable of destroying—it turns out in *Ultima IV* that you could just leave this skull alone. If you pick it up and use it, all life is destroyed on the planet. And so, instead, at the end of *Ultima IV* you should cast his skull into the great volcano at the abyss. We'll cover that later, when we get to *Ultima IV*. And you don't know this about his skull between *Ultima I* and *Ultima IV*. This was a piece of fiction that was generated at the time of *Ultima IV*.

I didn't know there was going to be an *Ultima II* when I wrote *Ultima I*. We gloss over the fact that it became Earth. This time your antagonist is Minax. Now, there are all kind of after-the-fact histories as we go. Minax, it turns out, was the child lover of Mondain. As you kill off Mondain she's still a weak child, so she doesn't come out too much at that point in time. At some point later she re-emerges to take her revenge for the nasty horrible thing you did to her master.

So, Minax arrives, more powerful than her predecessor, and she has mastered time and space even more than her lover had, and she runs back to the time of Legends. This is very much a *Time Bandits* parallel. That's really where the concept was taken from. And these Moongates arrive, which are holes in the time/space continuum, and that's where we got that map from. And you end up having to travel back and forth between different eras. Lord British exists in current day England. Once you've mastered the gates you travel back, knock her off, and she's out of there.

Which brings us to *Ultima III*. This returns to Sosaria (Sosaria is just the old name for Britannia). We don't ever say Earth, by the way. The land used to be called Sosaria, and no one there has ever realized that it happened to look a lot like Earth a long time ago.

Time and space and distance and fabric—it's all up to the interpreter.

Ultima I, *Ultima II* and *Ultima III* each seems to have its own bizarre quirk that is not congruous with the rest of the story. *Ultima III* has a really big one that we are also changing history for. Exodus (really just a nifty word that we didn't realize was from the Bible at the time we wrote it) was very mysteriously described as somehow being the foul progeny of Mondain and Minax. In the game, Exodus was in fact a machine. Basically, it was a big computer that you had to destroy. However, that's the part of history that we are now glossing over. And so the exact nature of what Exodus really was has to remain a mystery because we can't say he was this big demon when he wasn't. The best way to describe it is that he is a force of evil, something non-humanoid. To solve this game you have to collect the four symbolic cards—a sun, a moon, a heart and death. And after you've collected the four cards they are really something like computer punch cards. You insert them all in the correct order and it destroys him.

CS: Most people wouldn't guess he was a computer.

RG: No, it's pretty much the exact opposite.

And so, during *Ultima III* the kingdom is coming together as one kingdom under Lord British. By the end of *Ultima III* the kingdoms are united and you, the player, have assisted in this forging of a new kingdom, Britannia. The events in this trilogy were the first Ages of Darkness.

Ultima IV, *V* and *VI* are the Age of the Avatar. Now let me tell you what was happening in my life at the time, because it relates. Between *Ultima III* and *Ultima IV*, I moved out of my hometown of Houston and moved to the frozen wasteland of New England. I moved into a house right next door to my extraordinarily conservative brother. Our lifestyles clashed horribly. I finally left school. I was going through culture shock, adulthood shock, soul-searching—is this fun and games, or is this a serious career? If you've been through it, you can understand. And so *Ultima IV* became a very personal issue for me. As I was up there in New Hampshire (which I hated), I became very internalized. I spent two years

with *Ultima IV*, the longest I've ever spent developing an *Ultima*, perfecting it and getting this whole concept of Avatar-hood really nailed down tight.

And now I started discovering some of the sources that would influence the next three games. I was getting tired of writing the standard "go beat up the bad guys" sort of stuff. I had regurgitated that story three times. I now understood programming quite well. Technology was no longer an issue, no longer hard to do. I knew exactly what I could pull off and what I could not pull off. Since I (ORIGIN) was publishing the games myself, I began receiving and reading the mail that players sent in. I realized that people were reading things into the game that were totally fictitious. I'd get letters from people saying, "Ah, man, I couldn't beat up the big dragon with the huge sword I had, so I tried a dagger, and it worked!" Well, that's ludicrous. But when you have 100,000 people playing a game, they will have wildly different visions of what the game is, based on how it happened to unfold for them. People were reading all kinds of underlying messages into the games, many with serious overtones, when the view was "here's some money, here's some weapons, here's some monsters, go kill them and you win." That's all these games were.

For the first time I was getting mail, everything from fan mail from kids who were really getting into the game to hate mail from religious groups who thought I was a satanic perverter of America's youth. This all combined to make me sit back and say, "Gee," you know? It became more important to me as I became an adult to consider the quality of the story I was producing and also the content of that story, because a large part of the group playing these is pretty young. I concluded that when you have the opportunity to impact in some way the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people, there is an inherent responsibility that goes along with that.

And so, a large part of what changed about *Ultima IV* was a reflection of the desire to ensure that what was in the game was of good quality and also something that was a positive social force. It was never in response to that hate mail, by any means, but it was

because I'd like to make sure that nobody—no father or mother or whoever—would have any reason to think anything negative about this.

CS: So it sounds like you have a sense of responsibility about producing games with more significance than "let's go kill somebody." This also seems to show up in the way that you structured the game.

RG: Precisely. But on the other hand, when I was writing *Ultima IV*, I wasn't sure it was going to sell well. I was afraid people might think that I had really gone off the deep end, that I was preaching, so to speak, in a game. However, it was the very first #1 best-selling *Ultima* in the series. It was extremely well received. It was the first one that got substantial public awareness. It received a great deal of press outside of what it normally would have because it was the first, and still is really the only, series that takes this kind of socially aware sidetrack. Which is very interesting when we get to *Ultima VII*—it's kind of interesting to throw that in the other direction.

So the kind of things that built a foundation for *Ultima IV* were just as fun, but different. For example, in *Ultima I*, *Ultima II* and *Ultima III*, you see a chest and of course you go pick it up and try to take it with you, try to pick the lock, try to bash it open. The easiest thing to do story-wise back then was to hide things in people's houses. And you'd just go around ransacking everything, looking for everything. And I said, look, I can think of just as many elements that reinforce the fact that if I go steal something from your house, you're not going to be very happy about it. Because the technology is finally sophisticated enough that I can detect that kind of thing. In fact, one of the hardest things for me to detect is a player walking into somebody's house and taking something. It's very hard for the game to know.

That's really what *Ultima IV* says. I wanted to build this thing where there is no big fighter, no big bad guy. This is a game of personal conquest. The Triad of Evil is finally behind us, so this is the Renaissance. This is the age of sitting back and saying, "Hey! Even though there's no big evil bad guy, we still have thieves and brigands and fistfights and barroom brawls." So, this is a Quest for the Holy Grail

sort of thing. We want somebody to show us the way. What's the good way to lead a life? How do we do this right? What value system should we have to benefit society as a whole?

And so you get dropped into the game in *Ultima IV*... oh, that's another thing that happens in *Ultima IV*, that goes back to the intro scene you were describing. In paper role-playing games, one of the biggest aspects of the game is the human interaction. It's harder to simulate that in computer gaming. One of the next biggest aspects is the inventory or management—managing your personal stats and managing your inventory. Managing your inventory is one of the easiest focuses of computer games, but it's actually not the funner one in my mind. But if you go from there to, for instance, the character itself. . . in a computer game if you roll random dice, you're just going to sit there and go roll, roll, roll, roll. You get all maxed-out numbers and it's, "Okay, I'll take that one." If you don't let them roll out and you let them choose numbers, well, it's kind of a fixed equation. Once they know the map and the game, they can make the perfect decision as to exactly what their stats should be if they are aware that the equations are internal. So I don't want to give you either one of those.

Ultima IV I wanted to be a very personal experience. The reason is because in most of these games you are the puppeteer running this puppet around the world. If this puppet is doing bad things it's not you, it's the puppet. You can detach. And I wanted this game to be about personal and social responsibility. It is very important that this be you in the world of Britannia, not something you've rolled up. If I'm the computer nerd at home wanting to be a big barbarian going around crashing things, I still want to be a computer nerd down there, in nice clothing. The essence of that character in the game is really the essence of you as an individual.

Let me go back to the *Ultima IV*'s philosophy and where it came from. I knew I was going to have a Quest for the Holy Grail kind of thing. Let me describe to you some of the fundamental truths of Britannia. Whenever I include philosophy, I try to be very careful to do certain things and to avoid certain other things. Religion is absolutely forbidden. There is

no mention of religion, there is no mention of deities, there is no longer any mention of demons in the religious sense. There is no Antichrist, there are no dark princes, things of that nature.

On the other hand, there is magic in the world. But magic is not a function of invoking gods, magic is a function of pseudoscience. And so that brings up another very important point, a point of semantics. Basically, the way magic works in *Ultima* is that the proverbial ether does exist. There are real laws of physics that we are unaware of here or maybe that don't exist here, that really do exist in Britannia, that allow manipulation of things in the ether. So the point is that magic is a science. It is not a deistically based force.

CS: *It is more of a science. You have to do specific things in specific ways.*

RG: And there is a real reason why that works. Even if players don't know it yet. Of course they don't.

Also, these are not morals. These are ethics. I have no idea what the real term means, but let me describe to you what I mean when I say that. Morals don't exist for me or Britannia. Ethics do exist for me and Britannia. When I say ethics, the "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is ethics, because that makes good sense. Ethics have a logical rationale that I can describe to you how they help society exist. If I beat you up, you are going to be angry at me and will be on my back. If I'm nice to you, you are likely to be nice back. I can describe that easily. It makes good rational sense. That's ethics. That's what everybody in Britannia believes.

CS: *In other words, people do things because it makes sense, because it benefits society, and not because somebody told them.*

RG: You've got it. And that's my definition of the difference between that and a moral.

CS: *They make conscious choices instead of just having somebody tell them, "this is what you are going to do."*

RG: Correct. That is the whole concept of Avatarhood. Prior to *Ultima IV* everyone was doing pretty much what they darn well pleased. The whole point of *Ultima IV* was the discovery of "It sure makes good sense for society to have these basic rules

of interaction.” And you’re the person who goes out to discover them. *Ultima IV* is the discovery of these far better actions. Trial by fire. And that’s what’s really interesting about the way the game unfolds in *Ultima IV*. In *Ultima I*, *Ultima II* and *Ultima III* you were trained to do what? You were trained to go into everybody’s house, rifle the place, do whatever you wanted, kill them off when you were done with them because it was fun, and take all their possessions.

So people opened *Ultima IV*, and the first thing they did was ransack the place. But in *Ultima IV* they were completely unaware of the fact that, by the way, as you started down this path, the community was sitting back here. Well, I’ll get back to this in a moment. Let me tell you where this came from. If I’m going to push this stuff, I’m going to have to have a basic set of things to push. OK, that’s when I said, “I need some basic philosophy to push.” Now, what is that philosophy? And I am a believer that there is no single correct philosophy, because there are an infinite number of rules and certain combinations will work just fine. However, I needed to have something, some rallying point to push.

And one night on real late night TV, I was watching a show about the Dead Sea Scrolls—I find religion very fascinating to read, and I watch TV a lot—and they somehow digressed from this one aspect about the Dead Sea Scrolls and went on to a section about how the Buddhists and the Hindus saw Christ. For instance, according to the show, anyway, the Buddhists and the Hindus said that Christ had come and lived among them for awhile, and they had items to at least substantiate this person’s existence, and had written a number of interestingly different kinds of writings about Christ than the Christians had.

So basically what they are saying is that Christ had come along and studied to become an Avatar. The Hindus and Buddhists had this concept of Avatarhood and about becoming an Avatar, and they believed that these yogis study and purify themselves, and they had sixteen different methods of personal purification. They had five methods of personal purification that were physical, five that were spiritual, five that I can’t remember, and the sixteenth one, which you could accomplish only after accomplishing the previous

fifteen, was to become one with God. The physical ones were things like control of your heart rate, control of your body temperature, and being able to teleport across land, which they believed their yogis capable of doing. The spiritual ones and the other ones, I don’t remember what they were.

CS: *So you got the imagery of the purification.*

RG: Right. And all this stuff adds up. And also we had another interesting thing, on a side note, in that their writings about Christ say the Christians are all wrong. The Christians all claim Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. They say, no, He never claimed that, it’s written down wrong. Jesus Christ claimed to be one with God. And that’s a very big difference in their minds. Every yogi that exists is a partial Avatar. In whatever way that they’ve purified themselves, they are a partial Avatar in that sense. And in all of history, according to the Hindus, there have only been two complete Avatars, one of which was this woman that predates recorded history, and the second one was Jesus Christ. Now, that’s a really interesting bent on history, among other things. That became the foundation for saying, “Hey, I’m going to build my own little structure, a mathematically interrelated structure, which will build Avatarhood.”

CS: *So in **Ultima**, in Britannia, people do not follow a set of morals, but they have to behave in an ethical way, they have to behave ethically over a long period of time to achieve Avatarhood. Right?*

RG: That’s basically correct. The only person who has ever really obtained Avatarhood is the character, period. The character is laying down the foundations, or the concept, of Avatarhood. They are never put down as laws. *Ultima V*, by the way, is the story about freedom of choice. You can’t put these down as laws. It does not work to put these down as laws. They’re fine as a point of discussion, but it’s a completely personal issue. I would never try to build a pseudoscience of truth. That’s another very important point. This is never meant to be THE TRUTH. This is really meant to be a, “Hey, by the way, if you just happen to live by these standards, it works pretty well.” It was never meant to be the one great truth of the universe that you must abide by.

CS: *Which goes back to the whole idea of morals.*

RG: Exactly. And that comes out pretty much in *Ultima V*, when we get there. In fact, it comes out completely in *Ultima V*.

Ultima V deals with hypocrisy in religion. *Ultimas* like to slam all sorts of things, and often contain a more or less specific moral or ethical statement. That is *Ultima V's* target."

CS: *I think if you are slamming something you have to show why it is ineffective.*

RG: It was never a statement of "that's wrong." It's a "by the way, let's set up something that looks like that, and show why it failed." Hopefully I am also convincing you here that *Ultimas* are very different from other computer games. Nobody is trying to do, in my mind, real stories. All my competitors have very good games out that sell at least as well as mine, and they are all monster bashes. There's no real meaning behind any of it.

CS: *It seems that at some point people are going to get tired of that. It's not really taking advantage of the technology, is it?*

RG: So I sat back and I said, "OK, I want to build my own little structure." I started putting together big lists of all of the emotional motivators that caused people to do good or evil deeds. Greed, envy, all those things. I built huge stacks of paper of these things, both good ones and bad ones, all these motivators. A lot of them had subtly overlapping aspects. I had a real hard time sorting through them. I had gotten it down to a list of about eight. It was actually more like ten or twelve. And then I happened upon the fact that those eight or ten or twelve were all combinations of Truth, Love and Courage, which came to me *not* after watching the *Wizard of Oz*. However, it was reinforced less than a week after having reached the conclusion myself by watching the *Wizard of Oz* and deciding that he had come to the same conclusion, too. It was reinforced by the fact that I had obviously found an ultimate truth to the universe. Truth, Love and Courage are extremely non-overlapping concepts in my mind.

If those are the basic three pervasive principles of life, then all other thoughts, particularly emotional motivators, are some combination of positive or negative basics of those concepts. How many

generations of the three principles are there? There are eight: Truth itself. Love. Courage. Truth and Love. Love and Courage. Courage and Truth. Truth and Love and Courage. None of the above. Makes eight. So there are three Principles, and eight Virtues. Truth taken by itself is Truth; I rephrased that as Honesty. Love became Compassion. Courage became Valor. Truth tempered by Love became Justice. Love and Courage became Self-Sacrifice. Courage and Truth became Chivalric Honor. Truth and Love and Courage became a very carefully phrased Spirituality, not to mean religion, but concern as to whether my works in the world are good, not positive, not negative. "None of the above" we refer to as Pride, but Pride not being a virtue, we have to use Humility.

CS: *So you flipped it.*

RG: Here's why. Here is where math and pseudoscience all come together. If I draw a symbol and say those three circles represent the principles of Truth and Love and Courage, and if I draw a line that is tangent only to Truth, that's the line of Honesty. If I draw a line that is tangent only to Love, that's the line of Compassion. If I draw it tangent only to Courage, that's Valor. Truth tempered by Love is Justice. Love and Courage is Self-Sacrifice. Courage and Truth is Honor. The one that touches all three of them is Spirituality. And this outer ring that touches none of them, that is completely isolated, that is the bad guy so to speak. That's Pride. But you don't use Pride, you use the reverse, which is Humility. And that's why, in the game, when you go out looking for all these virtues, and you're led down the path looking for Pride, you have to discover for yourself that you are looking the wrong direction because this one is separate, you end up having this twist. You think you've got the whole solution down here and you're running along being haughty and vain, and you get slammed around because you are running the wrong way.

So, after arriving at these three, the eight fell out of the list I had before, and it condensed very nicely. The game has an internal karma counter for each of these virtues, and as you play the game, every thing you do has the opportunity to modify one of your attributes in there. You start the game at 50%, middle

of the road, with each of these attributes. Every deed you do, every person you talk to, everything you pick up, everything you kill, everything you save, can possibly modify each these. And later on in the game, it comes back to haunt you. And you are never told in the game that these kinds of things are going on behind you. Let me give you some examples. For instance, there is this woman who sells reagents for magic.

CS: *The blind woman?*

RG: You've met her?

CS: *Yes, I've bought lots of stuff from her, and I always pay her what she asks, since she's blind.*

RG: By the way, I got a letter from a blind woman who played the game who was offended that I did that. She said that blind people can count money.

That was the Honesty test. If you drop one gold coin she says, "Hey, I only heard one drop." If you drop two or more, she says, "Thank you very much" and lets you walk out. But if you did not put down the right amount, she says, "Thieving scumbag."

CS: *I accidentally picked up a chest and I went to give it back and it won't let you give stuff back. That is very frustrating.*

RG: There is one fortunate thing, in that there are enough tests throughout this game that it doesn't matter what you do one time; what matters is what you do repeatedly. Making one bad judgment will make no difference in this game whatsoever. It's really only a matter of what you do out of habit. It also means that if you have a habit of going around killing everybody, it's going to take you a long time to dig out of that hole. And a lot of people started out **Ultima IV** going around killing everybody. They would talk to somebody, get everything they needed to know, kill them off. That was a real standard method of playing **Ultima**. The funny thing is, we've trained people so well to be the good guy in this one, that I don't have to test for it anymore. In all the subsequent **Ultimas** people still think these tests are going on. These tests were a real pain, and they don't come in anymore, but everybody still does it.

CS: *I'm not telling them that you're not doing it, because I think it's real important.*

RG: But you see, **Ultima IV** does have all these tests.

What we did in **Ultima V** and **Ultima VI** is put a few obvious ones in to keep people on their toes.

CS: *OK, so we have the principles and have extrapolated the virtues.*

RG: You don't know any of this when you start the game. You don't even know you are in Britannia. You wake up in Britannia and wonder, "Why am I here?" There is a period of discovery. You wonder why you're in Britannia—there doesn't appear to be any great world-saving thing to do. Since nobody ever says, "Go on the quest of the Avatar!", your discovery that you're going to go on the quest of the Avatar, and exactly what that is, is a completely self-generated thing.

So we have the virtues. You know the little karma tests are going on around the world. Eventually you realize that if anybody is going to help figure this out, you are really the right person to do it. You seem to be the person who has the wherewithal, the knowledge, the capability to show people this way.

Here's your challenge. **Ultima IV** was the first time I tried to write a real story. When the story came out, it was much better as stories go than the rest of my competition, but still kind of klunky from a story standpoint. In particular, the aspect I find klunky is that it is fairly repetitive. For instance, there are the eight shrines that you have to visit to eventually become enlightened, to prove yourself in each of these eight aspects. But since you have eight aspects to prove yourself in, you have to prove yourself in similar things eight times. You have to do something for the three principles. You have to do that three times. And they are very similar kinds of quests. So the challenge for you is going to be to make those eight paths not seem repetitive. Here's where my pseudoscience breaks down and it becomes hard to describe stuff: you can actually go meditate at the shrines and the shrines talk to you, in a sense. It is important that this be done as an inner realization that comes to you. It is important that those scenes do not come out as supernatural.

So you go around the world to prove yourself to be this great person of virtue. The way it finally wraps up is, once you think you understand it all, and once you've done these eight quests, and you say, "OK, I'm

ready now to prove myself, that I really am the person who has this whole thing figured out," you take on a last and final step. Here's the Holy Grail aspect to it. There is this book that exists called the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom. The actual physical manifestation appears to take center stage, but in my mind it isn't really center stage because you can see how much trouble I've had just remembering it.

CS: *It's actually a red herring?*

RG: Not really. It's still the culmination. Ta da, I'm finished. But the real story is the personal discovery aspect. What you're running for the whole time is the book and it is really a very big, powerful, mysterious artifact. But that's not really the point of the story.

CS: *Actually, that could be a really poignant, bittersweet thing, that you've achieved this goal, you've triumphed, and the character feels really let down. But as he's reflecting he realizes that while this was what he was running after what he really gained is like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz: there's no place like home.*

RG: There's a scene at the very end of *Ultima IV* that is exactly that. A little while before it says "Ta Da! You're an Avatar." And then, "Oh, by the way, you've not really completed anything. You're not finished." The whole point is that this is a philosophy that does not culminate in a completion date. This is a thought process for which you have now discovered the proper direction, but the whole point of this is that you must continue in that direction. You don't finish.

The actual way the story wraps up is that you go down into this hollow volcano, the Great Stygian Abyss, and as you go down through the levels of this dungeon you are tested at each level as to whether you understand this relationship. What principle do you hold if you are a very honest person? Answer: Truth. What virtue is Truth tempered by Love? Justice. So each level you go down is a test.

We built this great pseudoscience of these three principles, spawning these eight virtues. If you combined all eight in all possible ways, you get 64 combinations, and it turns out if you have greed and envy and all those other things, they'll tend to be combinations of these eight. Since then we've gotten other sets of three that have turned up in the other

games. You can generate almost any other kind of things you want to, just out of combinations. So we had three, we had eight, we implied a lower level, but now the solution of the game implies an upper level. And so I sat around for six months trying to decide what is the one thing—I actually debated whether I was going to go eight, three, two, one, and have two like good and evil, or if I was going to go eight, three, one. And so it turns out that the overriding, pervasive question is, what is the one thing from which the three principles were spawned from which the eight virtues were spawned?

The answer was a fairly arbitrary choice, too, because it is kind of hard to think of one eternal concept. And so the answer to life, the universe and everything is that all things are spawned from infinity. Infinity is an eight letter word, conveniently enough, and as you saw, it leads to the eight partials, and you get a little rune which you put out on the table and it spells out infinity.

We have Truth, Love and Courage, which come from Infinity. We also have Control, Passion and Diligence, which is another set of three that I'll explain later. But they all spawn from Singularity. We have another one that spawns from Equality. So we've built a number of these other systems which are discovered down through the years.

CS: *I love the idea that there is a point to all this, that it is not random.*

RG: And all the little stories are chosen to fit into this bigger puzzle.

CS: *By the way, what is the meaning of the colors? Were they arbitrary choices?*

RG: No. Principle colors in the color wheel: red, yellow, blue. If I assign these to Truth, Love and Courage, which would you do? Red would be Courage, Blue would be Truth, Yellow Love. Purple, Green and White are the correct combinations of the eight Virtues. All that's pseudoscience. So whenever you need a color just take the primary colors of the color wheel, assign it to the three Principles, you won't miss—you'll come up with the same ones.

CS: *What about the tarot cards?*

RG: The pictures were chosen based on the eight virtues. In any one pass through it you will see all

eight. Of course it's a simple process of elimination. For instance, here are eight virtues. I'm going to give you four questions, asking you to compare them two at a time. You thereby eliminate four of them. With four of them eliminated, I can therefore identify four of them as being your favorite. Two more questions and I've eliminated all but two. One more question and I've now built a tree pyramid of exactly what your belief system is. It doesn't matter what order it comes in. It doesn't matter how it's presented. It brings them up in random order.

We worked on the phrasing of those questions. Unfortunately, there's no really perfect way to ask those questions that we've yet discovered. Here's something else that's interesting. When we were working on this system, I said, Here's what I want to do for character development." I went around to everyone in the office saying, Here's these eight virtues along with a short description as to what I mean by them. Give me your ranking, one to eight, as to how important you think they are." And then about a week later, after we generated these questions, we went back to the same people and said, "Answer these questions." Although our company was only about twenty people large, everybody except two people had the exact same outcome to the questions as they did to the judgment. And those two who were wrong only had two transposed in the list. And so it turns out you get the exact same responses as you do to an intellectual discussion of it.

So, you end the game of *Ultima IV* by realizing the big difference between the one and the three and the eight, and you've solved all these quests and you've lived the pure life, and you've shown everybody else in the world what it is to be an Avatar. This is a system you can all rally behind. Let's live our lives this way. Life will be fine. And the game's over.

Ultima V was a story where we sat back and said, "OK, now that you've shown everybody Avatarhood, let's show everybody why it's bad." Lord British can't be involved in this, so we conveniently arranged for Lord British's disappearance. We kind of rewrite back into the *Ultima IV* history a little bit and we say, when you discovered the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom, down in the chamber the bottom of the Great Stygian

Abyss, that's when the game ended in *Ultima IV*. Now, armed with that knowledge, we say that the Great Council of Wizards up here in Britain extracts it from the core of the Earth and brings it to the surface. In doing so it caused a volcano to erupt and build this huge Mt. Olympus. That is the Isle of the Avatar, which now shows up down in the bottom right hand corner of the map. In *Ultima IV* there's nothing on the map there. In *Ultima V* it shows up. It was actually there in *Ultima IV*, but it was the mysterious place you were not aware of. Now the volcano has erupted, it has created this huge mountain, and they've built a big shrine on top to hold the Codex of Wisdom, called the Shrine of the Codex. But, all this matter coming to the surface of the world has caused a real pseudoscience anomaly, which is that this matter has left an empty shell all the way around the world, a hollow space that has cooled off and has now become this empty underworld.

Between *Ultima IV* and *Ultima V* a number of other things happen, too. For instance, they've sealed off the entrances to the dungeons to prevent all the monsters from coming up and wreaking havoc. Life is much safer now. Life is much better. Even thievery is down. Things are going really great now, all of a sudden, because the monsters are knocked off. It's going so well that Lord British says, "Hey, I've always wanted an adventure myself." There's this river flowing underground where the mantle used to be, and Lord British decides he's going to go down with some people and explore it. And so he goes exploring down into the underworld and doesn't come back, conveniently leaving the throne available for somebody to come in and screw up.

While he's gone, his trusted companion, Blackthorn (whose name is suspiciously ominous), comes in to take power and kind of run things almost like martial law while he's gone. Of course, Lord British disappearing and not coming back on time creates a panic, since one survivor manages to come back and explain that the whole party is wiped out by this huge big evil nasty monster, a kind which no one has ever seen before. So the world goes into a panic. And Blackthorn, out of goodness, I mean his intentions are really very good (which is the best part

of the thing about the moral majority) says, "I've got to start straightening things out. Avatarhood is absolutely the way to straighten things out. But people aren't living by it. They aren't being honest. They aren't being compassionate. I'm going to force them to be that way." And so Blackthorn starts legislating morality. Which is, of course, just the wrong thing to do.

Now we bring an evil overtone into this. Remember the shards of Mondain's gem that I described back in the first trilogy? It turns out that one of the reasons this is all happening is that Lord British is not the only one down in this new underworld. Another key individual is this ship captain, Captain John, who is caught in a whirlpool up on the surface and is sucked into this underground lake. And he and his crew are trying to find a way out. (They all survived being sucked underground.)

During their exploration to find their way out, he stumbles upon the broken gem of Mondain. But you don't know that's what happened until much later in the story. And by touching these shards that were re-exposed, so to speak, when the volcano was formed, they come to life. Three beings come into existence, called the Shadowlords. And they personify the anti-virtues: Falsehood, Hatred and Cowardice. They leave Captain John alive just because they are big nasty evil guys, and he's trapped down there, hahahaha! Captain John goes insane and kills off the rest of his crew, and is left down there alone to suffer in the turmoil of evil he has loosed upon the world.

So, Blackthorn is now taking control, with good intentions. But as the game progresses, these three evil forces very easily bend him to their will, and they push him even further. *Ultima IV* is a game where the story is still pretty obvious. Things are either good or evil. You know this because it tells you in the documentation. Good monsters you don't kill. Lions and tigers and bears eat you because they are hungry, not because they are evil. And so killing them is not good. It's not necessarily bad—I'm not trying to raise animal protectionist issues. But if you don't kill them, that's better. On the other hand, it's not good to kill a monster, but it's not bad, either. It doesn't count against you to kill a monster. The choices you make in

Ultima IV are pretty straightforward. Do good things to good things and do bad things to bad things. That's it.

In *Ultima V* you've got a very different situation. *Ultima V* is the "gray area" story. Now suddenly Blackthorn has started legislating morality, very strictly legislating morality. You are either honest, or you have your tongue cut out. You must be compassionate. We are now going to tax you to make sure that you feed the poor. To be honest, you have to report your parents if they are not doing everything right. There are tons of things ... very "Big Brother." CS: *Would being drafted force you to be courageous?*

RG: Yes, things like that. And, more importantly, in a society that is very repressive like this, many good things can happen. Crime is going to go down. Certain kinds of businesses are going to flourish. So we have people who are correct in their resentment of the new system. There are people who are benefiting from the new system and honestly think it's great. There are people who are using it to their advantage. There are people who will tell you that they believe in it, who really are just waiting for an opportunity to turn you in. When you start *Ultima V*, you suddenly don't know who your friends are and who your friends aren't. You become a Robin Hood-style outlaw to work outside the system as a hunted criminal, trying to overthrow the system that you helped create.

The story of *Ultima V*, from my personal viewpoint, is a far better story than *Ultima IV*. It's not as repetitive. The quests are more singular. The decisions you make are really tougher. The choices when you play *Ultima IV* are really straightforward. Just do the good guy stuff and don't do the bad guy stuff and you are going to win. The problem with *Ultima IV* as a player is that you don't know you have to do all the good guy stuff. Your problem as a storyteller in *Ultima V* will be to make sure that these moral dilemmas come out.

So basically, the solution to this story is that you have to find a way to defeat the three Shadowlords. In fact, it turns out that the Shadowlords have captured Lord British and have him down in the underworld. And the Shadowlords are pushing society further and

further toward the anti-virtues, towards legislation of morality. Actually, this is abusing the virtues, not really promoting anti-virtues. You have to dispatch the Shadowlords and go rescue Lord British from this underground chasm that he was exploring. That's the resolution of *Ultima V*.

Another interesting aspect to the Shadowlords, by the way, is that they travel around ... you see, the pseudoscience all wraps around; everything is self supporting. Every step we put in is somehow related in some cosmic sense to everything else. For example, an amateur astronomer takes a telescope and looks at the night sky. And there are eight planets, representing the eight virtues. There are two moons, for no good reason other than that's the number we started with. In fact, the nature of the Moongates of the two moons is important. But it changes from game to game. Instead of trying to explain it, you should just use it to your end and not worry about the exact mechanics being described to the player that you're writing to. But let me just tell you approximately what it is. Basically there are two moons, and each of them goes through different phases. The way that the Moongates work is related to the phases of the moons. There are eight locations where the Moongates can show up. The eight locations in *Ultima IV* are fixed, but in *Ultima V* you discover that there are these stones buried beneath the ground where the gates rise up. And if you dig up the stones they are somehow marked so you can tell they represent a phase of the moon. Whenever a Moongate rises up out of the ground, the phase of one moon determines which gate is open, and the phase of the other moon determines which gate position it will take you to if you enter it. That was the way it happened in *Ultima IV*. In *Ultima V* we make it so all Moongates are open at night, period. At night they rise up out of the ground, and the phase of whichever moon is closest to being at apex determines where you will go if you enter a Moongate. That makes them a little more usable. Players can read the mechanics of it in the instruction manual and figure it out on their own. They don't need it as a clue in a walkthrough. Other people never figure it out. It's not important.

Also, there are eight moonstones, one for each of the eight phases. All these threes and eights and other pseudonumerology are never described as cosmically significant. They just happen to be that way. I don't actually state that there is some law of physics to support this. But it *would* be a law of physics, not religion, that explains it.

In fact, the planets have proper orbital periods and move properly, and if you wait five and a half years there will be a full planetary alignment. We intended for it to have some game significance, and never got around to giving it any. But you'll find out that plenty of things act similarly. There are lots of details that have nothing to do with solving the game.

On the other hand, if you look up at night during *Ultima V*, there are comets in the sky. If you see a comet near a planet, that tells you that one of the Shadowlords is in the city corresponding to that planet. Eight major cities, eight virtues. And the Shadowlords travel from city to city. When a comet is near a city's planet, that gives you some warning.

CS: *One of the things I noted was that each of the cities tends to relate to a virtue. How do the NPC characters relate to the virtue of their city?*

RG: In the game, there are about half a dozen significant characters in each town. When you walk into a town it should look like a bustling medieval village, with all the normal kinds of things you'd expect to find in a town, but there are only six characters that you have a chance to meet and talk to. These six characters don't tell you straight out that, "Moonglow is the city of Honesty," for example. It's not like honesty awards are plastered everywhere. It's more that because of the nature of commerce in this town, because of what is important to these people, honesty is a consistent trait. You might hear, "By the way, everyone around here is pretty honest. It's one of the things that we pride ourselves on around here." Like "everything's bigger in Texas." that kind of overtone.

One of the goals of an *Ultima* is to be very rich in detail and environment. It is as accurate a simulation as we can generate, as well. It is a far better simulator than most of my competition's products. But there are also tons of aspects to the games that some players

will never, never, never, never notice. And any of those that you can discover and point out will be fun, because they add to the reality of what is happening. Well, let me give you an idea of how the stories are developed. I can tell you at the beginning of a game what the goal of the game is going to be. But the detail of what you have to do—go get this object or that object—is largely unimportant. Not only is it unimportant, but I don't even know it until really late in the process, which really angers management. Because I don't design a story and then write a game to tell it. I write a simulation and then design a story that shows it off. Let me describe to you an exact case in point. Each *Ultima* got bigger and bigger than its predecessors. *Ultima I* had exactly 16 tiles with which to design a world. Water, grass, trees, mountains, a city, a person and a few other things. The level of detail was minimal, and everything was minimally represented. You had very little interaction with things. The landscape was all random and you had monsters scattered throughout it. By the time you get to *Ultima V*, for example, we finally have enough shapes where we can have furniture. So here's how story design took place in *Ultima V*.

I'm working with the editor, drawing furniture. I say, "Well, I've got a room now, I've got a desk, I've got a chair, a table, a lamp and a water basin, a bed and a flowerpot, a rug and a harpsichord." I made the harpsichord because it looked interesting. I was looking for furnishings that were big enough to see and thinking of real-world examples. With each of those items, as soon as you make it, you make it function as best you can. A chair you can move around and sit in. A bed you can lie down on. A desk you can look in its drawer. Everything you create you make functional. So I made my harpsichord go bing, bing, bing ... you can use it. And that's two-thirds of the *Ultima* development, building the reality of physics in Britannia. By the time the first two-thirds of the work is done, I've decided what the big goal of the game is, and I've been generating objects, things you can use to make situations happen, that will help build a flavor for that goal. But what order you use them in, or what things are useful, is completely undecided, until the physics of the world works. And then I sit

back and I say, "Look, I've built all this nifty stuff, I don't want you to miss it." If I don't tell the player to go play the harpsichord, they might not see it. So as I sit back and write the story I say, "OK, here's what I'm going to do with the harpsichord." The harpsichord, which began as just a piece of furniture, turned out to be one of the most significant points in the quest of *Ultima V*.

We sat back and we said, "We don't want people to miss it, so I'm going to tell them to play it." There's also a piece of background music in *Ultima V* that a good friend of mine, the character Iolo, composed. (All the characters in *Ultima* are real people. Yeah, I'll give a people synopsis here too. There's only a few of them that are important.) So here we are, and I want players to play it. So I have a character say, "Hey, the harpsichord works, by the way." So we took this piece of music called "Stones," about Stonehenge, and we set it in medieval musical notation in the manual. And there's a character in the game who will describe how to read that specific piece of music in medieval notation. Another character will tell you, "By the way, if you want to play the harpsichord, here's how you can play it, using this medieval music." There's another character in the game who tells you that that particular piece of music is Lord British's favorite. And there's another person in the game who tells you, "By the way, Lord British has a magical harpsichord, and I've heard that if you play certain pieces of music on it, it might do something special." And if the player puts that all together, and goes to the harpsichord, and plays that specific piece of music on the harpsichord, a wall opens up and gives you the big magic artifacts you need to solve the game.

The reason why the stories are designed that way makes a great deal of sense to me. The worst example of this is exactly the wrong way to design your game: if I say, "Here's a story, pick any book at random, make me a computer game that does that," it won't work. The reason why is because that story is not written with "is that technology feasible?" in mind. By definition it will not be as competitive as my game is because I have chosen specific story elements that the technology shows off particularly well. It required little,

if any, extra work, and it works well with all the other elements that can exist. It is designed to adhere to the reality that you can pull off technologically. By definition, it fits within the reality of Britannia.

And every time a new management person comes in and says, "Richard, you're doing it all wrong," I make my case and eventually they either give up on me or become a convert.

So what you'll find in the games is a huge amount of these elements, things that the game does that were never used in the story. There is easily two-thirds more in the game than are ever in the story. That's also what adds the depth and rich feel to the reality of the world. Even little things like the *Hubert the Lion* story* exist in the game. And people see that and they know it is has some real significance. It was not involved in the story, as it turns out. But people understand. You'll get a feel for it as you play it. There's a lot of stuff based on reality, at least the reality of Britannia.

CS: *There's a lot of funny stuff in there too. I don't know if that's intentional or not, but there's a lot of humor.*

RG: Let me relate that to story design for a minute. Humor is an issue. Yes, there's a lot of humorous stuff in there, and a lot of it is intentional, but there has also been a change in approach between the early *Ultimas* and the later *Ultimas*. In the early *Ultimas*, where a character literally stands there and says one line, there is not very much personality you can express. And so, I did not take *Ultima I*, *Ultima II* and *Ultima III* as seriously. Their worlds were not real, true, living, breathing places that took themselves seriously. Britannia takes itself very seriously.

In my mind, the most important consideration is that humor has to be completely within character. I have no problem with humor when it is totally in character. If it's totally Britannian humor, as when the jester decides to make fun of the king, or something like that, that's fine as long as the situation is completely within the context of the game. Earlier *Ultimas* did things that are no longer allowed. For example, the earlier *Ultimas* had swashbucklers

peddling pizza. You could go see the seer and next to him would be the Sears store. Those things aren't kosher any more. Humor that is not Britannian, any earth-based humor, any earth-based analogies, quips or terminology, are all out.

CS:

***Hubert the Lion is part of the Richard Garriott mythos. It is a rather lengthy children's poem that he can, and often does, recite from memory at a blistering pace. The Hubert the Lion story has been incorporated, in its entirety, in Ultima VII.**

Since I have a character who is basically a human from 20th century Earth, can he engage in internal dialogue that uses Americanisms, or would you prefer once he's in Britannia that he be Britannian?

RG: Oh, no, he doesn't need to use thees and thous. Everyone else needs to, but he can say, "How are you?" and "I'm fine." He can be pretty much neutral. I don't think he should be from New York City or Texan, nor should he use Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle slime.

This rolls over into the question, "Where's everyone in Britannia from?" Because we've chosen to keep the same world and continually evolve it, it's going to take time for things to change in the world. So what we've done is to say that the player, the Avatar, is from Earth. And here we have Britannia, which is a real place that really exists, but *where* it really exists is not known. So it's a fairly Narnian kind of jump. I'm not saying you are doing time- and space-leaping because I'm not saying that's where it exists. I'm not saying this is another planet around another star that exists somewhere else in the universe. Nor am I saying it takes pan-dimensional movement to reach it. I'm saying this is just someplace else. This is not Earth, period. How can you know how you got there? All you know is that you go through this gateway and you're in this other place. That's all that's relevant.

A Conversation with Richard Garriott

CS: *The runestones—give me some perspective. Are these small stones?*

RG: We've done it a lot of ways; we've sort of gone back and forth. The stones right behind your house are bigger than a basketball, but not Stonehenge. The shrines are more like Stonehenge, but smaller. Each shrine is about a quarter the size of Stonehenge.

Since Britannia and Earth are different places, time is completely disjointed between them. I'm not saying that it goes five times faster there than it does here. There is no connection between them. However, time does go in a positive direction for both places. If I spend one day here, there's no telling how much time passes there, and if I spend one day there, there's no telling how much time passes here. In both Narnia and Oz, zero time transpires on Earth while you're away from it, usually.

CS: *It depends. In Narnia there was one where there is a difference; it's an earlier story where the two children go back and it's the beginning of Narnia and the witch is there, and it's a real early, early story. They get back and something like 20 minutes have passed.*

RG: In Earth time, it's also been a small amount of time, but usually nonzero. For instance, by the time you get back to your house at the end of *Ultima V*, it's been robbed. Which angered some people. They said, "Here I've gone, I've been positive, virtuous and saved the world, only to come home and discover I've been robbed." The way the game ends is that your front door is ajar, and when you open the door you see gray walls where the pictures are gone, and your house is vandalized, and everything is stolen."

CS: *They think that virtue should have its reward, but I think you're saying that virtue is its own reward.*

RG: Exactly. So we have this time slip and that lets us run Britannia time ahead any time we need to. However, we also want to keep our major characters around for a long time, particularly Lord British. To that end we've added an additional twist that says that I'm an Earth person, so even while I'm in Britannia I won't necessarily age according to Britannian time. And that lets us have characters that are virtually immortal. Most of our slips between games have been,

relatively speaking, short. Ten to twenty years between games. Two hundred years. This (in *Ultima VII*) is the first time characters are actually going to age noticeably.

CS: *Eventually Lord British does die or leave, or something happens to him.*

RG: It's been real hilarious to see what people suggest, the guys that are helping write this. Raymond's first story proposal suggested that Lord British be married and have a child. No! No! This is utterly out of the question. And the reason it is utterly out of the question is because I'm not married and I don't have kids. Lord British is me. And so whatever you do to Lord British is happening to me. Shamino is also me, by the way. I get two characters. Yes, it is personalizing too much. It's too bad. It's the truth.

CS: *How do you figure the succession, then?*

RG: I don't know. I haven't figured it out yet. Depends on what happens. I've been very careful how I introduce my friends in the games, because it's permanent.

Anyway, back to time. Time is not in sync between worlds. Nearly all *Ultima VI* characters who show up in *Ultima VII* are not from Britannia, since it's been 200 years. They probably all come from Earth, but that has not been specified for most of them. We have not ruled out the existence of other worlds than these two, but we also have not implied the existence of other worlds. We're leaving all our options open until it becomes necessary to define them. However, Lord British is from Earth. He is absolutely Richard Garriott from Earth, who found a way to get to Britannia some time ago, who has in his possession an object that gives him the power to travel back and forth again at will. So I come here for work and go there for play. In *Ultima VII* we are destroying his vehicle for travelling back and forth, and stranding both you and Lord British in the world of Britannia. The other characters, Iolo and Dupré and so forth, they also probably come from Earth. We've kind of alluded to the fact that they do seem to be otherworldly, and this time around they will absolutely be from Earth.

It might be worthwhile to digress at this point to discuss *Savage Empire*, *Martian Dreams* and so forth. We can now take trips to other places with

these new technologies, some of which will not be Britannia or Earth, like Mars. Mars was reached by a time slip followed by a projectile going to Mars, while they get to Eodon [*Savage Empire*] by more of a cosmic twist. When *Savage Empire* was being developed, we decided we didn't want to put Shamino, Iolo or Dupré there, so we put parallel characters. You run into Shamuru and Triolo in Eodon. In some worlds you'll find all the main characters; in others you'll find their echo. There's a fundamental rule of the universe that seems to be emerging: there is no place you can go that doesn't contain a version of each of the main characters.

There are eight main characters to keep track of, besides yourself (the Avatar) and Lord British, but in *Ultima IV* you can only have eight in your party, so you take the place of one of the others.

For Honesty, there's the mage, Mariah. Mariah is really Michelle Caddel, my personal secretary. Mariah's parallel as an individual is very tenuous. She was used for name purposes only. The character Mariah begins as a young mage you discover who helps you out and becomes part of your travelling band. In *Ultima VI* she has become the head mage of the Lycaenum. She no longer travels with your party, but is instead one of the significant contributors to Britannian politics.

In *Ultima IV* she's probably a fledgling young mage. She's talented, she understands the ways of magic, but she's not particularly well versed. She has a good intuitive grasp of it, a child prodigy kind of thing, but does not have the book work to back it at first. By *Ultima VI* she has the book work to back it and is extremely insightful, and is now one of the greatest mages in the land. In *Ultima IV* she is not there yet. Blonde. Short, short, short as Michelle. Probably not that short. Green eyes, I think.

Compassion is Iolo. Iolo is David Watson, who really does make crossbows for a living. He is also a fantastic bard, and he and his wife write songs together that I include in the game, and things of that nature. The character Iolo's personality is patterned after the real person Iolo. Iolo is a real guy. He's a very happy, jovial individual. Very creative. Extraordinarily knowledgeable about history.

Sometimes what I'm saying now describes a character and sometimes I'm describing a real person. This is what we want the body of the character to be like, even if it hasn't come across in the game yet. Iolo is tall, leans back, walks with a cane, has a little pot belly, pointy beard, fairly long hair, a little gray (but the character Iolo should not be). Subtract 12 years from this description—make him late 20's. Cut the cane.

CS: *Maybe have a staff?*

RG: He is a crossbow maker. He's one of the best. Probably carries a crossbow. And a lute, a real pot-bellied lute. Its front view is a heart. Profile view is a full semi-circle. He makes those himself, too. If you ever had a scene where somebody sat down and whittled something, a ship or something, he'd be the guy to do it. He also makes little wooden ships. Iolo's purpose from a story standpoint is to be your best friend. When it's nighttime, and you've made the campfire, you've drunk the coffee, you're sitting on a boulder by yourself staring off at the stars, you're not sure where you should go, Iolo's the person who looks up and realizes you're in a thoughtful mood, goes over to you, sits down and says, "Hey, what's the problem? How can I help?"

CS: *They join halfway through the game book, right?*

RG: No, they'll join any time you ask. Some of them will volunteer the first time you see them, some you will have to ask. Most of them, as soon as you ask, "Hey, will you join me?" will say, "Sure!" In some cases they will say, "You're a thieving scumbag; I won't join you," until you are no longer a thieving scumbag.

Valor is Geoffrey. That's Jeff Hillhouse, head of Operations. Jeff is your quintessential "Let's go beat on something" fighter. Geoffrey is the physical manifestation of Jeff—6'5", built like three tons of bricks. As a character in the party he's not as well defined. He's not a principle exchanger of data with the rest of the party.

Justice, Jaana. Jaana is a friend of mine named Jaana. She is the druid. She is Finnish, and her character looks Finnish. Very Scandinavian. She's not overweight by any means, but she's clearly a shorter,

stouter type of individual. She's our back-to-nature girl. Hangs out frolicking in the woods, loves to jump into ice-cold lakes—a good way to wake up in the morning. A buxom blonde. By the way, notice that in the party there are exactly four males and exactly four females. The world of Britannia is very, very careful about sexism.

CS: *Actually, I heard that if you start off female in the adventure you are not going to be as strong.*

RG: Each *Ultima* does something different. In *Ultima IV*, *Ultima V* and *Ultima VI* sex is totally irrelevant, except how you are dressed. In some of the earlier *Ultimas* we have humans, hobbits, dwarves, and elves, and males and females in all the races and character classes. It gives you little pluses and minuses depending on what you choose. That is the point in being anything different.

The Sacrifice. Julia. Red hair. Not because the real person has red hair, but because that's the way they've always drawn it. That was the girl I dated up in New Hampshire, Julia. She's the tinker, a craftsperson. She would probably get along with Iolo just great, although we've never had a chance to have them interact.

CS: *I've noticed that there's not much romance and stuff like that—you pretty much go out and do your quest and stuff.*

RG: That's just because we've not found any good vehicles to bring it in, more than anything else. It's hard to do it and have it actually interactive and have it mean anything. It's hard enough to get across any emotion, much less romance. Good romance has a lot of subtlety to it.

CS: *A lot of tension to it. It's probably pretty hard to do tension.*

RG: I really have very little information on Julia, as far as what the character is really like. Not exactly one of the major characters. There are a few that are more major than others. The major ones are Iolo, Jaana is a middle one, and John and Dupré.

Dupré is your quintessential paladin, although we don't use the word paladin much. These terms are just used to define them; they aren't used very much in the games. Dupré does not run around saying, "I am a paladin!" We don't use *D&D* character classes to have

any sort of relevance in the real world, and they don't mean a thing. I happen to use magic so I might be known as a mage, but I am not a Magic User. I don't have classes that I have to fit into anything to mean anything.

CS: *I've noticed in all these characters that some of them can use magic, though not as well as somebody who has studied it.*

RG: Exactly. It's really a question of what you've studied all your life, and there are some terms that people will associate with that that don't really mean anything. The real person Dupré, as well as the character Dupré, takes honor literally to a fault. Chivalry as a way of life is exactly what Dupré lives by. To a sexist fault, in my mind. He is constantly, before making any decision, thinking about honor, whether this will have any effect on his integrity or whether there is honor to be won or lost in the situation. Although not won, for there is a humble element to him which is ... he doesn't go out seeking things for honor, like, "Let's go kill the dragon because it would gain us honor." The chivalric aspect is probably the big one.

Spirituality is Shamino, which is me again. He's our ...

CS: *Does he look like you?*

RG: Probably more than Lord British does. Denis always draws Lord British so he looks nothing at all like me.

CS: *He looks heavier and older.*

RG: Quite a bit. And so I would like to move back toward the real me from the Lord British character Denis does.

CS: *How do you envision the two characters?*

RG: I would like Lord British to be me plus ten years, Shamino me minus ten years. Leave them separated in time by that twenty year total. Shamino is your quintessential *Lord of the Rings*-style ranger. He is extremely well travelled. People in all parts of the world know who he is. They really don't know much about him; he's kind of a mysterious character. He travels everywhere, but gets to know few people very well. He's your tracker—if you're lost in the woods, he's the one who can look up at the sun and say, "Well, we must be east of Trinsic by now." See a

mountain range, he can tell you what that range is. He knows all those things. He knows all the lore of the land. All the practical lore. Iolo knows more of the historical stuff, Shamino has the practical knowledge.

CS: *Maybe if somebody tries to get close to him he keeps to himself? He may be friendly enough, but he's hard to decipher, he's not very open.*

RG: Exactly. The last one, the character of Trina, is Humility. Excuse me, Katrina. Who, in fact, in real life often goes by Trina rather than Katrina. She is the humble sucker who is the sole survivor of the city of Magincia. Remember the twist about Pride and Humility? One of the clues that there is something wrong about pride is that when you go out to the city of Pride, Magincia, you find the whole place has been destroyed. It's been destroyed by evil forces brought on by the people themselves. We call it demons, but that's a misnomer. We want to make sure we don't imply religious demons. The whole town was destroyed because it was so proud and haughty that it collapsed, and the only person who survived was Katrina. And so, she is our little plot-twist character; we'd say, "This person is totally useless to me. She can't fight, she can't do magic, she appears to be a burden to us. Why in the world are we taking her along with us, this shepherd, of all persons?" She is the character who produces words of wisdom—wisdom of the ages, that sort of thing. Occasionally you'll have a private discussion with Katrina, giving you some very insightful words, that reminds you why she is so important.

CS: *Rather than being helpful in the physical sense, she's helpful in the spiritual sense.*

RG: Right.

What can you tell me about the dungeons?

The only thing about the dungeons is that you should be able to identify each dungeon by looking at its map when you get there. Each has a theme associated with it. And the dungeons also represent anti-virtues. The one for Dishonesty is full of traps, with corridors that try to deceive you into going the wrong way. The one for Hatred is kind of like a prison. You can tell by looking at each one what the theme of construction was. Just think of the opposite of the Virtue, and the construction theme usually jumps right out at you.

Which ones are puzzles, which ones are random caverns, which ones are monster hideouts.

CS: *I noticed that various elements of Britannia reflect a wide range of Earth periods, running from medieval to Renaissance times. I know that in terms of the world itself they are in a period of Renaissance. Would you prefer to have it portrayed that way?*

RG: Yes, the clothing is more medieval, not French Renaissance. There are no large lace collars yet. We have this swashbuckler kind of character, but more the pirate kind of swashbuckler. We don't have the Three Musketeers' level of fashion yet.

CS: *Where is the best place to start in Ultima IV?*

RG: Britain would be the absolutely correct place to start, but it doesn't have the correct character to start. Probably you should start the ranger character in Skara Brae, and find your way to Britain. The reason I say this is that the ranger's your most balanced character, the one who's middle-of-the-road in all categories. Or you might want to make your guy or girl who goes on the trip be someone who is out in the woods. The word bard has a ... when I say "bard" I mean something slightly different than your quintessential lute-playing bard, even though a lot of them match that description. Bards are really thief-like characters, renamed because a thief is evil. "Thief" implies I'm a bad guy. When I say thief I mean your gymnast, your person who is dexterous and capable and usually quite creative also. Your artsy dude. That's what I meant by bard, and I never found a better label or I'd be using it.

Part II: Discussing Ultima VII (Interviewed by Caroline Spector for **Ultima: The Avatar Adventures**)

RG: *Ultimas I, II and III* are the go-out-and-kill-the-big-evil-bad-guy games. *Ultimas IV, V and VI* are the goody-goody-two-shoes games. *Ultima VII* and the next set, Book 3, so to speak, take yet another approach. They are the "wasn't it nice to be a good guy and isn't it still nice to be a good guy, but isn't evil wicked and horrible?" games. In *Ultimas IV, V and*

VI there was no true ultimate evil force to go out and defeat or who was going to kick your tail in. And so we had a few premises that we wanted to set up for the design of *Ultima VII* which were: we wanted a bad guy that was really evil, truly, truly evil. We wanted a bad guy who would survive a few games. You can't just kill him. You are not even going to have the opportunity to try. That way we could have a character who would continue for a few *Ultimas* as the antagonist.

I wanted to set the stage for the possibility that sometime in the near future *Ultimas* may change their technology fairly dramatically, i.e., go true 3-D, for example. In which case, I'm setting up a bad guy who comes from some other place, which may be represented differently, e.g., polygonally, who doesn't make it through to Britannia this time, but who you may choose to pursue to his or her place through the next few games, and his or her place could be represented by this other style. Can you follow that logic?

CS: Sure, that makes a lot of sense. A three dimensional vs. a two dimensional universe. One thing, I don't know if you were thinking about this or not, but in terms of standard conflicts that are established in fiction, you've got man vs. an outside force, like a beast, in the first three. Then you have man vs. himself. Then you have man vs. God or a god or something. So that's pretty unique.

RG: So we have this creature from another dimension, from another place, intentionally unspecified until we need to define it. I guess one of the cardinal rules of *Ultima* is, define it as it becomes necessary, and be aware of the ramifications of what you've decided and what your future options are. So we have this core creature. It's a very powerful entity. It sees Britannia from afar. And it says to itself something like, "Gee, if I could only go there I could take over and wouldn't life be happy? I'd have all those slaves and kill all those people." Whatever its ends are, they are not exactly understood in this first installment, and so are still undefined.

The only problem is, even though it's a big superbeing, it can't get there yet. It can see the place, and it can talk to people there in their minds. But

that's the only power that it currently has. Now if only the people of this world would build this construct, the Black Gate, which is of course the subtitle of *Ultima VII*, then it would be able to step through and take over in a jiffy. So if you were this evil superbeing and wanted this Black Gate built, and you could speak to people in their minds, what would you do?

CS: Lie!

RG: And what kind of lies would you tell? Would you be a good guy or a bad guy?

CS: I'd be a wonderful fellow. I'd be a great guy. As a matter of fact, I'd be so wonderful that people would just rally around and say, "We've got to build this Black Gate!"

RG: So that's what Mr. Evil does. Mr. Guardian—by the way that's what he calls himself, the Guardian. Kind of like your guardian angel, only we don't use the word angel—starts to talk to people, ok? And he comes up and says, "Caroline, don't go around that corner. There's a monster there." And you look around the corner, and sure enough, there's a monster. Wow. Thanks. "Caroline, watch out! There's a trap underneath the floor mat there." And sure enough there's a trap. Gosh, thanks! "And now, Caroline, after doing you all these favors, could you please just pick up this object and carry it over there for me?" Of course you'll do it.

So that's what he's doing to most of the people in Britannia. The people who believe in the Guardian, the masses who believe in him, are completely good people who are completely duped. And so this cult religion is building in belief of the Guardian and the Guardian's ends. The lowest level members of the Fellowship, which is this organization that believes in the Guardian, don't hear him. The Guardian doesn't even speak to them. Do you remember the *Time* article about Scientology where the lowest level is the self-help group? And it isn't until you've gotten into Scientology for awhile that you are told that in fact your body is inhabited by fatans that have been lying dormant in your body for seventy-five million years, and they got there when the evil ruler Zog kicked them off their planet Nimpto? I'm serious. This is Scientology. But you don't find this out until you're into Scientology.

And so the Fellowship is this cult religion that is founded upon three principles: The first is Unity. To work for a better world, we all need to work together. If we work together, we'll be better. This is your "go out and evangelize and convert them to our beliefs" syndrome. The next thing after Unity is Worthiness. You should always strive to be worthy of that which you wish to receive. Always try to deserve that which you wish to receive. Which is another way of saying, you get what you deserve. Which means, as far as the Guardian is concerned, if you've been bad, he kills you. You obviously got what you deserved.

CS: *That's kind of strict, isn't it?*

RG: Yes. You'll see the ways this kind of twists forward and backward when we get into it. The third principle is called Trust. If you and I are going to work together in the same organization, like me and my brother Robert, we have to trust each other. If I constantly think that Robert's going to stab me in the back, I won't get any work done. We'd be constantly checking on each other, making sure that what we're telling each other is the truth. So you have to trust the other members of the Fellowship. If I tell you to carry this box from here to there, don't ask me what's in it. Just trust me.

CS: *Trust has a condition on it, though. The condition is that you do whatever I tell you to do without question.*

RG: Trust! Just trust me.

CS: *That's really not trust.*

RG: I didn't say it was really trust. I said that's the word they use. So we have three elements, all right? Unity, Worthiness and Trust.

CS: *Which I suppose is a resonance for the three things that you've already learned about in the other Ultimas.*

RG: You've got it. All sorts of numerology in it. All sorts of farcical numerology.

The Unity thing says basically, go out and be a missionary. Anybody who is not with us is obviously against us. You get the implications in this. But of course they describe it all in a very positive light. All the first level members, the entry level people, are very positive. They are good people. Their goals really are good. That's a very important aspect of this group.

This had all been developing for ten or twenty years before you came back to Britannia. That's already in place. The way we kick-start *Ultima VII* is that the Guardian pushes through to the real Earth, to you, during the intro and gives you this once-over and says, "Well, now that I've looked at you and checked you out I'm not concerned. I'll see you on the other side."

So you have a heads up that the Guardian's not a good guy. But when you get to Britannia, the people who are members of the Fellowship don't immediately confess that they hear this voice in their head and that the Guardian is part of it. You don't necessarily make the connection between this voice that you've just heard and this religion, the Fellowship, right off.

CS: *You call it the Fellowship?*

RG: The Fellowship. Yeah. The connection comes pretty quickly, though. So you suspect this guy. The Guardian also has another purpose. We are pushing for voice in all our games, whenever possible. We have a CD ROM version of *Ultima VI* that has all the characters talk. The problem is that it takes half a gigabyte of data to store speech for everybody—more than most people have on their hard drive. Even for *Wing Commander II*, which only has 10 or 12 characters, it would take 10 or 20 disks. To keep speech down to four disks, they've limited it to just a segment of the game. But what we've decided is that the Guardian is an omniscient being who can only speak to you in your brain, not out loud. And so we have one character in *Ultima VII* who really talks through your computer. No text shows up on the screen. And that's the only way you ever interact with this character during the game. You'd be walking along the landscape, do de do, and "NOAH! BUILD ME AN ARK!" as you're walking across the grass. And there's no person there to talk to. You can't respond.

CS: *I was about to say, you also can't play the game unless you have the voice stuff.*

RG: No. There's two basic kinds of sound card technology. Sound Blaster and Roland/Ad Lib. If they don't have these, the words appear on the screen. But we are going to presume that people have the ability to hear the speech.

So, here you are. You have a clue that this guy is the bad guy. You are starting to walk around in the world, and—"CAROLINE! WATCH OUT! THERE'S A MONSTER AROUND THE CORNER!" And you recognize the voice because we've got this actor, Bill Johnson, who was Leatherface in *Chainsaw Massacre II*, whose voice we're using. So you hear, "CAROLINE! WATCH OUT! THERE'S A MONSTER AROUND THE CORNER!" And you go, "I know you. You're the jerk who stuck your face through my computer screen and blathered at me. You're the bad guy. I don't trust you." But you look around the corner, just in case. Sure enough, there's a monster there. You think, "Thanks a lot. I really don't want your help because I know you are the bad guy, but I guess thanks anyway." Of course you don't say anything because you don't get a chance to. There's no one there to talk to. You just hear it. And you're walking along and, "CAROLINE! THERE'S A TRAP UNDER THE FLOORMAT!" And he's right. And so, even though you know he's the bad guy, he's helping you out.

CS: *And you're starting to trust him, just a little bit.*

RG: But you really don't want to. You know you don't want to. You know you're going to get shafted one of these times. When it really counts, you're going to get shafted. And he's going to say, "Caroline, look. Couldn't you please just take this over there for me?" And what are you going to say? "No way! Forget it!" And he's going to say, "Ok, Caroline, whatever you do, don't take this from here to there." So what do you do? So now he's playing the opposites game with you. If you start doing the things he asks you to do, he'll continue to ask you things to do. If you do the opposite of things he asks you to do, or if you intentionally don't do what he requests, he'll start requesting things with reverse psychology. So there is no way to win this game. The best way to do it is to totally ignore it and act at random. There is no winning this game. No matter which pattern you follow, you will lose.

He plays one more little mind game. Suppose you are going to go buy a sword from a shop because you want the best sword you can get. You go up to a shop

and he says, "Avatar, I'd buy that big sword if I were you." So he starts telling you to do things you've already planned on doing. Now we have this psychology play. Do you go ahead because it's something you were really going to get and something you really do need, or do you say, "I'm not going to do it because you said to"? And he's just told you to go ahead and do what you really need to do for yourself.

CS: *You are going to have people who are so winning-the-game oriented that by doing this it's going to be virtually impossible for them to win a game. I mean, this is going to drive them to distraction. Is there actually a way to win the game?*

RG: Oh, yes. I'll get there.

This game also has what we call internally the story clock. There is a date at which the world is going to come to an end, i.e., the Guardian will come through the gate. The more progress you make, the closer that date comes. So, no matter what, the day before you finish the game is the day before the world comes to an end.

CS: *Talk about a cliffhanger!*

RG: Real time advances to follow you. You find out where the Black Gate's being built. You find out that it's going to happen at the same time as a big planetary conjunction, which you can predict by this big aura and the state of the aura as the conjunction approaches. And every time you get another phase along the storyline, the clock ticks closer to the planetary alignment. The planetary alignment will never happen until you are ready to complete the story. It all happens simultaneously.

CS: *You discover where they are building the Black Gate.*

RG: And the time table for its completion. Before I continue on that vein, let me jump back to another vein. Let me describe why Britannia was the Guardian's mark. Here's where we get in our little social statements. I'm going to describe them in modern terms because that's where the inspiration comes from. We are still working at folding this stuff into the game to where it is virtually invisible, so that it's not until an after-the-fact analysis of the game that you say, "Oh, hey, I kind of recognize that as being

true of today's society as well as in Britannia." Britannian society, if you remember at the end of *Ultima VI*, had the gargoyles and the humans co-existing in Britannia.

At the end of *Ultima VI* you've saved the world again, of course, and what you have is this race, the gargoyles, and humans, who are now left to live together. If you remember, gargoyle society was set up with the winged intelligent gargoyles and the shorter, muscular, nonwinged worker gargoyles. Bee colony-ish, in a sense. But by the end of *Ultima VI* you've destroyed their side of the world.

And so they move over to Britannia during the 200 years that take place between *Ultima VI* and *Ultima VII*. But whereas a gargoyle family, which included a winged gargoyle or two and some nonwinged gargoyles, was a very symbiotic, very loving, very sharing family, once you integrate those characters into human society in Britannia, the integration is not so clean. The hierarchy of Britannia society now has Lord British at the top, then the Great Council of Wizards, who are the main rulers under him. Next come the winged, intelligent, magical gargoyles, who aspire to very high levels of society because of their capabilities. And below them come the regular Britannian peasantry. And at the bottom are the worker gargoyles.

CS: *And so you have an incredibly stratified society.*

RG: Very stratified, and also very class-oriented. Britannia didn't use to have a class-based society, other than a very miniscule aristocracy. Now there's clearly a stratification.

CS: *Which is what happened to England as their society progressed, too.*

RG: As soon as you have a class structure, it's real easy for one class to live at the mercy of another class. And so what we have is different parts of Britannia becoming super-opulent, emerald castle kinds of places, vs. really dumpy kinds of places. And even some of the original eight cities, like the city of Spirituality, is completely abandoned. People don't go there anymore. It's too far off the beaten track. It's fallen into disfavor and is no longer of any use at all.

We've chosen to reflect a couple of other modern social overtones, too. The gargoyles had suicide kamikazi fighters—berserkers. There was this big silver snake who's venom they could extract and prick themselves with. It would mean death within an hour. But in that hour they would double their strength and speed and capabilities. Now the upper class have discovered that at slightly lower doses they can use the venom on the worker gargoyles, who can then work 24 hours a day down in the pits. The rich get richer so they can build more castles. The problem is it decreases their life expectancy dramatically. You get a lot more work out of your workers, but they don't work as long. And they are definitely not very happy and healthy. And since they are less intelligent in the first place and they are very abused, they are mentally, from the Guardian's standpoint, very attractable.

Social overtone two: Now we have this opulent, Emerald City-type group being built up, which is largely profiting from the work of these exploited masses. These exploited masses are also doing things like working in the mines all day and all night and raping the natural resources of the land with reckless abandon, so to speak. I'm not sure exactly how this is going to work in the story, either.

I originally meant to have two voices. What I called the voice from above and the voice from below. The voice from above was the Guardian, parading himself as a good guy. The voice from below was going to be not really a voice at all, but was going to speak with rumblings and thundering and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and be much harder to understand. At first most people would perceive it as being the bad guy. But in fact the voice below was really going to be nature reacting against the abuses. And so that was really where a lot of this came from. And so we are still going to keep that in a sense, but we're not going to have a voice from below.

But that's the essence of what I'm describing. Society's ignorance is causing this social downfall. The fabric of society is weak, which makes Britannia a prime target for the Guardian, and which is why he wants to go there.

Let me describe to you some of the things the Guardian is now doing. You've got the flavor of the

story; now I'm getting down to the details. The Guardian has already had a few things constructed. He has built these three monolithic things, each about the size of a pyramid. One is a sphere, one is a cube and one is a tetrahedron. They are built out of a special Britannian substance, black rock. Black rock is totally immutable from a physical standpoint. It has to be mutated magically. You can't form it without doing some magic. It is perfectly hard. Harder than diamonds. It is not modifiable otherwise.

The Guardian has already had these generators, these prismatic solids, constructed. One of them helps him speak more clearly to more people in Britannia. One of them is being used to disrupt the pattern of the Moongates, to shut down intercontinental travel. And the last one is basically a pulse generator to send disturbance waves through the ether. It keeps anyone from effectively using magic. And so three of your major objectives are to get rid of those things.

CS: *I take it you don't know they are doing these things.*

RG: No, you find out during the story. One other little side point is that there are two principle characters probably worth mentioning. One is Hook, and the other is Batlin. Now remember, you have these sheep-like masses who are all in the Fellowship. Anyone who gets to Level 2 becomes a leader of the sheep, like a guild leader, or the leader of a particular congregation. By the time you get to Level 2 you know the Guardian. He probably speaks to you. Fellowships have regular meetings, by the way, where they say, "Hey, were you saved this week? Have you heard the voice?" Those at Level 2 really do hear a voice. The people who are the leaders of their community are one more level aware, so to speak, of the Guardian. It's at this level, also, that we find believers who are so devout that they become what I call jihad-capable. If the Guardian ever turned to one of them and said, "Look, Caroline does not believe. Caroline is a threat. Caroline must be dealt with. . ."

CS: *They'd go, "Me! Me! Let me kill her!"*

RG: Yes. OK. That's another branch of the Fellowship. As a player, you already suspect the Fellowship. As a matter of fact, you are going to have to join the Fellowship to actually solve this game.

But let me explain how they kill people. That's the real fun part. This is the way *Ultima VII* opens, by the way. I'll give you the opening. You leap the Moongate, arriving in Britannia to find yourself in a town next to a stables. Lolo your good friend is outside and is holding this crying peasant. And you go walking up to him and he turns and says, "Oh, Caroline, Caroline, you're here, the Avatar is back. This is just amazing! Boy, I was just thinking, if only you were here. That would really solve our problems. But I never expected to see you again because I haven't seen you for 200 years." And he goes on to explain a little more of that, too.

And then the peasant comes up and says, "Lolo, Lolo, show her into the barn. Tell her to look inside." And Lolo says that it's terrible and you'd better go look at it. So you go look in the barn and you see that a ritualistic murder has taken place. You find someone's body lying in the center with its arms and legs cut off and taken off in four different directions from the body and staked to the ground with candles burning in them. In the back corner of the barn there's this little closet where a gargoyle lives, a little cabin boy or stable boy, who obviously happened to be in the stable at the wrong time. Because it's clear he walked out of the stable room, was seen, turned to flee, and was pitchforked across the far wall. And we're going to show this in graphics, too.

CS: *I'm just really curious about what kind of letters you're going to get after the opening sequence of *Ultima VII*.*

RG: Yup. This is called, "Richard changes tack completely and decides to get really, really nasty." That actually is a good point about this game. Do you know the concept for the box?

CS: *The black box?*

RG: The black box. Yeah. Black, black, black, black, black. No screen shots. No text. No nothing. It says, *Ultima VII*, The Black Gate, Lord British, ORIGIN, MP-13. Mature players over the age of 13.

CS: *Are you going to put some kind of disclaimer on the screen shots?*

RG: Yes. That's correct.

CS: *You want this to be a real adult kind of ...*

RG: Right! In the sense of ... it's very hard to generate

emotion in a computer game. Interactivity is limited. You don't have the control you have in a normal story. When you're reading a book you can generate any emotion you like because you've got control of the storyline. And so you do whatever you can whenever you can. Have I described the scene with the children in **Ultima IV**?

CS: *Well, there's a scene where you run into children who are playing ...*

RG: Yeah. In **Ultima IV** in one of the dungeons ...

CS: *Oh, yes, you did, where you can kill ...*

RG: Where you end up killing the children, or most likely ...

CS: *And you had somebody quit.*

RG: Yeah, one of our players quit. Well, that was one of these very rare opportunities, in my mind, where you get an opportunity to share something emotionally wrenching, that makes you...

CS: *You know what I don't understand? I've been thinking about this, and if they are behaving in an evil manner, if they are trying to destroy you, what difference does it make if they are children or not?*

RG: Nothing, as far as I'm concerned. The guy who had a problem with it was way off base in the first place, as far as I'm concerned. But even if he wasn't, let's suppose I put nuns in there praying, whom you had to slaughter before you could get out of the room. As long as you don't have to and it's a matter of personal choice, and you are having a mental mind thing—"Oh, gosh, I don't know what I should do," good! Good! If you have to think about it and you have to make a tough choice, great. Similarly, bad guys. Bad guys never do anything to the players. Never. Because it's hard to have an interaction with a bad guy that's meaningful. So, for instance, in **Ultima V** we arranged a meeting between you and the bad guy. And the bad guy says, "Oh, Avatar, I'm so glad to see you, you are a great and wondrous person." And even though you know he's the bad guy you still say, "I'm so happy to meet you."

CS: *This is Blackthorn?*

RG: Blackthorn. Yes. "Avatar, I've been wondering. There is this piece of information you have that I really, really want, and I know that you'll be just happy to give it to me. Right? Well, no? Well, I'm really sorry

to hear that. I really need to have that piece of information. If you are not going to tell me I would really hate for something bad to happen to your friend lolo here. Still don't want to tell me? Well, let me show you this rack that we're going to put lolo on. Still don't want to tell me?" Well, there's this pendulum swinging back and forth that you can see in the graphics. By the way, if you tell him this information, you basically lose the game. So this is a big deal question.

CS: *Do you know this at the time?*

RG: Yeah, you do. What you know is that you will get another major character killed by giving them this information.

CS: *So you have to choose one death or another.*

RG: Correct. And in the end the correct one to choose is to leave the other guy alive and let lolo die. At least, that's my opinion. And you actually get to watch as the pendulum comes down and you see little blood splats go out side by side and he's dead. And he cannot be resurrected. He's out of your party for the rest of the game. You find this little urn with these ashes and his name on it.

CS: *Does he come back in **Ultima VI**?*

RG: Yes. Lord British finally gets him back.

CS: *Couldn't do that to your friend lolo?*

RG: No, couldn't do that. But you get the idea. That was a rare opportunity for personal interaction between you and the bad guy. We are putting a lot of it in the **Ultima VII** story line. Plenty of good mind screwballing. That's why we have murders, graphic murders. Not because I want to have gratuitous violence (which isn't actually very violent); it's just a very graphic view of the evil that this group represents. And I am sure that this is going to become a hot topic at some point because we're going to show the carcasses on the ground and the blood trails. You can clearly see that the little gargoyle walked out of his room, left little footprints of blood as he tried to make it back to his door, and then caught the pitchfork in the wall. Good and graphic.

CS: *You've got the capabilities of doing it now, too, don't you?*

RG: Yup. The more that I can fit in there, the more happy I will be. Sexual taboos I'm probably going to

avoid because there's no real need for it in the story.

CS: *It doesn't sound like it.*

RG: But I don't think the level of violence I've got down there is gratuitous at this stage. It's only still part of the whole.

CS: *All computer games, I think, are very violent. It's all, "Let's go blow somebody up." You just never actually see the results of the violence. You don't mind killing somebody if you don't see the blood.*

RG: Another thing we're going to do shows up when you are in combat with monsters. What happens when you kick a dog?

CS: *Well, I don't know. I don't kick dogs.*

RG: What do you think your dog would do if you kicked it? Hard?

CS: *Turn around and look at me with this incredible expression on his face.*

RG: Kick it harder. What does it do?

CS: *He bites you.*

RG: Kick him harder. What does he do?

CS: *He might turn around and attack you. I don't know.*

RG: If you kick him hard enough, don't you think he'll eventually decide to run away? And don't you think he'll be whining and screaming when he goes? Well, we're going to do that to.

CS: *I don't want to play this game.*

RG: Here you are, being attacked by monsters. What are you going to do when a monster attacks you?

CS: *Fight back.*

RG: Ok. What's the monster going to do when it takes so much damage it's about to die? It's going to start whimpering and running off. No more Mr. Nice Guy. This game is very dark.

CS: *May I ask what the fun is in this? You're kind of a nice guy, Rich. Are you tired of being Mr. Nice Guy Richard Garriott?*

RG: Yeah. That's it. I've done three nice games in a row. Three nice games. How many more times can you write a game where there is no real big bad guy, and you're out to save the world, and everyone all around you is all happy fun and flowers too? I've done that game. I'm past that point. Now I'm back to the dark side of the forest.

You know how you get to Britannia, right? You have this stone that generates this gate that takes you there. Lord British has one of these, also. And they generate these red portals that take you to Britannia. In **Ultima IV** it was blue because we hadn't come up with the red ones. But they were really red. You just didn't know it. In **Ultima IV** it's not specified where the gate is. It's just off in some nondescript woods that you go wandering off into ...

Ultima IV is the first time you really use the gate as the way to get back and forth to Britannia. How it happened in **Ultima I**, **Ultima II** and **Ultima III** is in mythology, and who cares? So suddenly at the end of **Ultima IV** you've come back and forth through this gate, and it's a really good way to have this really good story continuity when you go back between **Ultima IV**, **Ultima V** and **Ultima VI**. There's this amazing adventure, and you come back and you're standing in these woods again, and there's some identifying arrangement of rocks there. So you're going to presume this space is special, which it is. So you're going to come back here a lot. You spend a great deal of time coming back there once a day, once a week, after a while once a month. You still know something special, you want to go back there, so eventually you buy the piece of property that is there or buy the house or whatever is nearby. And you build your house there. And you make that your home. In the hopes that someday you'll get to go back again. And, sure enough, **Ultima V** comes up and you get to go back there.

Anyway, you have this black stone which makes these red Moongates show up. The moonstones are actually made out of black rock. And are therefore, for all practical purposes, indestructible. So don't take a hammer to it, because your hammer will break. Don't forget, you have one of these, and Lord British has one of these. You discovered in **Ultima V** that's how he gets back and forth. Also, there are the eight moonstones in Britannia which are clearly made out of black rock that generate the blue Moongates, the ones that you transport around inside of Britannia. And so the theory now is that the blue Moongates are local transporters, red Moongates are interworld transporters ...

CS: *Interdimensional?*

RG: No, interplanetary. The Black Gate is your pan-dimensional gate. So here you are in Britannia now, and the Guardian is goofing up the gamework with his little generator. He's trying to get the Black Gate finished so he can come and take over Britannia. Another interesting side effect is that all of the moonstones in existence self-destruct. And that means the one that you're carrying in your backpack goes BOOM! and knocks you five feet across the ground. That means the one in Lord British's castle blows up and blows a big hole in the back side of the castle. That means where all the Moongates were there are big craters now because all the moonstones have self-destructed.

CS: *And this is why you get stranded in **Ultima VII**.*

RG: Which also brings up this nice little dilemma just before the end of **Ultima VII**, when Iolo comes up to you and says, "Avatar, we have a problem now. This is your way to get back and forth from Earth to Britannia, this is Lord British's way of getting back and forth from Earth to Britannia. The only gate we have left is the Black Gate, the gate that the Guardian is building. If we can use that to get back to Earth, then he can too ..." And so you struggle with the thought of trying to prevent him from getting through the gate while still trying to get home. But in the end you have to say you can't do that, so you destroy the Black Gate and strand yourself and Lord British in Britannia.

CS: *And that's the end of **Ultima VII**.*

RG: Close, close. Well, as it ends, here's the final climax. Hook is the hitman for the Fellowship, and Batlin is the leader of the Fellowship. They are both aware of the Guardian. They are aware of the fact that he is evil. They fully support his doings in the world, because they are going to be on his left and right sides when he comes through. But neither of these two guys like each other. They are the two main figures you actually have antagonistic activity with throughout the game. So the ending segments of the game have you at the Black Gate. You've destroyed the three generators. Hook and Batlin are there and they are performing rituals in front of the gate. Hook

turns around and you have this big battle with Hook. As soon as you finish off Hook, Batlin runs away. Chicken.

You're about to destroy the Black Gate when this arm reaches out of it—GRRR!—like it's going to reach out and grab you. The end game segment has probably taken over at this point. You see this in animation. You finally blow up the Black Gate. Your guy can't get through. And the Guardian's parting words are something to the effect of, "You may have prevented me from getting into Britannia, but now there's no one left in your homeland to protect it." And now for the **Ultima** spinoffs it leaves you trying to get back to Earth because you know the Guardian's going there. And in **Ultima VIII** you don't get back there.

For example, you remember how we did **Savage Empire** and **Martian Dreams**, of course? Let's suppose we decide to do a spinoff game which is set in Greek mythology. What we'll do is start you in Britannia in the beginning of the game, trying to devise a mechanism to get to Earth, and you get there in Roman and Greek times. "Wow! I screwed up!" And you come back to Britannia. And for the next **Ultima** spinoff, you say, well, let's try to get back to Earth again. And you go to wherever that spinoff is. And then finally, at the beginning of **Ultima VIII**, or at the end of **Ultima VIII**, we'll probably get you back to Earth.

CS: *How much lag time are you giving between the end of **Ultima VII** and the beginning of **Ultima VIII**? However much time it takes to develop **Ultima VIII**?*

RG: Yeah.

CS: *So what's **Ultima VIII**?*

RG: The big question is, what is the Guardian? Who is the Guardian? What does he look like? Is he a single malevolent entity of which there are no others? Is he one of a race of bad guys? Is he a bad guy member of a race that also includes good guys? Is he a very powerful version of whatever he is, or is he a very weak version of whatever he is? Those are all the questions that I've not really had a good answer to until recently.

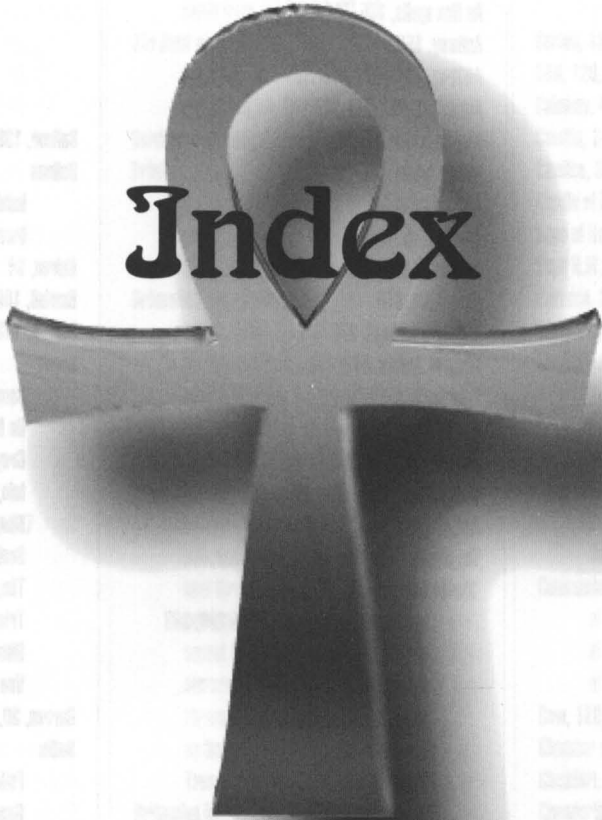
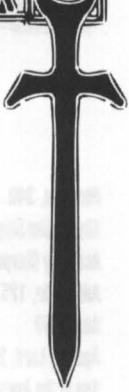
This is very tenuous, depending on how **Ultima**

VII goes. But my confidence level builds every time I think of this, so I'm pretty sure I'm going to do this. The Guardian is one of many of his race. I haven't really decided yet if he is a powerful member or a wimpy member of his race. But here is a description of the characteristics of others of his race. I'm basically going to make them be a good parallel for eastern or Hindu gods, where you have, for instance, the eight-armed woman with scimitars. A very Mt. Olympus-style set of super characters, of which he is one of many. This gives us the next level of play, where we can introduce even more religions into Britannia, or wherever we go next, to have these other kinds of conflicts.

I now have to find a form for the Guardian in the next game or two, and of course he'll have a red face that looks like this. What we're going to do is build a set of. . .we'll call them gods for now. Of course that will never show up in text, but to my eyes they are major beings as opposed to minor beings. So these will be omniscient superbeings, these deities. I think it would be kind of classy to say he's actually a weak one of his race, just because he was such a big deal to you. He's only Darth Vader, and the Emperor lives around the next corner.

And I'm going to choose a set of manifestations that also are very interesting. So we will have manifestations that are relevant to the game that we are building.

And that's it.



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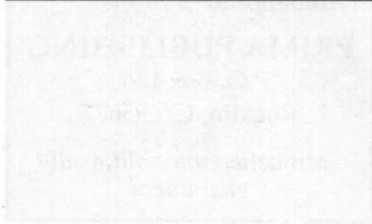
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