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## WARNING

Do not attempt any of the techniques or methods described in this book. They would result in serious injury or death to an untrained user.

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#### Historical note

Ninjas are historical fact. Ninjas existed in Japan from the sixth century AD to the beginning of the seventeenth century. For much of this period there were struggles for power between the warlords or daimios who were the heads of the noble clans.

The Ninjas were unknown faceless men, professional assassins and spies, killing machines available for hire. All of the abilities and skills attributed to the Ninja in this book are based on reality. Historically, the Ninjas of Medieval Japan were apparently able to perform most of the feats and were expert in many of the skills outlined in

The Way of the Tiger.

# THE WAY OF THE TIGER



# INFERNO!

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## Mark Smith and Jamie Thomson

Illustrated by Bob Harvey



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Hodder and Stoughton

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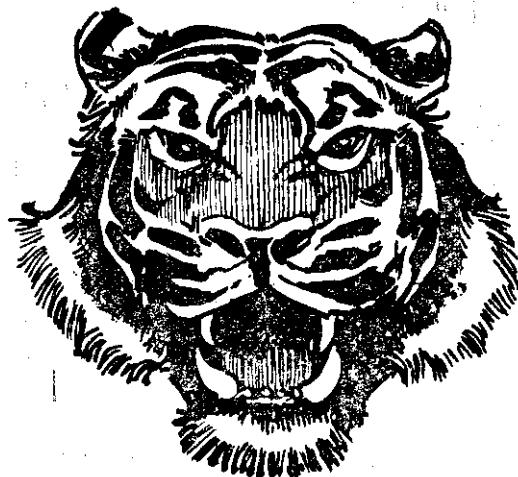
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# NINJA CHARACTER SHEET

## COMBAT RATINGS

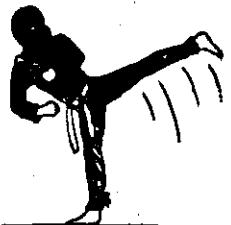
	SHURIKEN
Punch	0 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Kick	0 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Throw	0 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Fate Modifier	0 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Inner Force	5 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Endurance	20
NINJA TOOLS	Ninja Costume Breathing Tube Iron Sleeves Garrotte Flash Powder Flint & Tinder Spider fish Blood of Nil

## NOTES

## SPECIAL ITEMS

# OPPONENT ENCOUNTER BOXES

Name:	Name:
Endurance:	Endurance:
Name:	Name:
Endurance:	Endurance:
Name:	Name:
Endurance:	Endurance:
Name:	Name:
Endurance:	Endurance:



Winged Horse Kick



Leaping Tiger Kick

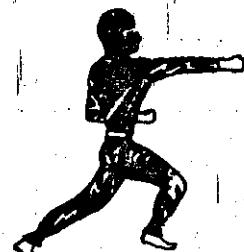


1



2

Forked Lightning Kick



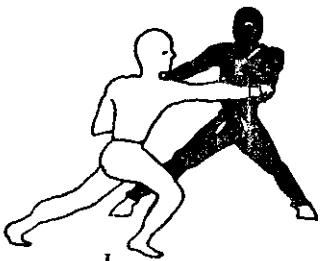
Iron Fist Punch



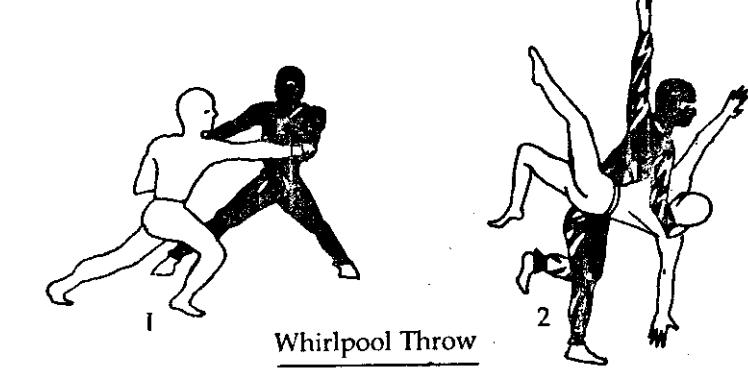
Tiger's Paw Punch



Cobra Strike  
Punch

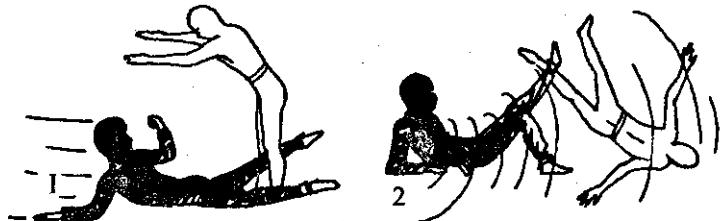


1



2

Whirlpool Throw

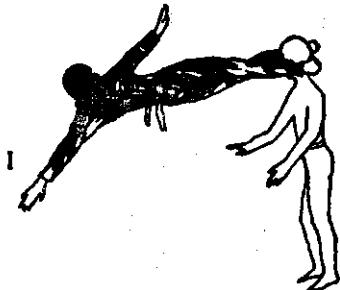


1

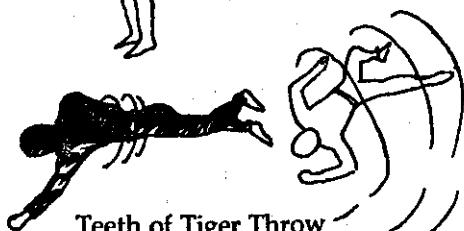


2

Dragon's Tail Throw



1



2

Teeth of Tiger Throw

## **BACKGROUND**

On the magical world of Orb, alone in a sea that the people of the Manmarch call Endless, lies the mystical Island of Tranquil Dreams.

Many years have passed since the time when, as an infant, you first saw its golden shores and emerald rice meadows. A servant brought you, braving the distant leagues of the ponderous ocean, from lands to which you have never returned. Your loyal servant laid you, an orphan, at the steps of the Temple of the Rock praying that the monks would care for you, for she was frail and dying of a hideous curse.

Monks have lived on the island for centuries, dedicated to the worship of their God, Kwon, He who speaks the Holy Words of Power, Supreme Master of Unarmed Combat. They live only to help others resist the evil that infests the world. Seeing that you were alone and needed care, the monks took you in and you became an acolyte at the Temple of the Rock. Nothing was made of the strange birthmark, shaped like a crown which you carry on your thigh, though you remember that the old servant insisted that it was of mystical importance.

The most ancient and powerful monk of them all, Naijishi, Grandmaster of the Dawn, became your foster-father. He gave you guidance and training in the calm goodness of Kwon, knowledge of men and their ways and how to meditate so that your mind floats free of your body and rides the winds in search of truth.

From the age of six, however, most of your time has been spent learning the Way of the Tiger. Now, you are a Ninja, a master of the martial arts and a deadly

assassin who can kill the most powerful enemies unseen and unsuspected. Like a tiger, you are strong, stealthy, agile, patient in the stalking of prey and deadly. In the Land of Plenty and the Manmarch the fabled Ninja, known as the 'Men with no Shadow', are held in awe – the mere mention of Ninja strikes fear into people's hearts. But you are one of the few who worship Kwon and follow the Way of the Tiger. You use your skill as a bringer of death to rid the world of evil-doers.

At an early age you hung by the hands for hours on end from the branches of trees to strengthen your arms. You ran for miles, your light-footed speed enough to keep a thirty foot ribbon trailing above the ground. You trod tightropes, as agile as a monkey. Now you swim like a fish and leap like a tiger; you move like the whisper of the breeze and glide through the blackest night, like a shade. Before he died Naijishi taught you the Ninja's Covenant.

#### NINJA NO CHIGIRI

'I will vanish into the night; change my body to wood or stone; sink into the earth and walk through walls and locked doors. I will be killed many times, yet will not die; change my face and become invisible, able to walk among men without being seen.'

It was after your foster-father Naijishi's death that you began to live the words of the Covenant. A man came to the island, Yaemon, Grandmaster of Flame. Using borrowed sorcery he tricked the monks into believing that he was a worshipper of Kwon from the Great Continent. He was indeed a monk but he worshipped Kwon's twisted brother, Vile, who

helps the powerful to subdue the weak, and wicked men to rule fools. Yaemon slew Naijishi – no-one could match him in unarmed combat – and he stole the Scrolls of Ketsuin from the Temple. Once more you knew the pain of loss for you had loved Naijishi as a father. You swore an oath to Kwon that one day you would avenge his death . . . and you *were* avenged.

You slew Yaemon and you learned of your ancestry. Now you are King of the City of Irsmuncast.

You gathered advisors around you and passed many new laws, some popular, others less than popular, but you managed to govern the city, playing one faction off against another until Irsmuncast came under attack. Not for nothing is the city named Irsmuncast nigh Edge. Its location at the eastern edge of the Manmarch, the lands of men, means that whenever the hosts of evil spew forth from the Bowels of Orb, the great Rift that scores the world like a black pit in a rotten fruit, it is likely that Irsmuncast will be the city they fall upon in their search for new slaves. And so it was early in your reign. The army repulsed them once, but, prompted by your god Kwon the Redeemer, you set out on a quest to recover the Orb and Sceptre which are the traditional emblems of your family's rule. The quest was successful, but when touching the Sceptre transported you magically back to the battlemented tower of the Palace a terrible sight met your eye. The city was wreathed in smoke, torched by the evil hordes from the Rift.

You led your forces in a great struggle against the forces of evil and triumphed in the final battle. Your arch enemy Honoric and the dread Legion of the Sword of Doom were crushed and the Spawn of the

Rift crept back to their underground fastnesses far from the sunlit lands of men, but they have not forgotten you.

## PEACE IN THE MANMARCH

On your triumphal return to the city, the streets of Irsmuncast had been strewn with flowers. Your victory against Honoric and the Legion of the Sword of Doom has made you the darling of the people. The months that follow are among the happiest of your life. As Overlord you will never be carefree, but your reign is now blessed with peace both within and without the city walls. The Forces of the Rift had largely melted away when news of Honoric's defeat reached them and there have been no more raids from the Rift, the gaping chasm that men call the Bowels of Orb, since that glorious day. Your friends Glaivas the Ranger-Lord and the Paladin, Doré le Jeune, became themselves fast friends during the celebrations, and at the zealous Paladins' suggestion, and against his better judgement, Glaivas allowed himself to be persuaded to accompany Doré on a punitive expedition to the Rift. They left almost a month ago to the day, and now, the first day of Pantheos, they are due to arrive back at court at any time.

Gwyneth, Force-Lady of the shieldmaidens of Dama, continues to oversee the keeping of law and of the military with her customary efficiency, and the Demagogue has persuaded you to sponsor a series of new buildings which he hopes will spark a renaissance for the city. The Treasury is empty and you have had to borrow to make payments to the dependants of those killed in the war, but the people are happy. Your allies have returned home

with gifts to show that they can count on you for allegiance should they ever fall under attack. There is no threat at present, but still you begin to feel increasingly uneasy as the days pass.

## RULES FOR BOOK 6

If you have not played and successfully completed Book 5: WARBRINGER!, in the Way of the Tiger series, then you begin this book with the equipment and skills listed. If you have successfully completed Book 5 then you should continue with the same character. Simply transfer all the information on your original Character Sheet to the one given here. You will have regained five Shuriken and your Endurance and Inner Force will have been restored. You also continue Book 6 with any special items you may have picked up in your journey. Do not forget to transfer all your Punch, Kick, etc., Modifiers to your new Character Sheet.

You may also have learnt just one of the following two superior skills, taught by the Grandmaster of the Dawn at the Temple of the Rock:

**SHIN-REN or Heart Training** – This is a secret knowledge passed on during several weeks in the hills of the Island of Tranquil Dreams. You have learned iron control of your emotions; you can walk over glowing coals without turning a hair, endure heat, cold, wind, rain, hunger, thirst and pain that would send a normal person mad. Your instincts have been honed so that you may 'read' any person like an open book – having learnt the language that the body talks, understanding what people think by observing their mannerisms and the way they

breathe, the roving of their eyes and their stance. You are able to understand a complicated situation at a glance and act, seize any opening and take any chance that appears.

**YUBI-JUTSU** or Nerve Striking – You have learnt how to maim and kill with even quite light blows to vital nerve centres – a technique especially useful when beset by many adversaries at once, or against a formidable human foe. You know the anatomy of man in fine detail, the unprotected points and nerve centres where an accurate blow can stun or even kill.

## COMBAT

As a Master of Taijutsu, the Ninja's art of unarmed combat, you have four main ways of fighting: throwing Shuriken (see under 'Skills'), kicks, punches or throws. You will be told when you can use Shuriken.

In general it will be harder to hit an opponent when kicking but a kick will do more damage. A throw, if successful, will allow you to follow up with a possible 'killing blow', but if you fail a throw your Defence against an opponent will be lower, as you are open to attack. Whenever you are in a combat you will be asked which type of attack you wish to make. (See the Way of the Tiger Illustrations for the different types of kicks, punches and throws available to you.) You will be told which paragraph to turn to, depending on your choice. When you are resolving combat, you will find it useful to record your opponent's Defence and Endurance score. A number of Encounter Boxes are provided with your Character Sheet for this purpose.

The combats have been presented in such a way that it is possible for you briefly to examine the rules and begin play almost immediately. However, if you do this, don't forget about Blocking and Inner Force, as you won't be told when to use these in the text.

### PUNCH

You will be told what Defence number your opponent has against a punch. Roll two dice, and if the score is higher than his or her Defence number, you have successfully punched your opponent. In this case, roll one more die. The result is the amount of damage you have inflicted on your opponent. Subtract it from his or her Endurance totals. If this has reduced your opponent's score to 0 or less, you have won. When your opponent attacks you, you will be given your Defence number for that combat. Roll two dice; if the score is greater than this number, you have been hit. The amount of damage inflicted upon you depends on the opponent and will be noted in the paragraph: usually in the format of 'Damage: 1 Die + 1' or '2.Dice' or '1 Die + 2'. Simply roll the required number of dice and add the number given. This is the total damage inflicted upon you. However, before you subtract this score from your Endurance, you may choose to try and block or parry the attack (see Block).

#### Punch Modifier

Whenever you make a 'Punch Roll' to determine whether or not you have successfully struck an opponent, add or subtract your Punch Modifier. This Modifier reflects your skill in using the punches of the Way of the Tiger. You begin with a

Punch Modifier of 0, as noted on your Character Sheet. This will rise as you progress in the Way of the Tiger and may change throughout the adventure.

### KICK

The kick and the Kick Modifier work exactly as the punch, except that when you roll the dice to determine the damage you inflict, add 2 to the dice – a kick is more damaging than a punch.

### THROW

The throw and Throw Modifier work as the punch. However, if you are successful, no damage is done to your attacker, but you will be allowed another attack, a punch or kick, and it will be much easier to strike a thrown opponent. If you are successful with this, your follow-up attack, add 2 to the damage you inflict.

### THE NINJA'S ENDURANCE

You begin the game with 20 points of Endurance. Keep a running total of your Endurance score on your Character Sheet. It will probably be the category that will change most as you are wounded, healed etc. When you reach 0 Endurance or less, you are dead and your adventure ends.

### THE BLOCK

As a Ninja, a master of Taijutsu, you have the ability to block or parry incoming blows with various parts of your body, often your forearms. For this purpose,

thin, lightweight iron rods have been sewn into your sleeves enabling you to block even swords and other weapons. During combat, if you have been hit, you may try to block the blow and take no damage. Roll two dice. If the score is less than your Defence given in that combat, you have successfully blocked the blow, and you take no damage. If your score is equal to or greater than your Defence, you take damage in the normal way. In any case, because you have taken the time to block, your next attack is less effectual, as your opponent has had more time to react. Whether your block is successful or not, subtract 2 from your Punch, Kick and Throw Modifier for your next attack only. Remember you can only block blows.

### INNER FORCE

Through meditation and rigorous training you have mastered the ability to unleash spiritual or inner power through your body in the same way as the karate experts of today break blocks of wood and bricks. In any combat, before you roll the dice to determine if you will hit or miss an opponent, you may choose to use Inner Force. If you do, deduct one point from your Inner Force score. This is used up whether or not you succeed in striking your opponent. If you are successful, however, double the score you roll when determining the amount of damage you inflict. When your Inner Force is reduced to 0, you may no longer use Inner Force. So use it wisely! You begin the game with 5 points of Inner Force.

### FATE

Luck plays its part and the goddess Fate has great

power on the world of Orb. Whenever you are asked to make a Fate Roll, roll two dice and add or subtract your Fate Modifier. If the score is 7-12, you are lucky and Fate has smiled on you. If the score is 2-6, you are unlucky and Fate has turned her back on you. You begin your adventure with a Fate Modifier of 0.

## THE SKILLS OF THE WAY OF THE TIGER

You have been trained in ninjitsu all of your life. Your senses of smell, sight and hearing have been honed to almost superhuman effectiveness. You are well versed in woodcraft, able to track like a bloodhound, and to cover your own tracks. Your knowledge of plants and herb lore enables you to live off the land. You are at the peak of physical fitness, able to run up to fifty miles a day and swim like a fish. Your training included horsemanship, a little ventriloquism, meditation, the ability to hold yourself absolutely still for hours on end, perfecting your balance, and 'The Seven Ways of Going' or disguise. The latter skill involves comprehensive training so that you can perform as a minstrel, for instance, if this disguise is used. However, a major part of this training has been in stealth, hiding in shadows, moving silently, and breathing as quietly as possible, enabling you to move about unseen and unheard. You begin the game with these skills.

There are nine other skills. One of these, Shurikenjitsu, is always taught to a Ninja in training. This you must take, but you may then choose three other skills from the remaining eight, and note them down on your Character Sheet.

### SHURIKENJITSU

You begin the adventure with five 'Shuriken'. The type you specialise in are 'throwing stars', small razor-sharp star-shaped disks of metal. You can throw these up to a range of about thirty feet with devastating effect. If you throw a Shuriken, you will be given a Defence number for your target. Roll two dice, and if the score is higher than the Defence number, you will have hit your target. If this is the case, roll one die. The score is the amount of damage the Shuriken does. Subtract it from your target's Endurance. You may find yourself in a position where you are unable to retrieve a Shuriken once you have thrown it. Keep a running total in the box provided on your Character Sheet, crossing off a Shuriken each time you lose one. If you have none left, you can no longer use this skill.

### ARROW CUTTING

Requiring excellent muscular co-ordination, hand and eye judgement and reflexes, this skill will enable you to knock aside, or even catch, incoming missiles such as arrows or spears.

### ACROBATICS

The ability to leap and jump using flips, cartwheels, etc. like a tumbler or gymnast.

### IMMUNITY TO POISONS

This involves taking small doses of virulent poisons over long periods of time, slowly building up the body's resistance. This enables the Ninja to survive most poison attempts.

## **FEIGNING DEATH**

Requiring long and arduous training, a Ninja with this ability is able to slow down his heart rate and metabolism through will power alone, thus appearing to be dead.

## **ESCAPOLOGY**

A Ninja with this skill is able to dislocate the joints of the body and to maximise the body's suppleness, allowing movement through small spaces, and escape from bonds and chains by slipping out of them.

## **POISON NEEDLES**

Sometimes known as spitting needles, a Ninja with this skill can place small darts, coated with a powerful poison that acts in the blood stream, onto his tongue. By curling the tongue into an 'O' shape and spitting or blowing, the dart can be propelled up to an effective range of about fifteen feet. A useful surprise attack, the source of which is not always perceptible.

## **PICKING LOCKS, DETECTING AND DISARMING TRAPS**

The ability to open locked doors, chests etc. A Ninja with this skill would carry various lockpicks in the pockets of his costume, including a small crowbar or jemmy. You are also trained to notice traps and to use the lock-picking tools to disarm them.

## **CLIMBING**

Comprehensive training in the use of a Grappling Hook and hand and foot clamps, or Cat's Claws. The padded four-pronged hook has forty feet of rope attached to it and is used to hook over walls, niches etc., allowing the Ninja to pull himself up the rope. The Cat's Claws are spiked clamps, worn over the palm of the hand and the instep of the feet, enabling the Ninja to embed his claws into a wall and climb straight up like a fly, and even to crawl across ceilings.

## **NINJA TOOLS**

As well as any equipment you may take depending on your skills, as a Ninja you will have certain tools with you from the beginning. These are:

## **THE NINJA COSTUME**

During the day you would normally be disguised as a traveller, beggar or suchlike. At night, when on a mission, you would wear costume. This consists of a few pieces of black cloth. One piece is worn as a jacket covering the chest and arms; two others are wound around each leg and held in at the waist. Finally, a long piece of cloth is wrapped around the head, leaving only the eyes exposed. The reverse side of the costume can be white, for travel over snowy ground, or green, for travel in woods or grasslands.

## **IRON SLEEVES**

Sewn into the sleeves of your costume are four thin

strips of iron, the length of your forearm. These allow you to parry or block blows from swords and other cutting weapons.

### BREATHING TUBE

Made from bamboo, this can be used as a snorkel allowing you to remain under water for long periods of time. It can also be used as a blow-pipe in conjunction with the Poison Needles skill, for added range.

### GAROTTE

A specialised killing tool of the Ninja, this is a length of wire used to assassinate enemies by strangulation.

### FLASH POWDER

This powder, when thrown in any source of flame, causes a blinding flash. You have enough for one use only.

### FLINT AND TINDER

Used for making fires.

### SPIDERFISH

Salted and cured, this highly venomous fish is used as a source for the deadly poison used in conjunction with the Poison Needles skill, and as a useful way of removing any guardian beasts.

### THE BLOOD OF NIL

You also carry one dose of the most virulent poison known on Orb. This venom is extremely difficult and very dangerous to collect for it is taken from the barb of a scorpion son of the God, Nil, Mouth of the Void.

With these skills and weapons at your disposal you are now a Ninja warrior and ready to take another step in **The Way of the Tiger**.



## 1

On the fifth day of Pantheos, Force-Lady Gwyneth asks for an audience which you gladly grant. She is even more ram-rod straight than usual, and her lips are pressed together in an expression of determination. 'A party has come from the Rift.'

'Glaivas? Doré?' you ask eagerly, but your hopes are dashed.

'No, we still lack news of them. The news that we have is all unlooked for. An enemy of the city has returned . . . a traitress.' She spits the word out with ill-concealed venom. Only one woman is hated by Gwyneth in this way – Foxglove, the beautiful courtesan who ran the Order of the Yellow Lotus, the secret informers of the reign of the demonic Usurper. You remind Gwyneth that there has been no proof forthcoming that Foxglove betrayed the city to Shadazar and the forces of evil from the Rift. 'What need of proof? Where was she when the Orcs and the Dark Elves and their Trolls overran the city? Gone. Disappeared – *poof!* – into thin air . . . *Pah!* Into the Bowels of Orb, more like.' Turn to 11.

## 2

The tunnel curves gently for perhaps half a kilometre before you see any sign of another soul. The Torch of Lumen looks like an ordinary brazier now. It is inside an illusion placed upon it by your father's most powerful sorcerer. Its light shows a small ill-favoured Orc walking towards you with head bowed down by the weight of a bundle of faggots. He shrinks to the side of the cavern to let you pass and then goes on his way. Turn to 52.

You pour the antidote down her throat but it is several minutes before you see any signs of recovery. In fact she has been tricking you, waiting to gather her strength so that she can now twist away from you and shout out to the Orcs. Her lithe swiftness astounds you. Her sword appears in her hand as if by magic. You give battle, but the Orcs swarm over you, impeding you, and Cassandra is able to knock you to the floor. You are quickly tied up as Cassandra gloats. She leaves the encampment to plot in peace. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 331. If not, turn to 171.

Passing a small alcove, Eris's keen eyes catch sight of a strange samovar encrusted with large sapphires. It is about sixty centimetres tall and made of solid gold. He picks it up and examines it, marvelling at its beauty, but he can find no magic in it. It is passed from hand to hand, and you are invited to hold the priceless object. Will you decline and pass on by (turn to 164) or take a look (turn to 64)?

Gwyneth murmurs something about pneumonia and the running damp in the windowless tower that is the Palace donjon, but after a time she takes her leave and returns to her temple. You fall to pondering what to do about your poor friend Glaivas. If it were not for him, you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

The silver serpent-headed javelin catches your arm. Lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, the swordsman is now attacking. He thrusts at your heart and his sword is enchanted to find its mark magically. You try to block the blow. Your Defence is 6. If you are successful, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 46.

The road winds gradually downhill, criss-crossing the canyon face in kilometre-wide zig-zags. Every now and then it burrows into the rock, cutting through a spur that makes a natural archway of stone above the road. At the first there are signs of a deserted guard-post. If you wish to turn back and take the narrow path, turn to 287. If not, turn to 307.

Desperately you search for something small and slim to poke into your ear in an effort to dislodge the spider. In a flash you remember the jewelled pin. Whipping it out, you jab it gingerly into your ear and then pull it out again. On the sharp end is a small black and red spider, a miniature black widow. You wipe it off the pin on the side of the tunnel, squashing it. If you still have one of these tiny spiders inside your head, turn to 48, otherwise turn to 52.

The tunnel you are in is joined by several others and then winds down steadily into the depths of Orb. Soon you are down to the more populous second tier. Here complete villages and towns exist, trading with one another, mining, and raiding each other for slaves and booty. You will have to start going even more carefully. Turn to 39.

If you have the skill of Acrobatics and wish to use it, turn to 30. Otherwise turn to 50.

'They are camped on the edges of our farmland, guarded by a hundred miserable quivering Orcs of the Severed Head.'

'They?' you enquire.

'Another woman is with her, a Warrior Woman, wearing a strange patchwork affair of scalemail. They demand amnesty from you before they will enter the city. They claim to bear news that you will find interesting.' You pause to think things over, but Gwyneth continues: 'I can take them with but twenty of my cavalry. Foxglove is no fighter. Then we will see what they have to say.'

Will you ride out with Gwyneth to try to take them prisoner (turn to 31), proclaim an amnesty using the town crier, as Foxglove asks (turn to 41), or try to use your Ninja skills to capture them alone (turn to 51)?

Lord Sile is a tough cavern-brawler and he reacts quickly to your kick, but its power batters through his block.

#### LORD SILE, THE ORC CHIEFTAIN

Defence against Kwon's Flail: 5

Endurance: 18

Damage: 1 Die +2

If you win, turn to 72. Lord Sile leaps forwards and head-butts you. Your Defence is 7. If you survive the attack, will you use the Forked Lightning kick

(turn to 362), the Tiger Paw chop (turn to 382), Kwon's Flail throw if you remember being taught it by Togowa the Mystic (return to the top of this paragraph), or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 32)?

You take Cassandra's sword with you - it is too great a treasure to leave behind - and carry Cassandra one step at a time out of the camp. Almost miraculously you succeed in carrying her prostrate form out of the camp and avoiding detection. You are a kilometre from the camp when she recovers enough to talk. She whispers: 'Tyutchev, Thaum and I came close to killing you, Avenger, in the city of Harith-si-the-Crow. Why do you not kill me? We are sworn enemies.' Will you change your mind and administer a fatal dose of spiderfish venom (turn to 43) or continue with her back to the city (turn to 422)?

Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking away at Foxglove. Foxglove calls you to her side to be her protector. You turn and run to do her bidding just as there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in Foxglove, but were merely averting their eyes, anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not

looking at Thaum, for you would surely have been stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. The four Adventurers have not all been so lucky. Vespers reacted quickly enough to shield his eyes and Thybault too has not been stunned, but Eris the Magician and Taflur are reeling back in a state of shock. Will you use a Shuriken against Thaum, who is beginning another spell, if you have one (turn to 294), or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 374)?

15

Foxglove's kiss has a strange effect on you. You find yourself gazing into her eyes and wondering how you could be taking such a noble and perfect person into grave peril. Foxglove is an enchantress and you have almost fallen under her spell. The Heart-Training that you learned on the far away Island of Tranquil Dreams is enough to stop you becoming her slave, but her enchantment is powerful. She mounts the white horse, smiles and waves goodbye. 'Farewell, Avenger.' As she rides away you suffer a pang of anguish at losing her, but you are gladdened by the thought that she is out of danger. You settle down, a solitary dark figure lit by the dying embers of the camp fire. Turn to 55. If you wish to ignore your Heart-Training and call Foxglove back, heedless of her enchanting ways, turn to 75.

16

As soon as you speak and they realise you are a human, their attitude to you changes. They are still wary, but not intent on killing you. You have a chance to look at them closely. The swordsman

wears a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irsmuncast tell you that this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. The man in the white robe is a priest. He sports the Cross of Avatar on his chest. The third man is in green, and is also a priest, though he wears chainmail, a worshipper of Illustra, Goddess of Life. The fourth, the magician, is a worshipper of a Chaos god. The five-spoked wheel insignia shows the Limitless Possibilities that may lead to good acts, however, rather than those that may lead to evil. You have made a mistake in attacking them for they are good people, unless they are in disguise. If you have the skill of Shin-Ren, turn to 126. They demand to know who you are, what you are doing and which god you revere. Will you tell them (turn to 146) or use a Poison Needle if you have the skill (turn to 318)?

17

As you back away there is a crack when the chains that tether these monsters to their guard-post become taut, preventing them closing for combat. You may use your Shuriken to force them aside so that you can continue down the roadway if you wish (turn to 77) or, if you think this a waste, flee back to the lip of the chasm and try another way down (turn to 97).

18

These people are familiar. You take off your face coverings and greet them. They are Eris the Magician, Thybault and Taflur, both priests, and

Vespers, a swordsman. You saved them from a terrible predicament, and Thybault healed you of the plague. They are dressed now as then, Vespers in a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irsmuncast have since revealed that this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. Thybault, dressed in his white robe with its red cross, is a worshipper of Avatar the One, Supreme Principle of Good, while Taflur, whose robe is green with a white cross, reveres Illustra, Goddess of Life, consort to Avatar. Eris the Magician you remember as a strange capricious fellow; he is a little nervous at the sight of you. The five-spoked wheel on his robe indicates that he follows Béatan the Free. The spokes are five of the ten arrows of Limitless Possibility that tend towards good rather than evil. You know and can trust these men. Now that they recognise you, they step forwards to embrace you in turn, hungry for news. You tell them much, and in return they pass on some useful information, while Foxglove watches and listens. Turn to 198.

19

Your Throwing Star catches the sister of Nullaq by surprise. She ducks too late, and it embeds itself in the crown of her forehead. She caws like a crow, drops a small bag and teeters to the edge of the ledge outside the store-houses. You follow up for the kill, but to your consternation she changes into a black crow and takes to the air, soon to be lost in the darkness of the chasm below. The green powder settles about you and begins to burn into your flesh.

34

like acid. Lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, you creep forwards to examine the bag that she dropped. Inside is a potion bottle, unharmed by the fall. It is pale blue in colour; one sniff confirms that it is an elixir of health. You may drink it at any time, except during combat, and it will restore your Endurance to its maximum. You decide to take to the tunnels and move away from the edge of the cavern. Turn to 9.

20

If you have a Shuriken left and wish to use it, turn to 100. Otherwise you run to the attack. Turn to 120.

21

As soon as you have recovered from the battering you received at Cassandra's hands, you manage skilfully to slip your bonds and bound away down the scree-slope in an avalanche of small stones. For all her quickness Cassandra is unable to catch you, encumbered in her heavy armour as she is. You escape and rejoin Gwyneth and her troops, who had been powerless to help you, unable to scale the pinnacle in time. You are preparing to press home an attack when, to your surprise, Cassandra and Foxglove, alone and undefended, walk up to you and surrender themselves. Cassandra says: 'Do not kill us, Avenger, for we are important to you, as you shall see when we re-enter your city.' You order Cassandra to surrender her sword, which she does, reluctantly, and ride back to Irsmuncast. Turn to 251.

22

You are urging Foxglove on when there is a cacophonous noise ahead. A wagon is rolling down

35

the rails towards you, still as yet out of sight, but you can hear the groans of a straining band of Orcs, harsh cries and the occasional crack of a whip. Will you turn and run, abandoning all pretence at disguise (turn to 42), or go on as you are (turn to 62)?

### 23

It takes longer than you expected to reach the head of the valley. By the time you reach the encampment again, this time from the opposite direction, it is just past dawn and the leader of the warband, a Warrior Woman, is already at sword practise. It would be foolish to enter their camp during daylight, so you return to Irsmuncast. Time is running out. Will you declare an amnesty for Foxglove and her companion (turn to 41) or ride out with Gwyneth to take them by force (turn to 31)?

### 24

As you pass the samovar you experience a feeling of relief and a lightening of your spirits. Turn to 416.

### 25

Gwyneth affects not to notice that you have had to apologise to her and leaves the Palace to go about her business as General of Irsmuncast. Now you will have to decide what to do about your friend Glaivas. Turn to 403.

### 26

There is a mighty clang as the sword bites into your arm-guard and you are pushed backwards. The sword's descent is checked, however. You are gazing straight into the swordsman's face, which is contorted with effort. If you have played

*Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord which was attacking them, turn to 78. If not, will you say that you mean them no harm (turn to 86) or seize the initiative and attack again (turn to 238)?

### 27

The gallery of caves is enormous. There are store-rooms, mostly plundered, and a forge and an armoury, both deserted, but further down you can hear sounds of life. There is a certain amount of growling and wailing and much low chatter in guttural complaining voices. The sounds are familiar as those of a slum. Here the refuse, the helpless or foolishly scrupulous inhabitants of the Rift are forced to eke out their days. Here they are closest to the danger of crusaders, madmen like the Paladin Doré le Jeune, who come to the Bowels of Orb to attempt to slay evil beings indiscriminately, or to the many renegade Orcish tribes who do not obey the Black Widow. You decide to take to the tunnels and descend to the next tier away from the chasm's edge. Turn to 257.

### 28

The spider burrows deeper and deeper inside your ear. Desperately you shake your head and cuff yourself, hoping to dislodge it, but to no avail. Soon you can feel it fidgeting somewhere under your brain. It is a daughter of Nullaq. If you now have two of these daughters of Nullaq spiders inside your head, turn to 68. If not, turn to 48.

There is time to grease the hinges of the stone door before you ease it open and slip into the torchlit interior of the cavern-house. To your surprise it is richly furnished with ornaments and even paintings brought back by raiding parties. Seated with their backs to you beyond a stream that cuts across the room are two Dark Elves, one clad in the blue robe that denotes she is a sorceror, the other clad in the green and red of a soldier. Nearby is a set of coffle chains as used to transport human slaves. Will you steal the coffle chains (turn to 69) or try to kill the two Dark Elves (turn to 89)?

Leaping twice as high as the enormous Ogres, you perform a graceful triple somersault above their pikes. In their amazement the Ogres get their long weapons caught up, and you land nimbly and set off down the exit tunnel before they can move to stop you. Note that you have been spotted in the Sacred Vault and turn to 372.

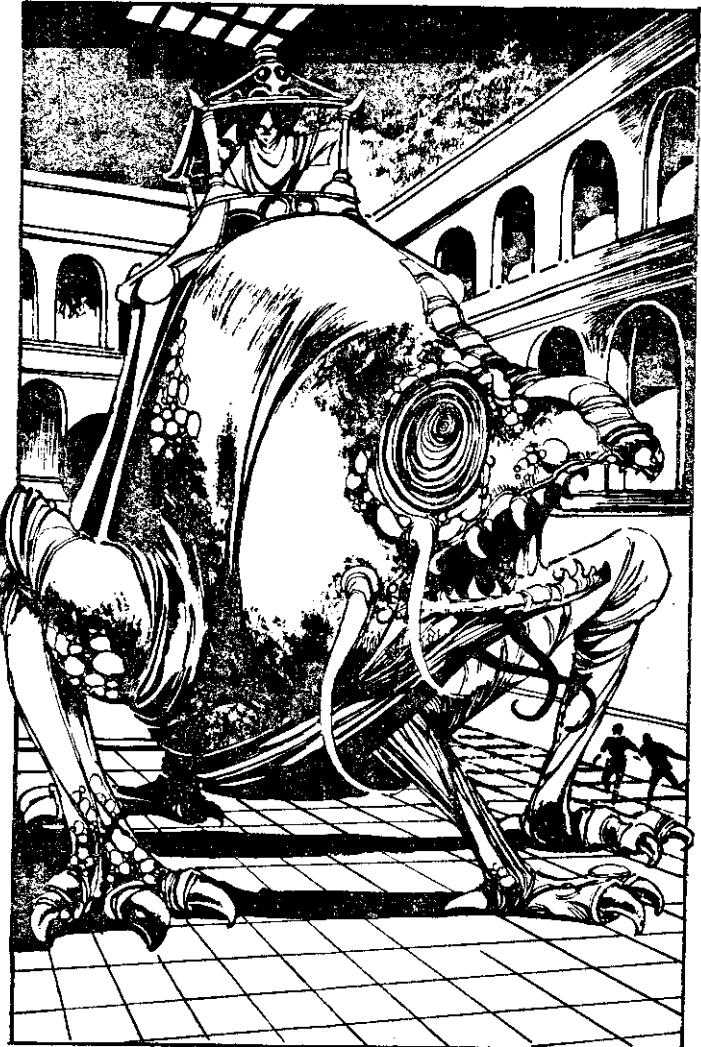
Acting on Gwyneth's advice you take only twenty of her best cavalry and ride out with them towards the point where the Orcs are encamped. They have chosen a reasonably defensible position in a narrow valley of one of the tributaries of the River of Beasts. They have thrown up earthworks on either side of the river at a narrow point between the steeply inclined walls of the valley. They can retreat up the valley if necessary, but the scree-slopes on either side make attack or escape difficult. Will you ride around them to the tributary's source and then back

down the valley behind them (turn to 81) or waste no time and make a frontal assault (turn to 91)?

Lord Sile, seasoned fighter though he is, is taken by surprise when you leap and clamp your feet on either side of his head, then wrench your body so that he falls sideways. You recover before he does and are able to give the killing blow before he can attack again. The laughter has barely died on the Orcs' lips before they are in full flight. You motion Foxglove forwards and continue on your way. Turn to 52.

Cassandra throws you to the ground, where you are pinioned helplessly by foul-breathed Orcs. Two of them hold your head rigid, and she takes her frost-rimed sword and says: 'This is for my friend Olvar, whom you slew out of hand in the Mountains of Vision.' She places the tip of the frost-rimed sword against the glowing green gem that you have instead of one of your eyes. Mercilessly she gouges the point into your face until the gem is prised free and you are wracked with agony. Sneering evilly, she pockets the gem. You will no longer be able to see invisible beings from other planes, and with only one eye your judgement of distance is impaired. Note that you have lost the emerald Orb. Subtract 1 from all your modifiers until you regain the Orb that was your eye. Turn to 273.

The tapestry down one side of the hallway is ripped aside and torn to shreds by the most colossal being imaginable. It is the Krathak, the beast Foxglove



referred to when she spoke of a being as large as a city. It is too large for you to guess at its dimensions. In shape it is like a chameleon, with huge pincers and claws and feeding tentacles around its cavernous maw. Everyone cries out in panic and begins to run. The Krathak is not alone. There is a howdah behind its head; it is being driven by Dark Elves in red robes. These are the personal bodyguard of the Black Widow. It seems she has decided you shall venture no deeper than the fourth tier. You join the flight away from the monster to the far end of the hall. A hail of arrows discourages thoughts of taking a stand, but a bolas thrown by one of the Black Widow's bodyguards twines around your legs and knocks you to the floor. You hear Cassandra shout: 'The Worldworm. It's our only chance.' Disentangling the bolas twine, you set off in pursuit of the others as the beast bears down on you. Tyutchev has reached the far end of the hall and is opening a large secret door. Like all seasoned campaigners, the chaos-bringers chose their ground well and have prepared a way of retreat. Turn to 411.

## 35

Foxglove's kiss has a strange effect on you. You find yourself gazing into her eyes and wondering how you could be taking such a noble and perfect person into grave peril. Foxglove is an enchantress and you have fallen under her spell. She releases you from her embrace at last and asks you to pick up her poisoned stiletto and give it back to her. This you gladly do, feeling you would do anything to protect her. She lies down on the other side of the camp fire with her back to you and settles down to sleep. You find yourself wishing you could embrace her once

again. You would even lay down your life for her. Note that Foxglove has enchanted you. Turn to 75.

36

The two priests rush to intervene, placing themselves between you and the swordsman. Anger flares in his eyes and he looks to Foxglove for guidance. It is quite clear that his friends the priests will try to restrain him if he does violence to you. Foxglove, realising this in her quick, calculating way, says: 'Very well. If you wish to show mercy, I will gladly fall in with your wishes.' She suggests you travel in one party deeper into the Rift for safety. Turn to 306.

37

This is a difficult move against an axe-wielding opponent. The Dwarf-Troll's Defence is 7. If you are successful, it is knocked on to its back and you have time to dash beyond it and past the other Dwarf-Trolls. Turn to 197. If you fail, the Dwarf-Troll catches you with its axe. Lose 5 Endurance. If you are still alive you decide to flee rather than risk your life needlessly. Turn to 407.

38

A whispered warning carries to your sensitive ears: 'Assassin, challenge or slay?' Another whispers: 'Wait. What is a beauty like her doing here in the eternal dark?' There are at least two in the cavern who speak the common tongue. You know that they are about twelve metres ahead of you. Will you attack them (turn to 388) or ask them who they are (turn to 398)?

39

Countless tunnels diverge in all directions at this

level. Finding your way, if you keep to the smaller tunnels, will be difficult. If you take the broader tunnels, you run a greater risk of being spotted. Will you try to find yourself a disguise so that you can bluff your way down to the lower tiers (turn to 299) or rely on stealth (turn to 319)?

40

As you make for the tunnel, the sister of Nullaq seems to whisper under her breath. Turn to 220.

41

Amnesty for Foxglove and for her retinue is proclaimed throughout Irsmuncast, and your unwelcome visitors enter the city. The Orcs of the severed head, plainly very nervous, camp on Caravan Field, and talk to no one; they are guarded by a special contingent of the Watch. Foxglove and her companion are escorted into your presence by Gwyneth and ten shieldmaidens. You are met with a double surprise. Turn to 61.

42

The tunnel plunges down hill for a while and the cacophonous rumbling gets closer. Looking back, you see a team of Orcs in harness towing a wooden chariot with rusty iron wheels along the rails. On the chariot are a driver clad in an outlandish suit of spiked armour, with a polished brass horn seeming to grow out of his forehead, and an Orcish chieftain – of all the hundreds of Orcs you have ever set eyes on, he is both the most brutishly strong and ugly-looking. By the side of the chariot lopes the wood carrier. He points and starts gabbling in Orcish while the chieftain stares at Foxglove and grins unpleasantly. Will you stop and try to bluff your

way past them (turn to 182) or turn off the main tunnel into a side tunnel (turn to 202)?

43

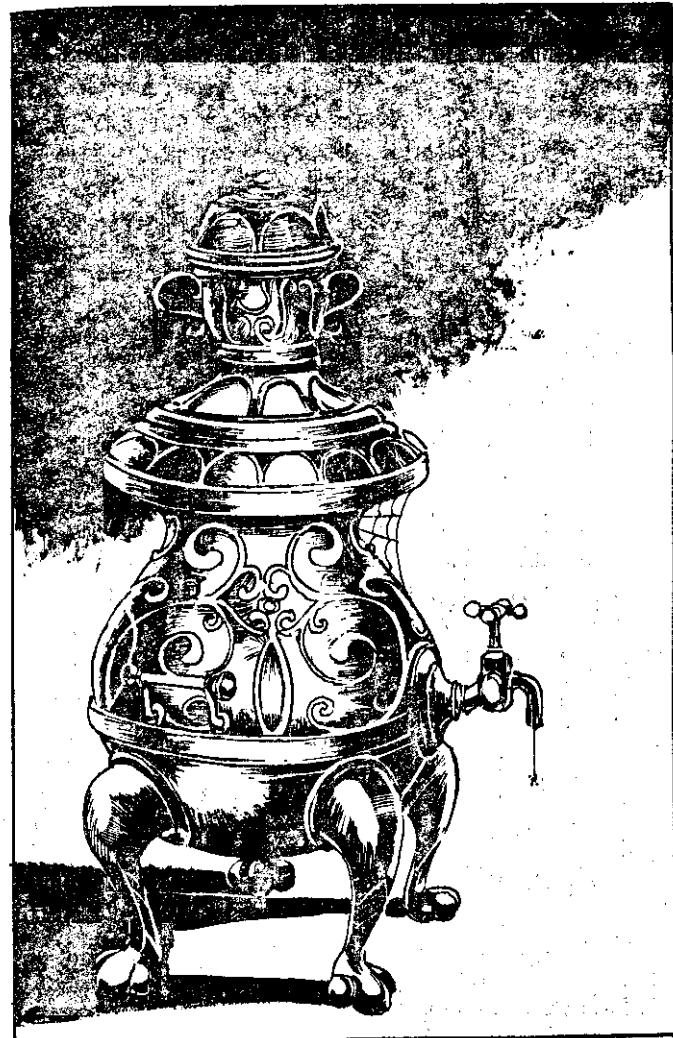
Cassandra senses that you have changed your mind and are about to kill her. 'Kill me and my secret dies with me, a secret that Avenger would like to hear more than any other, save perhaps a priestess of the Allmother in far-off Tor.' Will you kill her anyway (turn to 73) or take her back to the city to see if you can unravel this conundrum (turn to 93)?

44

The samovar is indeed priceless, but you lose interest in it when a small spider leaps from its spout into your hair. Before you can stop it, the tiny spider has run across your face and entered your mouth, which is still open in fear and surprise. You try to catch it with your tongue and to spit it out, but it crawls up behind a flap of skin and then into your Eustachian tube. Before long you can feel the little spider fidgeting about underneath your brain. It is a daughter of Nullaq, the Supreme Queen who rules in Malicious Envy. If you now have two of these daughters of Nullaq inside your head, turn to 104. If not, turn to 84.

45

The battle is long and bloody. Gwyneth is a fine and strong swordswoman, and she knows all the tricks. You are badly wounded and have lost a lot of blood by the time she falls stricken to the ground. There was no quarter asked or given. In the end your superior martial skill and your Inner Force triumph over her weaponskill and armour. The word of what has happened spreads like wildfire. The shield-



maidens of Dama turn against you and are joined by those who worship the evil Nemesis, Supreme Principal of Evil. Your position as Overlord becomes untenable. You are forced to relinquish the Sceptre, your badge of office, and with it your chance to save your friend Glaivas, the Ranger-Lord. You are an outcast and will die alone and unknown.



46

The sword bites into your flesh and as it does so the swordsman utters a strange word, letting fall the scroll as he does so. It is as if the Hand of Retribution had struck you. You are battered to the floor. Lose 7 Endurance. If you are still alive, you have no option but to surrender, as the swordsman is astride you with two others, one in white, the other in green, flanking you. The magician hovers gently to the floor. Turn to 106.

47

Your Shuriken flashes across the hall and wounds Thaum in the shoulder. He is no longer performing his incantations, but Tyutchev and Cassandra close on you simultaneously. You have no more Shuriken with which to keep them at a distance. You cannot block both of their sword-cuts, and Tyutchev's blade forces past your guard. Cassandra follows up,

and you are cut down. You die far from home, deep in the eternal darkness.



48

The spider moves occasionally, as if to remind you to live in fear, but nothing awful happens yet. There are no sounds of pursuit as you continue searching for the paths that lead ever deeper into the ground, but the sensation of being watched grows until your hair prickles with apprehension. Turn to 52.

49

The shambler squeezes along the narrow tunnel, scuffing dried excrement as it goes. You realise it is heading for its lair, a low-ceilinged cave. Nimblly you creep up behind it and slip the wire of your garotte around its thick neck. Within seconds you are gently lowering the shambler to the ground and stripping it of its grime-ridden furs. Using your skills as an impersonator you are able to mimic its shambling gait. Only someone looking at you closely would realise you were human. If you must now find a disguise for Foxglove, you decide to try the cavern-house. Turn to 29. If Foxglove is not waiting for you, turn to 319, but note first that you are disguised as a shambler.

50

The Ogres cross their pikes in front of each other,

blocking your path, and you fall back a pace. The pike points scythe down at you, but you dodge nimbly only to feel the hand of one of the sorceresses at your shoulder. Her hand seems to sprout rods of iron that embed themselves in you, and then she has levitated your body off the floor so that you cannot knock her over. You struggle, but the pikes batter you until she lets you fall to the floor, a bloodied pulp. Your end has come in the eternal darkness far from home.



51

Night falls. There is a new moon and wind. Conditions are almost ideal for Ninja. You are able to scout successfully without arousing suspicion. They have chosen a reasonably defensible position in a narrow valley of one of the tributaries of the River of Beasts. Earthworks have been thrown up on either side of the river at a narrow point between the steeply inclined walls of the valley. The scree slopes on either side will make silent movement difficult. Will you try to steal in over one of the earthworks (turn to 271) or, if you are a skilled climber, get above their position and then down the scree slope (turn to 281)? If you do not believe that either plan is suitable, you may circle around to the head of the valley and try to come at them from behind (turn to 23) or return to Irsmuncast and ride out with

Gwyneth and a company of shieldmaidens tomorrow (turn to 31).

52

Soon you have left the second tier far above. For several hours you continue to descend without being challenged. The only thing of note which you pass on the way is the scene of a battle. Three Dark Elves and as many Orcs lie dead on a stone landing. One was killed while running away, but they seem to have been fighting on the same side. A scroll has been discarded nearby, its magic spent, but to your surprise you recognise it as a scroll that carries the blessings of Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who took up the sword and fought on the side of good when the Pantheon descended to Orb itself to do battle, many thousands of years ago. There are no other clues as to who joined battle against your enemies the Dark Elves and the Orcs, but there is a vile and noxious gas lingering in the hallway which almost makes you vomit. Judging by the arrows that lie on the floor or have pierced bodies, they attacked from a side passage. Will you take this passage (turn to 390) or continue down the seemingly never-ending stairway (turn to 410)?



Cassandra's sword buckles suddenly under the pressure as the Worldworm tries to snap its mouth closed. She falls and the Worldworm's jaws shut with an almighty crack, crushing you to death. You die far from home, deep in the eternal darkness.



'You see, Cassandra, I have done your bidding,' says Foxglove.

'Give me the Sceptre,' demands Cassandra. You look sheepishly to Foxglove, but she dramatically throws herself to her knees beside you and says: 'You must, Avenger. They will slay me if you do not.'

'Then I will slay them first,' you cry gallantly.

Foxglove says nothing, but Thaum is beginning a spell. You decide to give battle, but if Foxglove is ever threatened remember that you must always choose to protect her under any circumstances. Turn to 74.

At least without Foxglove by your side you can make full use of your stealth and agility. It is not long before you are nearing the northern end of the

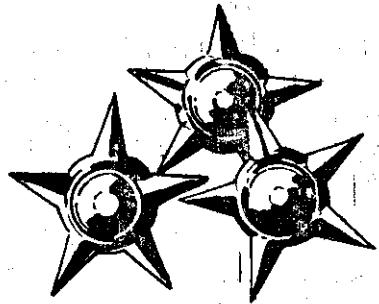
Rift. A warband of crooked mis-shapen creatures, their eyes to the ground as they shuffle across the stony fissured ground, causes you to lie low for a while, but when the creatures are safely past you approach the chasm. Turn to 165.

If Foxglove is still with you, turn to 96. If not, turn to 116.

This throw is well nigh impossible against an axe-wielding opponent of such girth and stature. You launch yourself feet first towards the head of the nearest Troll, but its half-dwarven ancestry gives it greater skill with the axe than you had expected. Before you can snap your feet against its ears it has struck between your legs, burying the axe-blade in as far as your stomach. Death is instantaneous.



They refuse to tell you who they are, but you can see three of them now, a swordsman and two priests, one heavily armoured, the other wearing white with a red cross. He demands in a peremptory tone to know who you are and what you are doing. Will you tell them (turn to 16) or attack them (turn to 358)?



59

The sister of Nullaq ducks your Throwing Star just in time. You follow up for the kill, but to your consternation she changes into a black crow and takes to the air, soon to be lost in the darkness of the chasm below. The green powder settles about you and begins to burn into your flesh like acid. Lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, you decide to take to the tunnels and move away from the edge of the cavern. Turn to 9.

60

Too late you realise you have made the wrong decision. The wall of flame engulfs you and you burn like a torch. The brightest light of goodness in the eastern Manmarch has had its moment and now sputters and dies. The sister of Nullaq gathers up the ashes of your body to be used in an occult potion. The Black Widow has the Sceptre of Irsmunk-cast and your people will suffer defeat at her hands.



52

61

The first surprise is Foxglove. She wears the same peacock gown that she wore when you first met her when she petitioned to become a member of your Privy Council, but it is torn and travel-stained; the extravagant peacock tail train has been ripped off it long ago. She is still beautiful, but her fragile beauty is that of the forlorn waif rather than the sophisticated courtesan you remember. The second surprise is the Warrior Woman. You recognise her haughtiness instantly. She is Cassandra, wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harith-si-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, along with other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Ananchil. You were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Most clearly of all you remember that she is a breathtakingly swift swordswoman. Turn to 71.



62

Round the curve of the tunnel comes a team of Orcs in harness towing a wooden chariot with rusty iron wheels along the rails. On the chariot are a driver clad in an outlandish suit of spiked armour with a polished brass horn seeming to grow out of his forehead. The other is an Orcish chieftain. Of all the hundreds of orcs you have ever set eyes on, he is both the most brutally strong and ugly-looking. By the side of the chariot lopes the wood carrier. He points and starts gabbling in Orcish while the chief-

53



tain stares at Foxglove and grins unpleasantly. You have heard enough Orcish spoken by those inhabitants of Irsmuncast who are Orcs or half-breeds to understand a few words as the chieftain calls his men to halt in front of you and then addresses you. 'Kneel, shambler, before Lord Sile of the second tier. Why trespassing far from the shambler hovels?' Will you kneel and say that you are taking your slave to the third tier where you can sell her for a high price (turn to 82) or remain standing and say that she is the Black Widow's favourite and that he had better order his Orcs to stand aside and let you both pass (turn to 102)?

### 63

When you are securely trussed, Cassandra, who has been measuring the gem against her own eye, returns to talk to you. 'I will say this only once, Avenger, so listen well. Your friend and trusted ally, Glaivas, the Ranger-Lord, has been taken prisoner by the Dark Elves in the Rift. Only one thing can save him. You must take the Sceptre that is your badge of rulership and surrender it to the Dark Elves inside the Rift. Then Glaivas will be released and you will both be allowed to go free. If you do not aid your friend in his hour of need, then you are no better than those who hold him prisoner in the everlasting darkness.' So saying, she orders the Orcs to half bury you in sand at the river's edge and then they depart, leaving you to struggle in your bonds. Turn to 293.

### 64

The samovar is indeed priceless, but you lose interest in it when a small spider leaps from its spout into your hair. Before you can stop it, the tiny spider

has run across your face and entered your mouth, which is still open in fear and surprise. You try to catch it with your tongue and to spit it out, but it crawls up behind a flap of skin and then into your Eustachian tube. Before long you can feel the little spider fidgeting about underneath your brain. It is a daughter of Nullaq, the Supreme Queen who rules in Malicious Envy. If you now have two of these daughters of Nullaq inside your head, turn to 104. If not, turn to 124.

65

Memories of how Glaivas brought the Rangers to help you in your fight against the Legion of the Sword of Doom help you to make up your mind completely. You will risk all to save your friend. Turn to 105.

66

The four Adventurers are here in the Rift for a purpose, not merely to loot or to slay evil creatures. They have a score to settle. You have enemies in common. They are hunting the worshippers of the Chaos god Anarchil, who slew the High Priestess of Illustra in the city of Harith-si-the-Crow. Taflur has persuaded his friends to seek out and destroy Tyutchev, Thatum and Cassandra, the very people who seek your downfall. Thybault tells the story of how the evil three dared to venture into the great Cathedral to Illustra and kill the powerful High Priestess before her own altar. They are on their trail: the worshippers of the Chaos god are somewhere on the fourth tier or below. The four Adventurers hate the evil trio. You may offer to join them if you wish (turn to 306) or say 'May Fate smile on you' and go your own way (turn to 326).

67

Just as you turn to retrace your steps up the roadway there is the whir of a tomahawk flying through the air and a clatter as it strikes the side of the canyon nearby. You sprint away, stealing a look over your shoulder as you go - to see five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post; if you had walked on you would have been among them. They begin to howl, so you run on towards the lip of the Rift hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. Turn to 107.

68

The first spider, which had lain dormant recently, becomes active again and you feel them beginning to eat their way into your brain together. Suddenly you hear a voice booming inside your head. 'This is the voice of Nullaq, I who rule in Malicious Envy, Supreme Queen of all who follow the ways of malice. Know that my touch is poison and my speech petrifying.' With that you feel your flesh beginning to turn to stone. The daughters of Nullaq have enabled the goddess to take over your mind. If you carried Foxglove out of the cavern of the spider, turn to 88. If not, turn to 108.

69

The hearing of Dark Elves is acute. As you deftly pick up the chains there is the faintest clink. Make a Fate roll. If Fate smiles on you, turn to 109. If not, turn to 129.

70

'To which deity do you wish to pray,' asks the

sorceress. Will you say that you came to pray to the Allmother, Fountain of All Life (turn to 130), Nul-laq, the Supreme Queen that rules in Malicious Envy (turn to 150), Tanajla, the Guardian of Elvendom and patroness of women who practises magic (turn to 170) or Zarahrayal the Temptress (turn to 190)?

71

Cassandra strides towards the throne neglecting to bow, and General Gwyneth moves in front of her to protect you. 'I have important news for you, Overlord. Your friend Glaivas the Ranger-Lord is held prisoner by the Dark Elves in the Rift. Only you can save him, Avenger. If you do not yield the Sceptre that is the badge and instrument of your rule to the Bowels of Orb, your friend Glaivas will die the death of a thousand torments, a death so horrible that only the immortal Dark Elves have the patience to execute it. If you yield the Sceptre, then Glaivas and the headstrong Paladin who accompanied him on his ill-advised venture into the Rift will go free.' She pauses for your reaction, running a hand through her spiked hair, as a man might, to conceal her nervousness. Will you ask her what she has to gain for placing herself in such danger while bringing you this message (turn to 181), ask Foxglove whether Cassandra speaks the truth (turn to 333) or threaten to hold Cassandra hostage against Glaivas's return (turn to 103)?

72

Lord Sile lies moaning on the floor, giving his last breath. The Orcs turn tail and flee. Wasting no time, you hurry on down the tunnel. Turn to 52.



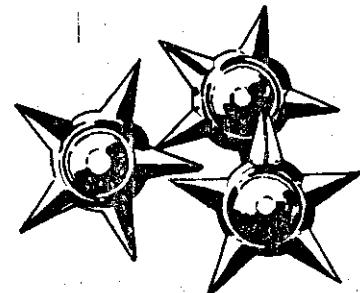
The poison does its work. Cassandra tries desperately to invoke the power of her god, Anarchil, Breaker of Edifices, but her tongue will not obey her. She dies, and takes her secret with her. You return to Irsmuncast where, later, your scouts inform you that Foxglove and the Orcish warband disappeared back into the Bowels of Orb. Turn to 83.

Foxglove sinks to the floor. Her powers in such a situation are limited. Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking at Foxglove. Will you look at Foxglove too (turn to 114) or keep your eyes fixed on Thaum (turn to 134)?

In the morning Foxglove smiles at you and lights up your heart with joy. She asks for the Sceptre as a sign of your esteem for her. You have some misgivings about this, and struggle for a time to resist the temptation of falling in with her wishes. Lose a point of Inner Force. In the end, however, you decide to give in just as you near the edge of the gaping chasm that is the Rift. She smiles and in her eyes is the knowledge that you would do anything she asked you to. Having proved her point, she gives back the Sceptre and bids you lead on. Turn to 95.

If Foxglove is still with you, turn to 136. If not, turn to 156.

It takes all your Shuriken to force the Dwarf-Trolls aside, but your accuracy is impressive in hitting in the throat the two that tried to howl out the alarm. They cower and paw at their wounds as you stride past. You cannot retrieve your Throwing Stars from where they are embedded in the purple flesh of the Dwarf-Trolls, however; cross off all your Shuriken from your Character Sheet. You may not use Shuriken again until you find more. Turn to 197.



These people are familiar. You take off your face coverings and greet them. They are Eris the magician, Thybault and Taflur, both priests, and Vespers, a swordsman. You saved them from a terrible predicament and Thybault healed you of the plague. They are dressed now as then, Vespers in a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irsmuncast have since revealed that this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. Thybault, dressed in his white robe with its red cross, is a worshipper of Avatar the

One, Supreme Principle of Good, while Taflur, whose robe is green with a white cross, reveres Illustra, Goddess of Life, consort to Avatar. Eris, the magician, whom you remember as a strange, capricious fellow, is a little nervous at the sight of you. The five-spoked wheel on his robe indicates that he follows Beatan the Free. The five spokes are five of the ten arrows of Limitless Possibility that tend towards good rather than evil. You know and can trust these men. Now that they recognise you, they step forwards to embrace you in turn, hungry for news. You tell them much, and in return they pass on some useful information. Turn to 66.

79

Fixing the grappling-hook in a small crack, you gently pay out the rope and lower yourself in the twilight to a ledge below the roadway. Some way below, you can see the roadway crossing the face of the chasm again. It will take some time to reach it, but when you do there is no reason not to hope that you will be able to slip unnoticed across it and continue your downward climb. In the long slow hours of your laborious descent your ears become attuned to the faintest of noises in the dark air of the chasm. Every now and then you have to make a detour around a cave opening or ledge. The noises of flying things become louder and more frequent. Dark shadows wheel lazily through the twilit airs of the Rift. Then a cry rings out, echoing off the far side of the canyon kilometres away. An Orc has been plucked off the roadway by a great winged beast. Grimly determined, you continue. Turn to 279.

80

Running on, you see, too late, a high recess in the

62

roof of the tunnel. You are beneath it when you look up and a tiny spider drops on to your up-turned face. You let Foxglove fall unceremoniously to the floor and slap at it. It runs into your hair and then into your ear, darting so quickly it cannot be stopped. If you have a bullrush-headed pin, turn to 8. If not, turn to 28.

81

It takes the best part of a day to skirt around and climb up to the head of the valley. You camp for the night and are not disturbed, then continue towards your prey in the morning. As you approach the Orcish encampment you realise it is hidden from view by the spur of a hill. A pinnacle of rock nearby, however, gives a good vantage-point from which to spy out the land so you decide to climb it. Turn to 161.

82

The chieftain sneers and scoffs. 'A shambler owning a beautiful human slave?' he laughs. 'So she just wandered into the Rift and asked you to care for her?' Again there is laughter. 'She looks tasty for a human.' He licks his lips while the Orcs slip out of the harness and begin to stride closer. Will you give them Foxglove and hope they let you go (turn to 122), tell the chieftain that he can have Foxglove only if he beats you in single combat (turn to 142) or attack them (turn to 162)?

83

A month to the day of Cassandra's death Glaivas's body minus legs, arms and face is carried into Irmuncast on the back of a hearse pulled by a blind carthorse. The hearse arrives undriven outside the

63



Palace and the horse dies standing up in the shafts. There is no clue as to what exactly happened or whether Doré le Jeune shared this grisly fate, but the knowledge that went with Cassandra to the grave might have enabled you to save the life of your dear and faithful friend. You have failed.



84

Every now and then the spider stirs as if to make certain that you are living in fear. There is nothing you can do to dislodge it now. You will have to carry on. Turn to 416.

85

That evening, at prayer in the Temple to Kwon, you bare your soul to your god, Kwon the Redeemer, and sense the deity's displeasure. The strength to do good that your belief in Kwon gives you is lessened. It is as if by abandoning Glaivas you become little better than his cruel captors. Lose 3 points of Inner Force. If you are not to displease your god further, you must try to save your trusted friend. Turn to 105.

86

As soon as you speak and they realise you are human their attitude to you changes. They are still wary but not intent on killing you. You have a chance to look at them closely. The swordsman wears a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked

out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irmuncast tell you that this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. The man in the white robe is a priest. He sports the Cross of Avatar on his chest. The other, in green, is also a priest, though he wears chainmail, and is a worshipper of Illustra, Goddess of Life. The fourth, the magician, is a worshipper of a Chaos god. The five-spoked wheel insignia shows the Limitless Possibilities that may lead to good acts, however, rather than those that may lead to evil. You have made a mistake in attacking them, for they are good people, unless they are in disguise. If you have the skill of Shin-Ren, turn to 126. They demand to know who you are, what you are doing and which god you revere. Will you tell them (turn to 146), or use a Poison Needle if you have the skill (turn to 318)?

87

As you near the natural archway of stone your acute hearing picks up two sounds. One is the sound of rock on rock, the other the sound of metal on metal. If you are interested in the sound of rock on rock, turn to 127. If you are interested in the sound of metal on metal, turn to 147.

88

You had unceremoniously dumped the inert figure of Foxglove on the ground when the spider fell on to your face, but to your amazement she is now standing, a broad smile gracing her features. She has brought the Black Widow a far greater prize than the fabulous Sceptre of Irmuncast. She has brought its

ruler, Avenger, to be a slave and pawn in the goddess's struggle for dominion over the wills of the beings of Orb. The goddess could now turn you to stone with a thought. You cannot even deprive her of your life, for you cannot act for yourself. Your movements are controlled by the two tiny daughters of the goddess, and they will use your considerable powers to turn the world to malice.



89

If you have the skill of Poison Needles, turn to 189. If you do not have this skill, you realise it will be impossible to surprise one without alerting the other. You will have to rely on your mastery of the martial arts, but who will you attack first? As you leap through the air, they turn towards you in shocked surprise. If you attack the soldier, turn to 209. If you attack the sorceress, turn to 229.

90

You surrender to them and one of the sorceresses puts her hand around your wrist. It sprouts iron rods that curve slowly round until they are like manacles around your wrist. You cannot resist as they take you away for questioning. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 110. If you have not, there is no escape for you. They will torture you if you allow yourself to live, so you bite off your own

tongue so that you bleed to death as any honourable Ninja should.



91

You give the order to charge and the Orcs are almost taken by surprise. The uphill going is rocky and difficult, however, and your charge falters as some of the horses fall or go lame. If you have the skill of Detecting and of Disarming Traps, turn to 101. If not, turn to 111.

92

As soon as you take off the disguise Sile orders his Orcs to take you prisoner. You have no choice but to give battle. Turn to 162.

93

A farmer at work in his fields greets you soon after dawn and is honoured to take both you and your prisoner back to the city in his ox-cart. You are waiting in your Throne Room for Cassandra to recover when a corporal of the Watch brings a message. General Gwyneth has ridden out with twenty shieldmaidens to meet the warband of Orcs who are now marching on the city. Not long afterwards Gwyneth herself presents some strange news.

'As we advanced towards the warband, the Orcs

put Foxglove on a horse and poked its flanks with their spears. The horse bolted towards us, and they flung down their arms and ran. It seems they simply wished to deliver the traitress Foxglove into my hands. We let them go. Foxglove is being held in the Palace donjon.' You thank Gwyneth and issue an order for the two prisoners to be brought into the Throne Room. Turn to 201.

94

You race to Foxglove's side and arrive before Cassandra's blade can fall. But to your dismay Foxglove grabs you so that you cannot defend yourself. Cassandra has never missed a stationary target, and her blade smashes your head. Foxglove has betrayed you for the last time, and you die far from home in the eternal darkness.



95

You reach the edge of the great chasm without glimpsing any of the Dark-Elvish magicians who might be on the lookout for you. The air is rank with the smells of sulphur and ammonia. Stale hot air seeps out of the great fissures that split the barren rock. There are no wild animals here at the edge of the Bowels of Orb, only dust. At the lip of the chasm

you pause to look down. There is no bottom – or if there is it is lost in darkness kilometres below. To the east you can dimly see the other wall, towering a kilometre above you like a distant bank of cloud. There are many twisting stairways and tracks leading down the side of the canyon wall, and there is even a road, wide enough for carts and siege machines, winding snake-like into the depths of the earth. It must have been a terrible labour to haul up to the light the engines that attacked your city. Foxglove says that the road passes many concealed guard-posts. Will you take one of the twisting stairways (turn to 415) or the road (turn to 7)?

96

The tunnel you are in leads to a balcony above a great open underground plaza. In the plaza are rows of guruka trees, a cross between trees and mushrooms which flourish in large spaces under ground, nourished by the bacteria and guano of bats and other creatures. They are like great still beasts, contorted into grotesque shapes and entwining as if they had been writhing together when the sun suddenly went out and they were robbed of movement. The plaza is lit so brightly by furnaces and blazing fires that your eyes, long accustomed only to torchlight, are dazzled. The plaza is busy. This is the main route from the third to the fourth tier, down the Fire Giants' Stair. There are no guards to be seen, just a steady bustle of people coming and going. At the far side of the plaza the largest tunnel and stairway you have ever seen lead down out of sight. Foxglove warns you not to attempt to descend the Fire Giants' Stair, for it is guarded at its half-way point by actual giants. They are blind, but folklore tells that the Fire Giants of the stair are gifted with



sixth sense, that they can sense anyone who should not be on the stair and then they hurl flaming boulders and smash the trespassers under their iron clubs. In this way subjects who have no business leaving the lower tiers are kept down, just as interlopers are kept out. Foxglove implores you to search for the secret stairs that lead to the fourth tier. Will you take her advice (turn to 176) or risk the stair (turn to 196)?

### 97

The Dwarf-Trolls begin to howl in annoyance, giving the alarm. One of them crushes Foxglove's head underfoot. You sprint back up the roadway towards the lip of the chasm hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. As you regain the lip you steal a quick look back. A figure stands beneath the first archway. A green and purple robe suggests that it may be a Dark Elf, perhaps even a sister of Nullaq. She shields her eyes against the light and is staring up at you. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway. You dart out of sight and take the nearest twisting stairway that winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 375.

### 98

A whispered warning carries to your sensitive ears: 'Assassin, challenge or slay?' There are at least in the cavern two who speak the common tongue. You know that they are about twelve metres ahead of you. Will you attack them (turn to 358) or ask them who they are (turn to 58)?

### 99

Though you are clad in your black Ninja costume

and move through the gloom as stealthily as a cat, many of the creatures have the advantage of living their whole lives lit by only the dimmest of light and one of them spots you, immediately raising the alarm. You have no choice but to retreat the way you came, as four Dark Elves riding flightless dragon-lizards charge after you and a dozen bows hum and twang. The shafts fall short, and soon you are nearing the guard-point of the Dwarf-Trolls once again. If you are a skilled Acrobat, turn to 119. If you are not a skilled Acrobat, you must fight your way through (turn to 139).



### 100

Even as you reach for a Shuriken the Dark Elf has spoken a spell. She thinks even faster than you do, but then she has two minds. Your fingers close around the Star and you cry out in pain. The Throwing Star is white hot. You drop it to the floor as it turns to liquid iron. If you are carrying any other Throwing Stars about your person, they melt through your clothing and run down your loins. Lose 2 Endurance for every Shuriken you are still carrying. If you are still alive, in a red mist of pain, you realise that they are all useless. Note that you have no Shuriken. The sister of Nullaq has not tried to kill you in your moment of pain and helplessness.

Instead she points to the tunnel ahead of you and to the left. Will you enter the tunnel as she bids (turn to 352) or try to leave by the other free entrance, behind you and to the left (turn to 220)?

101

At the very last moment you realise that the earth before the defensive earthworks has been disturbed recently, and you rein in your horse and bellow out, 'Halt!' One or two of the horses plough on and fall down into pits filled with spikes which the Orcs have prepared under their leader, who is a woman in the bizarre patchwork armour keeping them at the defences with the flat of her sword: the blade glows coldly and is rimed with frost. There is a flurry of arrows from the Orcs and three Warrior Women go down. Will you call off the attack (turn to 121), charge again (turn to 131) or dismount to press home the attack (turn to 141)?

102

The charioteer Orc looks at Lord Sile and the team wait to hear what their Lord will make of this threat from the lips of a shambler from the hovels. Lord Sile seems at first nonplussed and then angry. A cunning smile creases his scrofulous face. 'The Black Widow entrusts her favourite to the care of a shambler from the hovels of the second tier? You had both better wait in my dungeons until I can send a message to the Black Widow.' The Orcs slip out of their harness. Will you reveal that you are a human, not a shambler (turn to 92), or say that you are a Dark Elf sorceress who has been cursed and turned into a mere shambler, but who has not lost her sorcerous powers (turn to 112)?

103

Cassandra laughs and replies: 'What care the Dark Elves for Cassandra? You could have me torn limb from limb for all they care. No, you will have to take the Sceptre to the Bowels of Orb. If the love of a trusting friend means anything to you, Overlord, you must save Glaivas, the Ranger-Lord, or become no better than those who hold him prisoner in the everlasting dark.' Turn to 123.



104

The first spider, which had lain dormant recently, becomes active again, and you feel them beginning to eat their way into your brain together. Suddenly you hear a voice booming inside your head. 'This is the voice of Nullaq, I who rule in Malicious Envy, Supreme Queen of all who follow the ways of malice. Know that my touch is poison and my speech petrifying.' You feel your flesh beginning to turn to stone. The daughters of Nullaq have enabled the goddess to take over your mind. If Foxglove is with you, turn to 88. If not, turn to 108.

105

You cannot ask another to share with you the dangers of the Rift. Foxglove must come with you as

punishment for deserting her city in its time of need. She may be useful to you. But there is no point in taking an armed band. No matter how large, it would be outnumbered by the denizens of the Rift. Stealth will be your greatest asset. You take the Sceptre and swathe it in black cloth, then hide it inside your Ninja costume. Leaving Gwyneth orders to publish the news that you are journeying to meet two saviours of the city, you set off to that darkest pit of evil, the Bowels of Orb. One other artefact you take from the royal armoury, the Torch of Lumen, an ebony rod topped by a cone of alabaster. When the alabaster is touched it gives off a constant light that will be invaluable in the eternal darkness of the Rift. Turn to 145.



### 106

You surrender to your assailants and they discuss for a while whether or not to save you. You realise that though powerful and swift to mete out death to any who stand in their way, these are not bad men. You decide to tell them who you are and what you are doing. Turn to 16.

### 107

You regain the top of the canyon before pursuers appear on the roadway below you, and take the nearest of the smaller twisting stairways; it winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 375.

### 108

The Black Widow has won a far greater prize than the fabulous Sceptre of Irmuncast. She has won its ruler, Avenger, and he will be a slave and pawn in the goddess's struggle for dominion over the wills of the beings of Orb. The goddess could now turn you to stone with a thought. You cannot even deprive her of your life, for you cannot act for yourself. Your movements are controlled by the two tiny daughters of the goddess, and they will use your considerable powers to turn the world to malice.



### 109

Just as you pick up the chain the soldier begins to sing a haunting melody that is at once both foul and fair. Under cover of this distraction you retire to the door. If Foxglove is waiting for you and you have the furs of a shambler you may take that disguise while Foxglove takes the disguise of a slave if you wish (turn to 149). Otherwise you may kill the Dark Elves and take their clothes (turn to 169) or, if you

are alone, you may use the shambler disguise for yourself. If you disguise yourself as a shambler, note this on your Character Sheet and then leave the cavern-house; turn to 319.

### 110

If Foxglove was with you when you surrendered, turn to 290. Otherwise turn to 310.

### 111

Too late you realise that the earth before the defensive earthworks has been disturbed recently. The first wave of horses, including your magnificent white charger, ploughs onwards into the trap, a pit filled with spikes that kill many of your steeds. A volley of arrows from the Orcs kills several of the Warrior Women, and you hear Gwyneth giving the order to retreat. The Orcs swarm forwards from their earthworks, exhorted to victory with great gusto by the woman in bizarre patchwork armour. You are caught underneath your charger, and though not badly hurt you are helpless when, after throwing off several Orcs, you find the Warrior Woman's sword at your throat. The sword, rimed with frost, chills your blood. Turn to 151.

### 112

Lord Sile looks a little uncomfortable. He is clearly unable to make up his mind, and his Orcs move no closer. 'Leave her with me while you return to the Black Widow and fetch a guard. There are many traitors and some Flatlanders in the third tier. You will not be safe.'

You decide to bluff. 'You would dare to defile the Black Widow's favourite?'

'I did not say so.' Lord Sile plainly has unsavoury desires and he now looks very uncomfortable.

'I shall report this to the Black Widow. You will all be punished,' you threaten. There are wails of terror and Sile is cursed by some of his Orcs. Suddenly the charioteer screams and buries his bronze horn in Lord Sile's neck. Sile bellows and wrestles with him to the floor. They are locked together. The others join in or wait to see which side will win – Sile's supporters or those who wish for change – before they commit themselves. Sile's supporters are outnumbered, but Lord Sile's own strength is formidable. As you leave hurriedly the charioteer screams. You push through the battling Orcs and run for it. Turn to 52.

### 113

Cassandra is lying. Though to any other observer she would appear to speak candidly, you can tell by the way she is forcing herself to hold your searching gaze that she lies. It is true that she outbraves the lion; she risks everything by coming to Irsmuncast, walking into the lions' den, as it were, but she has slain lions before. She is lying when she says she is taking this chance for monetary reward. She lusts for your life to avenge the killing of her barbarian friend, and she stares at your emerald eye rather than your natural eye. She covets the emerald Orb that shines forth in your noble face. Turn to 123.

### 114

There is an eruption of coruscating light so bright that it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in Foxglove,



merely anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not looking at Thaum, for you would surely have been stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. He is beginning another spell. Will you throw a Shuriken at him if you still have one (turn to 154) or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 174)?

### 115

In the morning Foxglove is downcast to the point of abjection. She refuses even to look at you. If your heart softens and you give her the comforting she desires, turn to 305. Otherwise you will have to accept that much of your journey will pass in stony silence. Turn to 95.

### 116

The tunnel you are in leads to a balcony above a great open underground plaza. In the plaza are rows of guruka trees, a cross between trees and mushrooms which flourish in large spaces under ground, nourished by the bacteria and guano of bats and other creatures. They are like great still beasts, contorted into grotesque shapes and entwining as if they had been writhing together when the sun suddenly went out and they were robbed of movement. The plaza is lit so brightly by furnaces and blazing fires that your eyes, long accustomed only to torchlight, are dazzled. The plaza is busy. This is the main route from the third to the fourth tier, down the Fire Giants' Stair. There are no guards to

be seen, just a steady bustle of people coming and going. At the far side of the plaza the largest tunnel and stairway you have ever seen lead down out of sight. Will you attempt to cross the plaza (turn to 196) or attempt to find a back stairway down to the fourth tier (turn to 176)?

117

You give ground, but instead of attacking you your nearest assailant crushes Foxglove's head underfoot. Will you attack (turn to 207) or flee (turn to 227)?

118

The silver serpent-headed javelin strikes the floor beside you and rolls harmlessly away, but now the swordsman is attacking. He thrusts at your heart and his sword is enchanted to find its mark magically. You try to block the blow. Your Defence is 6. If you are successful, turn to 158. If you fail, turn to 178.

119

You rush straight at one of the Dwarf-Trolls, which strains at its leash to get at you, then you flip into a neat piked somersault and land behind the astonished beast. You are past the guard-post and you continue on up the road hoping to get back to the lip of the Rift and try to descend into the Rift along a less busy route. The cold-blooded dragon-lizards begin to slow and you escape. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway and turn to 375.

120

As soon as you move, the Dark Elf passes her arm across herself. As she does so she turns invisible.

She did not move a muscle before disappearing. If you still have the emerald Orb in your eye, turn to 260. If not, turn to 280.

121

You decide that further bloodshed would serve no useful purpose and call off the attack. Gwyneth remonstrates with you, but you tell Foxglove that she shall have her amnesty and return to the city to await the arrival of her warband. Turn to 41.

122

The chieftain beckons Foxglove to step up beside him on the chariot and forbids his orcs to touch her. You let fall the coffle chain. If you are enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 262. If you are not enchanted, turn to 282.

123

'What part do you play in this, traitress?' Gwyneth asks of Foxglove.

'I am innocent of any dark design. When my own city closed its gates on me I fled to the Rift for succour and found only cruelty that surpasses understanding.'

Gwyneth becomes more angry than you have ever seen her. She is almost raving. 'Vile worm! You fled to those for whom you opened the city gate when we were under siege, but they had no further use for you. You are only of use in this city, Foxglove. You have no martial skill, no sorcery or priestly powers, only the low cunning of a poisonous gutter toad.'

You ask Gwyneth to calm herself and ask again why Foxglove is here. 'Against my will, Overlord. I am but a helpless pawn in an evil game.' Turn to 173.

**124**

The Adventurers are appalled at what has happened. Thybault mutters darkly about losing your soul, and Taflur suggests you attend an exorcism at the earliest opportunity. Neither he nor Tybault can perform one outside a temple, so you will have to continue in hope. Every now and then the spider stirs as if to make certain that you are living in fear. 'There is nothing to be done but to go on,' you say bravely. Turn to 164.

**125**

The Rift has been a cauldron of evil since time immemorial. All manner of wicked and unnatural creatures spawn there, giving rise to an endless stream of evil pouring from the dark chasm across the lands of men. Dark Elves, sisters of Nullaq, Orcs, Old Ones, Sons of Nil, Plague-Trolls, these are but a few of the denizens lurking in the unending darkness. The chasm itself is like an immense gorge surrounded by a honeycomb of natural tunnels and carven halls which stretch to the very centre of Orb. A man could walk for a lifetime in the Bowels of Orb and still not trace every catacomb and vault. You decide to make for the northern end of the Rift. Turn to 165.

**126**

Your Heart-Training tells you that these four people – with the possible exception of the magician, who is a highly unreliable and capricious character but not wholly evil – are good and brave men. You can trust them, for they will not lie to you. You tell them that you are none other than the Overlord of Irsmuncastnigh Edge and of your quest to rescue Glaivas, your Ranger friend. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of

the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in a Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. If not, the swordsman waves his sword in your direction and speaks the words: 'Master of man and woman.' You find yourself beginning to like these four Adventurers. Turn to 246.

**127**

You look up to see a small shard of rock which has broken away from the wall of the canyon above tumbling down the rock-face to land on the roadway at your feet. At the same instant there is the whir of a tomahawk flying through the air at you. You whirl around, but it is too late. If you have the skill of Arrow Cutting and still have the emerald Orb in your eye, turn to 167. If not, turn to 187.

**128**

Death is instantaneous. The swords descend faster than the eye can see, slicing neatly through the arm-guards you have held aloft, through your arms and almost right through your body. The sister of Nullaq gathers up the pieces of your body to use in an occult potion.



The soldier is about to get up and sing when the sorceress lays her hand gently on his arm and touches a finger to his lips. They both hear the clinking of the chain and turn to attack you. The soldier comes first. If you have the skill of Poison Needles, turn to 269. If not, you give battle to the soldier. Turn to 209.

Even the Ogres realise that you have made a mistake. 'Die, desecrator,' says one, and 'Speak not that name here,' raves the other. They order you killed. The pike points scythe down at you, but you dodge nimbly only to feel the hand of one of the sorceresses at your shoulder. Her hand seems to sprout rods of iron that embed themselves in you, and then she has levitated your body off the floor so that you cannot knock her over. You struggle, but the pikes batter you until she lets you fall to the floor, a bloodied pulp. Your end has come in the eternal darkness, far from home.



As soon as you have regrouped, you charge again, hoping to leap over the pit. Your white charger strains every nerve clearing the pit, only to fall foul of a net trap beyond it. Others fall on to the spikes,

and once again the Orcs' arrows claim casualties. The Warrior Woman leads a charge from which those remaining on horseback can only retreat, while you are knocked senseless after falling from your horse and hitting your head on a rock. When you regain consciousness it is to feel the Warrior Woman's sword at your neck. The frost-rimed blade chills your blood. Turn to 151.

Seeing your success, Lord Sile bellows at his Orcs to stand aside. He dares to oppose you in single combat even though it has become plain that you are no shambler. Turn to 152.

Gwyneth steps forwards and takes Foxglove's arm in a grip of iron. Foxglove screams in fear, but Gwyneth's face is set hard. She pulls the wailing woman out of your sight. The wails continue down the corridor and are then cut off abruptly. Gwyneth returns to the Throne Room alone. Turn to 163.

Thaum's weird gesticulations are a wonder to behold. Just as you set out to attack him there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright that it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in Foxglove, merely anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You can only guess at all of this from the noises you hear, for you

are temporarily blinded and stunned. You reel backwards, but the tempered steel of Tyutchev's and Cassandra's meet in your vitals. You have been slain far from home, in the eternal darkness.



### 135

The baying of wolves wakes you and, to your surprise, you see that Foxglove is up and standing not far from you. 'I'm so frightened, Avenger, I can hardly stop myself screaming out in panic.' Her voice sounds very shaky. Will you give her the comforting she desires (turn to 305), go back to sleep (turn to 155) or stay awake until dawn, when you can continue (turn to 115)?

### 136

The tunnel you are in leads to a balcony above a great open underground plaza. In the plaza are rows of guruka trees, a cross between trees and mushrooms which flourish in large spaces under ground, nourished by the bacteria and guano of bats and other creatures. They are like great still beasts, contorted into grotesque shapes and entwining as if they had been writhing together when the sun suddenly went out and they were robbed of movement. The plaza is lit so brightly by furnaces and blazing fires that your eyes, long accustomed only

to torchlight, are dazzled. This is the main route from the third to the fourth tier, down the Fire Giants' Stair. There are no guards to be seen, just a steady bustle of people coming and going. At the far side of the plaza the largest tunnel and stairway you have ever seen lead down out of sight. Foxglove warns you not to attempt to descend the Fire Giants' Stair, for it is guarded at its half-way point by actual giants. They are blind, but folklore tells that the Fire Giants of the stair are gifted with a sixth sense, that they can sense anyone who should not be on the stair and then they hurl flaming boulders and smash the trespassers under their iron clubs. In this way subjects who have no business leaving the lower tiers are kept down just as interlopers are kept out. Foxglove implores you all to search for the secret stairs that lead to the fourth tier. Will you take her advice (turn to 236) or risk the stair (turn to 216)?

### 137

This is a difficult move against an axe-wielding opponent. The Dwarf-Troll's Defence is 7. If you are successful, it is knocked on to its back and you have time to pick up Foxglove and move back out of range; turn to 177. If you fail, the Dwarf-Troll catches you with its axe. Lose 5 Endurance and, if you are still alive, turn to 157.



The silver serpent-headed javelin catches your arm. Lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, the swordsman is now attacking. He thrusts at your heart and his sword is enchanted to find its mark magically. You try to block the blow. Your Defence is 6. If you are successful, turn to 158. If you fail, turn to 178.

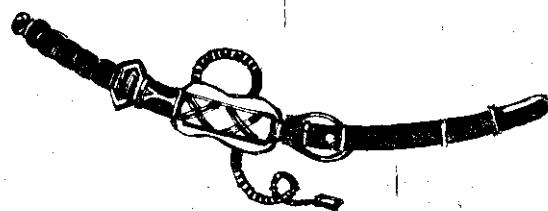
You will have to knock down at least one of the Dwarf-Trolls to forge past them and escape the jaws of the dragon-lizards, but you have time for only three well-timed blows before the dragon-lizards are upon you. You decide to attack one of them with a combination designed to floor him. Which three Way of the Tiger moves will you choose: a Forked Lightning kick, a Cobra Strike punch and a Dragon's Tail throw (turn to 159), a Winged Horse kick, a Tiger's Paw punch and a Whirlpool throw (turn to 179) or a Tiger's Paw punch followed by two Leaping Tiger kicks in quick succession (turn to 199)?



Foxglove's robe makes the slightest of rustlings as she follows you, her dainty step in time with your

own. If you were both spotted crossing the Sacred Vault on the second tier, turn to 240. If not, turn to 370.

The shieldmaidens dismount, close ranks, and advance grimly behind their lozenge-shaped shields. On foot, battle-hardened veterans to a woman, they avoid the pit trap with ease and leap over the spikes to give battle. The Warrior Woman who commands the Orcs with great gusto exhorts them to fight, but they are no match for Gwyneth's troops. You see Foxglove clutching at her shoulder and whispering in her ear and, reluctantly, she gives the order to surrender. You decide to send the Orcs back to the Rift, cautioning them that if they are found abroad again they will be cut down mercilessly. Turn to 201.



The chariot driver cries: 'The shambler challenges the great Lord Sile, strongest of the strong, to combat.' There is tumultuous laughter and mock applause. Lord Sile takes off his cloak to reveal a torso crossed with ugly scars, the trophies of his many battles. He stands before you, arms akimbo,

like a wrestler. He is unusually tall for an Orc, as tall as you. Will you use the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 362), the Tiger Paw chop (turn to 382), Kwon's Flail kick, if you remember being taught it by Togowa the Mystic (turn to 12) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 32)?

143

You inform Foxglove that she will remain in the custody of the Warrior Woman Cassandra for the time being and say that you look to her to redeem herself in adversity if she may. Foxglove blanches and looks at you imploringly, but you keep your resolve despite the evil smile that darkens Cassandra's face. Note that Foxglove is to return to the Rift with Cassandra. Turn to 163.

144

These people are familiar. You greet them. They are Eris the Magician, Thybault and Taflur, both priests, and Vespers, a swordsman. You saved them from a terrible predicament, and Thybault healed you of the plague. They are dressed now as then, Vespers in a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white upon it. Thybault wears the white robe and red cross of Avatar, the Supreme Principle of Good, Taflur the green robe and white cross of Avatar's consort, Illustra, Goddess of Life. Eris the Magician you remember as a strange capricious fellow. The five-spoked wheel on his robe indicates he worships Béatan the Free. These are good people. You know and can trust them. Their faces as they take in who they have stumbled across are quite comical. They line up for battle and you join them. There is fear in their faces, but this quickly turns to anger when Tyutchev speaks. 'I



wonder you dare to challenge us. You have no power. Both Cassandra and I are more dangerous fighters than you, and you, fickle Eris, cannot rival Thaum's witchcraft.'

Taflur begins to chant a blessing in the name of Illustra. 'So that still rankles, does it?' asks Thaum, trying to break his concentration.

Cassandra says: 'The High Priestess is dead. What is done cannot be undone. We have no vendetta against the followers of the Goddess of Life.'

'You who reverence Anarchil cannot keep an idea in your head for longer than a minute at a time,' says Thybault imperiously. 'But we do seek vengeance, against all who worship the insane god Anarchil.'

They are not even addressing you. You realise the rivalry of these people runs deep. Suddenly you notice the tapestry at one side of the room begin to ripple as if in a wind. Turn to 34.

### 145

The Rift has been a cauldron of evil since time immemorial. All manner of wicked and unnatural creatures spawn there, giving rise to an endless stream of evil pouring from the dark chasm across the lands of men. Dark Elves, sisters of Nullaq, Orcs, Old Ones, Sons of Nil, Plague-Trolls, these are but a few of the denizens lurking in the unending darkness. The chasm itself is like an immense gorge surrounded by a honeycomb of natural tunnels and carven halls which stretch to the very centre of Orb. A man could walk for a lifetime in the Bowels of Orb and still not trace every catacomb and vault. You decide to make for the northern end of the Rift. Turn to 185.

### 146

You tell them that you are none other than the Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge and of your quest to rescue Glaivas your Ranger friend. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in a Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 78. The swordsman waves his sword in your direction and speaks the words: 'Master of man and woman.' You find yourself beginning to like these four Adventurers. Turn to 246.



### 147

The scrape of metal on metal catches your attention. Instantly alert, you see an ugly pug-like visage staring at you from behind the archway of natural stone. The figure hurls a tomahawk at you with considerable skill, but you have time to duck as it whirs through the air and it clatters harmlessly against rock behind you. You drop to your haunches as a small boulder flies at your head. It shatters against the rock-face behind you. The sound of metal on metal that you heard was the faintest scraping of the chains that tether your assailants to the archway. Five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, are

ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post, but they lurch forwards with giant ungainly strides to assail you. Will you advance to the attack (turn to 207) or flee (turn to 227)?

148

The swords descend faster than the eye can see, grazing your chest then returning to their original position before you have time to think. If you passed between the statues, they would chop you in two. You have no choice but to leave through the tunnel indicated by the sister of Nullaq. As you cross the cavern once again she causes it to fill with a whirlwind of sharp flakes of copper which tear loose from the floor and bite into you. You lurch through the tunnel entrance. Lose 3 Endurance. If you are still alive, turn to 352.

149

Foxglove is waiting for you still. She is probably quite lost already and must rely on you if she is ever to leave the Rift. She pulls back in alarm as she sees you shambling towards her clad in the shambler's furs, but when she hears your voice she breathes a sigh of relief. When you show her the chains, however, she is not pleased at the prospect of being treated like a slave. You reassure the pouting girl that it is merely to enable you both to descend deeper into the Bowels of Orb in safety. You fix the chains around her wrists and make her walk just in front of you, as if she were indeed your slave. Turn to 289.

150

'Then pray, speak aloud the seventeenth rite of

poisoning one's enemies,' commands one of the Elves. You did not even know of the existence of such a rite, of course. The Elves realise this only too well. They order you killed. The pike points scythe down at you, but you dodge nimbly only to feel the hand of one of the sorceresses at your shoulder. Her hand seems to sprout rods of iron that embed themselves in you, and then she has levitated your body off the floor so that you cannot knock her over. You struggle, but the pikes batter you until she lets you fall to the floor, a bloodied pulp. Your end has come in the eternal darkness, far from home.



151

Looking up into the exultant but cruel eyes of the Warrior Woman you recognise an old enemy. Gwyneth and the shieldmaidens can do nothing to help you now. You shout a command for them to return to Irsmuncast and look to the defence of the city. When they have gone, Cassandra knocks you to the ground once more where you are pinioned helplessly by foul-breathed Orcs. Two of them hold your head rigid as she takes her frost-rimed sword and says: 'This is for my friend Olvar whom you slew out of hand in the Mountains of Vision.' Then she places the tip of her sword against the glowing



green gem you have inserted instead of one of your eyes. She gouges the sword point into your face until the gem is prised free and you are wracked with agony. Sneering evilly, she pockets the gem. You will no longer be able to see invisible beings from other planes, and with only one eye your judgement of distance is impaired. Note that you have lost the emerald Orb and subtract 1 from all your modifiers until you regain the Orb that was your eye. Turn to 273.

#### 152

Lord Sile takes off his cloak to reveal a torso scored with ugly scars, the trophies of many battles. He stands before you, arms akimbo, like a wrestler. He is unusually tall for an Orc, as tall as you are. Will you use the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 362), the Tiger's Paw chop (turn to 382), Kwon's Flail kick, if you remember being taught it by Togowa the Mystic (turn to 12) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 32)?

#### 153

Foxglove leaves the Throne Room in indecent haste, and you order her an escort of shieldmaidens so that she may leave the city without being stoned. Gwyneth is plainly vexed, but you point out that Foxglove will not dare to return. 'Not until her intriguing has brought your downfall, at any rate,' says Gwyneth darkly. Turn to 163.

#### 154

If you have only one Shuriken left, turn to 47. If you have more than one, turn to 166.

#### 155

Your awakening is rude indeed, for Foxglove's

poison-tipped stiletto is buried in your vitals. If you have the skill of Immunity to Poisons, turn to 412. If you do not, your last thought is the realisation that Foxglove has stolen the Sceptre and with it will become the tyrant of your fair city of Irsmuncast.



### 156

The tunnel you are in leads to a balcony above a great open underground plaza. In the plaza are rows of guruka trees, a cross between trees and mushrooms which flourish in large spaces under ground, nourished by the bacteria and guano of bats and other creatures. They are like great still beasts, contorted into grotesque shapes and entwining as if they had been writhing together when the sun suddenly went out and they were robbed of movement. The plaza is lit so brightly by furnaces and blazing fires that your eyes, long accustomed only to torchlight, are dazzled. The plaza is busy. This is the main route from the third to the fourth tier, down the Fire Giants' Stair. There are no guards to be seen, just a steady bustle of people coming and going. At the far side of the plaza the largest tunnel and stairway you have ever seen lead down out of sight. Will you attempt to cross the plaza (turn to 216) or attempt to find a back stairway down to the fourth tier (turn to 236)?

### 157

The blow from the heavy axe has knocked you backwards. Foxglove is unprotected. Instead of attacking you, the nearest Dwarf-Troll crushes Foxglove's head underfoot. Will you attack (turn to 207) or flee (turn to 227)?

### 158

There is a mighty clang as the sword bites into your arm-guard and you are pushed backwards. The sword's descent is checked, however. You are gazing straight into the swordsman's face, which is contorted with effort. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. If not, will you say that you mean them no harm (turn to 218) or seize the initiative and attack again (turn to 238)?

### 159

In a blur of speed and motion you go into action. One mistake will mean your death as your foes close in on both sides. If you wish to change your mind and hurl yourself off the edge of the roadway into the bottomless darkness of the Rift, turn to 219. Otherwise you are committed to this course. You stand off to deliver the first attack, giving the Dwarf-Troll no chance to hit you with its giant axe. The Forked Lightning kick is too subtle a move against this great beast, however, and it still stands after your double kick. The Cobra Strike punch doubles it up in agony as you hit cunningly just below the breastbone. If you have the skill of Yubi-Jutsu, turn to 239. Otherwise your attack is doomed to failure as

you slide beneath the bulk of the half-breed Troll and find that it is too heavy to trip using the Dragon's Tail throw. Turn to 259.

### 160

Leaving Foxglove to the clutches of the sister of Nullaq, you run quickly down the tunnel. The Dark Elf does not give chase; instead she claps her hands and laughs. Perhaps it was Foxglove she wanted. There is another flare of fire behind you – a wall of flame has sealed her end of the tunnel. Will you run back through the solid wall of fire (turn to 60) or run on (turn to 320)?

### 161

When you reach the top of the pinnacle you become aware that another had realised its value as a vantage-point. The Warrior Woman who leads the Orcish warband moves silently from behind a boulder, her sword, which glows coldly and is rimed with frost, pointing at your throat. You recognise her haughty bearing immediately. She is Cassandra, wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harith-si-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, along with other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Anarchil. You remember you were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Cassandra is a breathtakingly swift swordswoman, and she attacks with the speed and balance of a panther. She has given you no time to use a Throwing Star. Will you use the Dragon's Tail throw (turn to 211), the Cobra Strike punch (turn to 221) or the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 231)?

### 162

Foxglove stands back and watches coolly as the Orcs

assail you. If you have a Shuriken left, you may cast it. At this range it cannot miss and will do one die Damage, but you will not be able to recover it. Cross it off your Adventure Sheet. Only three can attack you at a time in the tunnel, but the charioteer shoulders his way to the front and tries to gore you with his implanted bronze horn.

The Orcs all carry long knives which they use like short stabbing swords to good effect.

	CHARIOTEER	SECOND	THIRD
	ORC	ORC	ORC
Endurance:	10	8	7
Defence:	6	5	5
Damage:	1 Die +1	1 Die	1 Die

You may choose which Orc to attack. If you are able to defeat two, turn to 132. Your Defence against their attacks is 8. Each has an individual attack and you may only Block one of them. If you survive, you may attack again (return to the top of this paragraph).

### 163

You decide to try to find out more information. Will you ask Cassandra where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 183), how many Dark Elves there are in the Rift (turn to 193) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 203)?

### 164

At last the stairs stop in a great dimly lit hallway of dressed stone. A magnificent and sinister sight greets you. Away to the left is a huge archway, and beyond it a succession of carven thrones with statues of the former rulers of this part of the Bowels

of Orb. In the shadows you can glimpse apparitions, the sight of which would freeze the blood of ordinary folk. To the right is a tall but very narrow tunnel, so narrow that it will admit only one abreast. Of the four Adventurers, the one called Vespers the Swordsman wishes to enter the Way of Thrones, and Eris is already walking towards the archway. Will you warn them against this and persuade them to take the narrow way (turn to 204) or walk with them through the archway (turn to 256)?

### 165

You reach the edge of the great chasm without glimpsing any of the Dark-Elvish magicians who might be on the lookout for you. The air is rank with the smells of sulphur and ammonia. Stale hot air seeps out of the great fissures that split the barren rock. There are no wild animals here at the edge of the Bowels of Orb, only dust. At the lip of the chasm you pause to look down. There is no bottom – or if there is it is lost in darkness kilometres below. To the east you can dimly see the other wall, towering a kilometre above you like a distant bank of cloud. There are many twisting stairways and tracks leading down the side of the canyon wall, and there is even a road, wide enough for carts and siege machines, winding snake-like into the depths of the earth. It must have been a terrible labour to haul up to the light the engines that attacked your city. Will you take one of the twisting stairways (turn to 375) or the road (turn to 395)?

### 166

Your Shuriken flashes across the hall and wounds Thaum in the shoulder. He is no longer performing his incantations, but Tyutchev and Cassandra close

on you simultaneously. In a flash a second Shuriken appears in your hand and they both flinch momentarily. You somersault backwards out of range of their swords and hurl the Shuriken. Tyutchev parries it, sending it shrieking across the hall into a tapestry, but falls to one knee as he does so. You have gained a short respite from the onslaught. Turn to 186.

### 167

With a speed that defies belief, you sweep your arm across. There is the ring of metal on metal as your arm-guard collides with the blade of the tomahawk and sends it spinning harmlessly away into the depths of the chasm. You drop to your haunches as a small boulder flies at your head. It shatters against the rock-face behind you. The sound of metal on metal that you heard was the faintest scraping of the chains that tether your assailants to the archway. Five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, are ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post, but they lurch forwards with giant ungainly strides to assail you. Will you advance to the attack (turn to 207) or flee (turn to 227)?

### 168

As you make for the tunnel, a shimmering figure appears at either side of the entrance in the form of two beautiful sylvan Elves. They are armed with slender adamantine scimitars, which are held up before their chests, and they face each other across the tunnel. Will you leap between them (turn to 128) or cross the chamber and leave by the tunnel indicated by the sister of Nullaq (turn to 352)? In either

case you will be leaving Foxglove to her fate. If you wish to pick her up and carry her out of the tunnel indicated by the Dark Elf, turn to 180.

169

The soldier rises and does a strange balletic dance to accompany his haunting refrain. The sorceress nods in time. Soon she will turn to look in your direction. If you have the skill of Poison Needles and wish to use it, turn to 189. If, instead, you prefer to rely on your martial arts skill, who will you attack first, the soldier (turn to 209) or the sorceress (turn to 229)?

170

Even the Ogres realise that you have made a mistake. 'Die, desecrator,' says one, and 'Speak not that name here,' raves the other. They order you killed. The pike points scythe down at you, but you dodge nimbly only to feel the hand of one of the sorceresses at your shoulder. Her hand seems to sprout rods of iron that embed themselves in you, and then she has levitated your body off the floor so that you cannot knock her over. You struggle, but the pikes batter you until she lets you fall to the floor, a bloodied pulp. Your end has come in the eternal darkness, far from home.



171

Back at the encampment Cassandra throws you to the ground, where you are pinioned helplessly by foul-breathed Orcs. Two of them hold your head rigid as she takes her frost-rimed sword and says: 'This is for my friend Olvar, whom you slew out of hand in the Mountains of Vision.' She places the tip of her frost-rimed sword against the glowing green gem that you have instead of one of your eyes. Mercilessly she gouges the point into your face until the gem is prised free and you are wracked with agony. Sneering evilly, she pockets the gem. You will no longer be able to see invisible beings from other planes, and with only one eye your judgement of distance is impaired. Note that you have lost the emerald Orb. Subtract 1 from all your modifiers until you regain the Orb that was your eye. Turn to 273.

172

The echoing of your footsteps, no matter how stealthily you tread, returns from the faraway walls of the cavern. The feeling of being so far underground, surrounded by foes, is becoming overpoweringly unpleasant. The tension is unbearable. You feel trapped and vulnerable, and even begin to hear footsteps approaching that aren't there. When you are about half way across the vault, judging by the echoes, you realise that the footsteps are real and that they are closing in on you from all sides. Suddenly there is a *whoosh* of flame and a ring of fires burst up ahead of you, then others to left and right. The vault is like a huge underground temple. Mock pillars that no longer quite reach the ceiling cast shadows at irregular intervals. The approaching footsteps are those of a party of Orcs

led by two Dark Elves in blue cloaks. They have been walking towards the glow of the Torch of Lumen, but now they can see you in the light of the fires. The chase is on. Ahead of you, thirty metres away, is a gallery leading to stairs, but it is guarded by a score of Orcs with crossbows. To the right, fifteen metres away, is another tunnel, but this is guarded by two Ogres wearing leather armour and wielding four-metre-long pikes like the men of Antiochis used to in the golden age of the Inner Sea. To the left of you, about twelve metres away, are the Elves and Orcs. Will you run towards the Ogres (turn to 192), the gallery (turn to 212) or stop where you are (turn to 232)?

173

Cassandra says: 'I brought the woman Foxglove with me in order to gain safe entry to your city. I care not what you do with her, though I will take her back to the Rift as a token of what is to come, if you wish. Since you killed Shadazar, the Black Widow rules the Dark Elves. Foxglove has made quite an impression on the Black Widow, haven't you, my beauty?' Foxglove throws herself to her knees and begs you not to send her back to the Bowels of Orb. General Gwyneth says that Foxglove is a traitress and should be put to the sword. Will you order that Foxglove be executed for the part Gwyneth says she played in the razing of your city (turn to 133), send her back to the Rift with Cassandra in the hope that this may buy time for your friend Glaivas (turn to 143), set her free (turn to 153) or say that Foxglove must accompany you should you decide to travel to the Rift (turn to 175)?

174

As you move so does Cassandra, not towards you



but towards Foxglove, who is cowering as far away as she can. Cassandra's sword is raised, ready to strike. If you want to protect Foxglove, turn to 94. If, instead, you attack Tyutchev, who is running at you, turn to 254.

175

Gwyneth escorts Foxglove none too gently back to the donjon, the windowless tower at the north-east corner of the Palace. There she will languish until you make your decision whether or not to rescue Glaivas. Turn to 195.

176

It takes more than a day to find an alternative to the Fire Giants' Stair. Only by covertly watching the thieves of the twilit world, mainly Elves and Orcs who have their own thieves' cant, unlike any language you have heard, do you discover a secret doorway in a rock-face. It takes a little while to discover how the mechanism works, but at last you swing the rock aside and begin the descent. Turn to 296.

177

Foxglove is already coming round as you pick her up. You flee just in time. The Dwarf-Trolls' chains snap taut just before they catch you and they begin to howl in annoyance, giving the alarm. Foxglove pulls a phial from a pleat in her boot and drinks it - a healing potion. Soon she is fully restored and can run unaided. You sprint back up the roadway towards the lip of the chasm, hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. As you regain the lip you steal a quick look back. A figure stands beneath the first archway. A green

and purple robe suggests it may be a Dark Elf, perhaps even a sister of Nullaq. She shields her eyes against the light and is staring up at you. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway. You dart out of sight and take the nearest twisting stairway that winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 415.

178

The sword bites into your flesh, and as it does so the swordsman utters a strange word, letting fall the scroll. It is as if the hand of retribution had struck you. You are battered to the floor. Lose 7 Endurance. If you are still alive, you have no option but to surrender as the swordsman is astride you with two others, one in white, the other in green, flanking you. The magician hovers gently to the floor. Turn to 258.

179

In a blur of speed and motion you go into action. One mistake will mean your death as your foes close in on both sides. If you wish to change your mind and hurl yourself off the edge of the roadway into the bottomless darkness of the Rift, turn to 219. Otherwise you are committed to this course. You stand off to deliver the first attack, the Winged Horse kick, giving the Dwarf-Troll no time to hit you with its giant axe. It is knocked to its knees by the power of your blow. You follow up with a Tiger Paw punch, knocking it off balance as it tries to regain its feet, causing it to drop the axe with a crash. You then step in to put the heavy beast on its back with a Whirlpool throw before it can regain its balance. You are soon past the guard-post and you continue on up the road hoping to get back to the lip of the

Rift and try to descend into the Rift along a less busy route. The cold-blooded dragon-lizards begin to slow down and you escape. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway and turn to 375.

**180**

The sister of Nullaq allows you to pick up Foxglove's slack body and watches calmly while you carry her to the tunnel. She does not give chase. Instead she claps her hands and laughs. There is another flare of fire behind you and a wall of flame has sealed her end of the tunnel. Will you run back through the solid wall of fire (turn to 60) or run on (turn to 80)?

**181**

Cassandra replies that she has been promised riches beyond man's wildest dreams and that danger to her is nothing for she outbraves the lion. If you have the skill of Heart-Training, Shin-Ren, turn to 113. Otherwise turn to 123.

**182**

The Orcs halt the chariot before you and the chieftain speaks. 'Kneel, shambler, before Lord Sile of the second tier. Why trespassing so far from the shambler hovels?' Will you kneel and say that you are taking your slave to the third tier where you can sell her for a high price (turn to 82) or remain standing and say that she is the Black Widow's favourite and that he and the Orcs had better stand aside and let you both pass (turn to 102)?

**183**

'Glaivas is kept captive beyond the seventh tier in the area known as the Forbidden Sanctuary. The Black Widow's web reaches out from the hub there.'

You may ask Cassandra one more question. Will you ask how many Dark Elves there are in the Rift (turn to 213) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 223)?

**184**

The narrow way continues in a straight line for many hundreds of metres without opening out or offering any openings. Towards its end it climbs slightly, and when you are half way up the incline the floor tilts suddenly and pitches you forwards on to your face in a small well-lit room hung with lush tapestries. When you stand and look around, you receive something of a shock. Turn to 224.

**185**

Foxglove retrieves a few of her old clothes before you leave and you have to forbid her from packing an entire trousseau. She rides out behind you on a white mare which you hold on a leading rein, wearing scarlet and black, kept warm by a sable cloak. You leave the city under cover of darkness and camp the following evening, by which time Foxglove is complaining of exhaustion, though she has ridden and you have walked. You are not far from the River of Beasts. Will you stay up all night to make sure Foxglove does not escape (turn to 205) or sleep soundly and trust to your animal alertness to wake you if anything is amiss (turn to 225)?



There is a screeching and grinding as the tilting tunnelway that deposited you here in the hall tilts once more. You both leap back as four bodies fall into the room between you. They pick themselves up quickly, and you realise that they are acquainted with the three chaos-bringers with whom you have been battling. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who became caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 144. If not, turn to 394.

You try to duck but you are too late. The tomahawk embeds itself in your side with such force that you are knocked to your knees. Lose 7 Endurance. You drop prone as a small boulder flies at your head. It shatters against the rock-face behind you. The sound of metal on metal that you heard was the faintest scraping of the chains that tether your assailants to the archway. Five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, are ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post, but they lurch forwards with giant ungainly strides to assail you. You struggle to your feet, but not before the first is upon you. Turn to 247.

Running on you see, too late, a high recess in the roof of the tunnel. You are beneath it when you look up and a tiny spider drops on to your upturned face. You slap at it, but it runs into your hair and then



into your ear, darting so quickly that it cannot be stopped. If you have a bullthrush-headed pin, turn to 8. If not, turn to 28.

### 189

Just as the soldier moves between you and the sorceress, as her eyes widen in alarm at the sight of you, so the poison needle hits her cheek. The soldier whirls around suddenly to face you as she slumps to the floor just in time for your second needle to bury itself in his lip. They die swiftly, and you take their robes, belts and sandals plus two hoods that you find in a box. There is also a small jewelled pin, with a golden bullthrush for a head, inside an ivory box. Note that you have the bullthrush pin. Turn to 249.

### 190

The Elves begin to mock you. 'A slave to the Temptress, eh? You will not find her ear here, nor any other part of her, come to that.' The Orcs snigger unpleasantly. 'Begone! Slink back to the fourth tier where you belong.' The sorceress points to the gallery, and you waste no time doing as she says. Soon you have left the Sacred Vault behind. Turn to 372.

### 191

Cassandra has defeated you, but her final blow, which should have killed you, is pulled at the last moment. She has spared your life. You are near death, your Endurance 2. Her sword is at your throat; its frost-rimmed blade chills your blood as she ties your hands together behind your back. Then she pulls you down the scree slope from the pinnacle towards where her Orcs are encamped. If you

have the skill of Escapology, turn to 21. If not, turn to 171.

### 192

The Dark Elves speak a command in their lilting language when you are six metres from the Ogres. If Foxglove is with you, turn to 392. If not, turn to 10.

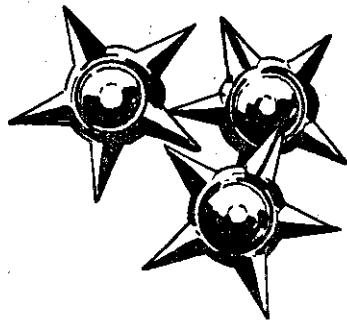
### 193

'More than even you can hope to elude, Avenger,' responds the Warrior Woman glibly. You may ask Cassandra one more question. Will you ask her where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 233) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 223)?

### 194

You follow their gaze, and there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in anything, but were merely averting their eyes, anticipating the numbling flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not looking at Thaum, for you would surely have been stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. The four Adventurers have not all been so lucky. Vespers reacted quickly enough to shield his eyes and Thybault too has not been stunned, but Eris the Magician and Taflur are reeling back in a state of shock. Will you use a Shuriken against Thaum, who is beginning

another spell, if you have one (turn to 294) or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 314)?



### 195

You decide to try to find out more information. Will you ask Cassandra where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 215), how many Dark Elves there are in the Rift (turn to 235) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 255)?

### 196

Oddly enough your stealth while crossing the plaza appears to be wasted. Two Dark Elves moving silently from behind a guruka tree come face to face with you by accident, but they do not even seem to register your presence. By the time you near the stairway there is quite a press of people around you, but none of them seem about to raise the alarm or even speak. They stream down the twelve-metre-wide stairway which glows redly, like the stairway to hell, in the light of banks of fires on either side. Half way down are what look like perfect waxwork models of six Fire Giants, their dark hirsute bodies glowing in the rubescent firelight. They are as still as



statues and no one even looks at them. Will you turn back (turn to 376) or continue (turn to 336)?

197

Still the Dwarf-Trolls have not given the alarm. Perhaps they will suffer if it becomes known that you succeeded in passing them at the guard-post. The road winds on ever further down into the twilit realm of the Rift. There is a tunnel leading off into the rock. Will you take it (turn to 217) or continue on the roadway around the next corner (turn to 237)?

198

The four Adventurers are here in the Rift for a purpose, not merely to loot or to slay evil creatures. They have a score to settle. You have enemies in common. They are hunting the worshippers of the Chaos god Anarchil, who slew the High Priestess of Illustra in the city of Harith-si-the-Crow. Taflur has persuaded his friends to seek out and destroy Tyutchev, Thaum and Cassandra, the very people who seek your downfall. Thybault tells the story of how the evil three dared to venture into the great Cathedral to Illustra and kill the powerful High Priestess before her own altar. They are on the trail of the worshippers of the Chaos god, who are somewhere on the fourth tier or below. They seem to hate the evil trio. Perhaps there is an old score still to settle. Turn to 386.

199

In a blur of speed and motion you go into action. One mistake will mean your death as your foes close in on both sides. If you wish to change your mind and hurl yourself off the edge of the roadway into the bottomless darkness of the Rift, turn to 219.

Otherwise you are committed to this course. You have to step close to deliver the first attack, allowing the Dwarf-Troll to swing its giant axe at your head. Your Defence is 7. If you are hit, you are knocked to the ground; turn to 259. Otherwise your blow causes the beast to double up in pain. If you have the skill of Yubi-Jutsu, turn to 239. If not, you launch yourself into a Leaping Tiger kick. You have two attempts to knock the Dwarf-Troll to the ground. Its Defence is 8. If you fail, you are in turn knocked to the ground by one of the other Dwarf-Trolls; turn to 259. If you succeed, you jump over the stricken body and are past the guard-post and you continue on up the road hoping to get back to the lip of the Rift and try to descend into the Rift along a less busy route. The cold-blooded dragon-lizards begin to slow down and you escape. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway and turn to 375.



200

If you have been enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 380. If not, turn to 20.

201

Later that day the prisoners are brought before you in the Throne Room at Irsmuncast and you are met with a double surprise. The first surprise is Fox-



glove. She wears the same peacock gown that had looked so stunning when you first met her when she petitioned to become a member of your Privy Council, but it is torn and travel-stained. The extravagant peacock tail train has been ripped off it long ago. She is still beautiful, but her fragile beauty is that of the forlorn waif rather than the sophisticated courtesan. The second surprise is that of the Warrior Woman whom you had not looked at closely at the encampment. In the Throne Room you recognise her haughtiness instantly. She is Cassandra, wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harithsi-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, abetted by other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Anarchil. You were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Most clearly of all you remember that she is a breathtakingly swift swords-woman. Her magical Coldsword is now safe within the Palace. Note that you have captured Cassandra's sword. Turn to 71.

## 202

The tunnels twist and turn. The Orcs can be heard following behind, all on foot now. They have to track by smell since they make so much noise, and you pull away from them. But Foxglove twists her ankle too badly to continue. If you have a healing potion, you may give it to her (turn to 222), or you can wait for the Orcs to catch up with you and try to bluff it out (turn to 242).

## 203

'Thaum was unwell following our last meeting with you. So unwell that we had, at great cost, to secure the services of a great priest. It left Thaum a pauper.'

Cassandra may be suggesting that he has been brought back from the dead, or perhaps that he was near mortally wounded by you. She goes on: 'There are many dark places in the Rift in which to hide. There is no telling whom you might meet, Avenger, in the everlasting darkness.' You may ask her one more question. Will you ask where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 233) or how many Dark Elves there are in the Bowels of Orb (turn to 213)?

204

The narrow way continues in a straight line for many hundreds of metres without opening out or offering any openings. Towards its end it climbs slightly, and when you are half way up the incline the floor tilts suddenly and pitches you all forwards on to your face in a small well-lit room hung with lush tapestries. When you stand and look around, you receive something of a shock. Turn to 244.

205

Foxglove sleeps soundly, but you do not. Lack of sleep takes its toll when you begin to trudge on soon after dawn. Lose 2 Endurance and turn to 245.

206

The swordsman is trying to charm you, using his magical sword Manmaster, but Foxglove's enchantment is too powerful and the magic of the sword has no effect. You become enraged that anyone should try to use magic to usurp the place of Foxglove in your favour. Foxglove asks you to teach them a lesson. If you have at least 2 points of Inner Force left, you are able to exert your will and self-control and overcome your desire to attack them. Lose 2 points of Inner Force and turn to 406. If you wish to

attack once more or do not have enough Inner Force left to go against Foxglove's wishes, turn to 238.

207

The Dwarf-Trolls are armed with great axes that they swing with surprising control; each axe must weigh as much as a man. You have to try to dodge the first sweeping blow, but speed is on your side. Owing to your quick thinking they have failed to steal the initiative. Will you back away and use the Iron Fist punch on any assailant (turn to 17) or charge in with a Leaping Tiger kick (turn to 37) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 57)?

208

At last you reach the huge halls of the third tier. The atmosphere is filled with smoke that burns the lungs until you become used to it. At least the braziers burning everywhere mean you can conceal the Torch of Lumen for the time being. Together with the smoke you become aware of a constant hum in the background. This puzzles you for some time until you realise it is the everyday noise of the denizens of the third tier going about a multiplicity of mundane tasks, the sound of their voices and the scuffing of their shoes blended with many thousands of other noises into a monotonous low drone. If Foxglove is with you, turn to 228. If not, turn to 248.

209

Too late you remember the teachings of Grandmaster Naijishi of the Island of Tranquil Dreams. 'When faced with a magician and a swordsman, always attack the spellcaster first.' As you are forcing the lithe Dark Elf soldier back, there is a magical

explosion that robs you of your senses. You reel drunkenly and fall forwards on to the point of the sorceress's dagger, which finds your heart. Your end has come in the eternal darkness, far away from your home.



### 210

The tunnel curves gently for about half a kilometre before you see any sign of another soul. The Torch of Lumen looks like an ordinary brazier now. It is inside an illusion cast upon it by your father's most powerful magician. Its light shows a small ill-favoured Orc who had been walking towards you bowed down by the weight of a bundle of faggots he had been carrying. He stares at you for a few moments, then begins to back away, dropping the bundle of faggots. If you have a Shuriken and wish to use it, turn to 230. If not, turn to 250.

### 211

Cassandra expects such tricks, having fought you before, and she has superb reactions. Your feet slide beneath her and you scissor your legs to topple her to the ground, but she leaps high and lands behind you. The tip of her sword gashes your arm as you whirl to face her and its unnatural cold bites into your bones. Lose 4 Endurance. If your Endurance is down to 3 or less, turn to 191. Otherwise you may

strike again. Will you use the Cobra Strike punch (turn to 221), the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 231) or try to disarm her with a Whirlpool throw (turn to 241)?

### 212

The Dark Elves shout a command in their lilting language, and when you are ten metres from the gallery they open fire. The volley of arrows comes thick and fast. If you have the skill of Arrow Cutting, turn to 312. If not, turn to 332.

### 213

'More than even you can hope to elude, Avenger,' responds the Warrior Woman glibly. Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the third tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 243.

### 214

You keep your attention firmly fixed on Thaum. There is an eruption of coruscating light so bright it stuns you into immobility. Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in anything, but were merely averting their eyes, anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You reel backwards, blind and helpless, wondering whether your fellow Adventurers have suffered the same fate. Your question is answered when Cassandra's sword slices into your midriff. If you captured her

sword outside the city, you lose 4 Endurance as her replacement sword is not magical. If she still has her Coldsword, the frost-rimed blade chills you to the marrow and burns in your wound. Lose 7 Endurance. If you still live, you are fortunate in that Thybault's flail cracks against her armour and she is forced to step back, allowing you time to recover. Turn to 414.

### 215

'Glaivas is kept captive beyond the seventh tier in the area known as the Forbidden Sanctuary. The Black Widow's web reaches out from the hub there.' You may ask Cassandra one more question. Will you ask how many Dark Elves there are in the Rift (turn to 295) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 315)?

### 216

Oddly enough your stealth while crossing the plaza appears to be wasted. Two Dark Elves moving silently from behind a guruka tree come face to face with you by accident, but they do not even seem to register your presence. By the time you near the stairway there is quite a press of people around you, but none of them seem about to raise the alarm or even speak. The four Adventurers have altered their appearance slightly, using magicians' skills, but to the point where they could pass easily as creatures from the third tier. They stream down the twelve-metre-wide stairway which glows redly, like the stairway to hell, in the light of banks of fires on either side. Half way down are what look like perfect waxwork models of six Fire Giants, their dark hirsute bodies glowing in the rubescence firelight. They are as still as statues and no one even looks at

them. Will you turn back (turn to 316) or continue (turn to 336)?

### 217

The narrow tunnel twists and turns ever deeper until it joins another near the second tier. It is pitch black now, so you touch the Torch of Lumen and proceed carefully by its faint guiding light. Turn to 417.

### 218

As soon as you speak and they realise you are a human their attitude to you changes. They are still wary, but not intent on killing you. You have a chance to look at them closely. The swordsman wears a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irsmuncast tell you that this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. The man in the white robe is a priest. He sports the Cross of Avatar on his chest. The third man is in green and is also a priest though he wears chainmail, a worshipper of Illustra, Goddess of Life. The fourth, the magician, is a worshipper of a Chaos god. The five-spoked wheel insignia shows the Limitless Possibilities that may lead to good acts, however, rather than those that may lead to evil. You have made a mistake in attacking them, for they are good people, unless they are in disguise. If you have the skill of Shin-Ren, turn to 278. They demand to know who you are, what you are doing and which god you revere. Will you tell them (turn to 298) or use a Poison Needle if you have the skill (turn to 318)?

Caught between the giant axes of the Dwarf-Trolls and the fiery breath and swords of the dragon-lizards and their riders, you decide to launch yourself over the edge into the bottomless dark and hope . . .

You fall for what seems like an age before your body is broken on an outcrop of stone far from the light. Your end has come far from home in the darkness of the Rift.



220

Will you hurl yourself between the sword bearing statues (turn to 128) or edge forwards carefully through the tunnel entrance (turn to 148)?

221

Cassandra's gaze is unwavering as she searches your face for the slightest flicker that might betray the timing of your strike. You feint to strike high and then try to punch upwards underneath her guard. She has the reactions of a panther, and the tip of her sword whirs downwards to cut your arm.

### CASSANDRA

Defence against Cobra Strike punch: 8

Endurance: 18

Damage: 1 Die +3

If you hit her and have reduced her to 12 Endurance





or less, turn to 261. Otherwise your Defence against her lightning riposte is 8. If you are reduced to 3 Endurance or less, turn to 191. Otherwise will you punch again (return to the top of this paragraph), use the Whirlpool throw in an attempt to disarm her (turn to 241), the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 231) or the Dragon's Tail throw (turn to 211)?

### 222

Cross the healing potion off your Character Sheet. Foxglove drinks it and is quickly restored. You run on and lose the Orcs, but you have also lost all sense of direction yourselves. Turn to 409.

### 223

'Thaum was unwell following our last meeting with you. So unwell that we had, at great cost, to secure the services of a great priest. It left Thaum a pauper.' Cassandra may be suggesting that he has been brought back from the dead, or perhaps that he was near mortally wounded by you. She goes on: 'There are many dark places in the Rift in which to hide. There is no telling whom you might meet, Avenger, in the everlasting darkness.' Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the third tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 243.

### 224

You have fallen straight into the arms of a reception committee. Arranged in a semicircle about you are three people you recognise only too well. Directly opposite you is a tall wiry man whose frame is draped in a black cloak. The only hint of colour is his

very curly hair, which is died bright corn yellow. He hefts a bastard sword almost negligently in one hand. On his right is a man in flowing grey robes covered with runes. He sports a large golden earring and has a look of devious intelligence and a smile of anticipation. On the other side is Cassandra, sword drawn, looking as haughty as ever, her bristling hair as dishevelled as her patchwork armour appears to be. The other two are her friends and your deadly enemies, Tyutchev, a thief and a blademaster, and Thaum, master of illusion and potent mage. They must have guessed that you would come this way. Tyutchev too has found the secret stairway and, knowing that you could not descend the Fire Giants' Stair, they have lain in wait for you here. They have done well to penetrate so deeply into the Bowels of Orb. Turn to 264.

### 225

You wake once during the night, to find Foxglove, still lying down, staring at you intently. As soon as she realises you are returning her gaze she turns over and pulls her sable fur around her head. You drift off to sleep again after a time and wake before her with the dawn. Turn to 245.

### 226

The four Adventurers are here in the Rift for a purpose, not merely to loot or to slay evil creatures. They have a score to settle. You have enemies in common. They are hunting the worshippers of the Chaos god Anarchil, who slew the High Priestess of Illustra in the city of Harith-si-the-Crow. Taflur has persuaded his friends to seek out and destroy Tyutchev, Thaum and Cassandra, the very people who seek your downfall. Thybault tells the story of

how the evil three dared to venture into the great Cathedral to Illustra and kill the powerful High Priestess before her own altar. They are on the trail of the worshippers of the Chaos god, who are somewhere on the fourth tier or below. They seem to hate the evil trio. Perhaps there is an old score still to settle. They ask you to join them in their quest and to abandon your own for a while. You have been charmed by the swordsman's sword, Manmaster, and you will find it difficult not to join them. If you wish to join them, turn to 386. If you do not and you still have at least 2 Inner Force left, you may exert your will and wish them luck but refuse to join them. Turn to 326 but lose 2 points of Inner Force.

### 227

You flee just in time. The Dwarf-Trolls' chains snap taut just before they catch you and they begin to howl in annoyance, giving the alarm! You sprint back up the roadway towards the lip of the chasm, hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. As you regain the lip you steal a quick look back. A figure stands beneath the first archway. A green and purple robe suggests it may be a Dark Elf, perhaps even a sister of Nullaq. She shields her eyes against the light and is staring up at you. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway. You dart out of sight and take the nearest twisting stairway that winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 375.

### 228

Foxglove has kept going well. She makes little sound, but her soft footfall lets you know that she is still right behind you. If you are both wearing the robes of Dark Elves, turn to 268. If you are disguised

as a shambler and Foxglove as your slave, turn to 288. If you are relying on stealth alone to reach the lower levels, turn to 308.

### 229

The sorceress falls under a hail of blows before she can marshal her thoughts and cast a spell. Just as you finish her there is a burning in your side. The soldier has picked up his sword and smitten you with it. Lose 5 Endurance. You turn and parry his next attack before throwing him to the ground and disarming him. You administer the coup de grace with his own blade. Their clothing is not badly torn, so you take their robes, belts and sandals plus two hoods that you find in a box. There is also a small jewelled pin, with a golden bullrush for a head, inside an ivory box. Note that you have the bullrush pin. If Foxglove is not with you, donning the green robe will be your best disguise. Note your disguise and turn to 289. If Foxglove is waiting, turn to 249.

### 230

Make a Shuriken roll. If you are successful, turn to 270. If you miss, the Orc stoops to pick up the Throwing Star as he runs away. Cross off the Shuriken from your Character Sheet and turn to 250.

### 231

Cassandra looks into your eyes, watching for the flicker that will betray your strike the moment before it comes. You lash your foot out at her kneecap and then at the side of her head, but she recognises that the first attack is little more than a feint. Her sword shadows your foot and she moves with the

speed of a panther, blocking you easily. Your leg is badly cut and stung by the cold of her sword. You lose 7 Endurance and she attacks again. If your Endurance is down to 3 or less, turn to 191. Will you respond with a Cobra Strike punch (turn to 221), a Dragon's Tail throw (turn to 211) or try to disarm her with a Whirlpool throw (turn to 241)?

### 232

The Dark Elves give a series of commands in their lilting language and the Orcs and Ogres close in around you. 'What are you doing profaning the goddess's Sacred Vault?' says one. You can only guess which goddess this Elvish sorceress is referring to. Will you tell them that you live on the fourth tier, where legend has it there is or was a colony of evil humans, and that you have come here to pray (turn to 70) or surrender to them (turn to 90)?

### 233

'Glaivas is kept captive beyond the seventh tier in the area known as the Forbidden Sanctuary. The Black Widow's web reaches out from the hub there.' Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the third tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 243.

### 234

There is an eruption of coruscating light so bright that it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in the tapestry, but were merely anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to

the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not looking at Thaum, for you would surely have been stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. He is beginning another spell. Will you throw a Shuriken at him, if you still have one (turn to 154), or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 174)?

### 235

'More than even you can hope to elude, Avenger,' responds the Warrior Woman glibly. You may ask Cassandra one more question. Will you ask her where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 275) or where her friends Tyutchev and Thaum are to be found (turn to 315)?

### 236

It takes more than a day to find an alternative to the Fire Giants' Stair. Only by covertly watching the thieves of the twilit world, mainly Elves and Orcs who have their own thieves' cant – unlike any language you have heard – do you discover a secret doorway in a rock-face. It takes a little while to discover how the mechanism works, but at last you swing the rock aside and begin the descent. Turn to 276.

### 237

You inch cautiously along the chasm wall on the inside of the roadway towards the bend. Peering around the corner confirms your fears. A great fortress of stone perched on a buttress of rock blocks your way. It is the gatecastle of the first tier. The



roadway runs right through the middle of the fortress, and there are guards in each of its towers as well as a motley group of creatures repairing the roadway before it. If you have the skill of Climbing and wish to use it, you may try to descend to the next tier down the sheer side of the chasm (turn to 79). Otherwise you may try to slip through them all in the shadows (turn to 99).

### 238

Your attack is ill-advised. The magician hovering in mid-air above you casts a spell that slows down the speed of your movement. As you struggle towards the swordsman he has time to read a scroll that magically causes him to move more quickly than normal. Now his magical sword cleaves the air in a bewildering blur of motion. Slowed as you are, even you cannot long evade the wicked blade. You die deep in the eternal darkness, far from home.



### 239

Your blow, which has caught the Dwarf-Troll underneath the heart, has hit a vital nerve-centre and the beast falls, pole-axed, to the floor. You have killed the monster with a single blow. You are soon past the guard-post and continue on up the roadway hoping to get back to the lip of the Rift and then

to descend into it again by a less busy route. The cold-blooded dragon-lizards begin to tire and you escape. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway and turn to 375.

### 240

The torches set in brackets on the nearby walls seem to flare brightly of their own accord, throwing into vivid relief an etching on the floor which extends over most of the chamber in which you find yourself. The floor has been plated with metal on to which a huge bloated spider shape has been cut with acid. The spider has only four legs, one at each corner of its huge body, each of which points towards a tunnel exit. The tunnel by which you entered, to which the right back leg points, is suddenly blocked by a wall of flame, and the heat forces you forwards to the centre of the spider's body. A ghastly figure enters the chamber from the opposite tunnel. It is a Dark Elf in a robe of purple and green, but the usually beautiful jet-black face is horribly contorted. Eight splayed legs and a bloated spider's body project from below the chin, as if half a huge spider had been grafted on to her face. It is one of the sisters of Nullaq, dreaded magicians whose mothers have mated with one of the three Mother-Spiders in the deeper vaults of the Rift. She gestures you to leave the chamber by the tunnel indicated by the etching's front right leg. Foxglove falls to the floor with a sigh. She has fainted from horror. Will you leave by the indicated tunnel (turn to 160), pick up Foxglove's inert body and then leave by the indicated tunnel (turn to 180), try to kill the sister of Nullaq (turn to 200) or try to leave by the other free entrance, behind you and to the left (turn to 168)?

**241**

You step in close to draw her attack then dodge sideways and reach out to grab her wrist. Cassandra is trying to bury the tip of her sword in your vitals.

### CASSANDRA

Defence against Whirlpool throw: 8  
Endurance: 18  
Damage: 1 Die +3

If you throw her successfully, you manage to wrest the sword from her grasp (turn to 261). Otherwise your Defence against her terrible swift sword is only 6 as you have overcommitted yourself to this difficult manoeuvre and you may not block. If you are reduced to 3 Endurance or less, turn to 191.



**242**

You wait in tense anticipation for the arrival of the Orcs. To your annoyance Foxglove takes a healing potion from her cloak just as the Orcs arrive ready for battle. There is no time to flee. You will have to fight. Turn to 162.

**243**

It would mean certain death for Glaivas, if he still lives, were you to detain Cassandra, so you tell her that she is free to leave and forbid her to enter the city again on pain of death. As she leaves, she says that you may yet meet her again. Now you must

decide what to do about the plight of Glaivas. Turn to 253.

**244**

You have fallen straight into the arms of a reception committee. Arranged in a semicircle about you are three people you recognise only too well. Directly opposite you is a tall wiry man whose frame is draped in a black cloak. The only hint of colour is his very curly hair, which is died bright corn yellow. He hefts a bastard sword almost negligently in one hand. On his right is a man in flowing grey robes covered with runes. He sports a large golden earring and has a look of devious intelligence and a smile of anticipation. On the other side is Cassandra, sword drawn, looking as haughty as ever, her bristling hair as dishevelled as her patchwork armour appears to be. The other two are her friends and your deadly enemies, Tyutchev, a thief and a blademaster, and Thaum, master of illusion and potent mage. They must have guessed that you would come this way. Tyutchev too has found the secret stairway and, knowing that you could not descend the Fire Giants' Stair, they have lain in wait for you here. They have done well to penetrate so deeply into the Bowels of Orb. Turn to 284.

**245**

On the next day Foxglove is sullen and will not speak to you. Tomorrow you will sight the last hills and forest before the Rift and you will have to set the horse free and continue on foot. When you camp at evening, however, she comes close to you, her eyes shining with tears, and says that she is too lonely and afraid to go on. 'Avenger, no one has shown me the smallest shred of kindness for longer than I can



remember. I will go with you to the Rift, as I must, but if you do not embrace me now my heart will break and I shall lose my mind.' Will you comfort her as she desires (turn to 265) or refuse her this kindness (turn to 285)?

#### 246

The four Adventurers are here in the Rift for a purpose, not merely to loot or to slay evil creatures. They have a score to settle. You have enemies in common. They are hunting the worshippers of the Chaos god Anarchil, who slew the High Priestess of Illustra in the city of Harith-si-the-Crow. Taflur has persuaded his friends to seek out and destroy Tyutchev, Thaum and Cassandra, the very people that seek your downfall. Thybault tells the story of how the evil three dared to venture into the great Cathedral to Illustra and kill the powerful High Priestess before her own altar. They are on the trail of the worshippers of the Chaos god, who are somewhere on the fourth tier or below. They seem to hate the evil trio. Perhaps there is an old score still to settle. They ask you to join them in their quest and to abandon your own for a while. You have been charmed by the swordsman's sword, Manmaster, and you will find it difficult not to join them. If you wish to join them, turn to 306. If you do not and you still have at least two Inner Force left, you may exert your will and wish them luck, but refuse to join them. Turn to 326, but lose 2 points of Inner Force.

#### 247

The Dwarf-Trolls are armed with great axes that they swing with surprising control; each axe must weigh as much as a man. You have to try to dodge or

block the first sweeping blow. Your Defence is 7. If you are hit, you lose 6 Endurance. After the first blow you have time to take the initiative. Will you back away and use the Iron Fist punch on any assailant (turn to 17) or charge in with the Leaping Tiger kick (turn to 37) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 57)?

248

If you are disguised as a Dark Elf, turn to 328. If you are disguised as a shambler, turn to 348. If you are relying on stealth and have no disguise, turn to 368.

249

You choose the soldier's red and green garb for your own. Only female Dark Elves attain proficiency in the magical arts, so Foxglove will have to wear the blue robe of the sorceress. She is waiting for you still. She is probably quite lost already and must rely on you if she is ever to leave the Rift. She pulls back in alarm as she sees you striding towards her clad in the Dark Elf's robe and hood, but when she hears your voice she breathes a sigh of relief. Quickly she dons the blue robe and you are ready to plunge further into the dangers of the Rift. Turn to 402.

250

The Orc runs away around the curve in the tunnel yelling 'Sunlander' for all he is worth. There is a cacophonous noise as of a wagon on rails ahead of you and the cries of many Orcs. They are after you. You duck down a small side tunnel in an effort to lose them. You quickly become lost in a maze of tunnels, but eventually join another small tunnel leading downwards. Turn to 339.

251

Later that day you order Cassandra and Foxglove to be brought into the Throne Room. Foxglove wears the same peacock gown that she wore when you first met her, when she petitioned to become a member of your Privy Council, but it is torn and travel-stained; the extravagant peacock tail train has been ripped off it long ago. She is still beautiful, but her beauty is that of the forlorn waif rather than the sophisticated courtesan. She seems frightened as much by the presence of Cassandra as by yourself. Cassandra demands that her sword be returned to her when she leaves the city and, since she became your prisoner voluntarily, you agree to allow her the sword as soon as she quits the city. Turn to 71.

252

The echoing of your footsteps, no matter how stealthily you tread, returns from the faraway walls of the cavern. The feeling of being so far under ground, surrounded by foes, is becoming overpoweringly unpleasant. The tension is unbearable; you feel trapped and vulnerable, and even begin to hear footsteps approaching that aren't there. When you are about half way across the vault, judging by the echoes, you realise that the footsteps are real and they are closing in on you from all sides. Suddenly there is a *whoosh* of flame, and a ring of fires bursts up ahead of you, then others to left and right. The vault is like a huge underground temple. Mock pillars that no longer quite reach the ceiling cast shadows at irregular intervals. The approaching footsteps are those of a party of Orcs led by two Dark Elves in blue cloaks. They have been walking towards the glow of the Torch of Lumen but now they can see you in the light of the fires. The chase is

on. Ahead of you, thirty metres away, is a gallery leading to stairs, but it is guarded by a score of Orcs with crossbows. To the right, fifteen metres away, is another tunnel, but this is guarded by two Ogres wearing leather armour and wielding five-metre-long pikes like the men of Antiochis used in the golden age of the Inner Sea. To the left of you, about twelve metres away, are the Elves and Orcs. Will you run towards the Ogres (turn to 272), the gallery (turn to 212) or stop where you are (turn to 292)?

### 253

Any decision you make should be taken quickly, lest Cassandra be spending her time brewing some terrible trap or ambush for you in the Rift. Once back at Irsuncast, you must come to a decision quickly. If it were not for Glaivas you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

### 254

Tyutchev grins evilly as he moves in to the attack. You use a combination of kicks and punches against him, but are disconcerted to find that the dark cloak he wears is imbued with a magic that makes it difficult for you to tell just how close he is. His enormous bastard sword swirls through the air faster than you might have believed possible.

#### TYUTCHEV

Defence against the Way of the Tiger: 8

Endurance: 20

Damage: 2 Dice +2

Your Defence against Tyutchev is 8. You should play three Rounds of combat. If you are still alive at the end of the third Round, turn to 396. If you wound Tyutchev twice, however, turn to 401 as soon as you have done so.

### 255

'Thaum was unwell following our last meeting with you. So unwell that we had, at great cost, to secure the services of a High Priest. It left Thaum a pauper.' Cassandra may be suggesting that he has been brought back from the dead, or perhaps that he was near mortally wounded by you. She goes on: 'There are many dark places in the Rift in which to hide. There is no telling whom you might meet, Avenger, in the everlasting darkness.' You may ask her one more question. Will you ask where in the Rift Glaivas is being held (turn to 275) or how many Dark Elves there are in the Rift (turn to 295)?

### 256

You should have heeded Cassandra's warning, for she spoke the truth. The Black Widow has set up a trap that even you cannot escape. As you walk past the thrones, a great slab of stone rumbles down into position at either end of the Way of Thrones, trapping you forever. You die next to statues of some of the most evil beings ever to walk the shadow world.



If you have been spotted on the roadway that leads down into the Rift, turn to 297. Otherwise turn to 277.

You surrender to your assailants and Foxglove heaps scorn upon your head. She tells them that you are but her bodyguard, disguised to make journeying through the Bowels of Orb easier. She moves sensuously towards the swordsman, who seems to find her very charming. As she goes she tells them not to believe a word you say, describing you as a megalomaniac and a compulsive liar so sick that you believe you are Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge. Will you protest that you really are Overlord (turn to 266) or wait to see what happens (turn to 286)?

Before you can rise from the ground the dragon-lizards and their riders arrive. You are bathed in flame and then savaged in one of the great monsters' jaws. Your end has come far from home in the darkness of the Rift.



The cavern swims before you and turns green as

your brain switches to the picture seen by the emerald Orb which allows you to see the invisible. The sister of Nullaq has sidestepped two paces to the right, but you can see her clearly. Will you pretend that you cannot see her (turn to 300) or continue your attack (turn to 423)?

Your arm-guard smashes into the hilt of Cassandra's sword, which is knocked from her grasp and slithers away from her down the slope towards the river. She is a swordswoman, and without her blade she is no match for you, and she knows it. She turns to run, but you trip her and force her to surrender. To your surprise she puts up no further resistance as she allows you to tie her hands behind her back. You retrieve her sword; it is too great a treasure to leave behind. Note this on your Character Sheet. She says proudly: 'Tyutchev, Thaum and I came close to killing you, Avenger, in the city of Harith-the-Crow. Why do you not now kill me? We are sworn enemies.' Will you change your mind and poison her with spiderfish venom (turn to 43) or take her back to Irsmuncast (turn to 93)?

Foxglove turns to you and says in the common tongue: 'How could you abandon me to these foul creatures?' Your mouth drops open as you are seized by abject shame and lost for words. The thought of what you have done robs you of your belief in yourself, for you have failed Foxglove, who is dearer to you than the rest of Orb put together. Lose all your Inner Force. The chieftain of the Orcs recognises the common tongue, and he asks Foxglove who you are as she mounts the chariot beside

him. He reaches out and paws her, but to your amazement Foxglove pretends not to mind. Foxglove whispers in his ear. You are astonished to see that she can speak Orcish, a legacy of her days organising the Order of the Yellow Lotus for the Usurper. Foxglove tells you to surrender to the Orcs. The nape of your neck bristles with fear, but you do as she says and are soon languishing in a grimy hole inside Sile's domain on the second tier. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 302. If not, turn to 322.

263

Even as Foxglove curtsys, Gwyneth fires an accusation at her. 'So, traitress, you have returned to Irsmuncast, the city that you betrayed to the dross that issued forth from the Bowels of Orb? Why did you open the city gates to the enemy?'

'It was not I who opened the gates. Please believe me.'

'Opened the gates to the enemy and when the enemy were beaten you fled to their land beneath the earth.'

'I fled because I would not be believed. Once the rumour that I was a traitress began, there was nothing I could do.'

You decide to ask Foxglove why she has been brought back to the city. Turn to 283.

264

The chaos-bringers are ready for you. Tyutchev says: 'At last, Avenger, the time has come for us to take our revenge, and you have brought us the Sceptre. Now I shall rule Irsmuncast.'



'You?' demands Cassandra, her striking features creased in anger.

'We shall all rule to the greater glory of Anarchil,' says Thaum in a calmer voice, 'and we shall destroy it utterly so that it passes beyond the memory of man.'

If Foxglove is with you, turn to 304. If not, turn to 324.



265

Foxglove comes into your arms and rests her head on your shoulder. An intoxicating aroma of exotic perfume, the scent of passion-flowers from the Island of the Goddess, wafts over you. You look into her eyes and marvel at her frail beauty. Before you can stop her she has stolen a kiss. Turn to 365.

266

Your protestations are met with derisory laughter. Foxglove suggests that they tie you securely for your own good, lest you throw yourself against the walls of the cavern and injure yourself in a blind rage. They ask you to submit to this, which you do,

feverishly thinking of a way to turn the tables on Foxglove. Suddenly a knife is at your throat and, unable to move, you feel your throat being slit. Foxglove has murdered you, and you will never turn the tables on her. Your people are alone without a saviour.



267

You instruct Foxglove to follow you quietly at an interval of twenty paces. She seems as frightened of you as of the denizens of the Rift and does exactly as you ask. You look back often to make sure that she is all right. Note that Foxglove is following you and turn to 27.

268

You wait for Foxglove to catch up as you stand in a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. There is a loud crack, and the cavern is lit up by vivid blue light. A lightning bolt from high up on the ceiling sizzles past you and strikes Foxglove, then rebounds off the wall behind, striking the floor at your feet. Lose 2 Endurance. If you are still alive, you see that



Foxglove is dead; the bolt of lightning has shattered her chest completely. In the light of the bolt your acute senses picked up four men, one of whom was dressed in a white robe with a red cross upon it. Will you attack straight away (turn to 358) or dive for cover through an archway (turn to 378)?

### 269

The first needle embeds itself in the soldier's neck and he slumps to the floor just in front of you. The second, following swiftly, hits the sorceress in the eye just as she is casting a spell. She, too, falls. The spiderfish venom has done its work. You take their robes, belts and sandals plus two hoods that you find in a box nearby. A smaller ivory box inside one of the hoods contains a small jewelled pin with a golden bullrush for a head. Note that you have the bullrush pin. Turn to 249.

### 270

The Shuriken fells the Orc and you pull it out of the warm body so that it can be used again. No one else disturbs your progress down the tunnel. Turn to 52.

### 271

There are Orcish sentries posted at intervals along the earthworks. Their night vision probably surpasses even your own, and it will be no easy task to slip past them. Will you use a stone to distract their attention (turn to 291) or a flash pellet (turn to 301)?

### 272

The Dark Elves speak a command in their lilting language when you are six metres from the Ogres, but the Ogres seem too stupid to act quickly. The

disguise has fooled them completely, and by the time they have swung their long pikes into action you have ducked between them and on down the exit tunnel. Note that you have been spotted in the Sacred Vault and turn to 372.

273

Cassandra orders the Orcs to bind you hand and foot and leaves the camp so that she can examine the coveted emerald Orb alone. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 331. If not, turn to 63.

274

Thaum's weird gesticulations are a wonder to behold. Just as you set out to attack him there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright that it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in the tapestry, but were merely anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You can only guess at all of this from the noises you hear, for you are temporarily blinded and stunned. You reel backwards, but the tempered steel of Tyutchev's and Cassandra's meet in your vitals. You have been slain far from home, in the eternal darkness.



275

'Glaivas is kept captive beyond the seventh tier in the area known as the Forbidden Sanctuary. The Black Widow's web reaches out from the hub there.' Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the fourth tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 335.

276

The twisting, turning tunnel soon branches into myriad other tunnels and caves. Mercifully this means you may avoid encountering the thieves of the twilit world. A sinister shadow moving on a nearby wall makes you start, but when you look again it is gone. You listen, but all you can hear is the soft susurration of your own breathing. Turn to 4.

277

You duck into the tunnel before anyone notices you and creep onwards, taking care always to descend towards the second tier. Turn to 417.

278

Your Heart-Training tells you that these four people, with the possible exception of the magician, who is a highly unreliable and capricious character but not wholly evil, are good and brave men. You can trust them, for they will not lie to you. You tell them that you are none other than the Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge and of your quest to rescue Glaivas, your Ranger friend. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in a Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician,

Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. The swordsman waves his sword in your direction and speaks the words: 'Master of man and woman.' If you are enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 206. If not, you find yourself beginning to like these four Adventurers. Turn to 226.

279

Some minutes after the chilling cry, you see the black shadow of one of the huge winged beasts that carried off the poor Orc. It is a Demiveult, the name given to one of the forms taken by the Firedrakes, fierce reptilians that rule the lands to the north-east of the Inner Sea. A Demiveult is a huge winged reptile larger than any other Firedrake but unable to reproduce. The Dark Elves must have stolen and hatched some Firedrake eggs. They hunt in the abysmal darkness by scent alone. The wings snap forwards and it begins to dive on you. You need two legs and an arm to cling on to the rock. Will you push yourself off the wall of sheer rock and let yourself fall into the bottomless dark (turn to 329), throw your grappling-hook around the beast (turn to 349) or start climbing upwards and hope that it misses you (turn to 369)?

280

When Cassandra tore the emerald Orb from your face, she did more than inflict agony; she made you almost defenceless against invisible beings. Will you attack the point where you last saw the sister of Nullaq (turn to 340), run out of the cavern down the tunnel that is ahead of you and to the left (turn to 352) or try to leave by the other free entrance, behind you and to the left (turn to 220)?

281

After an hour's climbing, moving as the mountain lion patiently stalks the doe, you are at the top of the northern slope of scree, a very steep-sided wall of pebbles and slate chips. Not even a harvest-mouse could move silently over this scree. You pray to Kwon that you will avoid the notice of the Orcish guards, whose night vision is so good. Courage buoys you up as you begin the difficult descent. Make a Fate Roll. If fate smiles on you, turn to 351. If fate turns her back on you, turn to 361.

282

Foxglove turns to you and says in the common tongue: 'We shall meet again, Avenger.' The chieftain of the Orcs recognises the common tongue and he asks Foxglove who you are as she mounts the chariot beside him. He reaches out and paws her, but to your amazement Foxglove seems not to mind. Foxglove whispers in his ear as you pretend not to have understood her words spoken in the common tongue. You are surprised that she can speak Orcish, a legacy of her days organising the Order of the Yellow Lotus for the Usurper. Sile is far less interested in you than in she, however, and you are able to slink past them and away. Turn to 52.

283

'I was brought, a prisoner of the Warrior Woman Cassandra, so that she would gain entry to the city and an audience with you, Overlord, all the more easily.'

You ask Foxglove to describe Cassandra.

'She is a cruel and heartless woman. I have never seen anyone handle a sword more skilfully than

her, not even General Gwyneth. She has the speed of a cheetah.'

'What does she look like?' you enquire.

'She wears armour at all times, a curious patchwork of metal scales. Her hair is spiked like the spines of a hedgehog. Some would call her attractive . . . she is as cold as an icefish and has a sword to match.'

Foxglove's description has told you enough. It is the same Cassandra who is wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harith-si-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, along with other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Anarchil. You were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Most clearly of all you remember that she is a breathtakingly swift swordswoman. Turn to 303.

#### 284

The chaos-bringers are ready for you but not for the four Adventurers. The look of glee on their faces fades to one of uncertainty, while the four Adventurers struggle hastily to their feet with looks of plain fear in their eyes, a fear that is quickly turned to hatred as Tyutchev speaks. 'I wonder that you dare to challenge us. You have not the power. Both Cassandra and I are more dangerous fighters than you, and you, fickle Eris, cannot rival Thaum's witchcraft.' Taflur begins to chant a blessing in the name of Illustra. 'So that still rankles, does it?' asks Thaum, trying to break his concentration. Cassandra says: 'The High Priestess is dead. What is done cannot be undone. We have no vendetta against the followers of the Goddess of Life.'

'You who reverence Anarchil cannot keep an idea in

your head for longer than a minute at a time,' says Thybault imperiously, 'but we do have a vendetta – against all who revere the insane god Anarchil.'

They are not even addressing you. The rivalry of these people must be deep-set. Tyutchev says to Eris: 'Come, Eris. You worship a Chaos god. Stand with us again. Cross over to the other side as you did once before. Otherwise your life is run, for you cannot stand against us.'

If Foxglove is also with you, turn to 344. If not, turn to 364.

#### 285

You inform Foxglove that it is not fitting for an Overlord to embrace a commoner, but she is hurt. 'Then I shall kill myself. I cannot live despised by all.' She is suddenly wracked by sobs and seems to be completely distraught. It seems she really has nothing left to live for. Fear fills her life and you are leading her into the direst peril. Will you take her into your arms and comfort her (turn to 305), tell her to go to sleep and save her strength for the descent into the Bowels of Orb (turn to 325) or tell her you wish to search her before you allow her to touch you (turn to 345)?

#### 286

Foxglove suggests that you journey on together, deeper into the Rift. She places herself in the middle of the party, beguiling the swordsman called Vespers to protect her. You hear her speaking to the young swordsman, admiring his physique and generally flattering him. It is not long before they slip behind a pillar and are entwined in an embrace. Thybault, the priest of Avatar, becomes most dis-

mayed when he realises what is happening, but when he remonstrates with Vespers Foxglove tells him he is 'Naught but a cold-blooded priest who knows not the joys of living'. Foxglove is so beautiful and haughty that she makes him feel unsure of himself, and Vespers, pleased that Foxglove has chosen him, tells Thybault forcefully to be quiet. Note that Vespers is enchanted by Foxglove. Foxglove then turns from you to Vespers and says: 'If you care for me at all, young man, slay this troublesome imbecile.' She points out that you might shout out at an inopportune moment and cause their deaths. Vespers runs his thumb up and down the sharp blade of his magical sword and starts towards you. You must stop him. Will you attack (turn to 238), appeal to the priests to spare you (turn to 36) or tell them that you are indeed the Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge (turn to 266)?

### 287

Just as you turn to retrace your steps up the roadway there is the whir of a tomahawk flying through the air and a clatter as it strikes the side of the canyon nearby. You sprint away, stealing a look over your shoulder as you go – to see five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post; if you had walked on you would have been among them. They begin to howl, so you run on towards the lip of the Rift hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. Foxglove manages to keep up well. She is tougher than she looks. Turn to 327.

### 288

You are waiting for Foxglove to catch up, standing in a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. There is a loud crack and the cavern is lit up by vivid blue light. A lightning bolt from high up in the ceiling sizzles towards you, and you try to dive aside. It does not catch you with full force, but still you are thrown through the air and your nerves are horribly jarred. Lose 8 Endurance. If you are still alive in the light of the bolt your acute senses picked up four men, one of whom was dressed in a white robe with a red cross upon it. Will you attack straight away (turn to 388) or dive for cover through an archway (turn to 408)?

### 289

There is a choice of tunnels ahead of you. One is a small tunnel that branches deep into the rock, away from the direction of the cavern (turn to 409), and another is a wider tunnel, with rusty rails at one side of it, that leads gently downwards and ahead (turn to 359).

### 290

Foxglove is taken away to a separate prison. You do not see her again, but word reaches you that she has been released before you decide the coast is clear and use your escapology skills to break out of the prison. You are just in time to escape interrogation; the torture party arrives just as you are stealthily creeping away from the prison caves. Soon they are far behind. You find a tunnel that leads back towards the area of the Sacred Vault where you surrendered. Turn to 372.

The sound of the stone crashing against the scree slope pulls one of the Orcs out of position on the earthwork. You seize your opportunity with fullness, as a Ninja should, and silently steal towards the earthworks. If you have the skill of Detecting and Disarming Traps, turn to 311. If not, turn to 321.

The Dark Elves see that you are dressed as they and are fooled by the disguise. They say something in their lilting language and then lead the Orcs away from you once more. You are free to leave the chamber as the Orcs file out of the gallery. Turn to 372.

A few hours later a party of shieldmaidens on horseback, scouts from your army, come across you as you struggle with the ropes that bind you. They are embarrassed to find you in such a helpless position but soon have you free and safely escorted back to the city. Another party of scouts returning at the same time report that Cassandra and the Orcs are returning to the Rift and that Foxglove is still with them. Note that Foxglove is still Cassandra's prisoner. Turn to 313.

Your Shuriken flashes across the hall and wounds Thaum in the shoulder. He is no longer performing his incantations, but Tyutchev and Cassandra close on you simultaneously. Thybault and Vespers step bravely into the breach. They are skilled fighters. Thybault's flail whines as it whirls through the air and cracks as it smashes against Cassandra's

armour. Her lightning riposte wounds the priest, but you are occupied with Tyutchev, who dares to attack both you and the swordsman Vespers together. You use a combination of kicks and punches against him, but are disconcerted to find that the dark cloak he wears is imbued with a magic that makes it difficult for you to tell just how close he is. He has to defend himself against Vespers as well, but he seems intent on finishing you first. His enormous bastard sword swirls through the air faster than you might have believed possible.

## TYUTCHEV

Defence against the Way of the Tiger: 8

Endurance: 20

Damage: 2 Dice +2

Your Defence against Tyutchev is 8. You should play three Rounds of combat. If you are still alive at the end of the third Round, turn to 360. If you wound Tyutchev twice, however, turn to 309 as soon as you have done so.

'More than ever you can hope to elude, Avenger,' responds the Warrior Woman glibly. Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the fourth tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 335.

The twisting, turning tunnel soon branches into myriad other tunnels and caves. Mercifully this means you may avoid encountering the thieves of the twilit world. A sinister shadow moving on a

nearby wall makes you start, but when you look again it is gone. You listen, but all you can hear is the soft susurration of your own breathing. If you have been spotted on the Fire Giants' Stairway, turn to 356. If not, turn to 416.

297

Just as you are about to turn into one of the tunnels, a ghastly apparition surprises you. It is a Dark Elf in a robe of purple and green, but the usually beautiful jet-black face is horribly contorted. Eight splayed legs and a bloated spider's body project from below the chin, as if half a huge spider had been grafted on to the face. It is one of the sisters of Nullaq, dreaded magicians whose mothers have mated with one of the three Mother-Spiders in the deeper vaults of the Rift. She gestures and the air begins to shimmer before you like a heat-haze. Then she launches a cloud of green dust that starts to descend upon you. As you glance down the tunnel, your avenue of escape, you glimpse a spider's web but nothing else of interest. Will you run down the tunnel (turn to 317), advance into the shimmering haze (turn to 337), stay where you are and hurl a Shuriken if you have one (turn to 357) or, if you do not have one, wait to see what happens (turn to 377)?

298

You tell them that you are none other than the Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge and of your quest to rescue Glaivas, your Ranger friend. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in a Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. The



swordsman waves his sword in your direction and speaks the words: 'Master of man and woman.' If you are enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 206. If not, you find yourself beginning to like these four Adventurers. Turn to 226.

299

If you have ordered Foxglove to follow you at a distance of twenty paces, turn to 379. If not, turn to 399.

300

You stay absolutely still, appearing to look around questioningly but in reality straining for the slightest noise that will give away her position. When it comes, you launch yourself in a great leap and lash out with a Leaping Tiger kick. Subtract 1 point of Inner Force as you let out all your pent-up power with a cry. If you do not have any Inner Force left, turn to 340; otherwise read on. The sister of Nullaq lies sprawled at your feet. She has become visible once more. If you wish to choose this moment to escape, will you run out of the cavern, down the tunnel that is ahead of you and to the left (turn to 352) or try to leave by the other free entrance, behind you and to the left (turn to 220)? If you try to deal a killing blow, turn to 400.

301

As soon as the flash pellet goes off there is uproar, and you realise from the meaningful sound of the Orcish shouting that you have been spotted. They are not quick enough to catch you, however, and you return safely to Irsmuncast. Time is running out. Will you declare an amnesty for Foxglove and her companion (turn to 41) or ride out with Gwyneth to take them by force (turn to 31)?

302

For five days you languish in the care of Lord Sile's Orcs, hoping and praying that Foxglove will at least come to visit you in honour of the heartfelt friendship you bear her. Then one day you overhear one of them saying in worried tones that Sile has gone mad and become infatuated with the woman Foxglove, who has ordered him to send you to the seventh tier, the Black Widow's lair. Almost too late you realise that you have been the victim of treacherous sorcery, and you see Foxglove in her true colours. Unfortunately you have had only the condensation which you could lick off the cave wall for sustenance these five days and have lost much of your strength. Lose 5 Endurance. If you are still alive, you regain the will to escape and use your skill as an Escapologist to break out of the chains. Turn to 342.

303

'Why did Cassandra desire an audience with me?' you ask.

'She came to lure you into the Rift. The Dark Elves have captured Glaivas. They will put him to torture and kill him unless you give them the Sceptre which is the badge of your rulership. If you deliver the Sceptre to them they will let you and Glaivas go free. Cassandra hoped to kill you before you found Glaivas. She still burns for revenge. I have told you all that I know. Now set me free, I beg you.'

'She is a traitress and should be put to the sword,' says Gwyneth.

Will you let Gwyneth have her way and order that Foxglove be executed for the part she is alleged to have played in the sack of your city (turn to 323), let



Foxglove go free on condition that she never enters the city again on pain of death (turn to 343) or force her to accompany you to the Rift if you decide to go (turn to 363)?

304

If you are enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 54. If you are not, turn to 74.

305

Foxglove comes into your arms and rests her head on your shoulder. An intoxicating aroma of exotic perfume, the scent of passion-flowers from the Island of the Goddess, wafts over you. You look into her eyes and marvel at her frail beauty. Before you can stop her she has stolen a kiss. Turn to 365.

306

The Adventurers believe that Cassandra, Tyutchev and Thaum are somewhere on the fourth tier. It is a long way between the third and fourth tiers and takes some time for you to find a way down. Evidently there are few connecting tunnels and stairways so that the deeps are easily defensible against the attacks of Sunlanders in the unlikely event that an invasion of the twilit realms be attempted. You see no further sign of any trouble and skilfully evade detection until at last you find a way that leads down to the fourth tier. Turn to 76.

307

As you near the second of the natural archways of stone your acute hearing picks up two sounds. One is the sound of rock on rock, the other the sound of metal on metal. If you are interested in the sound of rock on rock, turn to 347. If you are interested in the sound of metal on metal, turn to 367.

You are crossing a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. If not, turn to 38.

You are about to finish Tyutchev off when Thybault crashes into you. He is losing his battle with Cassandra, who has a killing light in her eyes. You steady him and move towards Cassandra. Eris and Taflur are recovering now, but Thaum is about to cast another spell. You have knocked a pouch from Tyutchev's belt which you quickly retrieve. Note that you have Tyutchev's belt pouch. Suddenly you notice the tapestry at one side of the room begin to ripple as if in a wind. Turn to 34.

You are able to use your escapology skills to break out of the prison and are just in time to escape interrogation; the torture party arrives just as you are stealthily creeping away from the prison caves. Soon they are far behind. You find a tunnel that leads back towards the area of the Sacred Vault where you surrendered. Turn to 372.

As you are about to leap the earthwork in one nimble bound, you notice that the earth feels

strangely soft underfoot. Probing ahead carefully with a stick, you realise you are at the edge of the pit trap. Quickly you leap across it on to the earthwork itself and then lower yourself as quietly as a cat – and undetected – into the camp. Turn to 341.

The Orcs let their bows fall in disbelief as you knock aside three arrows in quick succession and then catch one in each hand. You climb the steps to the gallery like a whirlwind and fell two of the Orcs who try to stop you. The Elves are still shouting orders as you disappear down the stairway at the far side of the gallery. Note that you have been spotted in the Sacred Vault and turn to 372.

Once back at Irsmuncast you must come to a decision quickly. If it were not for Glaivas you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

As you move, so does Cassandra – not towards you but towards Foxglove, who is cowering as far away as she can. Cassandra's sword is raised, ready to strike. If you want to protect Foxglove, turn to 94. If, instead, you attack Tyutchev, who is running at you, turn to 334.

Thaum was unwell following our last meeting with you. So unwell that we had, at great cost, to secure

the services of a High Priest. It left Thaum a pauper.' Cassandra may be suggesting that he has been brought back from the dead, or perhaps that he was near mortally wounded by you. She goes on: 'There are many dark places in the Rift in which to hide. There is no telling whom you might meet, Avenger, in the everlasting darkness.' Then: 'I will answer no more questions, but I will tell you this. When you reach the fourth tier, take the narrow way. The Way of Thrones has been baited as a trap for you, Avenger, a trap that even you cannot hope to survive.' Turn to 335.

### 316

As soon as you turn back, the creatures all around who had seemed oblivious to your presence begin to shout and try to grab hold of you. You fight your way to the top but without being wounded. Your martial skills and those of your companions are enough to deter your assailants once you reach the plaza again, and you lose yourself in the maze of tunnels. Note that you have been spotted on the Fire Giants' Stairway. Turn to 236.

### 317

You run agilely down the tunnel. The sister of Nullaq does not give chase, but to your consternation she claps her hands and laughs. If you wish to run back out into the cloud of green powder, turn to 377. If you run on, turn to 397.

### 318

The Poison Needle leaves your lips unseen. The swordsman recoils into the arms of the priest in white. The priest plucks the dart from his friend's neck and speaks a short spell. The swordsman

begins to sway unsteadily on his feet as the spiderfish venom takes hold, but then begins to recover as if he had suffered no worse than a wasp sting. He attacks again, and their combined spells and weaponry are too potent to withstand. You die at their hands, deep in the eternal dark.



### 319

There is a choice of tunnels ahead of you. A small tunnel branches away deep into the rock, away from the direction of the cavern (turn to 339), and a wider tunnel, which has rusty rails at one side of it, leads gently downwards and ahead (turn to 210).

### 320

You run on. The flame behind you dies down for a moment and Foxglove enters the tunnel behind you, looking panic-stricken. Before you can calm her, the flame barrier ignites once more and a tiny spider drops from a recess in the roof of the tunnel onto your head. You slap at it but it runs through your hair into your ear, darting so quickly it cannot be stopped. If you have a bullrush-headed pin, turn to 8. If not, turn to 28.

### 321

All goes smoothly until you are about to leap the earthwork itself in one nimble bound, when the

earth gives way beneath your feet and you fall into a pit trap full of spikes. You are not badly wounded, but a ring of spear-points above you heralds the arrival of the Orcs before you can escape. In the ruddy light of the fire you recognise a face you have seen before. She smiles haughtily and, unsheathing a sword rimed with frost and deathly cold, she beckons you out of the pit. She is Cassandra, wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harith-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, along with other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Anarchil. You were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Most clearly of all you remember that she is a breathtakingly swift swordswoman. You are soon bound hand and foot, powerless to resist. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 331. If not, turn to 33.



### 322

On the next day Foxglove comes to visit you. Your heart leaps with joy. Perhaps she has not forgotten your friendship after all. But your hopes are cruelly dashed. She takes the Sceptre without so much as a word except to say that the idea of disguising yourself as a shambler and she as a slave was not a good one. 'I realised then that you were too stupid to take me all the way back to the Black Widow yourself.' The look of malicious triumph in her eyes speaks

volumes. She will use the Sceptre to lead an army from the Rift against your city while you rot here powerless to stop her usurping your throne. You die in misery in the eternal darkness, far from home.



### 323

Gwyneth steps forwards and takes Foxglove's arm in a grip of iron. Foxglove screams in fear, but Gwyneth's face is set hard. She pulls the wailing woman out of your sight. The wails continue down the corridor and are then cut off abruptly. Gwyneth returns to the Throne Room alone. Turn to 383.

### 324

Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking away to the side of the hall. Will you look at the tapestry too (turn to 234) or keep your eyes fixed on Thaum (turn to 274)?

### 325

There is a sudden flash of anger in Foxglove's eyes, then she does as you bid. Bedding down on the far side of the camp fire, she turns her back on you and swathes herself in her sable cloak. Will you stay awake all night to make sure Foxglove does not escape or try to kill herself (turn to 385) or sleep

soundly so that you are refreshed for the descent into darkness tomorrow (turn to 405)?

326

They wish you luck as well as you leave them. Soon they are nothing but a memory, left far behind in this labyrinthine maze of tunnels and caverns far from the sunlight. It is a long way between the third and fourth tiers and takes some time for you to find a way down. Evidently there are few connecting tunnels and stairways, so that the deeps are easily defensible against the attacks of Sunlanders in the unlikely event that an invasion of the twilit realms be attempted. You see no further sign of any trouble and skilfully evade detection for hour after hour. Turn to 56.

327

You regain the top of the canyon before pursuers appear on the roadway below you, and take the nearest of the smaller twisting stairways; it winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 415.

328

You are crossing a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. There is a loud crack, and the cavern is lit up by vivid blue light. A lightning bolt from high up in the ceiling sizzles towards you, and you try to dive aside. It does not catch you with full force, but still you are thrown through the air and your nerves are horribly jarred. Lose 8 Endurance. If you are still alive, in the light of the bolt your acute senses picked up four men, one of whom was dressed in a

white robe with a red cross upon it. Will you attack straight away (turn to 358) or dive for cover through an archway (turn to 378)?

329

You push away from the rock-face and drop away from the clutches of the Firedrake. You fall for what seems an age before your body is broken on an outcrop of stone far from the light. Your end has come far from home in the eternal darkness of the Rift.



330

At last you reach the huge halls of the third tier. The atmosphere is filled with smoke that burns the lungs until you become used to it. At least the braziers burning everywhere mean you can conceal the Torch of Lumen for the time being. Together with the smoke you become aware of a constant hum in the background. This puzzles you for some time until you realise it is the everyday noise of the denizens of the third tier going about a multiplicity of mundane tasks, the sound of their voices and the scuffing of their shoes blended with many thousand other noises into a monotonous low drone. Approaching footsteps startle you out of your reverie. If Foxglove is with you, turn to 140. If she is not, read on. If you were spotted crossing

the Sacred Vault on the second tier, turn to 350. Otherwise, turn to 370.

### 331

When the Orcs bind you they are as intent on hurting you as binding you tight, imagining that if you try to escape they will have the pleasure of beating you senseless. You tense your limbs and, when you are ready, relax. The bonds fall loose and you squirm free before they realise what is happening. As you make your escape, running faster than any Orc can, you hear Cassandra calling for the cat o' nine tails. The poor Orcs who bound you will regret their lack of vigilance. You are back at Irsmuncast in a few hours, but time is running out. Glaivas and Doré le Jeune have still not returned from the Rift. Will you offer amnesty to Foxglove and your enemy Cassandra (turn to 41) or ride out with Gwyneth to take them by force, ordering twenty shieldmaidens to charge in a frontal assault on the camp (turn to 91)?

### 332

Three of the arrows find their mark. Lose 6 Endurance. If you are still alive, you pluck them out while you are running. With one leap you gain the gallery and fell two of the Orcs who try to stop you. The Elves are still shouting orders as you disappear down the stairway at the far side of the gallery. Note that you have been spotted in the Sacred Vault and turn to 372.

### 333

Foxglove looks nervously at Cassandra, who glowers at her, before replying. 'The Dark Elves took Glaivas two days before we set out from the Rift. They want the Sceptre. I do not know what

became of the Paladin.' She hesitates, and you prompt her to go on. She breaks into a flood of words: 'They will kill you, Avenger. It is a terrible place! The gods themselves could not survive in the Bowels. The air is tainted with poison and death and there are monsters that lurk there in the depths larger than cities . . .' She is breathing rapidly, her breast rising and falling with emotion. 'The Dark Elves are cruel and depraved beyond imagining. Don't send me back there with that woman, Overlord, I beg you.' She points at Cassandra, who sneers at her in disgust. Turn to 123.

### 334

Cassandra turns away from Foxglove. She was only trying to lure one of her antagonists out of line. Tyutchev and Cassandra close on you simultaneously. Thybault and Vespers step bravely into the breach. They are skilled fighters. Thybault's flail whines as it whirls through the air and cracks as it smashes against Cassandra's armour. Her lightning riposte wounds the priest, but you are occupied with Tyutchev, who dares to attack both you and the swordsman Vespers together. You use a combination of kicks and punches against him, but are disconcerted to find that the dark cloak he wears is imbued with a magic that makes it difficult for you to tell just how close he is. He has to defend himself against Vespers as well, but he seems intent on finishing you first. His enormous bastard sword swirls through the air faster than you might have believed possible.

#### TYUTCHEV

Defence against the Way of the Tiger: 7  
Endurance: 20  
Damage: 2 Dice +2

Your Defence against Tyutchev is 9. You should play three Rounds of combat. If you are still alive at the end of the third Round, turn to 360. If you wound Tyutchev twice, however, turn to 309 as soon as you have done so.



### 335

It would mean certain death for Glaivas, if he still lives, were you to detain Cassandra, so you tell her that she is free to leave and forbid her to enter the city again on pain of death. As she leaves she says: 'We may yet meet again, Avenger, or are you too craven to take up the quest?' Now you must decide what to do about the plight of your poor friend Glaivas. Turn to 355.

### 336

As you pass beneath the Fire Giants the other creatures either hurry on or lag behind. When the immobile Giants come suddenly to life, you are surrounded by them. Their unseeing eyes, like dark stones, seem to gaze above your head, but when the clubs start crashing down one after the other they are all perfectly synchronised and on target. Their sixth sense has told them you are an interloper and they need no eyes to see, for they have the inner eye. They are not the largest of the giant race but they are among the strongest. Their clubs strike

great boulders from the rock stair and you are soon a thin smear on the rock. You have died far from home in the eternal darkness.



### 337

You leap into the shimmering air ready to close and do battle, but find yourself choking and gasping. Feeling as though you had been without water in a desert for hours on end, you begin to crave your own blood to drink. To resist slashing your own wrist to bring forth a river of blood calls for a major effort of will. If you have the skill of Heart-Training, you lose only 1 point of Inner Force. If you lack this skill, you lose 2 points of Inner Force. But you resist the temptation and burst out of the shimmering haze, whereupon the illusion of thirst leaves you. Before you can attack, the sister of Nullaq turns into a black crow. She leaps off the edge of the ledge outside the store-houses and is soon lost in the darkness of the chasm below. You decide to go on a few yards before taking to one of the tunnels. Turn to 9.

### 338

As you tell them that you are none other than the Overlord of Irsmuncast nigh Edge and of your quest to rescue Glaivas, your Ranger friend, you have the

opportunity to study them closely. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in a Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 18. Otherwise read on. As you speak and they realise you are human, their attitude to you changes. They are still wary, but not intent on killing you. You have a chance to look at them closely. The swordsman wears a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white thread across his chest. Your studies in the library at Irmuncast tell you this is the insignia of a reverencer of the god Gauss, Enchanter of Arms, patron of sages, who was forced to take up the sword at the time of the descent of the Pantheon to Orb. The man in the white robe is a priest. He sports the Cross of Avatar on his chest. The third man is in green and is also a priest, though he wears chainmail, a worshipper of Illustra, Goddess of Life. The fourth, the magician, is a worshipper of a Chaos god. The five-spoked wheel insignia shows the Limitless Possibilities that may lead to good acts, however, rather than those that may lead to evil. He had been hovering in the air and now descends gently to the ground. They are good people, unless they are in disguise. If you have the skill of Shin-Ren, turn to 278. The swordsman waves his sword in your direction and speaks the words: 'Master of man and woman.' If you are enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 206. If not, you find yourself beginning to like these four Adventurers. Turn to 226.

339

The narrow tunnel ends abruptly in a steep stone

stairway shelving deeply down. Since Glaivas is almost certainly many tiers below, you decide to take the stairs. After a long climb you come to the edge of a great cavern. It is far too big for the Torch of Lumen to cast light on its far side. Alert to the slightest sound, you set off across the immense vault. Turn to 172.

340

Your feet and fists lash out at empty air. There is a terrible burning in your side – you have been stabbed. A patch of blood spreads quickly across your clothes. Lose 6 Endurance. If you are still alive, you decide that you cannot hope to defeat the invisible Dark Elf, for even though you lashed out instinctively the moment you felt pain your blow flailed through empty air and she has used another spell which muffles the noise of her moving. Will you run out of the cavern, down the tunnel that is ahead of you and to the left (turn to 352), or try to leave by the other free entrance, behind you and to the left (turn to 220)?

341

You discern two figures sleeping a little way away from the malodorous Orcs. One has merely unlaced her armour. The hilt of her sword glints in the moonlight near her outflung hand. The other must be Foxglove – her dark curling tresses show up on the light soil and she is wrapped in a threadbare travelling cloak. You can try to knock one of them out with a minute dose of spiderfish venom and then attempt to carry her off. Will you try to capture Foxglove (turn to 371) or the Warrior Woman (turn to 381)?

You slip out of Sile's domain and trace your way back to the point where you were captured before they have noticed you have gone. Turn to 52.

Foxglove leaves the Throne Room in indecent haste and you order her an escort of shieldmaidens so that she may leave the city without being stoned. Gwyneth seems barely able to suppress her annoyance and says: 'Overlord, have you taken leave of your mind? She will not rest until her intriguing has brought your downfall and delivered our city of Irsmuncast into the hands of the Riftspawn.' Will you order Gwyneth to be quiet and strip her of command of the army (turn to 413) or say that you value her judgement but that you cannot order even a former leader of the Yellow Lotus, the Usurper's Secret Informers, to be summarily executed without full proof (turn to 5)?

If you have been enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 384. If Vespers has been enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 404. If Taflur has been enchanted by Foxglove, turn to 14. If none of these applies, read on.

Foxglove, whose powers in such a situation are limited, sinks to the floor and makes herself small, hoping that when the spells start to fly she will be overlooked. Turn to 364.

'That will not be necessary, Avenger,' says Foxglove. 'This is what you would have been looking for.' She slips a stiletto knife out of a pocket in the lining of her sable cloak, unsheathes it and holds the

blade up before you. The point glistens with green venom. She sheathes the knife and throws it to the ground beside you, saying: 'My only defence against the Riftspawn.' Then she holds out her arms to embrace you. Certain that she is not going to try to kill you, you stretch your arms out warily. Turn to 265.

They heed your warning and tell Foxglove not to speak unless spoken to. Thybault says: 'By your actions we shall judge you in the name of Avatar the One.' Foxglove appears frightened of him and keeps quiet, apart from beseeching them to protect her from danger. Will you continue with them (turn to 306) or say: 'May fate smile on you' and go your own way, taking Foxglove with you (turn to 326)?

You look up to see a small shard of rock which has broken away from the wall of the canyon above tumbling down the rock-face to land on the roadway at your feet. At the same instant there is the whir of a tomahawk flying through the air at you. If you have the skill of Arrow Cutting, turn to 367. Otherwise read on. You whirl around, but it is too late. Foxglove slumps to the ground, the tomahawk embedded in her back. You duck as a boulder nearly smashes your head. The sound of metal on metal that you heard was the faintest scraping of the chains that tether your assailants to the archway. Five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, are ranged across the road beneath the second archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post, but they lurch forwards with giant ungainly strides to

assail you. Will you stand over Foxglove and give battle to protect her (turn to 387) or flee (turn to 407)?

348

You are crossing a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. A muffled exclamation carries to your sensitive ears: 'What on Orb is that?' There are at least two who understand the common tongue about twelve metres ahead of you. Will you attack them (turn to 358) or ask them who they are (turn to 58)?

349

The grappling-hook and rope become tangled around the enormous Firedrake, which shies away from you at the last moment. It takes the rope and hook with it, however. You are forced to let go or be dragged from your precarious position to fall in the bottomless pit of the Bowels of Orb. The Demiveult flies down into the blackness to find its roost and disentangle itself. You are left stranded without your rope. Your only option is to climb up again, for if you continue downwards and come to a place where rope is needed you will be too exhausted to turn back. Turn to 389.

350

The torches set in brackets on the nearby walls seem to flare brightly of their own accord, throwing into vivid relief an etching on the floor which extends over most of the chamber in which you find yourself. The floor has been plated with metal on to which a huge bloated spider shape has been cut with acid. The spider has only four legs, one at each



corner of its huge body, each of which points towards a tunnel exit. The tunnel by which you entered, to which the right back leg points, is suddenly blocked by a wall of flame, and the heat forces you forwards to the centre of the spider's body. A ghastly figure enters the chamber from the opposite tunnel. It is a Dark Elf in a robe of purple and green, but the usually beautiful jet-black face is horribly contorted. Eight splayed legs and a bloated spider's body project from below the chin, as if half a huge spider had been grafted on to her face. It is one of the sisters of Nullaq, dreaded magicians whose mothers have mated with one of the three Mother-Spiders in the deeper vaults of the Rift. She gestures you to leave the chamber by the tunnel indicated by the etching's front right leg. Will you do so (turn to 352), try to kill the sister of Nullaq (turn to 20) or try to leave by the other free entrance, guarded by two statues, behind you and to the left (turn to 40)?

### 351

Miraculously you achieve the almost impossible. It takes another hour to descend the fifteen-metre scree slope, and your muscles are aching from the effort of exerting such iron control over your limbs. At last you are within the enemy encampment undetected. Turn to 341.

### 352

You run quickly down the tunnel. The sister of Nullaq does not give chase. To your consternation she claps her hands and laughs. There is another flare of fire behind you and a wall of flame has sealed her end of the tunnel. Will you run back through the solid wall of fire (turn to 60) or run on (turn to 188)?

### 353

Memories of how Glaivas brought the Rangers to help you in your fight against the Legion of the Sword of Doom help you to make up your mind completely. You will risk all to save your friend. Turn to 393.

### 354

As you move, so does Cassandra - not towards you but towards Foxglove, who is cowering as far away as she can. Cassandra's sword is raised ready to strike. Foxglove cries out to Vespers to protect her, and he gallantly bars Cassandra's way. Tyutchev is running towards you, so you prepare to give battle. Turn to 334.

### 355

Any decision you make should be taken quickly, lest Cassandra be spending her time brewing some terrible trap or ambush for you in the Rift. Once back at Irmuncast, you must come to a decision quickly. If it were not for Glaivas, you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 65. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 85.

### 356

Passing a small alcove, you catch sight of a strange samovar encrusted with large sapphires. It is about sixty centimetres tall and made of solid gold. Will you examine it (turn to 44) or pass on by (turn to 24)?

### 357

Make a Shuriken roll. The sister of Nullaq, who has

been surprised by the speed of your Throwing Star, tries to duck but has Defence of only 6. If you hit, turn to 19. If you miss, turn to 59.

358

With all the speed and power of a tiger, you move to the attack. The man in white gives back before you. He is armed with a flail that has golden chains. You are faster than he and soon close to do battle, but as you do so you become aware of his allies. A swordsman who wields his sword in his left hand and carries a scroll in his right moves from behind an archway to your left. Above you, hovering in the air near the ceiling, is a man in a dark robe with a golden five-spoked wheel emblazoned on his chest – a magician. He speaks another spell, for it was he, you realise, who cast the bolt of lightning. A shining silver javelin appears in his hand and is launched towards you. As it flies it grows a serpent's head that dribbles venom. You must try to dodge. Your Defence is 6. If you succeed, turn to 418. If you fail, turn to 6.

359

The tunnel curves gently for perhaps half a kilometre before you see any sign of another soul. The Torch of Lumen looks like an ordinary brazier now. It is inside an illusion placed upon it by your father's most powerful sorceror. Its light shows a small ill-favoured Orc who had been walking towards you bowed down by the weight of a bundle of faggots he had been carrying. He is mesmerised by Foxglove's beauty, and looks from you to her several times before dropping the faggots and loping off in the direction he had come. You hurry on, hoping to come to a dividing of the ways so that you can leave this tunnel. Turn to 22.

194

360

You are still struggling with Tyutchev when Thybault crashes into you. He is losing his battle with Cassandra, who has a killing light in her eyes. You steady him and move towards Cassandra. Eris and Taflur are recovering now, but Thaum is about to cast another spell. Tyutchev has turned to face the new threat from his one-time friend, Eris the Magician. Suddenly you notice the tapestry at one side of the room begin to ripple as if in a wind. Turn to 34.

361

One unlucky step starts a small torrent of pebbles rolling that turns into an avalanche. Your arrival in the enemy camp could not be more spectacular as you plummet towards the river almost buried in scree. Before you can dig yourself out, a ring of spear-points above you heralds the arrival of the Orcs. In the ruddy light of the watch fire you recognise a face you have seen before. She smiles haughtily and, unsheathing a sword rimed with frost and deathly cold, she beckons you out of the pit. She is Cassandra, wanted by the Priestesses of Illustra at Harith-si-the-Crow for the murder of their High Priestess, along with other dangerous worshippers of the insane god of Chaos, Anarchil. You were attacked by three of them because you had slain their barbarian friend in self-defence. Most clearly of all you remember that she is a breathtakingly swift swordswoman. You are soon bound hand and foot, powerless to resist. If you have the skill of Escapology, turn to 331. If not, turn to 33.

362

Lord Sile is surprisingly fast, and he doesn't fall for

195

your feint. Instead he catches your foot on your second kick and puts you flat on your back. Lose 3 Endurance. The Orcs cheer and he comes forwards again, pretending to stamp on your groin but instead driving his fist into your face. All you can do is try to roll aside. Your Defence against his blow is only 4. If he hits you, lose 4 more Endurance. If you are still alive, you flip backwards in a somersault on to your hands and then on to your feet once more. The Orcs stop laughing and Lord Sile's face betrays surprise but no fear. Will you use the Tiger Paw chop (turn to 382), Kwon's Flail throw, if you remember being taught it by Togowa the Mystic (turn to 12) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 32)?

363

You have Gwyneth take Foxglove to the donjon, the small windowless tower at the north-east corner of the Palace, which she does none too gently. Next you ponder the difficult situation that confronts you. If it were not for Glaivas, you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

364

Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking away, to the side of the hall. Will you look at the tapestry too (turn to 194) or keep your eyes fixed on Thaum (turn to 214)?

365

If you have the skill of Shin-Ren, Heart-Training, turn to 15. Otherwise turn to 35.

366

Foxglove suggests that you journey on together, deeper into the Rift. She places herself in the middle of the party, beseeching the priest called Taflur to protect her. You hear her speaking to the young priest. She is telling him a tale of such woe that the poor man is almost moved to tears. She makes him feel that he has a mission to convert her to the faith of Illustra, Goddess of Life. It is not long before they slip behind a pillar and are entwined in an embrace. Thybault, the priest of Avatar, becomes most dismayed when he realises what is happening, but when he remonstrates with Taflur Foxglove tells him he is 'Naught but a cold-blooded priest who knows not the joys of living'. Foxglove is so beautiful and haughty she makes him feel unsure of himself, and Taflur, pleased that Foxglove has chosen him, tells Thybault politely but firmly to be quiet. Note that Taflur is enchanted by Foxglove. Thybault still mistrusts her, but he falls into line behind you both and you continue together. Turn to 306.

367

With a speed that defies belief you sweep your arm across. There is the ring of metal on metal as your arm-guard collides with the blade of a tomahawk and sends it spinning harmlessly away into the depths of the chasm. You have saved Foxglove's life. You drop to your haunches as a small boulder flies at your head. It shatters against the rock-face behind you. The sound of metal on metal that you heard was the faintest scraping of the chains that tether your assailants to the archway. Five Dwarf-Trolls, fat but powerful cross-breeds with pug-like faces, are ranged across the road beneath the second

archway. They are tethered there like dogs, chained to their guard-post, but they lurch forwards with giant ungainly strides to assail you. You yell at Foxglove to flee, and follow her back towards the lip of the chasm. The Dwarf-Trolls begin to howl the alarm, and you hurry on hoping to gain the top of the canyon before more intelligent foes catch sight of you. Foxglove keeps up well; she is tougher than she looks. Turn to 327.

### 368

You are crossing a dark cavern with fluted arches meeting at points in the ceiling. Hanging from each of the points is a skeleton, a grim reminder of the fate that befalls many here in the eternal darkness. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who had become caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 78. If not, turn to 98.

### 369

You struggle upwards just as the Firedrake tries to grab you with its outstretched talons. It fails to pluck you from the rock-face, but your back is badly scored. Lose 4 Endurance. Your rope is cut, too. The Firedrake loses height then wheels away towards other prey. You have had a lucky escape. You are left stranded without rope. Your only option is to climb up again, for if you continue downwards and come to a place where rope is needed you will be too exhausted to turn back. Turn to 389.

### 370

There are no sounds of pursuit as you continue

searching for the paths that lead ever deeper into the ground, but the sensation of being watched grows until your hair prickles with apprehension. Turn to 52.



### 371

Foxglove stirs uneasily and shivers a little as you approach, but you prick her neck and the venom does its work. She convulses once, then lies rigid and still. You wait until the new moon passes behind a cloud and then retreat across the earth-work. Foxglove is slim and weighs little – indeed, she seems almost undernourished. By dawn you are two kilometres from the encampment, and a farmer is honoured to take you both back to Irsmuncast in his ox-cart. Turn to 391.

### 372

For several hours you follow the circuitous twistings of the tunnels that lead down to the third tier. Your nerves are strained taut like hot wires lancing into your brain by the tension. You have been listening for the sounds of pursuit for so long that you can no longer tell whether the distantly muffled commands and the clashing of cymbals that seems to sound

every time you set off down another staircase is real or imagined. Turn to 330.

373

That evening, at prayer in the Temple to Kwon, you bare your soul to your god, Kwon the Redeemer, and sense the deity's displeasure. The strength to do good that your belief in Kwon gives you is lessened. It is as if by abandoning Glaivas you become little better than his cruel captors. Lose 3 points of Inner Force. If you are not to displease your god further, you must try to save your trusted friend. Turn to 393.

374

As you move, so does Cassandra – not towards you but towards Foxglove, who is cowering as far away as she can. Cassandra's sword is raised, ready to strike. Foxglove cries out to Taflur to protect her, but he can do no more than look blindly in her direction and groan. If you want to protect Foxglove, turn to 94. If, instead, you attack Tyutchev, who is running at you, turn to 334.

375

The nearest stairway is crumbling and unused, and the steps are half-eroded in places, but you make your way steadily down into the gloom. After half an hour's climb, in which time you have seen no living creature, you come to a gallery of caves served by many tunnels and paths cut into the side of the canyon wall. You have reached the first tier and are already in a twilit world. You touch the Torch of Lumen and it casts a gentle glow about you. You will need its light from here on. Turn to 27.

376

As soon as you turn back, the creatures all around who had seemed oblivious to your presence begin to shout and try to grab hold of you. You fight your way to the top, but not without being wounded. Lose 4 Endurance. Your martial skills are enough to deter your assailants once you reach the plaza once more, and you lose yourself in the maze of tunnels. Note that you have been spotted on the Fire Giants' Stairway. Turn to 176.



377

The powder settles all around you and begins to burn into your flesh like acid. Lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, you look up again to see the sister of Nullaq turn into a black crow. She leaps off the lip of the ledge outside the store-houses and is soon lost in the darkness of the chasm below. You decide to go on a few metres before taking to one of the tunnels. Turn to 9.

378

You reach cover just in time. Another bolt of lightning just misses you, ricocheting from wall to wall with thunderous cracks. Will you tell them who you are (turn to 16), use a Poison Needle if you have

that skill (turn to 318) or race to the attack (turn to 358)?

379

Foxglove has followed patiently and quietly every step of the way. In the dim light of the Torch of Lumen it is hard to read her expression, but she shows no signs of leaving you or giving you away, nor has she asked for any more proofs of your devotion. Finding a disguise for yourself alone will not be very useful if you cannot disguise Foxglove as well. You tell her to wait quietly and then set out to find the two disguises that you need. Turn to 419.

380

Foxglove seems to have recovered from her faint. She beseeches you, for reasons beyond understanding, to leave the cavern by the tunnel indicated by the sister of Nullaq. Her voice is so soft, calm and reassuring that you find yourself taking her advice. Turn to 352.

381

The Warrior Woman seems to be sleeping deeply. You prick her neck and the poison does its work. She convulses once and goes rigid, but her eyes are still open and she is struggling to whisper something. You lean closer and hear: 'Do not kill me. If I die, so does one loved by Overlord Avenger of Irsuncast.'

'What is this?' you hiss.

'Cure me of the poison that burns me so and I will tell you.'

Will you give her the antidote (turn to 3) or carry her off out of the camp (turn to 13)?

382

Lord Sile is faster than you expected. He strikes first, pretending to try to trip you before letting loose a great Roundhouse punch. Your Defence is 7. If he hits you, lose 4 Endurance. If you are still alive, you counter-attack with a Tiger Paw chop.

LORD SILE THE ORC CHIEFTAIN

Defence against Tiger's Paw chop: 7

Endurance: 18

Damage: 1 Die +2

If you win, turn to 72. One of the Orcs hurls a stone at you. You knock it aside, but this has given Lord Sile time to lash out at you with his foot. If you survive, will you use the Forked Lightning kick (turn to 362), the Tiger Paw chop (return to the top of this paragraph), Kwon's Flail throw, if you remember being taught it by Togowa the Mystic (turn to 12) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 32)?



383

You thank Gwyneth for performing the unpleasant duty of executing Foxglove. Gwyneth is used to living by the sword. 'It is part of my responsibility as general of the army of Irsuncast,' she replies. When she has returned to her temple you ponder the question of whether to go to Glaivas's aid. If it were not for Glaivas you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the

Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

### 384

Note that if you are given the choice of protecting Foxglove from attack, you must always choose to do so. Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking away at Foxglove. Foxglove calls you to her side to be her protector. You turn and run to do her bidding just as there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in Foxglove, but were merely averting their eyes, anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not looking at Thaum, for you would surely have been stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. The four Adventurers have not all been so lucky. Vespers reacted quickly enough to shield his eyes and Thybault too has not been stunned, but Eris the Magician and Taflur are reeling back in a state of shock. Will you use a Shuriken against Thaum, who is beginning another spell, if you have one (turn to 294) or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 314)?

### 385

Foxglove sleeps soundly, but you do not. Lack of

sleep takes its toll. Lose 2 Endurance then turn to 115.

### 386

They ask who Foxglove is, and you are about to tell them when Foxglove butts in. 'I was brought up to the worship of Nemesis, Supreme Principal of Evil. I became a servant of the evil Usurper of Irsmuncast, then when Avenger became Overlord I served faithfully but to no avail. I was cast out of the city and blamed for its sack. I wish to renounce the faith of Nemesis.' She looks beseechingly at the kind face of Taflur, Priest of Illustra. You can already see Taflur softening towards her. Will you warn them against Foxglove's enchantments (turn to 346) or let matters take their own course (turn to 366)? If you are yourself enchanted by Foxglove, one look of reproach is enough to silence you and you can only let matters take their course and turn to 366.

### 387

You step over Foxglove's slumped body, your own body tensed for battle like a tiger ready to spring. The Dwarf-Trolls are armed with great axes that they swing with surprising control; each axe must weigh as much as a man. You have to try to dodge or block the first sweeping blow. Your Defence is 7. If you are hit, you lose 6 Endurance. After the first blow you have time to take the initiative. Will you back away and use the Iron Fist punch on any assailant (turn to 117) or charge in with the Leaping Tiger kick (turn to 137) or the Teeth of the Tiger throw (turn to 57)?

### 388

With all the speed and power of a tiger, you move to



the attack. The man in white gives back before you. He is armed with a flail which has golden chains. You are faster than he and soon close to do battle, but as you do so you become aware of his allies. A swordsman who wields his sword left-handed and carries a scroll in his right moves from behind an archway to your left. Above you, hovering in the air near the ceiling, is a man in a dark robe with a golden five-spoked wheel emblazoned on his chest, a magician. He speaks another spell, for it was he, you realise, who cast the bolt of lightning. A shining silver javelin appears in his hand and is launched towards you. As it flies, it grows a serpent's head which dribbles venom. You must try to dodge. Your Defence is 6. If you succeed, turn to 118. If you fail, turn to 138.

### 389

The effort is almost too much for you as you climb back towards the roadway above. Lose 2 Endurance points owing to exhaustion. At last you clamber back on to the roadway. Unfortunately you have come up in front of the gatecastle of the first tier. The roadway runs right through the middle of the fortress, and there are guards in each of its towers as well as the motley crew of creatures repairing the roadway itself. A cry rings out from one of the towers. You have been spotted. You have no choice but to continue your retreat the way you came as four Dark Elves, riding flightless dragon-lizards, charge out of the gatehouse. An arrow from one of the towers finds its mark but causes only a flesh wound. Lose 2 Endurance. If you are still alive, you round a corner in the road and near the guard-point manned by Dwarf-Trolls once again. If you are a skilled Acrobat, turn to 119. If you are not a skilled

Acrobat, you must fight your way through (turn to 139).

390

This passage too begins to descend and then becomes a twisting stairway. For several hours you follow its tortuous twistings down to the third tier. Your nerves are at breaking point; the tension makes your head throb. You have been listening for sounds of pursuit for so long that you can no longer tell whether the distantly muffled commands and the dull echo of a great gong that seems to sound every time you set off down another turn in the staircase is real or imagined. Turn to 208.

391

Later that day Gwyneth arrives at the Palace with the news that the Orcs and their leader have retreated back towards the Rift. Gwyneth stays with you in the Throne Room to interview Foxglove. When Foxglove enters the Throne Room gracefully you realise she is wearing the same peacock gown that she wore when you first met her when she petitioned to become a member of your Privy Council, but it is torn and travel-stained, the extravagant peacock tail ripped off it long ago. She is still beautiful, but her fragile beauty is that of the forlorn waif rather than the sophisticated courtesan you remember. Turn to 263.

392

Foxglove has not run after you. She has given up all chance of escape and is surrendering. You will have to continue your mission to save Glaivas without her. If you have the skill of Acrobatics and wish to use it, turn to 30. Otherwise turn to 50.

393

You cannot ask another to share with you the dangers of the Rift. In any case, stealth is your greatest asset, so you must journey alone. You take the Sceptre and swathe it in black cloth, then hide it inside your Ninja costume. Leaving Gwyneth orders to publish the news that you are journeying to meet two saviours of the city, you set off to that darkest pit of evil, the Bowels of Orb. One other artefact you take from the royal armoury. This is the Torch of Lumen, an ebony rod topped by a cone of alabaster. When the alabaster is touched it gives off a constant light that will be invaluable in the eternal darkness of the Rift. Turn to 125.



394

The four are all men. They seem to be a party of Adventurers. One in a grey surcoat with an unfurled scroll picked out in white upon it is a swordsman. A priest wears the white robe and red cross of Avatar, the Supreme Principle of Good, another priest the green robe and white cross of Avatar's consort, Illustra, Goddess of Life. The fourth is a magician sporting the five-spoked wheel on his robe, which indicates he worships Béatan the Free.

These are good people. You know and can trust them. Their faces as they take in who they have stumbled across are quite comical. They line up for battle. There is fear in their faces, but this quickly turns to anger when Tyutchev speaks. 'I wonder you dare to challenge us. You have not the power. Both Cassandra and I are more dangerous fighters than you, and you, fickle Eris, cannot rival Thaum's witchcraft.' The priest in green begins to chant a blessing in the name of Illustra. 'So that still rankles, does it?' asks Thaum, trying to break his concentration. Cassandra says: 'The High Priestess is dead. What is done cannot be undone. We have no vendetta against the followers of the Goddess of Life.' 'You who reverence Anarchil cannot keep an idea in your head for longer than a minute at a time,' says the other priest imperiously. 'But we do seek vengeance, against all who worship the insane god Anarchil.' They are not even addressing you. You realise the rivalry of these people runs deep. Suddenly you notice the tapestry at one side of the room begin to ripple as if in a wind. Turn to 34.

### 395

The road winds gradually downhill, criss-crossing the canyon face in kilometre-wide zig-zags. Every now and then it burrows into the rock, cutting through a spur that makes a natural archway of stone above the road. At the first there are signs of a deserted guard-post. If you wish to turn back and take the narrow path, turn to 67. If not, turn to 87.

### 396

You are still struggling with Tyutchev when the tilting tunnelway that deposited you here in the hall tilts once more. You both leap back as four bodies



fall into the room between you. They pick themselves up quickly, and you realise that they are acquainted with the three chaos-bringers with whom you have been battling. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who became caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 144. If not, turn to 394.

397

As you run on there is the lightest tremor in the web that spans the tunnel. You duck, but a tiny spider drops into your Ninja hood. You unfurl the black cloth to shake it off, only to feel the spider run across your face and up your nostril. You sneeze automatically, but to no avail. You can feel the little spider fidgeting somewhere under your brain. Note that you are carrying one daughter of Nullaq. Turn to 417.

398

They refuse to tell you who they are, but you can see three of them now, a swordsman and two priests, one heavily armoured, the other wearing white with a red cross. He demands in a peremptory tone to know who you are and what you are doing. Will you tell them (turn to 338) or attack them (turn to 388)?

399

It should not be too hard to find yourself a disguise here on the second tier. You wait and listen for some time before deciding on the direction to take, hoping it is one that will lead you to creatures of some sort but not into the arms of too many at once. Turn to 419.

400

You are too quick for the sister of Nullaq this time. Your blow breaks her neck and robs her of life. Quickly searching her body, you find a healing potion. You may use this at any time, except when in battle, to restore your Endurance to its maximum. You leave the cavern not wishing to be discovered here. Turn to 370.

401

You are about to finish Tyutchev off when the tilting tunnelway that deposited you here in the hall tilts once more. You both leap back as four bodies fall into the room between you. They pick themselves up quickly, and you realise that they are acquainted with the three chaos-bringers with whom you have been battling. If you have played *Assassin!* (Way of the Tiger, Book Two) and met a party of Adventurers who became caught up in the Noxious Vapours spell cast by their own magician, Eris, and you defeated the Undead Warlord who was attacking them, turn to 144. If not, turn to 394.

402

There is a choice of tunnels ahead of you. A small tunnel branches away deep into the rock, away from the direction of the cavern (turn to 409), and a wider tunnel, which has rusty rails at one side of it, leads gently downwards and ahead (turn to 2).

403

If you leave Gwyneth behind at Irsmuncast while you travel to the Bowels of Orb, her position will become even more secure than the war has made it already. If you are trapped there, she is sure to try to crown herself Overlord of Irsmuncast. If it were not

for Glaivas, however, you would probably not now be Overlord of the city. To take the Sceptre into the Bowels of Orb is to expose it and yourself to the gravest danger. If you decide to try to save Glaivas, turn to 353. If you abandon Glaivas to his fate, turn to 373.

#### 404

Thaum's fingers are making the strangest patterns in the air, and Cassandra and Tyutchev are looking away at Foxglove. Foxglove calls you to her side to be her protector. You turn and run to do her bidding just as there is an eruption of coruscating light so bright it almost stuns you into immobility. You blink and realise that Cassandra and Tyutchev had expected it. They were not interested in Foxglove, but were merely averting their eyes, anticipating the numbing flash that is the result of Thaum's sorcery. They are darting to the attack already. Tyutchev's black cloak seems to deepen the darkness around him. Cassandra, as ever, moves with the grace and speed of a panther. You are lucky you were not stunned by the flash had you not averted your eyes. The four Aventurers have not all been so lucky. Vespers reacted quickly enough to shield his eyes and Thybault too has not been stunned, but Eris the Magician and Taflur are reeling back in a state of shock. Will you use a Shuriken against Thaum, who is beginning another spell, if you have one (turn to 294) or move left so that you put Cassandra and Tyutchev between you and the master of illusion (turn to 354)?

#### 405

Make a Fate Roll. If Fate smiles on you, turn to 135. If Fate turns her back on you, turn to 155.

#### 406

Foxglove suggests that you journey on together, deeper into the Rift. She places herself in the middle of the party, beguiling the swordsman called Vespers to protect her. You hear her speaking to the young swordsman, admiring his physique and generally flattering him. It is not long before they slip behind a pillar and are entwined in an embrace. Thybault, the priest of Avatar, becomes most dismayed when he realises what is happening, but when he remonstrates with Vespers Foxglove tells him he is 'Naught but a cold-blooded priest who knows not the joys of living'. Foxglove is so beautiful and haughty she makes him feel unsure of himself, and Vespers, pleased that Foxglove has chosen him, tells Thybault forcefully to be quiet. Note that Vespers is enchanted by Foxglove. Foxglove is ready now to continue. Turn to 306.

#### 407

You flee just in time. The Dwarf-Trolls' chains snap taut just before they catch you and they begin to howl in annoyance, giving the alarm. One of them crushes Foxglove's head underfoot. You sprint back up the roadway towards the lip of the chasm, hoping to get out of sight before you are spotted by more intelligent foes. As you regain the lip you steal a quick look back. A figure stands beneath the first archway. A green and purple robe suggests it may be a Dark Elf, perhaps even a sister of Nullaq. She shields her eyes against the light and is staring up at you. Note that you have been spotted on the roadway. You dart out of sight and take the nearest twisting stairway that winds down out of sight between two spurs. Turn to 375.

You reach cover just in time. Another bolt of lightning just misses you, ricocheting from wall to wall with thunderous cracks. Will you tell them who you are (turn to 338), use a Poison Needle if you have that skill (turn to 318) or race to the attack (turn to 388)?

The narrow tunnel ends abruptly in a steep stone stairway shelving deeply down. Since Glaivas is almost certainly many tiers below, you decide to take the stairs. After a long climb you come to the edge of a great cavern. It is far too big for the Torch of Lumen to cast light on its far side. Alert to the slightest sound, you set off across the immense vault. Turn to 252.

It is a long way between the third and fourth tiers and takes some time for you to find a way down. Evidently there are few connecting tunnels and stairways, so that the deeps are easily defensible against the attacks of Sunlanders in the unlikely event that an invasion of the twilit realms be attempted. You see no further sign of any trouble and skilfully evade detection until at last you find a way that leads down to the fourth tier. Turn to 56.

The end of the hallway slides back to reveal a bowl-shaped cavern running with fire. It is the lair of the Worldworm, which fables tell has its head in the Rift, here, and a body that stretches all the way around Orb, through the roots of the mountains, and a tail that reaches to the very centre of Orb. In

the middle of the bowl is what looks like a gigantic statue of a snake's head, its mouth open, showing great curving fangs. Tyutchev does not hesitate, for there is no other way out of the cavern. He leaps into the statue's open mouth and is lost to view. You sprint towards the statue as the Krathak's stinking breath bathes you and its footfalls shake the earth. Soon everyone has jumped into the statue's mouth. Cassandra is the last, just ahead of you. As she leaps there is a cracking noise and the statue turns to grey-green scaly flesh. The Worldworm is coming to life. As quick as thought, Cassandra thrusts her blade into the roof of the Worldworm's mouth to prevent its closing upon her. In the next instant you have leaped up beside her. The Krathak is not far behind her. Will you attempt a killing blow against Cassandra (turn to 421) or run into the belly of the Worldworm (turn to 420)?

Foxglove leaves you for dead, but you sink into a trance and let your body overcome the poison. When you are well enough to continue, Foxglove is nowhere to be seen. You must continue your mission to the Rift alone. Turn to 165.

'I will no longer tolerate your veiled opposition to my wishes, General Gwyneth' you say quietly. 'You are relieved of command of the army. Kindly return to your temple.'

Gwyneth says just as quietly: 'You cannot rule without me, Avenger. The army is loyal to me.' And she draws her sword and advances, shield ready to divert a Shuriken. Will you apologise to her and

reinstate her as General of Irsmuncast (turn to 25) or give battle (turn to 45)?

**414**

When you recover you quickly notice that the priest Taflur and Eris the Magician have been stunned. Thaum is beginning another spell. Thybault stands between you and Cassandra, his flail thrumming as it whirls through the air. Will you use a Shuriken against Thaum, who is beginning another spell, if you have one (turn to 294) or move left so that you put Thybault and Cassandra between yourself and the master of illusion (turn to 374)?

**415**

The nearest stairway is crumbling and unused, and the steps are half-eroded in places, but you make your way steadily down into the gloom. After half an hour's climb, in which time you have seen no living creature, you come to a gallery of caves served by many tunnels and paths cut into the side of the canyon wall. You have reached the first tier and are already in a twilit world. You touch the Torch of Lumen and it casts a gentle glow about you. You will need its light from here on. Turn to 267.

**416**

At last the stairs stop in a great dimly lit hallway of dressed stone. A magnificent and sinister sight greets you. Away to the left is a huge archway, and beyond it a succession of carven thrones with statues of the former rulers of this part of the Bowels of Orb. In the shadows you can glimpse apparitions, the sight of which would freeze the blood of ordinary folk. To the right is a tall but very narrow tunnel, so narrow that it will admit only one



abreast. Will you walk down the Way of Thrones (turn to 256) or the narrow way (turn to 184)?

417

Many tunnels converge on a cavern where you make out a fresco that chills your blood. It shows a great web with a black widow spider, identifiable by the scarlet hour-glass shape on its back, testing all the lines from the web with her legs. At each extremity is a smaller version of her, crawling over some poor unfortunate - Orc, Dark Elf or human; even an Old One is shown trying in vain to free itself from a silken web. Another fresco shows a Paladin in full armour but without helm. He is being assailed by the small spiders, which seem to be creeping into his ears, nose and, as he screams, his mouth. Turn to 9.

418

The silver serpent-headed javelin strikes the floor beside you and rolls harmlessly away. But now the swordsman is attacking. He thrusts at your heart and his sword is enchanted to find its mark magically. You try to block the blow. Your Defence is 6. If you are successful, turn to 26. If you fail, turn to 46.

419

For an hour you scour the tunnels and caverns of the second tier. They are as lively as the streets of a market town, but the darkness discourages conversation. The people of the second tier, low in the hierarchy of power, are too busy conserving enough energy to keep alive to indulge in frivolity. Several times you are almost spotted, but at length you come to a cavern with a stone façade built across its

front, like a house. You can clearly hear the sinisterly musical voices of two Dark Elves inside. They must have clothes that you could both use as a disguise. Nearby is a small hole in the rock through which a shifty-looking monkey-like ball of fur squeezes, thumbling its nose at the little cavern-house as it goes. The fur is the coat of a wolf and the shambler is an intelligent man-like being with short arms and bandy legs. It is shaped like an Orc but is fairer of face. Will you steal into the cavern-house (turn to 29) or follow the shambler through the hole (turn to 49)?

420

If you captured Cassandra's sword before setting out to the Rift, turn to 53. If not, turn to 423.

421

Your killing blow is effective enough. Cassandra sees the murderous look in your eye, but there is nothing she can do as her muscles tense in her efforts to stop the Worldworm closing its jaw. She shouts 'No', but crumples dead from a single blow. The sword falls out on to the ground below, and the Worldworm's jaws shut with an almighty crack, crushing you to death. You die far from home, deep in the eternal darkness.



A farmer at work in his fields greets you soon after dawn and is honoured to take both you and your prisoner back to the city in his ox-cart. You are waiting in your Throne Room for Cassandra to recover when a corporal of the Watch brings a message. General Gwyneth has ridden out with twenty shieldmaids to meet the warband of Orcs who are marching towards the city. Not long afterwards Gwyneth presents herself bearing strange news.

'As we advanced towards the warband, the Orcs put Foxglove on a horse and poked its flanks with their spears. The horse bolted towards us, and they flung down their arms and ran. It seems they simply wished to deliver the traitress Foxglove into my hands. We let them go. Foxglove is being held in the Palace donjon.' You thank Gwyneth and issue an order for the two prisoners to be brought into the Throne Room. Turn to 201.

Just before you strike the sister of Nullaq, she disappears. She has not turned invisible this time, she has teleported out of the cavern. You may leave through the tunnel through which she entered the cavern (turn to 370) or the tunnel that she indicated (turn to 80).

From the Worldworm's maw you plunge down a dark tunnel of ridged stone, towards its belly. But the Worldworm no longer has what pass for stomach and tail. Instead you fall out of a jagged hole in its body into a pitch-black void. The wind whistles past your ears as you fall ever faster into darkness.

The cries of the others sound below you. Cassandra tries to grab hold of you but loses her grip and you hear her cursing fervently in despair as her god will not help her. You try to call upon Kwon the Redeemer, but still you fall. Then you are wreathed in a gossamer thread, as smooth as silk, that slows your descent to the middle of Orb. You fall more slowly now, until at last you come gently to rest in a great cocoon of silk. A pale and sickly light looms above you and a great heaving body begins to scuttle closer to you on eight, hairy black legs. You have fallen into the web of the Black Widow, whose minions have driven you to this pass. Here on the seventh tier you will make a juicy morsel for the Queen of Evil, unless you can master your despair and somehow rid Orb of its darkest blight.

**The end**