

RUMOURS

Only a foolhardy adventurer would embark upon such a perilous quest without first finding out as much as possible about the mountain and its treasures. Before your arrival at the foot of Firetop Mountain, you spent several days with the townsfolk of a local village some two days' journey from the base. Being a likeable sort of person, you found it easy to get on with the local peasants. Although they told many stories about the mysterious Warlock's sanctuary, you could not feel sure that all – or indeed any – of these were based on fact. The villagers had seen many adventurers pass through on their way to the mountain, but very few ever returned. The journey ahead was extremely dangerous, that you knew for certain. Of those who returned to the village, none contemplated going back to Firetop Mountain.

There seemed to be some truth in the rumour that the Warlock's treasure was stored in a magnificent chest with two locks, and the keys to these locks were guarded by various creatures within the dungeons. The Warlock himself was a sorcerer of great power. Some described him as old, others as young. Some said his power came from an enchanted deck of cards, others from the silky black gloves that he wore.

The entrance to the mountain was guarded by a pack of warty-faced Goblins, stupid creatures, fond of their food and drink. Towards the inner chambers, the creatures became more fearsome. To reach the inner chambers you would have to cross a river. The ferry service was regular, but the ferryman enjoyed a good barter, so you should save a Gold Piece for the trip. The locals also encouraged you to keep a good map of your wanderings, for without a map you would end up hopelessly lost within the mountain.

When it finally came to your day of leaving, the whole village turned out to wish you a safe journey. Tears came to the eyes of many of the women, young and old alike. You couldn't help wondering whether they were tears of sorrow shed by eyes which would never see you alive again . . .

Now turn over.