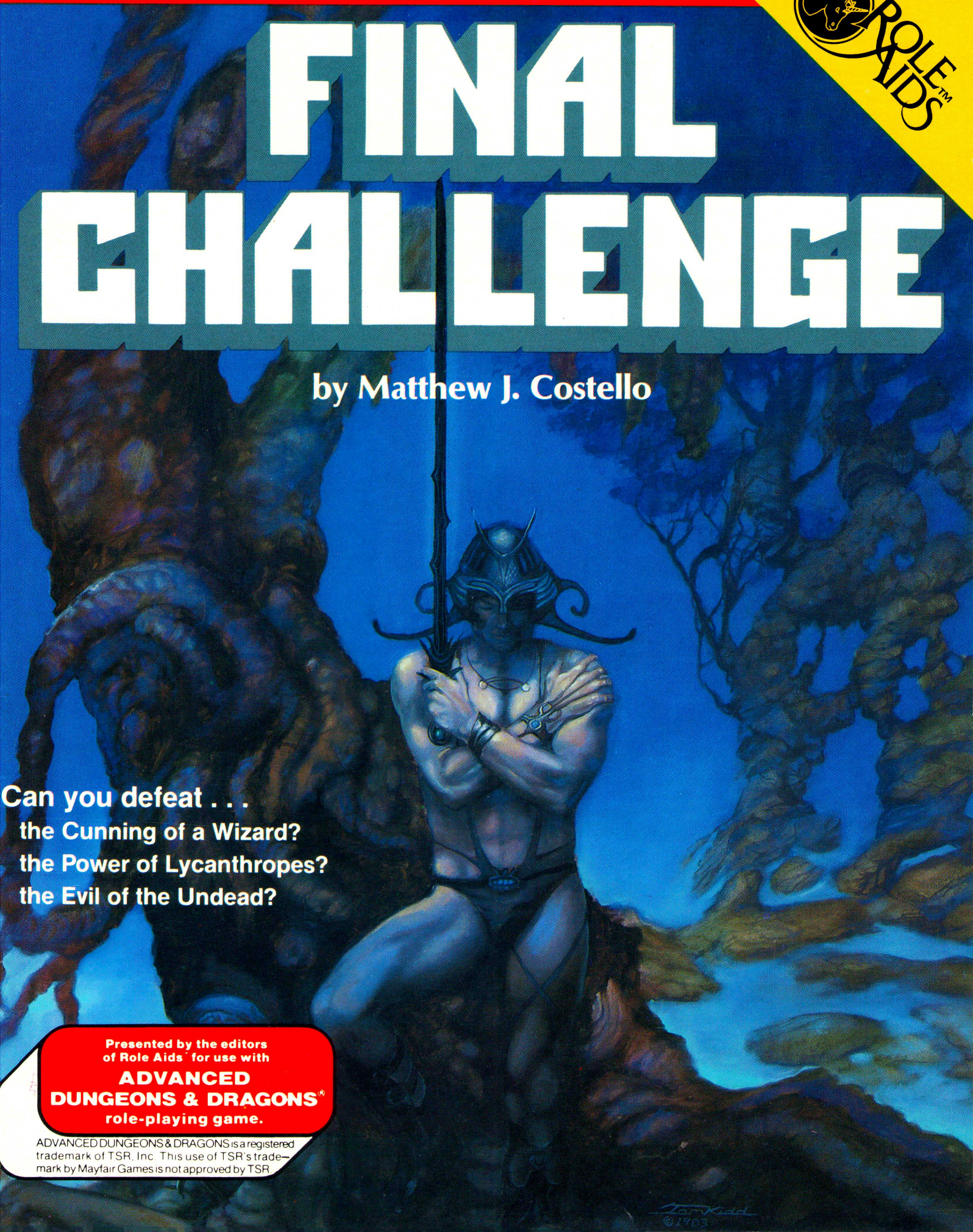
ROLE AIDS™ A Solitaire Module

722

ROLE AIDS™

FINAL CHALLENGE

by Matthew J. Costello



Can you defeat . . .
the Cunning of a Wizard?
the Power of Lycanthropes?
the Evil of the Undead?

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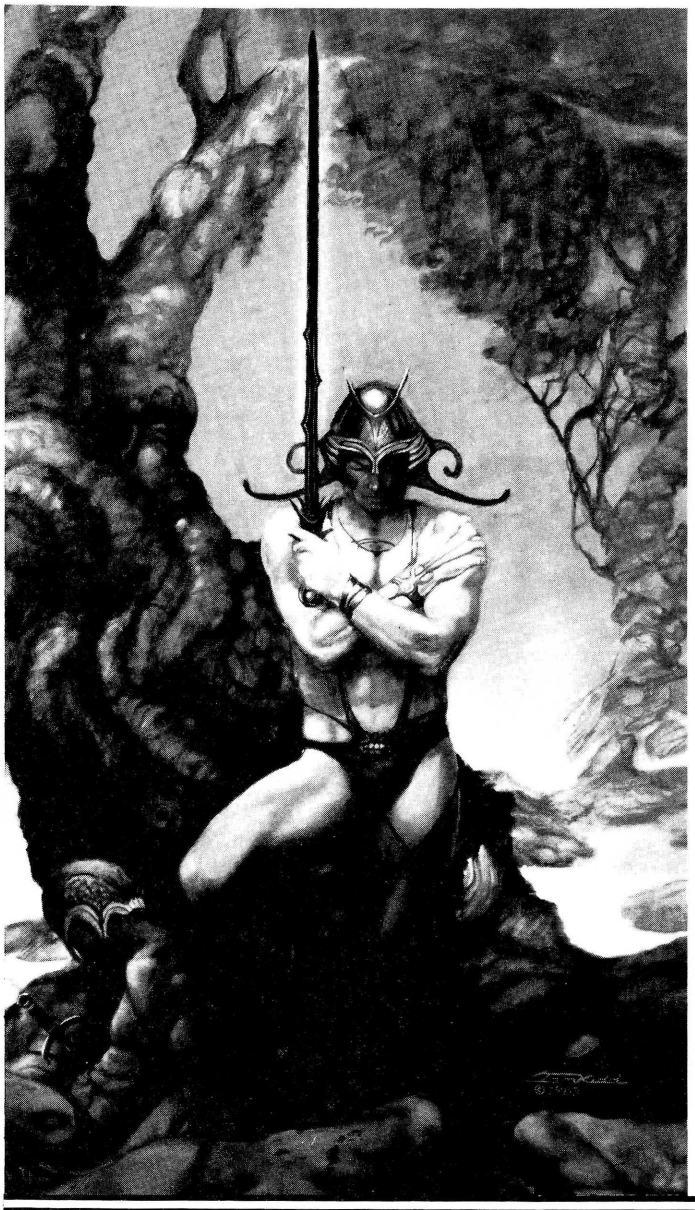

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FINAL CHALLENGE

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INTRODUCTION

The air is dank outside your mountain hut this evening. The small hearth fire does little to take the chill away. You talk to yourself, a habit you've acquired from years of living alone, as you prepare your modest meal. Another night of solitude and peace as the wind howls and bites like a hungry animal.

BUT TONIGHT, IT IS DIFFERENT. There is a knock on your door. You stand very still and listen. It comes again. "Who could it be, you wonder, so late and so far from town?" You open the door, and standing in the misty air, is Rogan.

Rogan, the wise cleric. You once were friends in your youth—you, Rogan, Pyron St'aal—but that is over now.

"Tel El'ryn, am I bid welcome?" His rich voice jars you with many memories. You nod and move aside. You begin asking the many questions that are overwhelming you.

"No!" the gray-bearded cleric says, silencing you with a quickly raised hand. "There's no time. You must listen, and after you listen, you must act. Sit El'ryn. Sit and hear the horror."

You sit down on your simple plank chair, facing the pallid and waxy-skinned man. Confusion shows on your face. Was it really so long ago, you wonder, that you wandered the streets of Sol Ga'an?

Then he begins to talk.

"Four young people met in the town of Sol Ga'an. They became friends and gave vent to their high spirits. They spent their youths playfully challenging one another in contests of strength, skill, and intellect. One, Pyron St'aal, became a thief, quick as lightning, with a smile that flashed like gems in the moonlight. You, El'ryn, became a fighter, loyal to none, yet a protector to those in need or anyone with enough gold. I turned my back on the way of Forsetti and pursued the study and worship of the ancient Norse gods.

"Then there was Gwdion V'ran. Do not turn away, El'ryn. We must share the responsibility for him. You remember his unholy desire to learn the magic of The Black School. We warned him, to no avail, against engaging in any experiments lightly. Reluctantly, in the interest of friendship, we helped him gather the necessary items for a "summoning"—the Mandrake root, a viper's tongue, a spoon of molten silver, and finally, from the graveyard, a...but I see you choose not to listen.

"Surely you remember the night long ago. The moon glistened like a pearl in a speckled black sea, and the strange fragrance of herbs

filled the air. I think I knew then that something was wrong. The look on Gwdion's face showed that he was no longer the friend we knew. We had been drinking...it was a lark, a mere jest. Toward the end, I don't know whether our friend, the thief, was even awake.

"He didn't see the moon darken. He didn't hear the wind's whisper change into a beast's groan, or smell the unearthly odor of death that filled the glen.

"But you and I saw it all—even the great cloud of smoke that blinded us. And then, you screamed as you saw the beast. At first it appeared to be a horse. Then we saw the sly grin, the glowing eyes deeper than the deepest hole. And I knew then that it was Astaroth, the Grand Duke of Hell. While we stood frozen, our mouths open, they talked; and Astaroth, with a shriek of glee, gave Gwdion a ring.

"You remember, of course, the next morning. The horrible pains in our stomachs, the feeling that somehow it was all a dream. Yet it was real. Gwdion was gone, vanished into the unexplored East where he could study from the demented masters of The Black School. This, I knew, was no ordinary magic. This was the darkest magic from the ages before man.

"No, sit down and let me continue. You decided to leave Sol Ga'an and its memories of Gwdion. 'Enough challenges,' you said. 'I will lead the life of a simple woodsman,' you said. But the truth was something else. The truth was that the evil you saw that night scared you profoundly.

"Yet, my friend, that can no longer be so. For Gwdion has returned...a wizard, one must call him. And like the spreading stain of spilled wine, his evil moves through our land, twisting and distorting the way things should be. If he is not stopped within 10 weeks, he will establish a Kingdom of Evil that will be an abomination forever.

"And you, my friend, must stop him. You must meet this one final challenge. Why not me, you ask? Because, you see, I am already dead.

"Here, take this medallion. It allowed my spirit to come to you. Hold it close, for if you should fail, my spirit will find Pyron St'aal before its power fades forever. My poor clerical spells were no match for Gwdion and I knew that he could sense any spell-caster who entered his foul domain. He can appear anywhere.

"You, though, may have a chance. You know his mind as it was, its weaknesses and fears. And, in the last minute of my encounter with him, I was able to see into Gwdion's soul, and I detected something hidden, something secret—something from his past. It's something that could be dangerous to him. Despite all his powers, I sensed that he is worried.

"Somewhere in Sol Ga'an, someone must know something about Gwdion's past, or someone can suggest a place where you could look for some sort of clue about his past.

"I can leave you some help. Here are 50 gold pieces, in case you need to buy supplies along the way. My spirit can also make four magic items appear from this scroll (see ***Magic Items***). Choose, also, one of these weapons and take this shield (see ***Magic Items***). As long as you're not a spell-caster, you will not draw Gwdion's attention. Learn Gwdion's secret from the town of his youth, and discover the location of his Tower of Madness. Then, destroy him!"

In a daze you choose magic items from the scroll, and then a weapon. When you look up, the cleric is gone, the door is open, and a biting wind nips at your cheek.

PLAYING A SOLITAIRE ADVENTURE

As the adventure starts, you are Tel El'ryn, a Skill 7 fighter (see ***Chart V*** for character information). El'ryn starts at his mountain hut, which is found at **No. 40** in the ***Events and Locations*** paragraphs. From there, you will be given options that can take you either to the town of Sol Ga'an, or to the Wilderness in search of Gwdion and his tower.

If El'ryn fails, Pyron St'aal, a Skill 6 thief starts the adventure.

In a solitaire adventure, the game itself acts as Gamemaster. Each paragraph offers your character different choices. These choices direct you to another paragraph. For example, facing an attacking bear, you are given two choices: you may draw your sword (**No. 382**) or you may flee (**No. 376**). Decide which action you want to do, then look up either paragraph **No. 382** or **No. 376** in the ***Events and Locations*** section, depending on which you choose.

Sometimes a paragraph directs you to make a die roll to look up another paragraph.

You will need to keep track of the days you spend (see ***Time*** and ***Chart V***), to conduct combat (see ***Combat***), and to make checks or die rolls against your basic statistics (see ***Ability Rolls***).

When you are in combat, you must run both sides of the battle. This is explained under ***Combat***.

Chart V is provided for you to keep track of the time you spend on your adventure (see ***Time***) and to keep a record of all the paragraph numbers that you visit. Sometimes a paragraph tells you to return to your last number or you may want just to retrace your steps. It is important to keep a record of all paragraphs you visit.

Chart V also allows you to keep a record of your character's possessions, especially the number of times the limited magic items are used, the money your character spends or acquires, and what your character learns.

Various maps are used as you enter the four different segments of the adventure. How to move on the maps and how to visit locations on them is explained when a paragraph directs you to use a particular map.

Read all instructions carefully, especially the ***Ability Rolls*** section. You must make those die rolls to see the appropriate paragraphs.

You will need 4-, 6-, 8-, 10-, and 20-sided dice to play the adventure.

Last of all you're alone in this adventure (although you could certainly "run it" for a friend). Avoid looking at paragraphs unless you're directed to them and accept the judgment of the dice.

When you understand the rules and are ready to play, go to **No. 40** in ***Events and Locations*** to begin the adventure.

TIME

Chart V is provided for you to keep track of information as you play the adventure. Time is one of the more important items to record. Note the days and weeks you use up as you go through the adventure. The solo has an "internal clock" and different occurrences happen at different times during the 10 weeks alloted to stop Gwdion. For example, if you land in Region 4 on Map 3 before the 8th week, you will use ***Chart I***. If you land there during or after the 8th week, you will use ***Chart II***.

Each segment of the adventure, whether you're journeying to Sol Ga'an, exploring the town, or searching the Wilderness, has its own instructions for counting the days. These are explained in the paragraphs that begin each segment.

For example, the time traveling to Sol Ga'an is measured by the number of times you make a die roll for an encounter. Time spent exploring the town is measured according to how many places you visit. And time spent in the Wilderness, searching for the tower, is measured by how many hexes you travel through in a day. Also, your rate of travel through the Wilderness depends on whether you travel on foot or by horse.

Chart V is designed to help you count off the days and weeks. You have 10 weeks to find and stop Gwdion; otherwise, he will take over the entire kingdom.

CHARACTER INFORMATION

El'ryn's basic statistics are presented on ***Chart V.***

If El'ryn should perish, go immediately to **No. 215**. (***Events and Locations,*** paragraph **No. 215**). There the thief, Pyron St'aal, is activated.

El'ryn should select four magic items and one weapon from ***Magic Items.***

You many carry only one suit of armor and 3 weapons. If you kill an opponent, you may take possession of any of his weapons as long as you jettison an equal number of your own weapons. (The Horn of Confusion may be used as a weapon and it is not included as one of the 3 weapons.)

Armor Class and weapons are subject to change, depending on magic items selected.

ABILITY ROLLS

Die rolls on your character's abilities work much like saving throws. On certain occasions, your character will be directed to make a "check" or a die roll against one or more of his basic ability statistics.

For example, if you want to detect a lie or get further information, you may have to make a check or die roll against the statistic of Insight (IN) as directed in a paragraph.

Roll 1D20 for all checks. If the number is **equal to or lower than** the ability score, you make the check, and then can do as the paragraph directs. If you fail, you may be directed to do something else.

Often, making an ability roll will direct you to another paragraph.

Ability rolls are often modified. If you're instructed to make an IN Roll at -3, you subtract 3 from the die roll. For example, if your IN is 15 and you roll a 17, you make your check because 17 - 3 = 14.

You will be asked to make saving throws as well. For saving throws, you must roll **equal to or greater than** the score to save.

MAGIC ITEMS

Your character may choose four of the magic items from the list below. In addition, any one of the special weapons and the +1 shield may be taken.

Record what weapons and magic items your character takes. All the others disappear with the cleric.

POTIONS

Potion of Undead Control: The vial contains three doses of a potion that can control any undead. Each dose can control the undead for 5 melee rounds, enough time to escape combat or bypass the creatures. A maximum of 50 HTK of undead may be controlled per dose. It may be taken only once per day. *Event paragraphs will explain the effect of taking the potion.*

Potion of Healing: Six doses. Restores 2D4+2 HTK of damage per dose. It may be taken twice per day.

Potion of Levitation: Three doses. Allows the character to levitate 20 feet per round. *Event paragraphs will explain the effect of taking the potion.*

RINGS

Ring of Invisibility: Renders the character invisible for the entire day, or until the ring is taken off. It carries three "charges" (may be used three times). *Event paragraphs will explain the effect of its use*

Ring of Fire Resistance: The character is resistant to all normal fire, and saves at +4 against Breath Weapon and any other supernatural flames. Once activated, the effect lasts all day. The ring carries three charges.

Ring of Protection: A +2 ring of protection. It subtracts 2 from all Ability Rolls and increases your character's Armor Class by 2. It is effective for the entire adventure. It cannot be used with the Cloak of Protection or the +1 Shield.

STAVES AND WANDS

Staff of Curing: This staff can cure diseases and wounds (3D6+3 HTK). It carries three charges and may be used once per day.

Wand of Fear: Any creature touched by the wand (treat as a hit), must save vs. Wand or retreat. It carries three charges. *Event paragraphs will explain its effect.*

Wand of Secret Doors and Traps: This wand can, in appropriate situations, detect a secret door or a trap. It carries three charges.

MISCELLANEOUS

Cloak of Protection: This +3 cloak increases the wearer's Armor Class by 3. It can be used with the +1 Shield listed below, but not the Ring of Protection.

Horn of Confusion: This item can be used as a weapon in any combat situation. It will stun 3D6 opponents (or accomplices), causing 1-6 HTK of damage. Due to the stun, it also allows you one free attack for one round or, if the situation allows, you can escape to continue movement as before (ignoring any attacks on you as you flee).

The Horn may be used once per day. If used more than that, there's a 25% chance, cumulative for each use, that the Horn will shatter, causing not only its destruction, but also 1-10 HTK of damage to you.

Note on Magic Items:

The Potion of Undead Control, Potion of Healing, Ring of Fire Resistance, Ring of Protection, Staff of Curing, and *Cloak of Protection* may be used at any time during the adventure, if there are still enough doses or charges left.

The Wand of Fear, Ring of Invisibility, and *Potion of Levitation* may be used only at points permitted by the adventure.

To use these three items, the paragraph will ask you if you want to use magic item. Decide which one of you picked it at the beginning of the adventure and then consult the indicated paragraph to determine its effect in that situation. Remember, even if a magic item does not work, one dose or charge must be marked off.

The Wand of Secret Doors and *Traps* may be used only if the paragraph indicates that there might be a secret door.

WEAPONS

You may take a +1 shield, plus any one of these swords:

+1 normal combat sword that is +2 to Hit against magic-users and enchanted creatures.

+1 two-handed sword that is +1 against lycanthropes and shapechangers.

+1 sword that is +1 against regenerating creatures.

COMBAT

To conduct combat, begin by rolling for initiative on 1D6 for both your character and his opponent(s).

Missile fire, if any, from each combatant then follows. Normally, only one round of missile fire takes place before melee begins. The paragraph will tell you when missile fire is to be conducted.

Melee is fought in rounds, with the character of the highest initiative going first. Roll a 20-sided die (1D20) to conduct combat, and then consult the appropriate charts in the standard rule books to determine Hits and damage results.

Occasionally, the paragraph will tell you to look up another paragraph after a certain number of melee rounds, or make an ability check for further information.

Any opponents that your character meets will have their Armor Class listed as well as their HTK and the number they hit Armor Class 0 (THACO). For example, if a Goblin's THACO is 13, and your character is AC -1, the Goblin hits you on 14 (13 + 1 = 14). If your character is AC 4, the Goblin would hit you on 9 (13 - 4 = 9) (Armor Class 0 to Armor Class 4 = -4).

Your character or any of his opponents will be allowed to flee combat only if directed in the event paragraphs.

It takes one melee round to use a magic item, which is prepared in lieu of an attack. Surprise, if any, is determined by the event paragraph.

You may heal 1D4 HTK of damage for every day that you rest. In other words, you may not move, and you will have no encounter for one day everytime you wish to heal yourself.

WINNING THE ADVENTURE

You win the adventure by destroying Gwdion within 16 weeks. Should your character El'ryn not survive, you may begin the adventure of Pyron Sl'aal by going to **No. 215**. Instructions regarding magic items and time will be found there.

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Armor Class
HTK	Hits To Kill
Align	Alignment
Att	Attacks per melee round
Dm	Damage per attack
THACO	To Hit Armor Class 0
Special	Special Abilities
INT	Intellect
IN	Insight
ST	Strength
D	Dexterity
SM	Stamina
A	Appeal
g.p.	Gold Pieces
s.p.	Silver Pieces
c.p.	Copper Pieces
No.	Number

CHARTS

Charts I and II are used when you explore the Wilderness—Map 3, in search of Gwdion's tower. The hexagon map is grouped into regions. When you move on the map, look to see which of the six regions you are in. Then refer to Chart III and see what paragraph number corresponds to the region you are in. The region paragraph will tell you when to use Chart I and when to Chart II, depending on what week of the adventure you are in.

For example, if you are in Region 1, Chart III directs you to **No. 171**. Paragraph **No. 171** tells you to use Chart I if it's before the 6th week or Chart II if it's the 6th week or after.

Then look to see what type of environment you are in on Map 3 (open, woods, swamp, or mountain).

Roll 1D6 for Chart I, roll 1D4 for Chart II. Cross reference the number you roll and the environment you are in on Charts I and II to see what paragraph number you should read for your encounter. For example, if you are in an open area in Region 1 during the 5th week, you refer to Chart I. Now, if you roll a "6", Chart I tells you to look up **No. 133**.

If you roll a "1" on either chart, the charts tell you to "use special." Refer back to the paragraph number of the region you are in (found on Chart III), and the special table there will tell you what paragraph number to look up, according to the environment you are in.

For example, if you roll a "1" and you are on an open area hex in Region 1, paragraph **No. 171** tells you to look up **No. 186**.

Chart III accompanies Map 3—The Wilderness. Another chart exactly like Chart III appears on the Map's Key.

When you first land on any hex in each of the six regions on the map, look up the paragraph indicated on this chart to begin play. These paragraphs tell you how to roll for encounters in a particular region and tell you when to use Charts I and II.

For example, if you land in Region 1, Chart III tells you to look up **No. 171**. Paragraph **No. 171** then tells you to use Chart I if it's before the 6th week and to use Chart II if it's the 6th week or after, as explained above.

You will also refer back to these Region paragraph numbers when you roll a "1" on Charts I and II, as explained in the "use specials" paragraph above.

Chart IV lists the paragraph location of all the places known to Tel El'ryn at the start of the adventure. It tells you what paragraph numbers correspond to the villages, mine, El'ryn'chur, and the locations in Sul Ga'an.

Chart V records time, paragraph numbers, character information, and possessions and their use. This chart is your work sheet for the adventure.

There are charts for both Tel El'ryn and Pyron Sl'aal, but you use only one chart and one character at a time.

Mark off the days as you play the adventure. Record each paragraph number you visit. Keep track of how much money you have and spend. Record the weapons, magic items, and supplies you acquire along the way.

The page that Chart V is on may be copied, and it is designed so that you can remove it from the book.

385 It's dark in here. A torch will light it, but barely, for this is no normal darkness.

A low growl tells you that you're not alone. A Hell Hound in Gwdion's service leaps out at you.

Hell Hound
AC: 4, *HTK:* 25, *THACO:* 13
Att: 1, *Dm:* 1-10

The Hell Hound will also blow fire at you and you must save vs. Breath Weapon or take 6 additional HTK of damage per melee round. It has the initiative and you cannot escape it.

If you want to use a magic item (decide which), see **No. 345**.

If you defeat it, you may go to **No. 380** which is the door to room **No. 391**, or to room **No. 372**.

---

386 You crawl through the first-level opening to room **No. 371**, section B of Map 4.

---

387 You're sure it's an illusion, that actually you're not changing. It is evil wizardry of a most demented sort. You regain your lost IT points and you may go on to room **No. 371**, or climb up to the next level (room **No. 372**, section C of Map 4).

---

388 There's a terrible stench in this room, and you see a pile of bodies. But there's no time to look at them as you're attacked by two Ghasts.

Each Ghast
AC: 4, *HTK:* 14, *THACO:* 15
Att: 3, *Dm:* 1-4/1-4/1-8

You must save vs. Poison to avoid the effects of their stench. If you fail, you can do nothing for two rounds.

If you want to use a magic item against them (decide which), see **No. 301**.

If you defeat them, see **No. 374**.

If you try to escape, the Ghasts get two free attacks while you return to **No. 371**. They will not leave their "post."

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389 No event. Return to your last number.

---

390 You climb into the second-level room **No. 385**, section C of Map 4.

---

391 *If you have already dispatched the Golem, see* **No. 370**.

You see a throne and a statue...no! That isn't a statue, it's a preserved body standing next to the throne. A wooden placard says *Mantell V'ran*. Then, you see Gwdion.

Gwdion, you say quietly.

"My friend, my dear friend," he says, stepping out of the shadows. "Somehow I knew that it would be you who would find me. You were always the cleverest and the bravest. At least you will have the pleasure of joining me in victory."

Then, out of the shadows, a huge creature of disparate parts and pieces steps forward—a Flesh Golem.

"Oh, yes, my personal guard and one of my greatest achievements. He has more ...persistence than my foolish Ghouls and Ghasts.

"Did you see the map, one flight down? It's all there, my friend, the armies of undead that I'll unleash upon the land, the death ships that will carry my ever-expanding army to the heart of the empire itself. Each week I grow stronger, as my tower moves closer to the sea."

Why? you ask.

"The Black School showed me the way, of course, though deep in my heart I probably felt my own powers. It showed me the true force of power within me, a power that you'd probably call evil. But nature does not recognize such words. Power is power, and it is mine.

"Are you ready to join my cadre?"

Gwdion raises his hand and the Golem lurches forward. You have but a moment before the Golem reaches out and grabs you.

Do you:
Attack the Golem (**No. 393**)?
Prepare a magic item (decide which) (**No. 353**)?
Try to leave (**No. 369**)?
Or, if you have a tree branch with you, see **No. 358**.

---

392 You step up into a dimly lit chamber. Two candles give off a feeble, smoky light. Then, suddenly, they begin to glow brightly and you see your reflection in an enormous mirror.

You can see your face changing—twisting and contorting, with cracks appearing and strange fibers beginning to grow out of your head. You scream.

You may try any of the following:
Make a save vs. Spell (**No. 395**).
Make a save vs. Magic (**No. 375**).
Make a save vs. Polymorph (**No. 367**).
Make your IT Roll (**No. 387**).

You may try one saving roll per round. Each round you lose 1D6 IT points. When you get down to 0 IT, you will be a babbling idiot and the Ghasts will collect you later.

---

393 ***Flesh Golem***
AC: 9, *HTK:* 40, *THACO:* 13
Att: 2, *Dm:* 2-16/2-16

Only a magic weapon will have any affect on the Golem. To use a magic item against the Golem (decide which), see **No. 353**.

Gwdion will make the door slam shut and the Golem will attempt to destroy you.

If you kill the Golem, see **No. 370**, but you cannot flee.

---

394 This room seems to be a laboratory. Various vials and jars filled with odd-colored liquids sit on the cluttered shelves.

If you want to pick them up and examine them, see **No. 351**. Otherwise, you hear ...(**No. 352**).

---

395 No result. Lose 1D6 IT and return to **No. 392**.

---

396 The Potion of Levitation offers no help.

The Ring of Invisibility will add 2 to your AC, and your opponent will hit at -2. Escape will not be possible.

The Wand of Fear can be used. The Leucrotta saves on 13. (Return to **No. 378**.)

---

397 No event. Return to your last number.

---

398 If you are carrying the Wand of Secret Doors and Traps, you are able to stop yourself in time (Return to **No. 384**).

Otherwise...As soon as you pick up one of the flowers, it starts working its way under your skin and begins draining blood. You also feel the stem moving under your skin, traveling up your arm. It will reach your heart in a matter of minutes.

What will you do?
Hack at the flower (**No. 359**)?
Try a Healing Potion, if you have one (**No. 399**)?
Use a Staff of Curing, if you have one (**No. 400**)?

---

399 No effect. You take 1D6 HTK of damage due to blood lost.

If your first action at **No. 398** brought you here, you may go back there and pick again. Otherwise, see **No. 401**.

---

400 The flower withers and falls off after you take another 1D6 HTK of damage due to blood loss. You can now go to room **No. 394**, or down to room **No. 372**.

---

401 It reaches your heart and the stem wraps around it and crushes it like a balloon.

The Amulet that Rogan gave you begins to glow and someone, somewhere is contacted to save Sol Ga'an from the Tower of Madness (**No. 215**).

"It is a debt we owe to Gwdion who was once our friend," the Good Cleric's voice broke with emotion. "Now he has returned . . .

SWORN TO SERVE POWERS TOO EVIL

to name. Only you may have a chance to stop the foul creature our friend has become, before he spreads the cloak of his Evil Magic over all our land."

The Cleric's voice became heavy with regret. "You will have to meet creatures as cunning as they are deadly. Others have gone before, . . .

NONE HAS SURVIVED.

I cannot join you. For I have ventured also, failed, and paid with my life. And now from the land of the restless dead, I wish you luck, because,

You must now face . . .

FINAL CHALLENGE

ALONE.

A solitaire adventure which will challenge your every dungeoning skill.

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