

SWORDS OF TWILIGHT

CLUEBOOK

by Jon Freeman



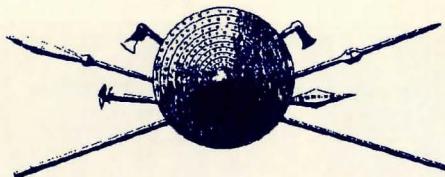


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This cluebook was written with several goals in mind:

1. To illustrate how to play SWORDS OF TWILIGHT.
2. To show the adventure, from beginning to end, as it might be experienced by someone without prior knowledge of the quest.
3. To better acquaint you with the personalities and skills of the characters in the game.
4. To demonstrate some of the uses and limitations of magic and its various practitioners.
5. To serve as a reference for much of the information diversely available in the game.
6. To comfort those of you obsessed with maps.
7. To entertain you by bringing plot and character to life in a more traditional, linear format.

Caveat #1. There is no single right answer to any problem, no one correct order to the quest. Any approach that works is valid.

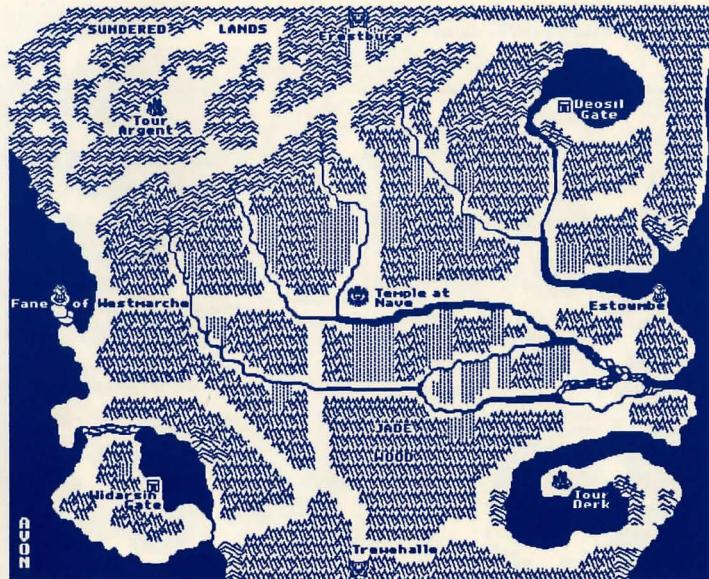
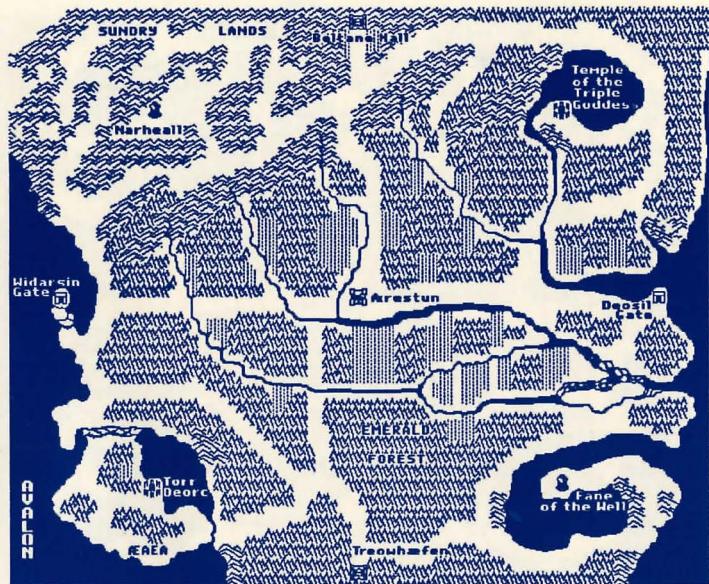
Caveat #2. Characters, strategies, and outcomes in the cluebook were chosen as much for reasons of drama, balance, and illustration as for efficiency.

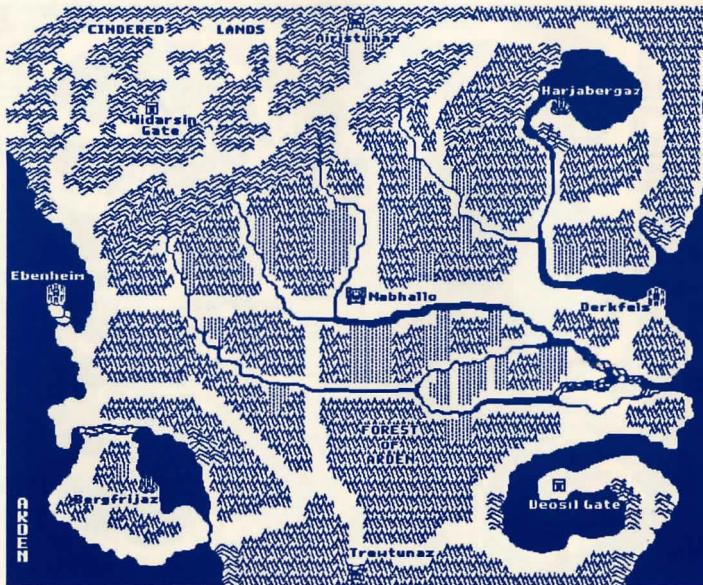
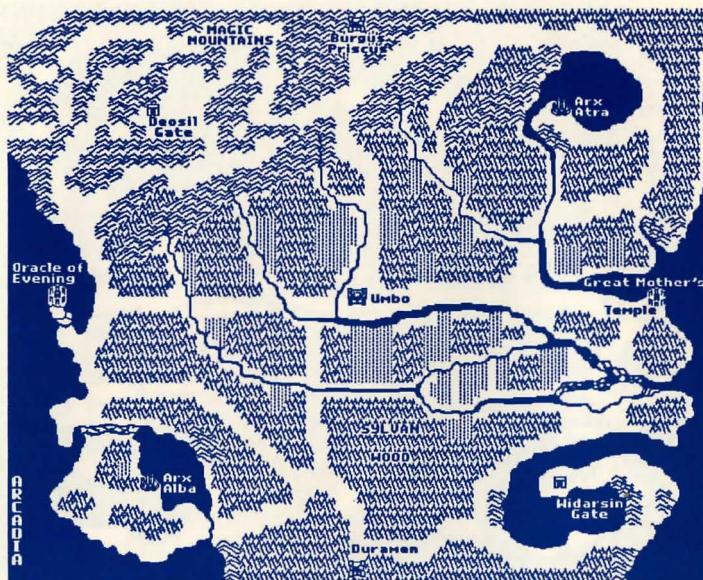
Caveat #3. Duplicating in the game the sequence of events and outcomes described in this cluebook is possible but statistically unlikely.

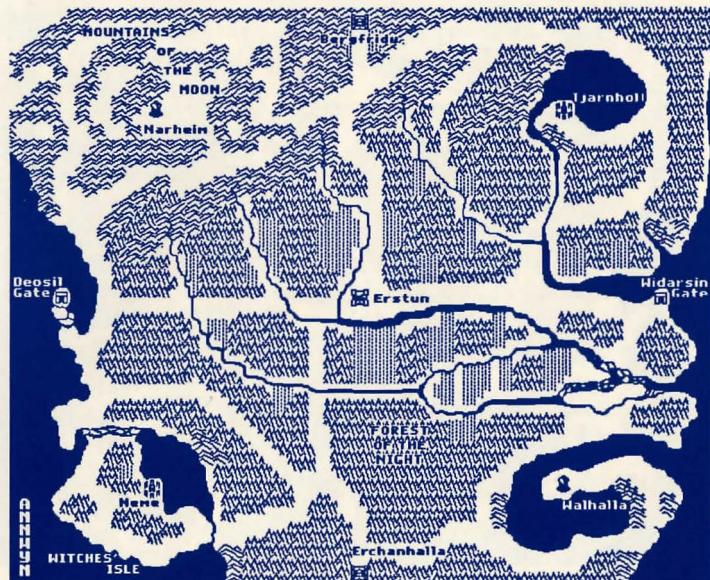
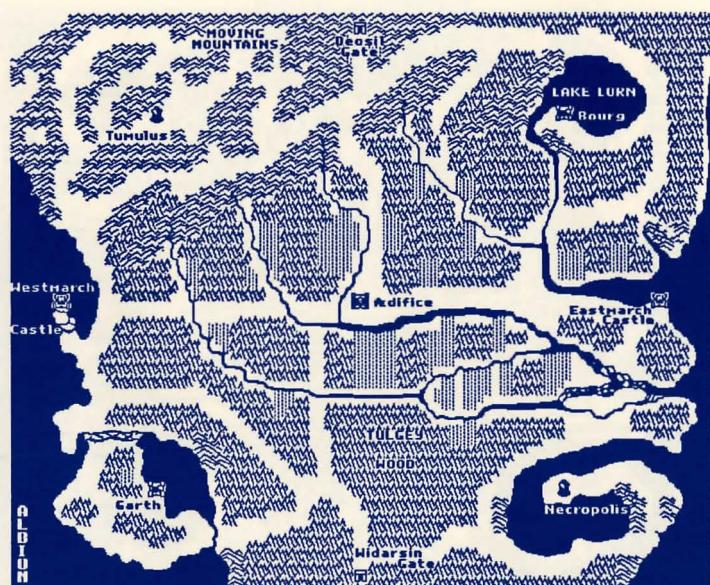
Caveat #4. The game is dynamic and highly variable. Objects do not always stay where you (or I!) put them. Many things will change every time you start over.

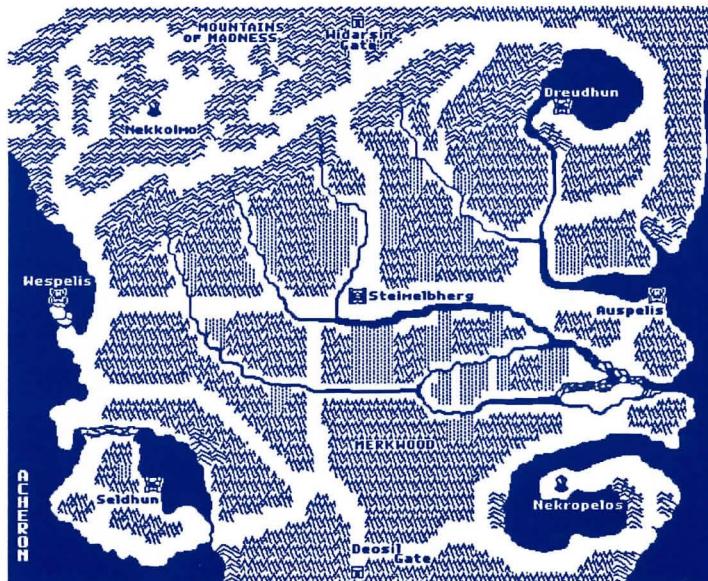
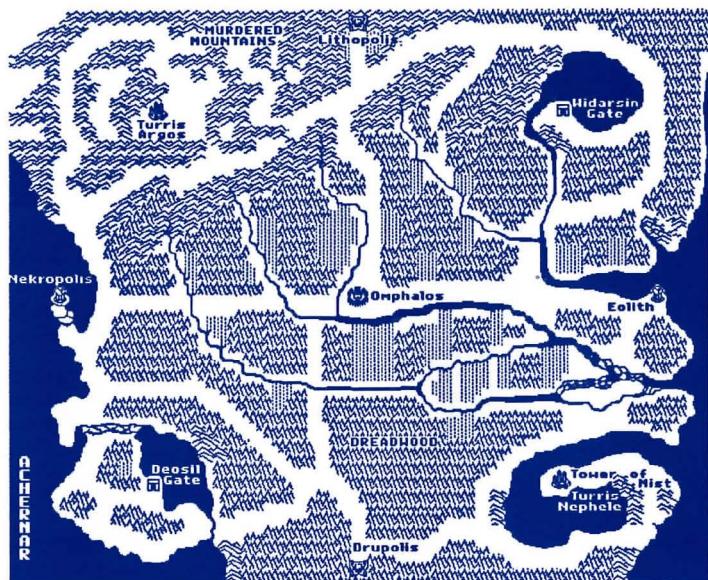
Caveat #5. Not all donjons are shown. Salient features may be missing from the maps, but everything you need to complete the game is covered. Feel free to fill in the blanks.

Caveat #6. There are usually objects of interest in every donjon, often in more than one place. Searching ruins can be tedious, but it gives you an excuse to hone your combat skills. Enjoy the experience.











Bronwen's Tale

It took no sage to know that something was amiss in Albion. Rumor abounded, and the land felt wrong somehow. Action was coming, but of what sort?

Excited, curious, I was summoned to the Great Hall of the castle for an audience with the Queen. With me were the Elf Prince, Valor son of Vale, and Lochinvar, called the Perfect Gentle Knight. Queen Gloriana was surrounded by her honor guard, doughty fighters all.

"A great quest lies before you," said the Queen, without preamble. Before I could gather my wits, she added, "Provisions for your journey have been made ready."

It was too mysterious for me. "What can you tell us that might be helpful to our quest?"

She seemed reluctant to discuss the purpose of our journey, though she freely offered advice: Attend to your needs. Be true to yourself. Do not get killed. Folk have long memories. Be polite — especially to a potential host.

—Sound advice, if a bit obvious, I thought. I did not realize at once that some of her words, like our swords, could cut two ways.

Finally, the Queen set forth our task: to bring back a shield from the Guard Captain of Eastmarch Castle. —An errand both odd and trivial, it seemed, for there were shields aplenty in the castle armory. But one does not argue with a queen.

She dismissed us, then, with her blessing. We wheeled about and left by the main door opposite.

In the entryway, before leaving the castle, Valor surprised me by stopping to open the Emptied Chest. It is an old storage chest, handy enough when circumstance leaves you laden with unnecessary gear, but always empty in the morning. Goods left within are taken out and stored ('tis said) elsewhere in the castle, but no one ever sees it done, and whoever knows the secret isn't telling. The younger knights, hoping for a clue, have taken to throwing open the chest at odd moments, but I did not know the game had spread even to Albion's champions.

Tenormin, the young wizard, once asked me to share an all-night vigil nearby, but it was not the Emptied Chest he was eyeing when he spoke, and I am not so gullible as some.

Outside the castle, we met a group of commoners in travel-stained garb. After politely exchanging greetings, I was ready to depart, but Valor and Lochinvar, ever courteous, took time to learn more.

On the East Road, we followed the banks of the Alb until it curved south into the Great Marsh. We kept east, skirting a grove, until we came to Eastmarch Castle.



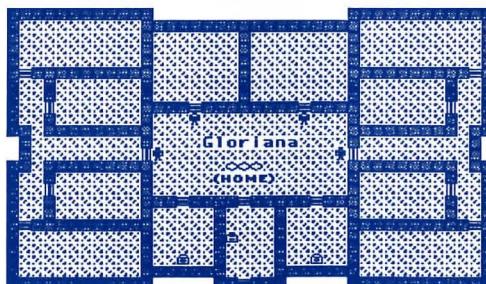
The peace of Gloriana's reign left the entrance unguarded, and we were not challenged until we reached the Great Hall, where a few knights loitered. We talked briefly with them before Valor led us out a door on the east side of the hall, through an antechamber, and down into the Guard Captain's quarters.

The formulaic response, "My words are heard," identified the eldest knight there as the one we sought.

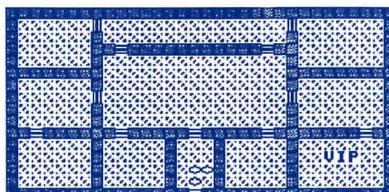
We explained who we were and why we had come to him. When I offered him a gift, a token from Gloriana, he graciously accepted and offered, in return, an orichalcum shield! It was, I knew at once, the Shield of Rolo, held in Eastmarch Castle for safe-keeping since the hero's death long years ago. For a long moment, nothing was said. Lochinvar was as surprised as I, and the Elf Prince, already adorned in orichalcum, seemed content to let me speak. Greatly daring, then, I offered my acceptance of the prized shield.

There was more talk, but I remember none of it. Before we left the castle we crossed the hall to seek out a sage staying in the southwest room. From him and his acolytes, we learned much, but I was in a daze and recall few details.

RIBION



Edifice (Gloriana's castle)



Eastmarch Castle



heelin's Tale

We assembled in the great hall — Percodan, Ajac, and I — to be sent on a quest: "Trewehalle is besieged a world away on Avon. Go north by Gate and Road, and bring back news."

Departing Queen and castle, we headed north beside the river, past farmers' fields, curved around through the pass, and north again. At length we came to a dolmen set into the side of the mountain. Light flickered mysteriously from within its depths.

We passed within, and beyond the stony gateway found ourselves in a cave half filled with a great, golden-winged form. A dragon! An eye the size of my fist blinked open to regard us.

Next to me, Percodan fumbled for his flask of mandragora, evidently thinking that what served against elemental fire might do as well against a dragon's. It was a reasonable notion, but courtesy, I thought, was better still. When the dragon spoke politely, we exchanged greetings. To my questions about where we were, the Golden Dragon confirmed that the Deosil Gate, in which we stood, led to Avon, but that most folk returned by way of the Widarsin Gate, in the south.

In the end, as thirsty for knowledge as any mage, the dragon asked us to identify the bearer of a crest seen or sensed among those prominent in Albion. It was a toll of information, I later learned, a type of question asked of all before they passed. Percodan's answer seemed to satisfy the dragon, for the eye closed. "You may pass."

For a moment we hesitated. Then, skirting that great golden head, we ventured into the darkness in the rear of the cave. The blackness was brief, and the light, when it came, was blinding.

The Rainbow Road! A bridge across the sky? A tunnel through the night? With bricks of color and walls of light, if it is not the same as that rainbow we see in the sky, it must be the original on which that airy wonder is modeled. The green of our world faded, replaced by the blackness of the void, until at length the color of another world flickered, flashed, and grew briefly solid. Our destination, I thought. I hoped. The Road went on, but we stepped off, into that color, onto that world.

We were on the shores of a mountain lake, a dolmen at our backs. "Lake Lorn," cried Ajac, but I shook my head.

"This is very like Albion," admitted Percodan, "but the water's colors are different, and that is not Bourg, behind us."

"But is it Avon?" I asked.

"We will see!" he said. "Stand back." Ignoring glares and questions, he drew a hex upon the ground and conjured a water elemental. "Where are we? What can you tell us about this place?"



Evidently a mastery of liquids extended to knowledge of where streams and rivers flowed. "This is the land of Avon," the nymph confirmed. She spoke of castles in the north and south, a citadel in the northwest, and a tomb in the east, but nothing of Trewehalle, at least by name.

When asked of our quest, she spoke further. The banesword Baleblade, the Sword of Aggression, was said to be in the land of Annwyn — wherever that was. The Sword of Concealment, the bane of the Shadowlord Nefas, was in Tour Derk, the Dark Tower. I recognized none of this, but it seemed of great import.

When at length she vanished, Percodan noticed we were standing warily, hands on hilts, unconsciously expecting an attack. Looking no more relaxed, he shook himself and forced a smile. "Are we threatened?"

Ajac scowled. "By you, perhaps."

"Would it not have been as easy to ask such questions of the folk hereabouts?" I asked.

"Easier, if we meet any," he admitted, "but I wished to test my magic, which no longer works on Albion."

We headed east along the shore, then followed the southerly path down from the hills, my comrades growing less furtive as we proceeded. Splashing across streams where we could, we followed the broadening river south and east to a tomb, which we entered.

The antechamber happened to be empty. "I suppose we could pillage the burial chambers and blame it on bandits," joked Percodan nervously.

"The knights of Albion are not thieves," I said primly, but I understood his discomfort. The dead make grim companions, and I would not care to visit the most well maintained tomb at night.

From the antechamber, Percodan's key allowed us into a long, still corridor, lined with sealed chambers. At the end of the winding passage, the key opened another door, past a crypt guarded by forbidding statues, and through another door, where we found the caretakers at last. After exchanging words and gifts, we parted amicably.

As they went to attend to other tasks, I saw that Ajac covetously eyed the chest in the room. Blocking his path, I repeated, "The knights of Albion are not thieves!" Why do so many men insist on grabbing anything within reach?

We left there without incident and made our way southwest to Trewehalle, which proved to be in ruins. "Besieged?" said Percodan. "The message must have been brought by Tessalon."

"At his best pace," agreed Ajac, sharing the joke.

I glared at both to keep from smiling. Tessalon was as notoriously



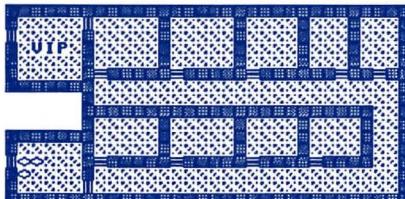
slow as ancient Inderal.

"Let us search the place," said I. "There may be refugees about with information."

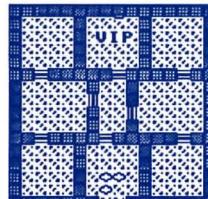
"Or items left behind," said Ajac, brightening, for objects salvaged from a ruin might rightfully be claimed by the finder.

In truth, our search happened to be fruitful on both counts, though the skeletons in the great hall made us all nervous.

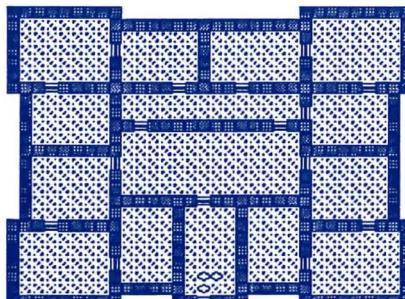
From there we went north, to a temple, and then west to the Fane of the Mirror. We offered gifts in both places and learned much in return, of baneswords and Shadowlords, metals and magic, and an ogre named Gog, who dwelled in the Dark Tower.



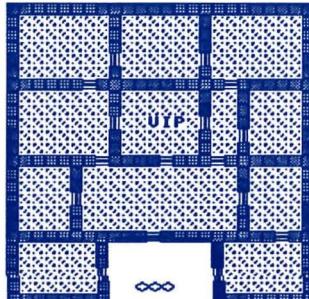
Estoumbe



The Fane of the Mirror



Trewehalle



The Temple to the Lady



Percodan's Tale

Following the Queen's orders, we took the road south to the Widarsin Gate, a lair of the Green Dragon. From there, a journey that seemed short on the Rainbow Road took us to Arcadia.

We emerged where Necropolis would be on Albion, a lonely peninsula in the southeast. Commoners we chanced upon told us something of Arcadian geography and little else. Their travels were limited, and their knowledge little. One comment was particularly cryptic: "The Lapis arcanus must be returned to the castle of Umbo."

If we reckoned aright, that castle stood on the selfsame spot that Aedifice did in Albion. Deciding to make that our first destination, we made our way around and off the rocky point and headed west through the Sylvan Wood.

At length we came to the ruins of a town: Duramen. "Shall we explore? Something useful may remain within, if we could find it."

Kevin shook his head. "This cannot be the place we seek. It is beyond our help, and a search would take too long. I feel the need for haste."

Nothing new in that, I thought. Kevin was the hastiest man in Albion. But I remained silent, and we marched north, to Umbo.

Though not so large as the Queen's castle at home, and vastly different in design, the castle of Umbo bustled with activity, and folk of all sorts could be found within its walls. We talked with some and eventually made our way down a long corridor, through a guarded antechamber, and to the quarters of the knight in charge.

We exchanged gifts: a jeweled goblet for a potion of more use to us. From him and others we learned much of the Shadowlord, Maron, called the Lord of the Fire Hand. With the aid of turncoat humans and a legion of ghouls, he had stormed an old citadel in the northeast and seized it for himself. From Arx Atra, as the place was now called, the ghouls raided the countryside, though only Duramen had yet fallen.

Involved with our quest somehow were the Seven Swords of Shambala, forged, it was said, to maintain and defend their worlds. But which swords were these? If Arcadia was one of the worlds alluded to, was Albion, also?

When we left, Kevin was of a mind to go to Arx Atra at once, but we persuaded him to seek more answers from the Oracle of Evening, to the west. Unfortunately, by the time we got there, the incoming tide separated it from shore. Too restless to sleep, we ventured further along the coast before returning to wait. At sunset, we made camp and slept until dawn.

At sunrise, the tide was low enough to cross the sands, and we



entered the oracle. The seer's chamber was in a straight line with the entrance, naturally enough, easy to find and accessible to all. We offered her a gift, as is the custom, but declined the one she offered: what we needed was information.

We learned much of the banesword Spellbane. It was called the Sword of Negation and could be wielded only by a master. (A master mage? A champion?) Although said to be in Acheron, it was connected somehow with Arcadia, the still mysterious Lapis arcana, and someone named Blas. None of this was particularly illuminating.

Of more immediate use was the knowledge that the Sword of Protection, the bane of the Shadowlord Gog, was being kept near Maron's chamber in the citadel of Arx Atra — our next destination.

Outside, the water was already rising as we splashed across to shore. We headed north along the coast and then followed a trail northeast into the mountains. Eventually we came to a lake and a fortress on the south shore: Arx Atra, the Blackened Tower.

With Kevin at his most affable, and me at my most glib, we talked our way past the guards at the entrance. The one bad moment came when they asked our purpose. A knight cannot lie, but, while candor was appealing, announcing our intended theft seemed unwise. Ariana, still wary, rescued us from our dilemma. "We are on a quest important to the realm," said she. With this safe if not satisfying answer, we were allowed to proceed into a seemingly endless series of corridors that wound around the fortress like a python's tightening coils.

Talking our way past those we encountered, by chance we discovered a section of wall that moved on hidden hinges, a secret door leading into the treasure room. An earth elemental I summoned forced the opening and then broke into the locked chest inside the room. Ariana managed to seize the Sword of Protection from the chest, and somehow we survived the battle that ensued.

When we had healed ourselves with our elixir, we debated our course. Ever attracted to the bold stroke, envisioning a triumphant return, Kevin urged us to continue. Obviously the sword we had discovered had some special power in Ariana's hands, for it glowed the moment she had readied it for battle. We were no more than a room or two away, and the mandragora I carried was said to offer some protection from Maron.

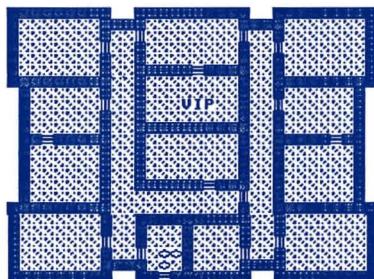
It seemed to me that we should take the sword and run: to use its power against Gog, on Avon, or return, better prepared, to face Maron. My flask of mandragora was neither full nor fresh; the elixir was nearly empty; and an enchanter, a witch, or a sorcerer would be more useful there than I. In battle in such narrow corridors, it was hard to unleash an elemental



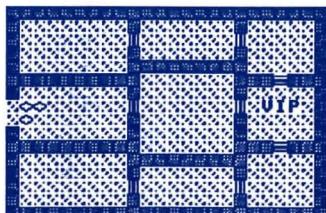
without harming my comrades.

In vain I argued, but Kevin was nothing if not stubborn, and Ariana, though reluctant, would not oppose a champion. It was a costly mistake, and a fatal one for Kevin. Only Ariana and I survived to stumble, bleeding and near death, south to the temple, where the witches took pity and healed us.

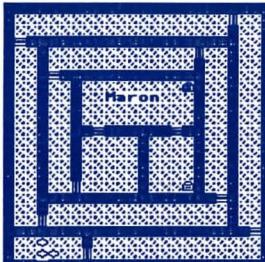
In the morning, fed and rested but heavy-hearted, we traveled to the Gate in the mountains and returned to Albion.



Umbo



The Oracle of Evening



Arx Atra



Ariana's Tale



It fell to us to strike on Avon the first direct blow against the Shadowlords: Bercilak, mightiest of champions; Althea, greatest of healers; and I, who bore Gog's bane, Bladeward, the Sword of Protection.

No dragon chanced to guard the Deosil Gate as we passed through on our way to Avon. From the lake, we circled south, stopping by Estoumbe, where those of Albion had been welcomed before.

We left better informed and equipped. Striking south across the marshy flood plain, we wound around the bay until we reached the Dark Tower. Before entering, Althea unsealed her flask of alexin, which was said to be of help against Gog, and we all drank deep of its power.

The antechamber was large and guarded by ghouls. Despite their bluster, they feared us. Bercilak could not conceal his revulsion for the vile creatures, but Althea's calm prevented bloodshed. They did not like our answers but let us pass through a door flanked by statues. I cared no more for their stony visages than the ghoul's fanged snarls, and my skin prickled until the door closed behind us.

A scruffy group awaited us in the second room. In mismatched garb and bearing cheap swords, they, too, seemed daunted by our presence and left without a fight.

Bercilak sneered. "A braver lot would have gone for our throats."

"They may yet," said Althea, moving forward purposefully. "Ariana, keep watch while I search this wall. There was something odd about that fellow, something in the way he moved, as if he thought of escaping this way."

"I noticed nothing," Bercilak protested.

"Of course not," she said, but so warmly that there was no sting in her words. "Ah, here. As I suspected. Bercilak, we need your strength."

We both moved closer, and when Bercilak applied his shoulders to the task, a section of the wall swung aside. I followed Bercilak through the opening, Althea content to trail behind. As we stepped within, and the wall closed, four ogres stepped from the shadows: huge, menacing, formidable. Bladeward was in my hand in an instant, and from the surge of power running through its hilt, I knew the biggest brute was Gog himself. I felt invincible, invulnerable. A blow that would have felled an ox rebounded from my shield. I seemed immune to pain.

Behind me, Althea cried something that just eluded meaning, and the least of the ogres staggered. Again she called out words I almost understood, and three of the ogres collapsed, asleep before they crashed to the floor. Only Gog remained groggily on his feet, and Bercilak and I rushed to meet him.



It was well that he was slowed and we protected, for Gog struck with bone-breaking force. By the time the Shadowlord fell, Bercilak's face was pale, and his breathing harsh and pained. He took the elixir gratefully, and in minutes the broken ribs reknit, his breathing eased, and his color improved noticeably.

While I took a talisman from Gog's body, Bercilak broke into the chest, triggering a smoky explosion and another attack from ruffians bursting in the room. These were more determined than those we'd encountered earlier, if no better equipped, but without proper armor they were doomed. Still, when the brief battle was over, we all needed a drink of the elixir to recover from the poisonous fumes. Althea could have healed us, of course, but she was conserving her energy.

From the chest Bercilak brought forth a sword as finely wrought as the one in my hand. The Sword of Concealment it was, the bane of the Shadowlord Nefas, but it seemed heavier than Bladeward and did not glow when he held it.

When Althea's brass key failed to unlock the room's only visible door, we returned through the secret opening in the wall.

"I did not like the look of those statues," I admitted, before we went further.

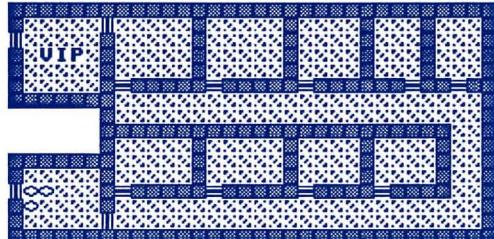
"Nor I," agreed Althea. "Let's try the other door."

The route we took was longer, and did not lead to safety, but at least kept us from facing all four statues at once. Magically endowed with vengeful life, tireless and powerful, the statues might have killed us all, for they were immune to witchcraft. My feeling of invulnerability had left when Gog died, and weariness and fatigue sapped my strength. Yet Althea's spells allowed us to regain our feet when exhaustion left us helpless, and at last, triumphant, we staggered out of the citadel.

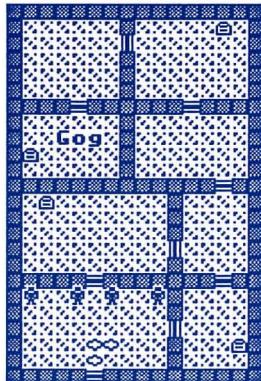
The elixir was gone. We were all bleeding, but Althea could not manage a spell to heal us. "I have spent my limit," she said weakly.

So we made halting progress west and north, to the Temple to the Lady at Nave, where we begged aid, and they healed us, so that we could return home to Albion.

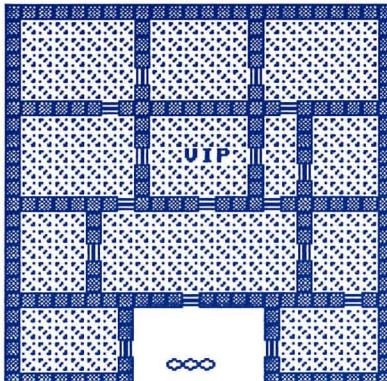
Moved by an impulse I scarcely comprehended, I gave my magic blade to Queen Gloriana. My part in the quest was over.



Estoumbe



**Tour Derk,
the Dark Tower**



The Temple to the Lady



J isken's Tale

Three of us were sent to gather information: Theelin, Kodak, and me.

The next world beyond Avon was the Bright Realm, Avalon, a land of sunny warmth, vivid colors, sparkling water, and careful harmony, with fields so ordered and precise they seemed unreal.

A chance encounter near the eastern Gate led us on the main road west to Aerestun. It was a city of great size, but we found the Lord Mayor without difficulty. His quarters were in the building reserved for the Keepers of the Bread, who guarded the city treasury. After exchanging information and gifts, we headed south.

Treowhaefen, in the heart of the Emerald Forest, was no ordinary castle. A city in itself, inhabited entirely by adepts of many arts, their servants, and students, it was a college of magic, perhaps the greatest center of knowledge in all the worlds. Though some resented our intrusion, it was a fruitful visit, and from the head of the college, a learned sage, we obtained a flask of nepenthe, said to be of some small aid against the enchantress Circe.

East of those walled towers sits the Well at World's End, where it is said all questions may be answered. At that oracle we offered the last of our gifts, and from the Keeper of the Well obtained not only answers but a golden key.

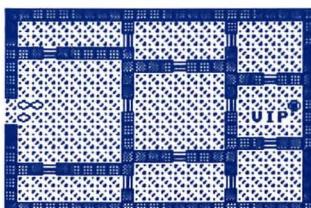
Finally, we made our way to Beltane Hall, in the far north, where we begged aid of the Queen of Avalon, Morgana, half-sister (it was said) of our own Queen, Gloriana.

"My aid I cannot grant while Circe lives," said she. "Three worlds deosil was borne the blade to slay her."

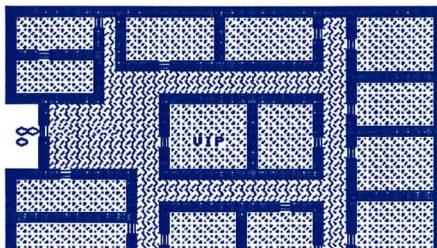
Thus directed, we returned to the Deosil Gate and continued on the Rainbow Road until a sphere of purple loomed: Achernar.

We did not get the banesword. From the first folk we encountered, we learned news that brought us hastily back to Albion.

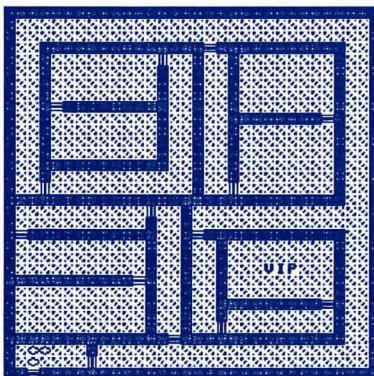
The Shadowlord of Achernar was Nefas.



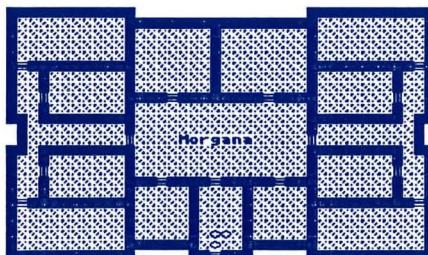
The Fane of the Well



Ærestun



Treowhaefen, the College of Magic



Beltane Hall



elladonna's Tale



Though the Sword of Concealment did not fit his hand, Bercilak simply did not think of doing what a mage would have tried at once. It was only while searching a chest, his mind forced to the subject of evaluating objects, acquiring this, discarding that, that he considered offering Sightshade to another. By fortune's favor, with him at that moment was one to whom the sword was suited: Bronwen.

With the banesword came responsibility for finding Nefas. When word from Theelin sent Bronwen to the third world out the Widarsin Gate, I was with her. Our companion then was Ursin the Unwashed: the Queen's choice, not mine, but certainly experienced in combat.

We emerged by a lake, in the northeast. In a trance, I verified the land was Achernar. Scrying was easier than it ever was on Albion. Power emanated from the very ground, and names and places fairly leaped into my mind.

"Let us go south and east," I said. "There is an oracle there."

Alas, the oracle was dead and empty, and we did not pass the entry chamber. Westward, at Omphalos, which folk there called the World-Navel, we found a temple. With words and gifts we won their trust, and the High Witch offered us a flask of alcahest, full and potent.

At Lithopolis, in the north, we obtained a sword: not the greatest of the treasures there, but a fitting blade for Ursin. Farther west, we found our way through the mountains to the ruins of the White Tower, Turris Argos. The alcahest we drank muffled even Ursin's clamor, and we made our way unseen to the heart of the battered citadel. In an elaborately locked chest we found a key of rare power, but the noxious trap half poisoned us all. I healed myself, and Bronwen took some of the elixir the Queen had given us, but Ursin manfully disdained to drink. I was forced to cast another spell to heal him, the pain of which did little for my mood or health. Stubborn oaf!

By the time we made our way out of the mountains, south and west to the shore overlooking the City of the Dead, it was late. Ignoring Ursin's urging, we ate and made camp. Our sleep was interrupted by travelers, and we did not get all the rest we hoped.

With Ursin along, there was nothing subtle about our assault on Nefas' lair. We slew the entry guards and hurtled headlong down a corridor lined ominously with statues, before confronting foes — and choices — in the next chamber. Luck — and the new key — opened the right door.

Ghouls and guardian statues took their toll, but even wraiths could not stop our inexorable advance. The spirits of the dead do not sleep, but neither could they stand against the magic blades we bore. Without retreat, we fought and bled and fought again. I do not know who finished the elixir,



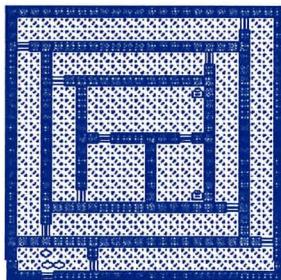
or when, but we were not fit to fight Nefas when we did.

The final battle was chaos and confusion. I wrested control of a skeleton from him, but Ursin, all unknowing, cut it down, and I was undefended. As I was forced to aid and heal, I saw the bare bones reassemble under necromantic power and arise to strike again.

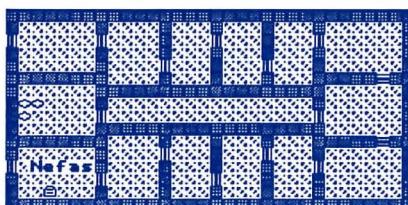
I know too well the moment Nefas perished. My final, frantic healing was paid for with the last life left in him and Bronwen both. I felt the risk but did not want to die. Ursin should have joined them, but a potion from the chamber's chest returned him from the brink of death, when I could not, from weariness and sorrow and regret. I could not trade his life for hers, despite my wish, and had not traded mine.

The Shadowlord was dead, and perhaps a world was saved, but the cost of war is high, and victory is not always triumphant.

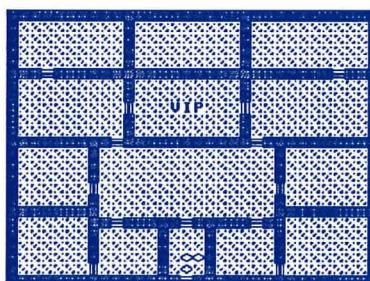
It is hard to love a sorcerer but harder still to be one.



Turris Argos



Nekropolis



Lithopolis



Kodak's Tale



The Tower of Mist, in the southeast of Achernar, seemed twin to the College of Magic on Avalon. In it was the Sword of Relief, bane of the Shadowlord Circe, and we meant to have it. I am a man of action, but Theelin and the wizard Visken, being women, had other notions. Sweet words and gifts were their way. Despite our cautious welcome, no doubt the mages looked on us more kindly now with Nefas dead. I do not regret the plan's success, for I did not fancy fighting necromancers and the animated bodies of the dead. Pteh!

Burdenbane, the sword was called, and for my hand that hilt was made. It glowed, when I took it for my own.

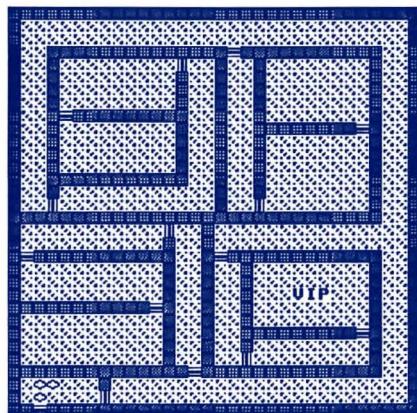
North we went to the Widarsin Gate, and back we fared to Avalon. We arrived in the west and headed south, along the coast, to the enchanted isle, Aeaea. There stood Circe's tower.

The gold key from the Fane of the Well on Avalon opened every door and a chest we found, besides. Visken blasted the enchanter guarding it with magic fire, but the encounter left us greatly weary. We dared make camp in the corner of the room, expecting trouble, but our sleep was undisturbed.

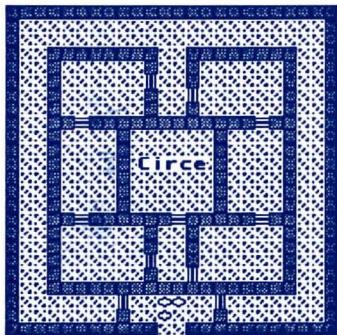
When morning came, we vanquished Circe in her chamber. Her magic left us half asleep, but better than turned to stone. From her body Visken took the ornamented staff, a ring, and something else. When my key failed, she opened the treasure chest with a spell. Though the Sword of Cold glowed when she drew it, she gave it up to Theelin. "It suits my hand but not my arm, and the staff is better suited to my art. Keep this for Ajac or Toronto."

In Beltane Hall Queen Morgana gave us a great stone block, the Aercenstan, and asked us to return it and the banesword Burdenbane to the town of Aerestun. The Sword of Cold was ours to keep.

Glad was I to reach the town, and gladder when the Lord Mayor joyfully accepted our offer. It was said that sword and stone together could restore the world, but after carrying them all the way, I was one who needed restoration. That stone was heavy!



Turris Nephele, the Tower of Mist



Torr Deorc, the Dark Tower



oronto's Tale



The Sword of Cold, brought back from Circe's tower, all knew to be the bane of the Shadowlord Maron. With a good night's sleep, Theelin was prepared to seek him out. It was not revenge she sought, she said, but justice. Dead is dead, say I.

Because she said the banesword Fireproof was meant for me, her quest was also mine. Instead of a mage, with us we brought Ajac, my comrade in arms. Magic on Arcadia was hard and wearing, it was said, but mages are all weaklings, anyway. I did not mind. No magic could save Kevin, and Ajac's arm, or mine, was better than a spell.

From the entry Gate on Arcadia, we circled the bay and hurried north, across the marsh, minutes ahead of the tide. (Try doing that with a mage slowing you down!) At Theelin's urging, we stopped at the temple by the river mouth.

The maidens who greeted us were seekers like ourselves, they said, though they did not seem equipped to battle Maron. Mindful of my manners, I offered them a gift. Afterward, Theelin said, "That was kind of you."

"Indeed," said Ajac. "A golden ornament is just the closure for a sackcloth robe."

"Did I do something wrong?"

"Certainly not," he said hastily.

"Your courtesy is impeccable," assured Theelin, but I did not miss the look that passed between them.

In a chamber deep inside the temple, Theelin offered her gift to the High Priestess, who gave us mandragora. "It is said to offer some protection from Maron," said the witch. "You have a key, of course."

"We do?" said I.

"You don't?" said she.

"We do," said Theelin quietly.

"You cannot enter Maron's citadel without a wizard or a key. If the one you have is insufficient, the White Tower holds a key, and in ancient Burgus Priscus, it is rumored, is another."

"Ours will suffice, I think."

From the Great Mother's temple we traveled north, over the river and through the woods, to a blackened citadel overlooking a lake, above a waterfall. We drank a toast to Maron's doom with mandragora from the flask, and Theelin and I exchanged swords. In my hand the Sword of Cold glowed like cold fire.

She handed me the golden key, ceding pride of place. "I know your hearts. Take the lead together, and I'll guard your backs."

With weapons drawn, we entered.



I am not one for subtlety, and we did not stop for words. Side by side, we swung our swords, Ajac and I, that none could pass or stand before us. Side by side, we forged ahead, while Theelin, fearing ambush, watched behind.

In the center of the citadel they awaited us: Maron and three others. The ghouls were huge, and battle there was fierce. Maron had a flaming sword, a champion's skill, near Ajac's strength, and more than Theelin's swiftness. But we were shielded from the heat by mandragora, and against the Sword of Cold the Lord of the Fire Hand could not prevail.

"It is good that we had two elixirs," said Ajac, gasping — he who's never short of breath — as we stood there, bloody, at the end.

From the body and the chests in that room and the next, we drew a mass of arms and armor. Maron's runesword would not flame for any other hand, but it was a fine blade and worth keeping. Ajac and I exchanged our habergeons for hauberks and took better shields.

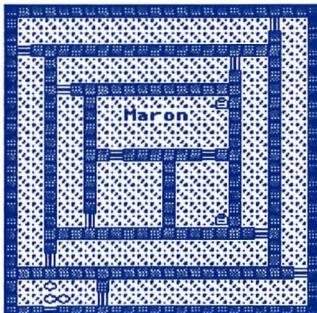
"That was Kevin's," said Theelin of the armor Ajac donned.

"Then it is only right for you to take it," said he, though her electrum armor was better far than anything we had.

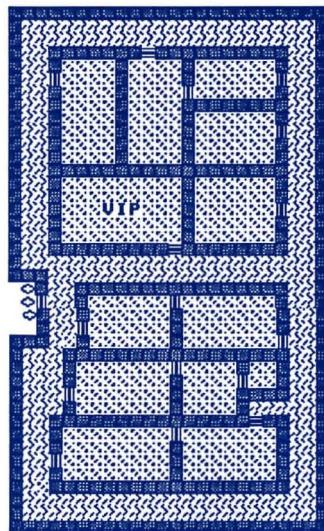
She shook her head. "No. He was himself, not what he wore. It will not bring him back. I hope it guards you better."

"Now what?" I asked, into the silence.

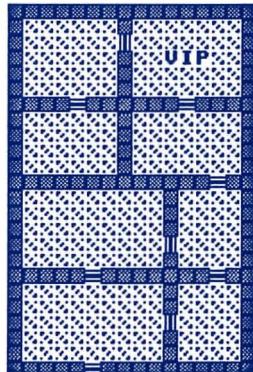
"Back to Albion," said she, "where I will stay awhile. I am tired of slaying, and you can take the banesword back to Achernar."



Arx Atra



Burgus Priscus



**The Temple of
the Great Mother**



B ellatrix's Tale

It is hard to gain experience when others go a-questing, and I was determined to taste of battle when I left Albion. Hardly daring to question my luck, I said little until we arrived in Achernar. As we circled the lake there and headed west, I asked my companions, a mismatched pair, "Why are we here?"

"To return the Sword of Cold," said Toronto, the strong and hardy slayer of the Shadowlord Maron.

"But why?"

"It belongs here," said Carmen of the Velvet Voice and melon breasts, who knows too much, despite her looks, for a thick-skulled hulk like Toronto. "To restore the land, it must be replaced in the Arkolith, which can only be done at the heart of the world."

"What is the Arkolith?"

"It is the heartstone of Achernar."

"How do you know all this?"

She smiled, and Toronto actually stumbled. "I have talked with Belladonna, who was here, and others, and I have studied the lore."

"Then we will fight no one!"

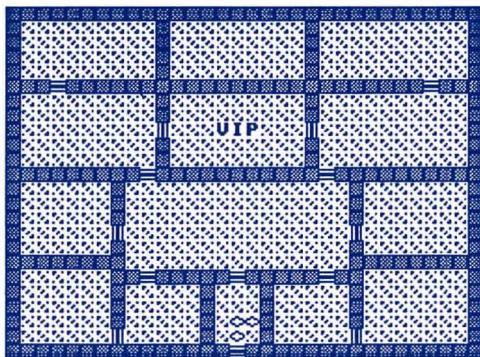
"I hope not. Yet evil did not die here with Nefas, and we may have need of your swords."

It turned out as she had said. From the Lord of the Dree (a dwarf, in truth!) in Lithopolis, we were given a block of stone, exactly square, to carry south to Omphalos, which they called the World-Navel. Into the temple there Toronto carried the stone and offered it and the sword to those within.

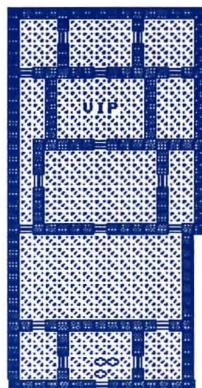
"All Achernar rejoices!" they said.

For thanks, our gift was a mage's staff for Carmen.

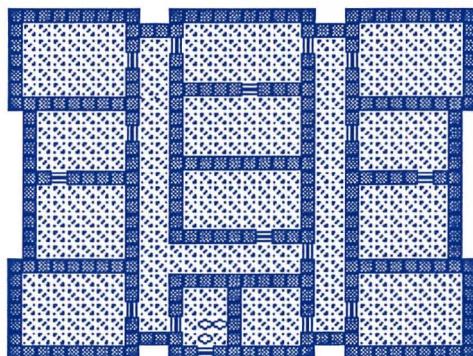
But I was still determined, and the ruins of Drupolis in the south were not far out of the way to the Deosil Gate. There we found tests — and treasures — more worthy of a knight. I returned to Albion a novice no longer.



Lithopolis



The Earth Mother's
Temple at Omphalos



Drupolis



iorinal's Tale



Out the Widarsin Gate, beyond Arcadia, lies the Twilight Realm, Annwyn. There rules the Witch Queen, Prytania, sister of Morgana of Avalon and our own Queen Gloriana, though little loved by either.

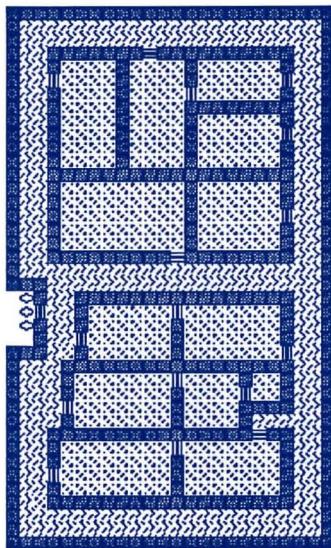
From the eastern Gate we traveled: Valor and Polaris, two courtly knights, and I. From an oracle in the northeast, conjured elementals, and strangers we encountered, we learned of potions, problems, baneswords, and the Erchanstein; of the Shadowlord Aryonek, the Lord of the Dead, who dwelled in the Home of the Dead; of the Sword of Aggression, locked deep within the Queen's castle; and of folk there who blamed Morgana for bringing ruin to the realm.

Between the Gates was Erstun, a city old as time, now left in ruins. In the more modern quarter of the city, we found a chest, its lock intact. At my call, a gnome came and forced it open. Within were two flasks, one sealed and another nearly empty. The first was crucial: vervain, said a nymph, which shielded one from Aryonek and his ilk.

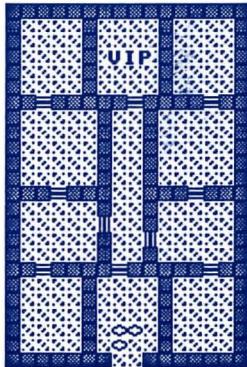
Ancient, tangled, dark, and wild, the Forest of the Night was as little, Valor said, like the Emerald Forest of Avalon as the pale and changing moon was like the sun. Certainly, it seemed less friendly than the Tulgey Wood of home, but deep within it, in the south, stood Erchanhalla, Prytania's Truesilver Hall.

Promising aid for aid, the Witch Queen set us on a quest: to retrieve Aryonek's bane, Soulguard, the Sword of Salvation, from the land of Arden. In the meantime, she showed her hospitality by granting food and shelter for the night.

In the morning, after breakfast, we traveled through the Widarsin Gate to a world of glowing orange on the Road. From the Cindered Lands we went south, to the ancient island refuge of Bergfrijaz, which held the banesword. For lack of a key, we were trapped in the entry chamber, until the strongest elemental I could call broke the simple lock and freed us to retreat to Albion.



Erstun



**Tjarnholl,
the Oracle of the Lake**



P olaris's Tale

I returned to Arden, and Bergfrijaz, with different companions. The hardy and enduring Knight in Autumn, for skill shown and deeds done on Avalon, had been promoted to the 3rd rank. The Dark Lady brought with her the banesword Sightshade, which Bronwen bore to Achernar, and a potent key obtained on that same quest.

Belladonna surprised us both by offering the sword to Kodak, whose surprise was even greater when the sword seemed to come alive in his hands. "It glows!" he said.

For a long moment, we were silent, pondering this development. Then, "Come," I said, breaking the mood deliberately, "we are here to get a different sword."

West we went, to Bergfrijaz. In the anteroom, Belladonna pacified the guards enough to let us pass without bloodshed, but it was not a friendly parting. "This has the look of a mage's tower," said the sorceress, as we left the room. "There is danger here."

"What does that mean?" asked Kodak, echoing my thought.

Her smile was bleak. "Perhaps you should have brought a wizard to protect you — or at least some orchis root."

Startled, I said, "But I have orchis root. At the temple...."

"Then allow me a drink, if you please. You can take it at the last minute, if you like, but I prefer to be prepared." I followed her lead, but Kodak merely accepted the flask without drinking.

For a time, Belladonna's concerns seemed unfounded. The rooms to the right, where chance took us, held little of danger or interest save a chest guarded by a necromancer. When we slew him, his skeleton retinue collapsed. Opening the chest, Belladonna took from within an ornamented staff that seemed to please her.

The other wing of the tower proved her out. Thanks to the potion, encounters with enchanters left us alive and awake, if perceptibly sleepy. Of the banesword there was no sign, until we came to an intricately locked door near the end of the last, narrow corridor.

When Belladonna failed to budge the heavy door, we traded keys and places, and with my strength even that door opened to the key from Achernar. From the doorway, I examined the narrow room.

"I do not like the look of this," said she, peering over my shoulder. At the far end was a chest, but there were four statues arranged so that the room could only be entered in single file. Getting out would be awkward, for the one with the key would end up farthest from the door.

After a while, she sighed. "Both of you will have to enter, one to try the chest, one to guard. I will stay here, to keep the door from locking you



in. Do not be nervous," she said sharply. "Keep your hands away from your weapons. Act friendly, and the statues may let you pass."

I did my best to feign a casualness I did not feel, while Kodak, a step behind, did the same. Unfortunately, the key failed at last. "I'll have to try to force it open," I said.

"The trap could kill you," said Belladonna, from the doorway.

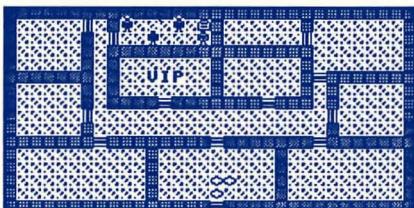
"We have come too far to turn back," I said.

"Spoken like a true knight," she said, without approval.

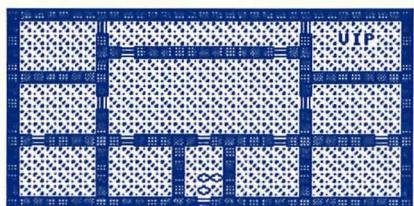
When I finally pried it open, a great gout of smoke burst forth. Perhaps because of the orchis root, I felt no ill effects. The sword within blazed alight as I snatched it up to turn and face the now awakened statues. With the help of Belladonna's magic, we fought our way out.

Only in the west of Arden, in the Temple of the White Goddess, and in the northeast, in the citadel of Harjabergaz, were we welcome. There, at least, were aid and information, shelter and safety, and gifts exchanged for things of use.

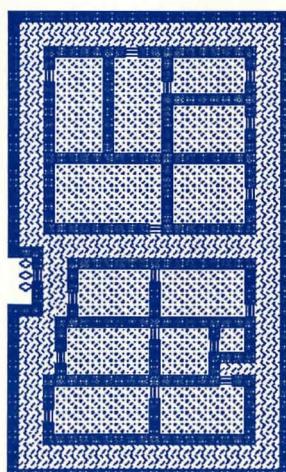
Though the search was slow, even the ruins held rewards. The greatest of these was the arcanstone, or heartstone, of Arden: the Arkenstain, hidden in the ruins of Airstunaz. With effort, we bore it to the ruined castle of Nabhallo, and placed it in a chest. When Kodak then dropped the sword, point-first, the block enclosed it like a scabbard, and both sank magically into the floor!



Bergfrijaz



Harjabergaz



Airstunaz



Valor's Tale

When Polaris returned to Albion with the Sword of Salvation, we set forth again for Annwyn — Fiorinal too, despite misgiving.

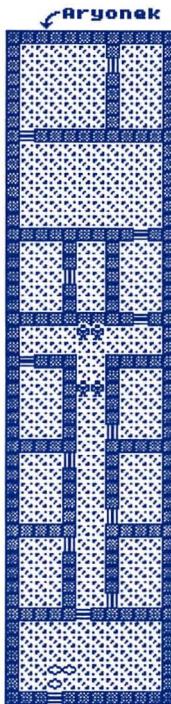
In the Mountains of the Moon, in the northwest of the Twilight World, lay Narheim, the Home of the Dead, where dwelled the Shadowlord Aryonek. Before we entered, we shared the vervain. Fiorinal, most vulnerable, drank first, while I, who scarcely needed it, went last of all. The icy touch of a wraith, which can be death to unprotected mortals, does little harm to one of the Alfar.

Knowing Aryonek waited far from the entrance, we proceeded down the central corridor, ignoring the side chambers, until our way was blocked by statues. If wraiths held few terrors for me, the animated statues, with their great strength and swords of cold iron, were my bane. Yet I survived, and healed my wounds, and went on.

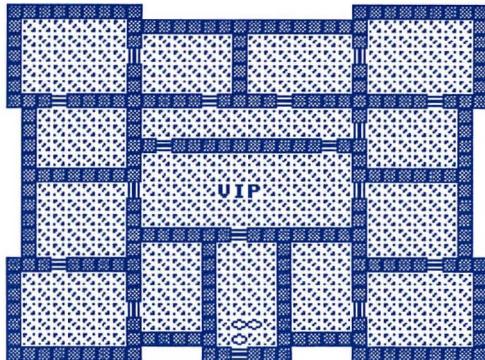
In a secret inner chamber, toward the rear, and another guarded by Aryonek, we found treasures: arms and armor, for Polaris, and a key. Vulnerable to magic blades and the chained lightning of wizards or elementals of the air, less fearsome than the several statues we encountered, Aryonek was vanquished.

From Narheim we went across the land to another tomb, Walhalla, in the southeast, to regain the arcanstone of Annwyn. That was a place of horror and disaster, designed to trap the unwary, with no retreat. Past statue after statue did we run, and many did our haste avoid, but not all. At last a deadly blow was struck before Fiorinal had a chance to conjure help. Again and again she healed herself, while we fought to stay alive and could not save her. Her luck and healing potion ran out before the statues; mine lasted barely long enough to reach the stone and leave.

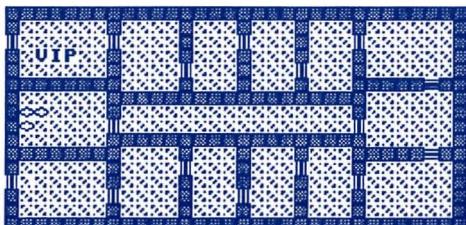
We slept and staggered to the temple for healing, then slowly made our way from Witches' Isle northeast to ruined Erstun, where we left sword and stone to restore the world, if not our company. The Sword of Aggression Prytania gave us, guerdon for our loss.



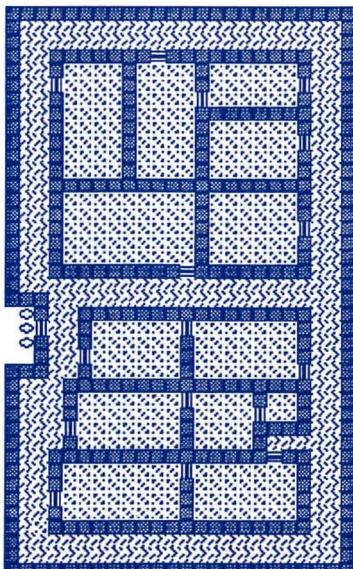
**Narheim,
Home of the Dead**



Erchanhalla (Truesilver Hall)



Walhalla, the Crypt of the Slain



Erstun



Benedic's Tale

It was said on Avon that the banesword Baleblade, brought back from Annwyn, was best wielded by the rankest novice. The strongest of that number, Bellatrix, was novice no longer; Fiorinal was dead; and only Parsifal, the least of Albion's knights, remained. Few were pleased by this. Claiming superiority of strength or skill, many clamored for the sword. Yet it seemed to me that Baleblade's full powers might be needed, and that the course that seemed riskiest was surest. When Inederal agreed, the decision was made.

Keeping Parsifal alive in direst peril, I knew, would require the last of Althea's alexin, the most potent of my spells, and a mighty champion. The Shield of Rolo would have helped, but none seemed to know its whereabouts. Even better would have been a full, potent flask of alexin, but we did not realize where to get one. To guard us I chose Bercilak over Mgorem, his equal in prowess, despite the Black Knight's bitter protests. In his Cloak of Shadow, the cautious Mgorem was less likely to draw attention away from us.

Unknown Acheron lay red as fire and blood between Achernar and Arden. It proved to be Albion reflected in a dark mirror, a place of magic and chaos and decay. In a thin line east to west stood three remaining fortresses: the Citadels of Dawn and Night and, in the center, the Dark Tower of Steimelbherg. All else was ruin.

No doubt there were objects hidden among the ruins that could have aided us, but I did not care to venture there. Wespelis would not admit us without effort, and I did not wish to risk our fate in battle. Auspelis, though cautious, was won over with words and gifts.

It was a sorceress's tower, a bastion against Shadow. There was ambrosia there and an adamantine key. Both were useful, but to me the key was vital. While I was no wizard, my spells could more nearly take the potion's place than the key's.

In Steimelbherg, the evil echo of Aedifice, dwelled Morgh, the Shadowlord of Acheron, whose bane was borne by Parsifal. Just before entering that fell place, we finished the alexin. I chanted airy armor about me and sang strength and vitality on us all.

Glad was I that we knew the location of Morgh's chamber, for the Dark Tower was vast and filled with ghouls and other foul creatures. I guarded Parsifal like a mother, recklessly expending magic to keep him safe. Perhaps my caution was excessive. Neither ghouls nor statues could stop us, but the cost was yet to come.

At length, we fought our way to the room in the southeast corner. In his black, adamantine armor, Morgh was a terrifying sight, and he bore the last of the baneswords, Spellbane, though in his hands it was dull as coal.



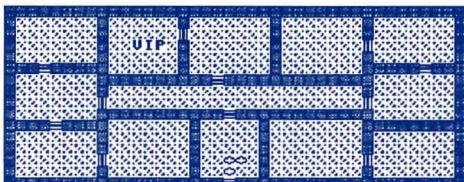
Even the knights with him were daunting. I thought to sing them all to sleep but had to stop when my own sleepiness threatened.

Baleblade's glow had brightened when Parsifal entered the room, and in that place, with that blade, he attacked with a berserk fury no champion on Albion could have matched. It was needed, for even Bercilak could scarcely dent Morgh's armor. The battle was long and furious, and by the time Morgh fell, our wounds were grievous. We finished the elixir without healing any of us fully.

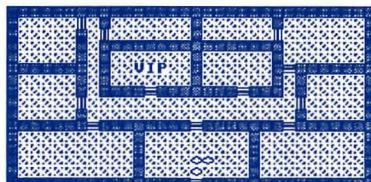
The chest there was empty, but Bercilak was strong enough to wear Morgh's heavy armor, and when he seized the Sword of Negation, it matched Baleblade's now slightly diminished glow. Feeling invincible, he wanted us to search the citadel for treasure, but I was so weary I could scarcely keep my feet.

We survived the running battle out of the Dark Tower, but, when we emerged, I saw that Parsifal's wounds were more than mortal. He was alive only while the unnatural vitality bestowed by my spell still lingered, and I could not possibly stay awake long enough to get him to a place of healing. I was horrified, but he seemed at peace. "Feel no guilt for me. You have helped me do what no other thought I could. Landless am I, but luckless no longer. Born a third son, I shall die a hero, and content."

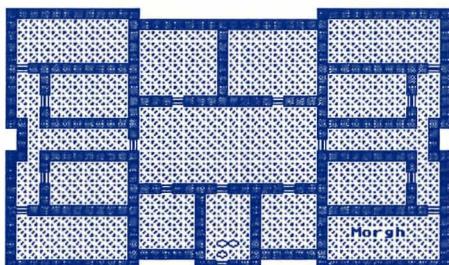
He was still serenely smiling when I fell asleep.



Auspelis, the Citadel of Dawn



Wespelis, the Citadel of Night



Steimelbherg, the Dark Tower



Bercilak's Tale

Benedic's sleep was short, and when he woke we both were glade to leave, for we had had our fill of that land. Yet there was another task for us to do, he said, before we could go home.

From the north of Acheron, through the Widarsin Gate, we traveled on the Rainbow Road to the southwest of Avon. My spirit unaccountably seemed burdened as my body from the heavy weight of armor, but it was merely aftermath of battle, certes, wounds and weariness. At Benedic's halting pace, we moved northwest to Nave, in need of rest and healing.

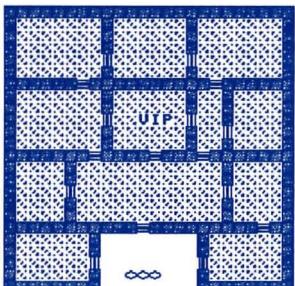
Both we found there at the temple, and in the morning, much refreshed, we went into the mountains, to the Silver Tower. There was something there, said Benedic, we needed to restore both Albion and Avon, and vaguely I recalled such talk on an earlier journey. A simple thing it was, a massive block of stone, but heartstone to the world, he said.

The Dree Lord of the citadel gave it willingly, which was as well for them. Armed and armored as I was, I could have taken it by force. Benedic claimed we were not there to slay and pillage, but to set the world aright, but I do not think mages know the joys of battle.

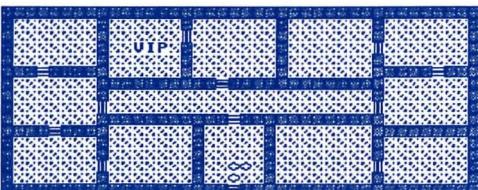
Back we went to the temple and offered to the Lady the stone and the sword that Parsifal had used to slay the Shadowlord. They said all Avon rejoiced, and, when my heart was gladdened, I knew that this task, too, was needful and correct.

It seemed that both of us were glad until, before we left, the High Witch offered us, as gift, alexin. At this the enchanter groaned, and fought back tears, and could not offer answer.

Strange are the ways of mages.



The Temple to the Lady



Tour Argent, the Silver Tower



I nderal's Tale

Last of the Shadowlords was the sorcerer Blas. Imric, with the strongest mind, should have gone as champion, but Bercilak would not give up the banesword Spellbane. Since the flask of orchis root had lost some of its potency, for protection I had to go, instead of another sorcerer. With us came Gardol of the Bright Blade, though Bellatrix would have done as well.

Out the Deosil Gate to Arden, at my slow pace we went, then north to Derkfels, called by many Darkrock Keep. The tower was filled, it seemed, with sorcerers, but I wove protection from their magic, and their robes were insufficient armor against the swords of my companions.

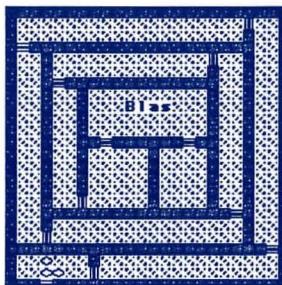
My protection proved just sufficient to counter Blas's mindblasts, which harmed us less than they did him. Indeed, we suffered as much from his healing as from his attacks. The direst moment, fortunately, came after the knights guarding him had fallen, when, with his mind, the sorcerer seized control of Bercilak and turned him back upon us.

"Stop him!" I cried, as that juggernaut in adamantine armor came toward me.

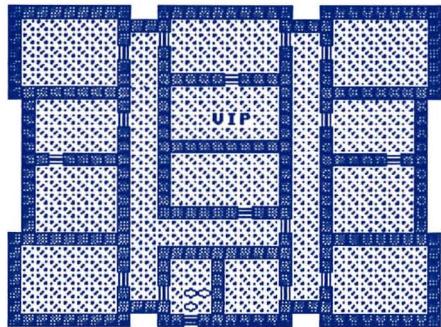
"How?" cried Gardol, interposing.

Without breath or time to waste in answer, I hurled a fireball at Blas that broke his concentration. Again and again, I loosed that fire, but he could heal himself as fast as I could strike. Bercilak broke the impasse. Enraged, and free again, he turned and swung the banesword, and the last Shadowlord was dead.

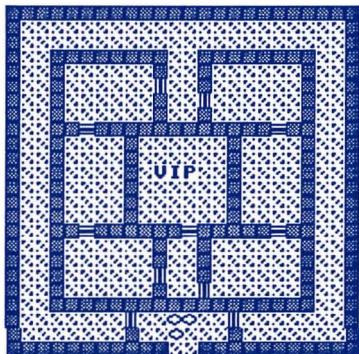
From Derkfels we returned to the Deosil Gate and thence to the Magic Mountains of Arcadia. We traveled south, past the Oracle of Evening, to Arx Alba, and from that citadel we bore the heartstone back to Umbo. Bercilak at last yielded up the banesword Spellbane, and, when sword and stone were joined, the world was made whole.



Derkfels (Darkrock Keep)



Umbo



Arx Alba



Ithea's Tale



The final task was Tessalon's, perhaps, but some information even elementals do not know. Also, despite the death of Morgh, Acheron was a place of peril, and a healer was wanted, for safety. With me came Mgorem, Britomart, and the adamantine key.

We searched the ruined towns of Acheron until we learned the Archonstone was buried in a secret room in Nekropelos, in the southeast. We found a hidden chamber within that tomb, but it was empty. We searched from one end to the other, but within those walls was no space for another room.

Would learned Benedic have known the answer sooner? Would Inderal, Wisest of the Wise, have seen more quickly? Perhaps. My understanding was of a different sort, and the spirit of the Mother was far from Acheron.

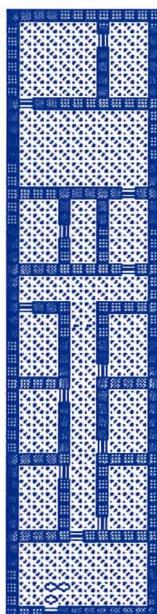
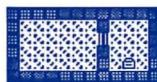
With realization came the answer: The secret room was not within the walls, but beyond them. There had to be a secret door in an outer wall, and at length we found it. Beyond, cunningly hidden, lay the greatest treasure in Acheron, the stone that linked two worlds.

Acheron had no true heart and no heartstone. The Archonstone belonged to Albion and must be returned to the heart of that world to restore the balance, magic, realm, and Road.

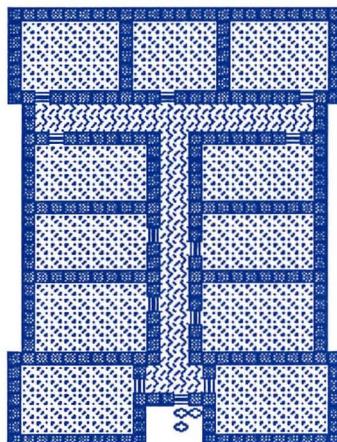
It is not my part to criticize the Queen, for I do not know her motives. Perhaps she sought to spare Albion for its own sake, or the people's; perhaps she merely thought to ensure her reign. Who can say? In seeking to preserve the realm, she gave up that which kept it whole. Without integrity, all is hollow; without a heart, the land must die.

The Road goes ever on. You cannot close the Gates to keep out Shadow. The only safety lies in friendship, not isolation. As it was said, "All worlds are linked, all problems joined, all solutions entwined."

And it was so.



Nekropelos



Dreudhun



TABLE ONE: ITEM EFFECTS

OBJECT	POTION	TRAIT OR CONDITION AFFECTED
Hydra ring	Hydra blood	Combat skills, magic force
Raven ring	Raven blood	Intelligence, patience
Lion ring	Lion blood	Courage, willpower
Dragon ring	Dragon blood	Wisdom, caution, self-preservation
Kraken ring	Kraken blood	Strength, attack damage
Troll ring	Troll blood	Vitality, endurance, "hit points"
Serpent ring	Serpent blood	Dexterity, attack speed
Gauntlets	Ambrosia	Attack effects
Girdle	Nepenthe	Encumbrance
Shadow cloak	Alcahest	Stealth, concealment
Cloak of ward	Alexin	Protection from weapons
Fire mantle	Mandradora	Protection from fire
Crown of skulls	Vervain	Protection from wraiths
Star crown	Orchis root	Protection from magic
Crescent talisman	Elixir	Wounds
Pyramid talisman	Aqua vitae	Fatigue
Gammadion talisman	Panacea	Wounds & paralysis
Sphere talisman	Anodyne	Hunger
Cube talisman	Balm	Sleepiness
Pentacle talisman	Amrita	Paralysis
Ankh talisman	Nectar	Wounds (increased effect)

1. Talismans work more slowly and somewhat differently from potions.
2. Flasks contain at most 7 doses of a potion. Each drink from a flask is less effective than the previous swallow. Two drinks of a full (fresh) elixir will normally completely heal the worst wounds.



TABLE TWO: ORDER OF MATERIAL AND WORKMANSHIP

MOST ITEMS	WORD/SHIELD	ARMOR
(none)	Common	Habergeon
Iron	Rune	Hauberk
Brass	Electrum	Electrum Habergeon
Silver	Electrum	Electrum Hauberk
Gold	Orichalcum	Orichalcum Habergeon
Electrum	Orichalcum	Orichalcum Hauberk
Orichalcum	Adamantine	Adamantine Habergeon
Adamantine	Adamantine	Adamantine Hauberk

1. A common staff serves as a weapon. A magic staff aids in fighting and casting spells.



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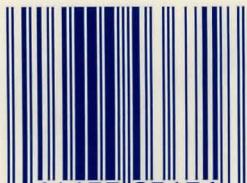
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