

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

A BRIEF SUMMARY

By Denzil Oakes

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Foreword :-

Personally I don't like to read the plot of a book before I read the book itself. It seems to negate the whole point of reading the story in the first place. If you feel that way too then I would advise you not to read the next section of this text. Some of the books described were written eight years ago and I have no memory and not enough time to go over them all again. I can only hope that most of what I am about to write portrays the main drift and spirit of the novels.

Personal History.

I did not discover role playing games until very late, 1985. That first famous one was ten years old by then and most players were leaving it for newer products. It was in 1992 that I read somewhere that no-one had ever taken a character all the way from a complete beginner to immortality according to the official rules. I thought that it would be a cool thing to do to roll up the average adventuring group (of six characters) and take them all up from scratch to immortality. I was, of course, both game controller and all six players but I handled sensitive decisions by using the relevant ability rolls, so that the characters would not always do what I knew was the right thing to do. A character who failed a wisdom check would end up doing something stupid. It was an intriguing process because I, as game controller and author, was not in control of what actually happened in the story. I made up the scenarios and the creatures that the characters would meet but the outcome was what followed logically from the mix of characters that I had and their propensity for stuffing up.

I had envisioned taking the whole group of characters up a level of experience in each book. I worked out the experience points gained individually depending upon how many enemies they damaged or dispatched. Needless to say things did not go according to plan. When the mage of the group reached higher levels she took over the campaign completely and gained levels twice as fast as the rest. In some of the middle books I tried to redress the balance by making situations in which her magical powers were muted. However, when this failed to restore the balance I gave up and gave the girl her head.

Within the space of twenty five books the only female character in the group made it to immortality. The rest, it is implied, joined her later but their working through those levels may never be seen. At least I can claim that I have officially immortalised one character.

I had underestimated how just much work it takes to gain ten million experience points according to the official rules. It was never my intention to make the lady the focus of the story. The six members of the group were supposed to be equally the focus of the tale.

In the books from twenty five to twenty eight I tried running the five characters left behind without their famous mage. According to later game rules that I found it was possible for them to fulfil a quest to become immortals after they reached twentieth level. Thus I could claim immortality for them by default. To give them encounters to bring them all up to thirty sixth level would be a very long and difficult process indeed.

The Series

So I was role playing six characters with myself and the books were a spin-off from that process, a detailed description which was really only supposed to be proof that the process had been gone through fairly and impartially. I very rarely had to invoke the principle of divine intervention to save any of them, only about three times in the whole chronicle, which is not excessive when you consider the length of the campaign.

Book One The Orb of AGNI.

This adventure was one that I had made up for characters level three or four, for groups that I was running at the time. It was at this point in their campaigns that I first conceived of the notion of chronicling a self played adventure as a way of writing a book.

I went through the official monster manuals and made a list of all of the monsters from 1st through 4th levels which would fit in a deep dungeon setting, I think there might have been a couple of individual monsters of 5th or 6th level too. When I run these games I make all of the monster encounters rolled in random order and make up the places in which they are found according to the environments in which they should be.

For example if the players are to meet a giant crab then they must find their underground path crossed by an underground stream, so that they can be attacked when they try to cross it, etc.

I had lower level scenarios that I had used for my real life game players and that I could have used for the characters of my book. I had a couple of problems though, not the least of which was how to get the priest of the group into the game/story and into the group. With this particular priest it was to be a problem to justify his involvement in and continued support of the group.

The scenario of the book required the priest to come to the others for help. For this reason I put them, six first level characters, through a scenario designed for third or fourth level characters right off. It was to prove a true baptism of fire for them, which is why they kept on falling down a lot. Still I wanted these guys to earn their stripes. In every case I was harder on them than I was on any group of living roll players. I could really pick on these guys and they couldn't complain or give up on the game. They were my captive audience.

The plot of the book was simple. The priest had to find The Sacred Orb and return it to the auspices of his church. However the trek took them hundreds of miles through underground caverns and by the time they had found The Orb they were so deep into hostile territory that it was questionable whether they would live to bring the blessed thing back to civilisation.

For a while they blundered around in the underdark and, since I was rolling their positions and directions at random, it was questionable whether they would live even long enough to reach the surface. Many such groups of adventurers disappear in the wilderness, particularly underground, and are never heard from again. At this point I was not deeply committed to their survival. If they had all died and failed to roll for divine intervention I would have let them stay dead and started the whole process with another group of adventurers. It was only the first book and could easily have turned into a one-off adventure book with a tragic ending, which would have been a rather typical event on The World Of Spem.

Once they reached the surface I made up a list of monsters suitable to meet on the trek overland back to their 'home base'. Again I adjusted the details of the terrain according to the creatures that they met. Since the world had begun practically empty of detail this was easy enough to do.

Only once a group of adventurers have travelled a road do you have to record the details of what is there, so that when they travel that way again what they see and meet the second time is consistent with the first.

So these six adventurers blundered around meeting lots of creatures (not all of which they had to fight) and found The Orb (actually ridiculously early in the piece) and then fought and scrambled their way back to civilisation.

Along the way they were also getting to know one another and being very, very young were wrestling as well with their place in the world and with their own emotions. They were growing up and coming to grips with their own sexuality as the story unfolded. So the tale ended up being as much about these six personalities and their relationships with one another. The book is as much a soap opera set in a fantasy world setting.

Due to the fact that the whole was governed by the rules of that famous first adventure role playing game (I hesitate to mention the name of it because apparently the company which made the game has a tendency to sue people for such presumption? This is not good public relations I should have thought!), and that game is basically a combat oriented game, there is necessarily a lot of fighting in the work. Having to run so many battle scenes I have sought to keep descriptions of them down to a minimum and describe them succinctly. The combats were run round by round in accordance with strict rules of initiative. Most often, except in very large combats, I used the individual initiative rules. (Yes this was a pain to do when I was wrestling with game rules and half a dozen characters and maybe dozens of monsters and trying to write effectively to boot.) How well or how badly I managed is evident in the books themselves. If you are not heavily into the details of such things then it might be a good idea to skim through the combat details and rush through to the outcome of the whole affair. Also because there is so much violence in the book I tried not to over-dramatise it. Yes, when people get hit by sharp weapons, or even heavy blunt ones, it hurts a damned lot and people scream and bleed. I think that such things are best left to the imagination of the reader. This is fantasy and I really don't want to dwell too much on details of bits of flesh hanging off and etceteras unless it is important to the plot and to the story and to the characters.

In summary of the summary, six young people set out on a quest to recover a sacred orb and it is an open question as to whether they will live to return it to its rightful owners right up until the very last paragraph, because the author himself did not know the outcome.

The World of Spem.

When I began running role playing games it was after buying and reading thirteen hard cover rule-books of the game (without ever having a group to run games for) a process which I went through between 1985 and about 1990. Then I started to look around for people to run games for.

I was not impressed with the fact that there was no world where everything could be met and anything could happen. If you buy a game you expect to be able to use every aspect and nuance of it. So I constructed Spem as the one world where anything could be met (although some things are necessarily not common there). First about spem is that it is very large, about four times the surface area of our own world (if I remember correctly). The second thing is that it is not 80% water. It is only covered with oceans over 50% of it, so that there is relatively more land. Thirdly it is deeply dissected. Our world has about seven continents? The world of spem had two hundred and forty nine continental masses and all of the remote islands, of which there are millions of small ones, are lumped together and called the two hundred and fiftieth continent. The average size of the continental masses is four million square kilometres. A square kilometre is a spemen squile. The Spemen call kilometres miles and a squile is a square one of those. This makes the continents large enough to give large pieces of wilderness and small enough so that they are not remote from water and totally desartic. Spem is on average a very much more fertile planet than Earth and this is important because it has to support an extra tier in its food chains, super-predators, like organised societies of devoted killers, like goblins, and large monsters which eat things like grizzly bears and elephants for breakfast. I am a student of ecology and I tried to make spem ecologically sound. If a thing lives in a place then it has sufficient space around it and sufficient prey species to support its huge appetite.

In the treks underground there are miles of empty tunnels traversed before any major monsters are met. I may not have stressed this in the books since mile after mile of senseless tedium is tedious to write about and tedious to read and no sensible author wants to bore their reader.

Similarly above ground a major monster has several squiles of land surrounding it and flocks of spemen sheep or similar on which to feed while it is waiting for hapless adventurers to roll up and volunteer to be its breakfast.

Fourthly Spem is a well ventilated planet. It is full of holes. Almost every part of it is transfused with caverns and tunnels which extend down to several miles into the crust. It is a glorified piece of Swiss cheese.

Fifthly, the extensive areas underground mean that life has evolved there, plants living on the rocks, vapours and the heat of the planet itself. The underground is not so prolific as the surface, it is a relative desert, but there is enough room down there to make the numbers of monsters large enough overall.

The continents vary in size from small, about a million squiles, to one super-large one which is sixteen million squiles. (I know it is not particularly large by Earth standards but to travel across it using feet, horses or wagons is still a major feat).

The climate on spem is not seasonal as it is on Earth. The axial tilt of the planet is minuscule, perhaps one or two degrees. (No-one on spem can measure that accurately). The planet's orbit is elliptical, so that in summer it is 5% closer to its star than in winter. (or is that + or -5%). Anyway both hemispheres experience summer together and winter at the same time. The whole planet warms slightly in summer and cools slightly in winter.

Spem has two moons. In typical spemen style they are called The Large Moon and The Small Moon. The small moon is smaller and closer and travels around Spem every ten days. Its lighting effect on the surface, even when there is minimal cloud (a rarity on spem) is pretty small. The large moon is large, a little larger than our moon but also a little further away, and rotates around the planet in fifty days.

Spem is circling a slightly larger and more luminous sun than our own at a greater distance and its year is five hundred, thirty hour days. The large moon keeps pace with this with remarkable synchronicity. The full moons fall on the same days each month year after year. The large moon is dark on the twelfth and full on the thirty seventh of each month. The Small is dark on the second and full on the seventh and so on, completing five cycles each month. The moons give rise to major tides and more frequent minor tides following this pattern.

Because of the deeply dissected land distribution the 'oceans' on spem are not very wide. The average sea's width is only about seven hundred spemen miles (kilometres) though deep bights in neighbouring continents coupled with the uneven distribution of lands gives rise to a few seas which are a couple of thousand miles across. Long sea voyages are possible, though vessels which stray further than a hundred miles from land are relatively rare.

BOOK TWO

THE DRAGON'S CLAW

The second book in the series is a series of short adventures. The characters grow, train and develop both professionally and as people. The adventures are punctuated by months of training, detailing the professional development of the characters. They learn new skills and hone old ones. They develop relationships and reputations. Book Two is the book in which the six commit to one another and form a proper adventuring company, under the business name of The Dragon's Claw, which is why I entitled the book as I did.

The adventures:-

The Princess's Wedding..

The Princess of the kingdom of Der Goth goes missing on the eve of her wedding day. How could she have disappeared and why? The adventurers have to investigate to solve this mystery.

Og's Palace

The children of a small village are kidnapped by an evil ogre and his goblin minions. The villagers are afraid that any attempt to free their children will result in their being killed. The Adventurers have to not only defeat the goblins and the mighty ogre but they have to do so without getting the children killed. First of all, however, they have to make it past the villagers or convince them that they can do the job without jeopardising their precious children. If they set out to help the children there is every possibility that they will have to fight their way through the irate villagers and somebody innocent might get killed in such a battle. Can The Adventurers make it past these obstacles to free the children without any innocents being killed?

Sir Broderick, Philanthropist.

The Adventurers, wishing to enhance their reputations, take part in one of the major tournament events in The Kingdom of Der Goth's social calendar, run by the noble Baron, Sir Broderick. This tournament is a rare thing on spem. It is run for the sake of charity, the proceeds go to supporting a series of homes to take care of orphaned children and soup kitchens to feed the poor.

Such is a radical innovation for the world of spem, which is rife with orphans but heretofore has had no institutions to look after them. Will such a venture succeed and take off in the violent world of spem? What sinister events unfold surrounding the running of the tournament and how will our adventurers fare in all of this?

The Dwarven King's Tomb.

Provided with a map which supposedly details the location of an ancient and long lost Dwarven King's Tomb our adventurers set out to uncover the scene. What dire monsters will await them there and what succulent treasures will they find? Can they even work out the puzzles, tricks and traps that are set along the way to find the place and explore it thoroughly?

Murder at The Minotaur

Returning from their adventures the heroes are looking forward to a break from all of this danger and high drama but it is not to be. They come home only to find that trouble is rife there too and danger lurks behind every corner. What strange force is killing the denizens of The Charging Minotaur Inn and why?

The Trollslayers.

Now The Dragon's Claw are hired for a short foray into the strange and enchanted, wooded hills of The Sirkin Dahl, to investigate monstrous raids that have taken place at the estates along its borders. Farm animals and people have been killed and the culprit is rumoured to be a murderous troll. The Sirkin Dahl is rumoured to be the haunt of elves and fairies, an enchanted place where Spemen fear to tread. Is the culprit really a troll at all or some other kind of evil faerie? If the adventurers venture there will they prove tough enough to survive its dangers?

This concludes the adventures which are contained in book two. During all this action the six adventurers are still trying to figure out their relationships to one another. Is the beautiful, blonde Mage, Angel interested in any of her five male company members? If so which one will win her heart? Will the six even be able to get along well enough to continue working together or is this group just the usual flash in the pan? Will it all fall apart within a few short months?

Spemen History and Monsters.

As our story begins the Spemen Calendar is nearing the forty fifth millennium. The written history of The Spemen Race is nearing forty five thousand years long..

Although the planet is very large The Spemen Race is in control of only 10% of it. They tend to cling to the coastal plains where the environment is fertile enough for them to occur in numbers large enough to hold territory against monstrous and humanoid invaders. Almost every area of major spemen occupation is balanced precariously on the edge of one vast wilderness filled with monsters or another. Monstrous invasions occur with frightening regularity. For a speman kingdom to last for two or three hundred years without getting overrun by goblins or other monsters is regarded as extreme longevity. As such the spemen civilisations are almost nomadic on a millennium by millennium basis. The only thing which keeps the race from being overrun everywhere at once, and thus completely wiped out, is the fact that they have effectively spread across the whole planet and for all of these very numerous areas to be wiped out at once would be no small coincidence. Stretched out over the two hundred and fifty continents there may be as many as a thousand areas of major spemen settlement at any one time, each one consisting of a group of at least several kingdoms or the occasional mighty empire.

Generally on Spem a king has to be a mighty warrior and great general in order to survive his reign. A king will typically control as much land as he can conquer and hold onto, which mitigates against kingdoms growing too large. They are typically as extensive as a man can travel across in a day or two. The ability to reinforce areas swiftly and to maintain command and control dictates this.

Over the course of a couple of hundred years of relative stability significant wealth and social structure begins to build up. The people become more educated and cultured and make significant discoveries. Social enlightenment threatens to loom over the horizon.

Over that same period of time the monsters in surrounding wilderness areas also grow and strengthen to plague proportions. The lure of the growing riches in the spemen areas finally prove too much for them. Especially goblins tend to take the route of collecting easy riches in a short, sharp invasion over longer term goals.

Spemen civilisations and burgeoning cultures are periodically wiped out, yet some elements of them have hopefully migrated beyond the areas of such devastation before then and the spemen race as a whole hopefully progresses in various ways, albeit slowly.

It is this dynamic which has kept the spemen world locked in a medieval state for so many millennia and threatens to do so indefinitely.

The Spemen race is the only intelligent race which has evolved originally on the planet. All other intelligent races have arrived there from elsewhere and have set up colonies there for their own reasons. The Spemen Planet has been characterised by successive waves of such invasions by intelligences and monsters.

Here is a definition to distinguish monsters from normal animals. Most spemen animals have earth homologues. If its counterpart exists on Earth then it is a normal animal. If it kills only normal sized prey and only sufficient for its own needs then it is a normal animal. If it is a super-predator, capable of preying upon things which would normally be considered the top predator on Earth, or if it transcends the normal ecological constraints, being so powerful that it will attempt to kill all intruders upon its territory, then it is a monster.

Monsters give no quarter, they are not easily faced down and if met the only ways to survive them are to evade or destroy them.

I have met people who espouse the view that there is nothing innately evil. This is true only of Our Earth. In The World of Spem there are things which are innately and irretrievably evil. They can not be talked to or bargained with. They can not be redeemed or turned from their evil ways. That is what makes them monsters and what makes the world of Spem a fantasy world. It is not merely a pale reflection of this Earth. Magic and monsters exist and both are extremely dangerous to deal with. That is the keynote of interest in The World of Spem. Bleeding hearts, those who are too noble or tender hearted to accept these imperatives, tend to die on Spem very quickly. You have to be tough minded enough to make the hard decisions and to treat an enemy as an enemy always.

Book Three

A Few Short Adventures

This continues the series of adventures I had originally made up for character levels one to three. At the beginning of this book our six adventurers have just trained up to third level. So far they are still keeping step with one another in advancement.

Although beginning mages are weak in the game and so far Angel has been almost a useless weight that the others have carried and protected through the adventures, now Angel begins to become a useful member of the group in her own right.

The main focus of the books has been the adventures, the events and to detail them efficiently. There has been very little in the way of character development. In this and subsequent books the focus improves a great deal and the six party members' personalities begin to show through. The relationships deepen and become more influential in the proceedings, affecting the outcomes of the adventures progressively more. I, for one, am glad of this more 'human' dimension to the stories.

The characters' focus progresses, from the imperative to survive and just scratch a living out of adventuring, to higher goals. They get glimpses of larger and more important things in the future. They get the sense that there could be a future where they had once expected either to die quickly and horribly or to live in a struggle of depressing poverty their whole lives. The adventurers now acquire a horizon to aim for.

The Adventures:-

Just having finished a spate of training The Adventurers encounter Spemen prejudice against other races at home. They are shocked to see their own people acting like goblins and take a hapless victim of racial prejudice under their wing, promising to help him to combat an evil speman mage.

It is the first time that they have had to battle seriously against one of their own kind. Can they prevail against the evil (and nominally much more powerful than themselves) mage and put an end to his sinister experiment?

They become more sophisticated, realising that all spemen are not good and all other races are not evil.

The Missing Children.

The taking of a single child from the market square in the town of Hud leads to an investigation which unearths a sinister religious sect and its devious practices. Can The Dragon's Claw expose the evil sect and put an end to its murderous ways?

The Armourer's Wagon.

The Dragons' Claw hear of a wagon-load of armour which failed to be delivered from its dwarven smiths. They go to investigate. Can they find the wagon and its contents and take them to the armourer who offers a reward for their delivery?

Ogre Ambush.

The Adventurers' former activities come back to haunt them as the brothers of Og The Ogre come out of the wilderness to wreak vengeance upon them. Can our heroes survive such reprisals?

The Amulet.

They are hired by The Royal Mage, Zarantin, to remove a powerful magical item from under the control of a petty tyrant. Who is this wielder of magic who controls an army of humanoids? Can the heroes put an end to his tyranny and bring back the evil item to be destroyed without being tainted by it themselves?

The City Beneath The Swamp.

The Adventurers hear of a place long lost and now recovered. An ancient city, believed by some to be elven, has been discovered buried beneath a swamp? Is this just a rumour or the romanticising of the simple minded gully dwarf who tells the tale? Should our adventurers follow such a creature and his tales? What dire secrets will they find buried beneath the swamp, if any?

This concludes the adventures which are detailed in book three of the chronicles, the endless saga which is The Quest For Immortality.

It has been suggested that these adventures be converted to electronic form and distributed via the internet. If enough people express some interest in said works then I will endeavour to recreate them. My record keeping is practically none-existent and my memory even worse than that but I would make that effort if there was some point to it, i.e. expressions of interest. Bear in mind that while I am involved in such distractions I will not have time to write more new and exciting books.

Sponsor a writer!

My good friend and associate Brett Nash has suggested that I release the first volume of this series of books (which currently numbers twenty eight in the Quest For Immortality Series) freely on the internet. I never wrote the things for publication in the first place or for profit in the second and so am happy to give away the fruits of my labour but.... A person gets to eat!

I have a part-time job and earn very little and have some time to myself for writing but if this venture is going to cost me significant money my bank balance won't take the shock. I clearly can not give away the fruits of my hard won wage packet and receive nothing in return.

So this is a begging letter.

If you liked any part of the first chronicle in any way, shape or form then you might find it in your heart, subject to the means of doing so becoming available, (I confess to complete computer illiteracy and can not for the life of me see how all this is going to work), to send me a small donation. The amount doesn't matter, so long as it is more than sixty cents, (apparently donations of less than that will end up costing me money). A couple of dollars would suit me nicely and is not so terribly much to pay for a whole book. I really hate to ask but, if I am going to publish works this way, I really have to ask. If the system proves successful on a pay as you like basis then it may not be necessary for me to ask for regular fees at all. I don't really want to be too rich, only to earn enough so that I can quit my day job and concentrate every effort on my writing, increasing not only my output but also the quality of the works.

So I thank you in advance, those who are kind enough to pay for the service provided, and it might also be a boon if you could express your interest in, your willingness to purchase, further volumes of the work, so that I can gage whether it is worthwhile proceeding with the project.

I hope you all find something of interest in my little tales and wish you every joy in discovering the intricacies of The World Of Spem.

Yours Sincerely.... Denzil Oakes.

'I want to be a writer when I grow up.'

OTHER WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

In addition to the volumes 1 to 28 of the Quest for Immortality series I have completed four other books, one of which is set in The World of Spem with game rules modified to reflect the post ascension changes on spem. The second is a return to the speman ancient rules. The third is a pre game-play period novel, written entirely free form, the only novel I completed before discovering That Game. The fourth is an attempt post my game era to get back to free form writing and effectively throw the game rules out the window as far as writing is concerned.

1. Old Soldier. Details the life of General John Wulf, a latter day great Speman General who saves The Florenian Empire from an attempted goblin invasion. The book shows how the actions of The Spemen Gods have altered The World Of Spem (as those deities battle against the alien deities causing a shift in the balance of power and changes in the rules of magic). The novel is as much about the man and his battle with mid-life crisis. How he responds to the cruelties of fate and transcends their rigours to find true love. (Featuring cameo appearances from two characters who are first met in the middle period of the Quest for Immortality series and The Goddess Aurelia herself).

2. YOUNG BUCKS.

After several thousand years of bedlam and unpredictable changes to the rules The Gods' Wars are resolved in an uneasy truce which results in a negotiated return to the pre-ascension rules of magic. The book follows the first two adventures of a group of ten youngsters of leaveling age (or close thereto). This group is started as zero level characters and the book sees them train up to become beginning professionals and form an adventuring company and their first harrowing adventure beyond. It is also my first real attempt to generate a truly Speman City campaign. Set in Floren City where magic is illegal, on pain of death, and there are generally no monsters or humanoids, everything encountered is either speman or capable of disguising itself as such. In the first adventure The Young Bucks have to find a single man in the vastness of the city and resolve conflicts with local street gangs in so doing. In the second adventure they are involved in investigating a spate of bizarre murders, discovering what evil is responsible for murdering and mutilating young virgins.

3. MAGIC HELPERS SERIES.

BOOK ONE... ZEEBRAN DENATH.

This was the first novel I ever completed and was written free form, there was no such thing as game rules in those days for me. It is a boots and all high fantasy novel where the boundaries of fantasy and science fiction become intertwined.

Beginning as a simple quest by a young farmer to save his ailing grandfather, it blossoms into a high adventure in which the fate of the world is at stake. Can the forces of wizardry and elven kind save the denizens of a medieval planet from techno-aliens and their portals and starships?

4. FADIM.... (THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER).

This is a novel about a simple camel driver who falls in love with a princess and his attempts to win her heart. It is set in the harsh desert reaches of the unforgiving Al Quaid, the desert of stone known as The Vast Empty, so harsh that its very emptiness threatens to send even the strong willed and stout hearted insane. Fadim seeks and tries to follow the advice of four renowned wise men. The novel explores the areas of class, age and racial prejudices and the nature of wisdom itself and questions its attribution to individuals. Who decides who is called wise?

To help me to decide if I should publish and what I should publish next your input on what you would prefer and would be willing to pay a couple of bucks for would be greatly appreciated.

NOTE SEX AND THE SINGLE AUTHOR.

When I began the QFI Series I had to decide at the outset whether I was going to make it a children's fantasy, and pretend that sex didn't exist, or not. I knew that the series would contain immense amounts of violence, because the game system is largely a combat system and characters can only grow and become strong by enduring significant conflict, and I could not envisage a world in which violence was rife but sex did not exist. Such a focus would only vindicate the skew-whiff attitudes of Victorian society which western civilisation still clings to.

Having decided that sex does exist there is no stepping back from there. Therefore be warned The QFI series is not suitable for very young children. It includes adult themes and sexual references.

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY BOOK PRÉCIS, CONTD.

BOOK FOUR.

The beginning of book four finds our heroes recently trained up to fourth and fifth level characters. At this stage the priest and rouge have the advantage of easier progression and have drawn slightly ahead of the rest. At these levels the game characters are tough enough to face major challenges, They are already becoming difficult to challenge and have to come up against a significant number of monsters in order to go up levels. I sought to put them in an extended campaign setting where it was logical that they must combat large numbers of foes. Both these adventures are land clearing assignments, where their duty is to kill everything that might prove dangerous to future settlers and residents. There is a lot of fighting and in addition to round by round combat more deep seated strategies have to be considered. Spell and Prayer use becomes more complex and commonplace now that the mage and priest have a significant number of magics that they can use each day. Combats become lengthy and complicated affairs.

The Adventures.

1. The Haunted Castle.

The Dragon's Claw are hired to clear a deserted castle to prepare it for its new owner to move in. The place has a significant problem with evil spirits and weird undead things wandering around. The Adventurers not only have to clear out what is already there but have to figure out the puzzle of what causes them to be there, in order to prevent the problem from recurring.

What sinister force fills this deserted castle with undead and evil spirits and what, if anything can be done about it?

2. The Assassination Ball.

This is a minor encounter in which The Adventurers foil a plot to assassinate King Vengrim of Der Goth. The party of assassins was actually created to be of equal strength to our heroes and a significant challenge but in game terms anything can happen. This is no more than a punctuation mark in the saga.

3. A Place of Solitude.

The Adventurers accept a land clearing job which takes them high onto the dreaded Halescenian Plateau where they begin to clear a crater/valley of a lot of different kinds of monsters and a couple of small humanoid families or tribes.

The Adventurers personal lives move on with the deep bond forged between them in battle and the evolving sexual tensions coming to a head in a most unconventional way.

Originally reticent about sex, Angel's emotions have come to a complete about face. She now conceives of the idea that if a man can have several wives (very common on Spem) then a woman can have several husbands. She begins the process of trying to persuade all five of her adventuring companions to marry her.

Adventure notes...

For the castle clearing adventure I wanted an excuse to put all of the undead and ghosts together. Neither these nor devils and demons should exist on spem unless there is a reason for them being there. They should not appear on random encounter tables. Extraplanar beings can only enter spem by being summoned and they can get left behind when their summoner stuffs up and/or dies. The accumulation of undead in an area creates the kind of pull which can draw spirits and even devils and demons into an area. I think I used all the undead that I could find of low to mid-range levels. The creatures were placed mostly, except for a couple which wandered the entire complex. The staff moved to wherever anything was recently taken down to effect its magic upon them.

In the land clearing adventure I used monsters acceptable to the plateau terrain and vegetation types and a couple of summoned creatures which were left by the altars where they were summoned and destroyed their summoners. The water creatures were naturally placed in and around the lake and the goblin village was planned as the first encounter. Goblins in large numbers effectively drive off everything else, keeping other monsters out of the valley and also keeping those from inside in. They are in this way an incidental stabilising force, strangely enough. I placed the flying creatures a suitable distance away at the points of the compass. Apart from these the rest were rolled at random and placed in a hex which then became the terrain and vegetation type that those creatures required.

Thus the adventure was different for the three groups of gamers that I played it with and with The Dragon's Claw as well. That helps to keep the campaigns fresh and different for game controller and players.

BOOK FIVE....

This book again begins with all characters advanced one level, the priest and rouge remaining one step ahead.

1. Drow Under The City...

Investigating strange nigh-time events The Adventurers discover that Drow have found a way up from The Underdark into The City of Hud itself. Investigating, they were supposed to defeat The Drow but plans often go awry. The Dragon's Claw were captured and held by The Drow for some time. They had to be rescued by a group made up of the characters and NPC's who were active in the area at the same time, with the authentic player characters actually taking part in the action. Thus the game players world and that of the novel characters became closely intertwined. My many thanks to the players who took part in that rescue, allowing my books to continue. Without them the DC's would have lived and died the prisoners of the drow.

2. Walk to the Devlin

Ruined by their capture by the drow The Dragons' Claw, desperate to make even a small amount of money, accept a job to escort a wagoner, petty merchant to The Dire Kingdom of The Devlin Khanate, high up on The Halescenian Plateau. This evil regime, headed by a tyrant High Priest, is run by spemen who use various humanoids as their slaves and servitors, to do their dirtiest work for them. The Book ends with our heroes imprisoned by the evil forces of The Khanate. What will await them, endless imprisonment, enslavement or a swift and untimely death?

BOOK SIX...Escape from Devlin or The Bell of Winter.

At the beginning of the book The DC's are offered a deal, work for the evil Devlin Khan or die! They are sent to steal a magical bell from the temple/monastery of a God of Winter.

They have to fight against priests of the evil sect, frost giants and ice bears to recover The Bell. On their way they visit the fabulous realm of Crossways, with its mystical Bhaktrah and its gate guarded by the mighty Djin, Alabaster.

Angel employs an unusual stratagem to destroy the priest of The God of Winter.

The adventurers decide to renege on their agreement with Devlin Khan and float The Bell back to Hud. On the way they are ensorcelled by strange magics in the water and their exhibition sinks into oblivion. Subject to magical influences for a year and a day our heroes are imprisoned, stripped of their will and worked continuously, not even registering any of these events in their minds.

The Name, Dragons' Claw, where did it come from?
(acknowledgement)

As I was controlling four games a week at the time when I began to write The QFI Series I was apt to become a little confused.

I had a group which was at the stage of forming a company at the same time as the characters in my book were doing the same thing. The name Dragon's Claw was the name that they selected, courtesy of Susan Baddams (question on the spelling there?), for their group. I had a name for my group in mind but to this day I do not remember what it was supposed to be. Anyway I got confused and used their name for my own group. Then I explained the error to them and wrote a scenario in the book to explain the dual naming. Hence the invention of the amusing scenario of how several groups called The Dragon's Claw arose in the same area at the same time. The authentic and original Dragon's Claw guests heavily in the QFI series (as Raima's group, Raima being the centaur character played for many years by Susan. The group was at times large and had a lot of personnel changes and Raima was just about the only member to remain throughout all of their campaigns. Raima not only became an important NPC in the book but those around her, notably her daughter and husband also assumed important NPC status to our heroes. The other major player and character to which I would like to extend my thanks is James Ahearn, the creator of Eventine who's elven character released Ariadne into the world and helped to shape not only this campaign but also the whole history of the elven race on spem.)

THE ADVENTURES AS RUN YOUR OWN MODULES:-

By picking painstakingly through the books I can identify the creatures met by The DC's on their treks in the order in which they encountered them. If you own the relevant role playing game accessories you could do the same. Personally it irks me that I am still captive of this thing and that a work that I had believed finished keeps drawing me back and capitalising my time.

I must stress that I prefer to begin games with beginning characters, starting from character level bla always leaves an empty feeling, there are too many questions involved in this character, how did che get to that level, what did che encounter and how did che survive?

If you wish to start characters on Spem and rerun the spemen adventures I would recommend that you put your characters through book two and three first, rather than the first one. I recommend The Orb of AGNI be played by characters of third or fourth level, for which it was really designed. If you play it in the order in which it happened to The DC's then be warned, a lot of characters are likely to die!

If you have a priest who will easily fit into your campaign, you don't have to have a priest of AGNI, then there is no need to start your career as The DC's started. Personally I hate replaying existing histories, I prefer all of my games to be unique events. If through lack of game ideas I put several groups through the same adventures they will be mainly randomly generated and thus the action will vary slightly each time. To randomise these encounters just assign numbers to the monster groups and check off each one as they are defeated. Just make sure that the main encounter with the owners of The Orb is well in the middle somewhere or near the end of the underground section. You can then randomise the above ground creatures in a separate random shuffle for the journey home.

PS If you start with a priest of a different sect then there is no reason why you should be seeking an Orb of AGNI, the item itself could be any relevant thing, The Shield of TORM, for example or The Cash-box of WASTRI.

If you have played through the adventures of books two and three with a group and then want to introduce this module then have the group's priest either have nightmares, as Preach did, or, and especially if the player doesn't take the hint, have a senior priest of his religion visit and order the priest to recover the item.

THE STAGE IS SET:-

If you are generating new characters they can meet at the Charging Minotaur Inn. I have no problem with people meeting at inns.

If you want to run The DC's through the adventures then you will need three warriors, a priest, a rouge, all male and a female mage, name them appropriately. Don't kill them off or I shall get most upset. Exceptional stats. Angel had both Intelligence and Constitution at 18. Preach had Wisdom 18 and Constitution 16. Cat had Dexterity 18 and Constitution 17. The warriors had Strengths and Constitutions of 13's 14's and 15's, Shorty had the higher Strength and Red the higher Constitution, the ability modifiers for all of these was the same (at one) anyway. Boss is meant to be handsome and charismatic and so should have Charisma and Comeliness (If you use it) at higher than 13, most likely 15 or thereabout. Angel is cute but not stunning, comeliness perhaps around 15 as well. It is high enough to be considered attractive but she was not the most attractive thing in the world. She was petite and not buxom, most spemen men like the buxom Botticelli types. Angels' sex appeal came more from her attitudes than her physical attributes. In fact at first she was shy and reticent about the physical stuff.

If you are attempting to role play The Dragon's Claw, Shorty acts like a brick but he actually had the second highest wisdom score of them all. His dickhead behaviour was all the result of his upbringing and a few unfortunate failed wisdom checks.

He has common sense where it matters.

Red is noble and judgmental, applying the same high standards to everyone else as he does to himself. Red is not actually very intelligent but he hides it well.

Cat is cool and nonchalant and rarely does anything for anyone but himself. He stays with the group because he assesses that they have a good chance to be successful and that he can ride on their coat tails. Cat is very cluey and is eight years older than the rest. He has been through a lot in his early life and seen it all, as far as one can see it in the relative safety of spemen realms.

Preach is devout and faithful only to his sect. In every other way he is a loose cannon and very wayward. Only his wisdom allows him to steer himself through the hazardous course that his natural proclivities would otherwise tend him towards.

Boss is an easy going character and a true friend to all. He often leads from behind and is not doctrinaire like Red. He sees the other's point of view and steers them gently.

He is of some intelligence but of no particular wisdom, which shows through most often in his stuffing up on major decisions or in saying the wrong things. Quite often in the minor decisions he seems quite correct.

Angel is very intelligent and eventually becomes the most intelligent thing on the planet. Yet she has a fairly poor wisdom score, as her physical exploits and bad personal life decisions show. When tempted by a cute guy she has to make a wisdom check to see if she succumbs (at least after her first physical encounter). She can generally resist anything but temptation.

The Town:-

Hud is a town of some fifteen thousand people but it is a frontier town and therefore has a lot more of those weird adventuring types than a town of its size would normally have. It is walled and has a castle, The Duke's Castle, which is also walled, quite separately to the town walls. The Castle is in the centre, as is the case in most speman towns. A small river runs through it and is protected by metal grills where it runs under the walls. This river runs north joining up with The Pasquativa River which in turn runs east to the mighty River Floren. The Pasquativa is about half a mile wide. The River Floren is around seven miles wide where the three rivers meet.

Hud has about eighteen taverns or inns. Not all pubs have guest rooms. The important places are The Charging Minotaur, where low level characters and adventurer wannabe's hang out, and The Happy Unicorn where The Toffs of high society, noblemen, rich merchants and even some few adventurers who have distinguished themselves and aspire to be social butterflies amuse themselves and each other. It is a good place to find the profligate sons of the men of influence about town. If you can get in you might also pick up some lucrative employment there as the patrons there can afford to pay for services rendered.

The Crusty Crab Inn is active, where some old, disused warehouses by the docks used to be, for a couple of years only before it is torn down by vengeful goblins.

The Sailors' Arms is a low-life, sleazy dive by the docks where obviously sailors, rouges and perverts hang out but it is nowhere near as bad as The Total Pisspot, a place generally to be avoided unless you seriously want to either get killed or get someone else killed.

Lots of Temples, as everywhere on Spem. The adherents of TORM, who include half of the nobles of the kingdom and their families, generally are rich enough to have private altars and shrines in their homes, devoting a special room to a place where they can do their devotions and, if they don't have a personal priest, a local priest visits regularly.

Several churches devoted to agriculture, nature and weather.

Generally in my campaigns I sort out if there are any priests in the adventuring party and may include a church devoted to that deity in town or tell the acolyte that one of his duties is to establish a church devoted to his deity in the area, as Preach had to do.

If there are no priests of the characters' religions in the area then they have to make arrangements to either travel to them occasionally or send donations along. It is possible to correspond with one's known priests and have them advise you when a priest of that sect will visit the area, even if it is only once a year.

Many folks on spem find themselves physically remote from their assumed religions and not all are willing to change their religion just for convenience.

No matter what church a priest belongs to it will not be long before he has to go as far as Floren City for further training, since priests in provincial churches generally cannot train them past fourth or fifth level.

In a town like Hud street punks and petty crims are not a problem to anyone who wears chain mail armour and carries a sword around or anyone who is known in the town to have had serious training in the fighting arts. Known and obvious Priests are rarely attacked and word soon gets around not to hassle anyone who is enrolled in The Guild of Guilds. Mages, if they become known as mages, well they probably terrify anyone with half a brain and the real deadheads might think it amusing to 'rass on them.

The problems can be when people are new in town, which means all of The DC's except Boss and possibly Cat at the start of the campaign. Or when the harassers are folks newly arrived in town and unfamiliar with the territory and their limits. There are typically a few of such characters or even groups of them in The Charging Minotaur who need putting in their place.

For the best armour there is a dwarven smith in town, at Smithy's Forge (and an apprentice rune-smith appears briefly).

If a company goes to The Town Hall to register and hesitates to come up with a name the desk clerk will suggest that they call themselves 'The Dragon's Claw'.

Encounters about town can be with merchants while the characters are equipping themselves. They will find both honest and dishonest merchants and prices may vary widely from vendor to vendor.

Encounters on the road will be with travellers and farmers. Travellers can be merchants, rangers, itinerant and missionary priests, vagabonds, waifs and strays, patrols of frontier guards, travelling performers and so on.

When The Adventurers travel north from Hud they come to the river. They encounter the farmer who will offer to sell them poor rope at a very inflated price. In the tale (though it was not well explained) Angel caste her first spell (a *friends* spell) so that she could persuade him to sell for a reasonable price. Otherwise it takes a charisma check (modified by magic, any skill in bargaining or persuasion, and by comeliness if of the opposite gender) to barter with the farmer.

The Boat is in very poor condition quite probably rotten and leaky and about to sink. It takes a wisdom check to see that it floats too low in the water, any sailor in the group gets a bonus to succeed. An intelligence check is needed to decide either not to use it at all or to use it to cross one or two at a time or use the rope to bring it back to shore each time.

It is a strength check to see if a person can pole against the stream, and possibly a couple of constitution checks to make it all the way across. It is a dexterity check to catch hold of a vine and to climb halfway up it. It is a constitution check every five feet to see if a person will freeze-up on the vine. Ideally everyone should end up frozen on the vine.

It is a charisma check to persuade the gnome or elf which comes along to free them from the vine and pull them up the cliff face, or to assist the one or two who are struggling with the task.

Those involved in freeing others and pulling them up remain in danger of freezing-up as long as they use or touch the vine in any way, (except for elves, dwarves and gnomes which are immune to the paralysing effects of the vine).

In my own games I used this as a quick-start to the game, we begin playing with the characters unformed and barely rudimentarily equipped. We roll the relevant stats for each person as the task is required and this roll is recorded as their score, then the D20 check tells if they have succeeded or not. It is a great way to duck the tedious process of character generation.

Blessing of the Gods.

For my book and all my spemen games I used a special hp bonus on all player characters that NPC's did not get. This was because these people were specially blessed of the gods. (Or some deity or other). The extra ten hit points allotted at first level were paid back two hit points at a time over levels two to six until at sixth level the characters came back to normal game stats. I found that the game as a whole makes 1st level characters too weak and that they need this boon as an aid to survival. By sixth level they don't need any bonus to hit points and so it was O.K. to gradually strip them back. Characters, of course can not lose hp's when going up levels, so they in effect could not 'gain' less than two per level, the two that they paid back, which might leave them progressing with no hp gain. What I actually used was to reduce the size of the dice rolled by two so that mages would gain a D2 etc.

When the characters have been rescued (and they should always need to be) then the rescuer, be they elf, gnome, dwarf or speman ranger, will always want to just walk away and leave them to it. Try to let the characters let the helper get away before anyone thinks to ask them to stay. Try not to let the characters persuade the helper to remain with them unless the helper is the character of a player. .

Throughout no stats are detailed for creatures that the characters are not meant to combat. These will be of two kinds, those too weak and or meek to warrant fighting and those which represent overwhelming odds, so that the only sensible course is to run, such as a horde of fifty kobolds, hidden and wielding bows or any large dragon met in the early adventures. I mention this because The Farmer, The Helper and the horde of kobolds should not be attacked.

The Randomness of the dungeon:-

This job is proving much more difficult than I thought. This is not only reproducing the book but also the list of monsters from the game? This bit should have been back near the start somewhere. The Caverns are very complex and deeply dissected, with tunnels branching off at irregular intervals.

For much of the beginning the main tunnel is identifiable by its larger size and more convenient direction. Side tunnels are smaller, sloping at awkward angles and difficult to negotiate. The stealers of The Orb had to move between their home and where they found the object.

I vaguely remember having a random tunnel direction generator which took into consideration all twenty seven directions that one could go in three dimensions.

The aerial directions have funky names like *abeft* and *forabight*. Forwards and backwards with respect to the viewer are the first part of the name then the first syllables of *above* or *below* are added and finally the last syllable of *left* or *right*. *Forabight* for example is forward, above and to the right, and so on. These words are well known to dwellers in the underdark and to flying creatures such as pegataurs, hsiao, pixies and so on.

Next I drew up a d100 chart which showed the distance between major features, the lower and higher numbers represent unusually short and long distances respectively and the mid range and most usual represent around the average distances of say 200 yards to 2 miles. Then roll a d10 to discover the number of minor features, nooks and crannies, small blind caves and dead end passages and passages too small for spemen to negotiate which occur between the major features. Meetings of passages can be T junctions, cross roads, single passages striking off at odd angles, and caverns or short lengths of tunnels which have multiple ways in and out, a star junction of up to ten separate tunnels or a star-plex where several smaller junctions are close enough together to form a complex multidirectional junction.

How do the Characters know which way to go?

Mapping such a complex, two hundred miles long and multi-branched, is clearly impossible. I never even attempted it. I might have produced some sketches of small sections, maybe not. Handling one junction at a time is easy using some dungeon tile system, You can make your own easily with a few pieces of cardboard marked into squares.

If you are running a player character priest who is leading the group then the game controller tells the priest's player when a feature of the tunnels matches a place che saw in hes dreams or visions, however you wish to present them.

If you work it out beforehand you can feed the player the information in dreams and describe the place then. Then say you spot a (for example) pink ring of stalactites which look like a crown... etc.

Once the object is found the players will try to turn back and retrace their steps. Now what they thought was obviously the main passage, travelling one way, isn't quite so obvious looking back the other way. You should offer them several choices, opportunities to take the wrong way, and keep it up until they fail. In the unlikely event that they refuse to fail then you can pull the old collapsed tunnel trick on them.

Make a whole section of tunnel miles long unavailable to them and make it clear that to return that way they would have to dig for years. Many players will accept that they are lost as it is quite a reasonable proposition. Point out to them that they were unconscious before they were transported to (for example) Garishamal's place and do not know the routes back from there. The fact that they are lost deep underground with a dwindling food supply, damaged equipment and weakened physically is a plot device which should be used to create high drama.

From here you can begin to roll to see if they are coming closer to the ground. Make two steps closer to the ground for each step backwards and thus they should make it up eventually. The correct route is not always the most direct one. The 'Main Tunnel' in this case most probably leads to a dead end. The way up can be a quite obscure tunnel beginning at a junction some way back, or ahead, and might even start out tortuously in seemingly the wrong direction. If you wish you can role play with the characters negotiating difficult sections, crossing chasms and underground streams. The terrain can be as much a part of the adventure as battling monsters.

Going down is always a bad idea in these places as it leads to the wider underdark where drow, beholders and mind-flayers lurk. Give the players a sense of foreboding if they deliberately and consistently try to go down.

The structure of the tunnels under spem go like this...

At first caves are caves like on Earth, they get dark very quickly away from an opening to the sky.

When you dip down below a few hundred feet the dark gives way to the underdark where the environment of stale air mixed with fumes coming up from deeper down, the heat of the ground itself and the moisture seeping and constantly dripping out of the walls make it possible for the greenglow to grow.

Accumulated wastes of spent greenglow and animal droppings and carcasses make the forests of fungi of various sizes possible.

Remember that things can grow almost equally well from the walls and the ceilings as well so that the surface area available down there is immense.

Below The Underdark proper comes the tyranny of heat and pressure. You are close to where the rocks turn to lava and the concentration of sulphurous fumes make the air unbreathable, it becomes like the nether planes of hell.

Your players will not be going that deep yet. We are talking about seven miles down or so.

In point of fact at no point in this adventure should they get further than a few hundred feet down to maybe a half a mile or so.

The Rescuer. If they persuade the first passer by to help them it will be either a lone elf, gnome or dwarf. Personally I used a lost gnome. He didn't know the way to anywhere if they asked him to guide them. He took some persuading to help them, was vague and wandered off aimlessly as soon as they were up the cliff. They should not attack any such creatures. If they do make them damned tough characters, 7th level fighters or so, and getting mauled in the process might be a lesson to them. If they prevail over someone that they shouldn't have attacked you could use the technique of subtracting an appropriate number of xp's from their tally to represent the wrath of the gods. Also they are in danger of having their alignment changed to evil. As soon as that happens then they lose their blessings of the gods. Priests lose their prayers and they all have to gain twice as much xp to go up levels (permanently).

XP...

Oh yes, you can award players xp for these encounters, for bargaining with the farmer, the helper, for succeeding in getting across the river, up the vine (say 30 xp each). Everything is an encounter. For deciding to flee The Kobolds, sooner rather than later is worth more xp, maybe as many as a massive 120 xp for the optimum response, which is running but keeping together.

The Hsiao and Hunter if they are met (and especially if they are needed and persuaded to help) perhaps also 30 xp each.

When I ran this in the book The DC's did not quite get enough xp to go up a level by the time that they arrived back in Hud. I don't know how I figured the xp then. I must have cheated them horribly.

When I came to tally up the xp for this adventure afresh for this module I came up with a total of thirty thousand xp?! In this I allotted the calculated xp as per The Guidelines and a very small allowance for role playing and for treasure gained.

During the writing of the books as a whole I changed my view of xp a couple of times. Towards the middle somewhere I evolved a formula. By then I was using maximum hp's for each creature met. I allowed all of the xp for destroying those creatures which they had to fight and an equal allotment for role playing and an equal portion for treasure gained. That is, I effectively tripled the xp associated with each creature they had to battle and allowed a small amount for none combat encounters. It would not be a bad idea to allot the maximum xp for the optimum response to the situation (In terms of role-playing your character) and a correspondingly lesser amount for less than perfect behaviours. E.g. if they were not meant to fight a creature then the max. xp would be gained by not fighting it and half xp for its destruction.

PS since I don't know if I used the creatures at max. hp in the book one strategy would be to halve the hp's allotted to each creature encountered and similarly halve all of the xp values for 1st level characters. If you are running third level characters or above then the numbers will be alright as they stand. Whichever way, a good start to the game would be to set the date some time in the future, after the ascension of the spemen gods, unless you are doing an exact re-enactment, this will bring the xp tally down to what The DC's actually received.

The dungeon doesn't have to be a complete re-enactment of The DC's adventures. It can be what would have happened if The DC's didn't exist and/or others had gone in their place.

On a parallel time line, of which there were many, for example. Alternatively, since most of the ways still existed and most of the monsters would have re-colonised the same environments where they were formerly found, then another group could experience the same trek for a different reason either a few months or years before or after the DC's did so.

It is not necessary for your players to read the books in order to play this scenario. In fact it is probably more desirable if they don't read the books until after they have played the game.

But hey, don't hold up people who would otherwise read my books or I shall starve?!

Food shortages and foraging:-

If you have run this dungeon properly the characters should run out of food before long. It is possible to find sparse fare of questionable value in The Underdark. If none of them have any expertise in herb lore, hunting or foraging then make them roll occasionally if they try to eat anything strange, to see if they get sick. Not everything has to cost hit points or be deadly poisonous but episodes of weird side effects and loose bowels and vomiting can be threatening. You might give them a temporary loss of strength bonuses or constitution bonuses etc as a result of strange effects.

Once on the ground again they will find edible animals and potable water more easily. There should be a great sense of elation at arriving (The characters don't all have to have sex because of it).

Now we get to the serious dungeon bit. The following will have attendant stats which are detailed on the table following. There is rarely any significant treasure to be found in most of these encounters. The Orb itself is worth much more xp as a treasure than the encounters in all of this adventure put together merit. It is a one off artefact of the kind that twentieth level adventurers would not think it a waste of time questing for.

HSIAO

This wise old owl is there in case the characters are deeply wounded or in danger of dying (or even recently dead) the wise old owl can heal and even *resurrect* . He is not interested in payment.

HUNTER

A badly cut up group which wishes to withdraw can be guided safely back to civilisation by this speman hunter

KOBOLDS 50 kobold archers, hidden and taking pot-shots.

The arrows come thick and fast from various directions. The kobolds are expert at quick-draw and rapid-fire techniques and can peek and fire so quickly that it should be hard for anyone to even see where the arrows are coming from. The impression should be given that the only sensible course is to run away. Fast.

If players tarry, even to discuss tactics, then have them fired on about five times a round by at least five arrows in each volley (for the whole group, not per individual). Not all one hundred arrows have to be fired each round. The Kobolds are using opportunity fire.

Coincidentally try to arrange the fire so that those with the best armour class and hit point totals are threatened by more arrows, try to distribute the damage evenly, except if one character does anything really silly. Make the character's actions have their natural consequences even if it means that someone gets killed. Character loss at this end of the game is not as bad as several months of role playing from now. Players have to learn to make up characters that are equipped to survive and to fit in with the campaign.

However the game controller's aim is never to kill the players if it can be helped. This encounter is only to scare them, to show them that there are such things as overwhelming odds and that even heroism has its limits.

FIRE BEETLES (mistakenly billed as fireflies in the novel)

WARNING! There are ten fire beetles. If a group enters the caverns unaware and are surprised by them, all ten attacking at once, they are easily capable of killing all six first level characters. Give the characters some sense of foreboding and allow them a chance to see something is amiss and devise a stratagem. Firing arrows into the cave at those points of light will wound some of them or drive them off or drive them out of the cave where they can be targeted individually. The other strategy is to huddle and to rush across the cave, taking the monsters by surprise and 'fireflies' will not follow deep into the caves, they are not that dumb.

The purpose of these monsters is to make it difficult to turn back, especially when deeply wounded. The characters should gain the impression that they are trapped and that there is no way to go but forwards if they wish to survive.

If they wimp out and attempt to leave prematurely for insignificant reasons you can always have those fifty kobolds hidden behind trees aiming at the mouth of the cave entrance to drive them back in. The DC's never gave up.

However, if the characters are really in dire straits then going back should not only be possible but easy. Remember we are not against the players or trying to kill their characters.

Two Bugbears

Bugbears shambling along, characters moving silently should get a chance to hear them and can attempt to hide. There are things like overhangs in the uneven roof and small nooks and crannies wherein folks can hide. The xp for successfully evading these creatures is half of that for destroying them. The benefits of evading are that the characters don't get injured so much and may well survive for longer.

Incidentally, down here things are encountered about three times a day while travelling, representing many miles of travel, and things are encountered three times a night because monsters generally wander around over a wide range to collect enough food.

The encounters at night can be cut down significantly if the characters hide effectively and take every precaution.

Stupidity, like staying on the open trail where it is possible to get off of it, and blazing lights all 'night' long and being loud should increase the number of encounters and the number of monsters in each group, as the adventurers become much sought after prey. If I were controlling the game, I would make these alterations at the expense of straying from the exact re-inaction of The Chronicles. The DC's adventures turned out as they did partly because of the way the adventurers acted and so should yours.

Giant Crayfish.

The Adventurers come to an underground stream which crosses their path. Make it clear to them that there is virtually no way to go but to attempt to cross the stream.

It is about forty foot across and if a path is picked carefully it can be crossed where it is never more than three feet deep but at every step there are deep holes on either side of any selected path. When the first character is about halfway across the giant crayfish emerges and attempts to surprise them.

Still roll to see if they are quick enough to say... 'Surprise Yourself'. The crayfish is tough and if it gains surprise at least one person could be very quickly dead.

Goblins.

There are six goblins. They do not have to arrive when the characters are deeply wounded from the crayfish.

It was just what The DC's rolled, being blamed unlucky. However it is convenient if all of the characters are at least unconscious, perhaps even near death after the next encounter. Then Garishamal can be seen to have rescued them.

Homunculus

The Homunculus has a poison which puts people to sleep unless they make a saving throw against poison. It will try to creep up and put everybody to sleep without anyone noticing. Then it will drain them of blood at its leisure, as in dead! However Garishamal's familiar, the quasit will find them first and they will awaken as her prisoner.

Garishamal...

Garishamal is a half-orc. Possibly half speman but it is hard to tell and is entirely academic. She is meant to be a unique character and can be described as, in appearance, bizarre, though her orcan heritage tells plainly on her. She is at once a reasonably high tribal shaman and wikka. Fourth or fifth level spells and prayers, though she of course pretends to no great power.

Garishamal is the kind of opponent that they really shouldn't be trying to attack. They should get the sense that she is not to be trifled with but if she is attacked she should have lots of protections and ways to escape.

Bashmash the quasit (Garishamal's Familiar) is capable of turning into a giant centipede, disappearing into the tiny crevices which are common in the rocks of this area of the underdark. He should equally be difficult to catch.

If attacked make every effort to allow the pair to escape. If the adventurers do not accept Garishamal's deal then they will blunder into the minotaur anyway.

* In the table I have marked encounters which the characters are not really supposed to fight (in some cases at that part of the adventure at least) with an asterisk, like so *, in their name column.

Minotaur.

A beast minotaur which will not talk but will attack to kill all intruders and fight to the death.

Pseudo dragon

The little Pseudo-dragon is benign unless attacked. It is telepathic and has a poisonous sting. Deadly poison. Save v's poison or die. It's telepathic pleas should dissuade anyone from trying to kill it. If anyone is bastard enough not to see that then their character deserves to die. If anyone dies after The Orb is procured it can elect to save them (game controller's option, not the players). If the players try to use it for healing or resurrection it is your option whether to allow it to work or not. As the one in charge you are representing the will of the gods. If they complain about a resurrection not working you have the excuse that it does not negate the poison.

The one resurrected will die immediately after revival unless you allow The Orb to *_neutralise poison_* as well. The players may have to think to ask for it in any case.

Piercers

There are a lot of piercers and anyone who stands under them all should be in big trouble. The sensible thing to do is to move quickly around the edges of the cavern where they are thinner and smaller individuals. The slow march across the centre things get increasingly dangerous until even a moron should get the idea to turn back. The stats for these are maximum piercers, which is what will be met if the characters try to go through the centre and are not quick about it. Strategies such as picking a path near the edges of the chamber and moving quickly and efficiently result in few piercers dropping and these being smaller. The smaller ones are worth less xp to destroy but you could also bestow bonus xp for the role-playing and strategising.

PS When the table numbers column reads 'many' it is obvious to the characters that there are many of the creatures, representing insurmountable odds to any sensible folks. The DC's were not heroic idiots and if your PC's are supposed to be role-playing them then they are not really into suicide. If they are a parallel or alternative DC or a group following in their footsteps then their actions should have their natural consequences. Idiots seldom live long enough to become immortals.

Giant Rats

There are lots of giant rats, again the idea should be to try not to have to fight them all, they will follow into the exit tunnels only a little way before turning back. The longer the adventurers stick around the more rats will arrive and the more dangerous it will be.

Rust monster

This creature, though unable to deal damage, is possibly the most dangerous creature they will meet, if it is allowed to destroy their metal armour and weapons. They may well die several encounters hence as a result of the loss of that protection.

To eat a metal item a rust monster must get a hit upon the object with both of its antennae, i.e. two hits in the same round.

Stirges

Stirges drain a hp worth of blood every round to a max. of their own hit point total, until they are killed. If their wounds go untended the victim will continue to bleed. They can be very dangerous. (I think there were four of them?)

Troglodytes.

They have a smell that can incapacitate and make people lose strength temporarily. This makes them also dangerous. They can also surprise, hiding disguised as cavern walls until people are right on them. Two trogs are enough for this level of dungeon.

Spriggan

The Spriggan are the main encounter as they have The Orb hidden in their altar stone.

If encountered in gnomish form they are masters of stealth and have the revulsion effect which can incapacitate their enemies with fear. In their giant form they are twice as tough in hit points and damage potential (and give the higher xp which is listed). They should be met one at a time. If the adventurers are still fairly healthy when the first one is defeated then another should arrive. Keep them arriving until The Adventurers are suitably weakened.

Almost dead is a fine point to aim for as long as no individuals die, even if it takes four or five or six spriggans to bring them close to going down. This is a fine balancing act. A fresh spriggan could easily kill any character low on hit points.

The Orb

A search for hidden mechanisms around the area of the altar stone should reveal the secret compartment which when opened proves to contain The Orb. Make it not too easy to find but short of impossible. I am not good with tricks and traps and such so I can't give you any ingenious ideas on that score. Personally I find them a bore and a chore when people use them against me in games I play. I don't like to see players suffer through these things. As this is meant to be the main point of the adventure you can choose to push it further back, making it perhaps the last of the underground encounters.

The Orb's Powers:-

The Orb can do any kind of curing, healing, neutralisations, resurrections and regenerations, bringing a whole party back from the grave if it decides.

It will do limited effects for characters on request, most usually working for the priest only, or on his behalf if he is taken down. However in extremis remember that it is in The Deity's best interests that The Orb be recovered and it will work whatever it needs to, for whatever character, even of a rival religion or ethos, to procure that end.

Do not reveal the healing powers of The Orb, unless it becomes absolutely necessary, or let the players use it on a whim. If they try then tell them that they don't know how to activate the thing. However if they really need its power then it reveals itself to them or The Orb acts of its own accord.

PS The Orb is capable of doing *_lightning bolts_* three times a day (for 80 hp's of damage) but it may not be necessary to reveal this to the players. Make it an option available if they get in too much strife, generally it will only do this on request by the relevant priest. If the Orb is overused then have it explode on them. It is a very very old thing and the magic in it is limited. Once the containment magic goes the thing goes pop for 2D10 hp damage to the holder and D10 to all within forty feet.

Bats

Bats are not generally a serious problem but can be dangerous if the players are so very nearly dead (and they should be). There can be a multitude of bats but only a half dozen or so stick around long enough to be a problem.

Bookworms!

Bookworms are the bane of mages, an absolute terror to them. They destroy pages at the rate of d4 a minute and characters should roll to see if any of their spells are devoured. Don't forget that for a beginning mage a lot of the pages are empty.

If anyone tries eating bookworms to get their spells back it is a 'save versus poison or die horribly' situation. Is it worth the risk?! Successfully rescribing spells back into spellbooks is difficult under these circumstances and mages should not have the inks to do the job down here. (Chance to forget spell every day).

Bookworms should be thick on the ground and start turning up with increasing frequency until the party moves.

PS An 'x' in the column for number means that one creature is met at first and then a couple and gradually increasing in numbers until they become a flood.

Cave Cricket:-

Cave Cricket is not a game. They do not mean to attack but will be a hazard until they are moved away from, chased off or killed.

Blind Cave Fish:-

Virtually the only monsters which are not poisonous to eat are the various giant versions of existing edible animals, such as giant crayfish. The blind cave fish are normal animals and are therefore edible. The characters should be running out of food by now, unless they brought along a truck and trucks don't fit down most of the tunnels. At a pinch rats and bats can be eaten.

There are always cave fungi, some of which are edible and normal animals such as rats and mice and fish can be gathered. The phosphorescences are not good to eat. The least they can do is to make you glow in the dark, making you an easy target for monsters. Some are very poisonous.

Cave Fisher:-

The Cave Fisher sits on a ledge above the passers by and gets only one shot at them unless they stay around for a couple of rounds while it rewinds its projectile barb.

If it hits it draws its victim to its mouth and then feeds on them. It is very nasty damage. To climb to it takes a couple of rounds for an expert climber. Two or three climbing checks should be required. If characters move quickly it should only get one attempt to hit.

Cave Moray:-

These shoot out unexpectedly from holes in the walls. They do mega damage and frequently take their prey by surprise. Again if characters move quickly the creature may only get one chance to hit. If damaged it will most likely withdraw and will be difficult to get to. This one is a creature of stealth and should not be made to stupidly fight to the death. If it can it will drag its victim into the hole with it where they might disappear forever.

All attempts at fighting once inside the restricted holes are a -4 penalty to hit and -2 penalty to damage.

PS. There are many holes and if the characters stick around needlessly to make a fight of it then each one might contain a beast. The DC's beat a hasty retreat and therefore never found out how many there were, nor should your players' characters.

Bowler:-

Bowlers are benign unless attacked (they will not attack one against a mob. A lone adventurer against a number of bowlers might be a different story). The rock creature which Angel made into her familiar, very briefly, would have been encountered otherwise but such an encounter would not be very interesting. 'Hey look, the rock moves?' . Great! (The bowler might stay still and be undetectable or follow until a character seems weak and alone and then swoop {Game Controller's Discretion}). The chances of a mage making a bowler a familiar are very slim, practically nil. It worked for Angel only because the spell went wrong after its bizarre translation. The chances of anyone holding onto a Petrock are zero even if they should gain one. Don't forget a mage who loses a familiar loses a number of hit points equal to its hit points, permanently.

Huge Centipedes:-

These have poison which does 2D4 extra damage if an easy saving throw (+4 bonus) is failed. Otherwise the damage is nothing, less than one hp's worth. (The official number makes them too damned dangerous for what they are worth)

Giant Centipedes:-

Same deal but the poison is stronger, the saving throw is without the bonus and the damage is 4D4, enough to kill a weakened character.

The Derro:-

Defending territory these humanoid ground dwellers will attempt to turn the interlopers back, always attacking by stealth, firing crossbows from hidden and hard to reach positions. Keep the characters on the hop until they decide to turn back.

The Duergar:-

The Duergar are deep dwarves and also are defending territory, usually from the neighbouring derro, or worried that someone is going to try to jump his mining claim.

Formian Ants:-

When ants are first encountered they are foraging or guarding the edges of their territory. At least one of a group of ants should turn back to warn the nest and summon others. If characters stay around for several rounds of combat, more ants begin to turn up, in small numbers at first and then increasing. The safest way to tackle ants is to retreat before they reach critical density. Most of the ants encountered are workers.

Only if the characters stay around for too long should soldiers begin to arrive. These have real poison in their stings, only one point of physical damage but save or D6?

Galeb Duhr:-

The Galeb Duhr, sentient rocks, are neutral and rarely reveal themselves to strangers. In this case it responded to Angel because she was still realising the after-effects of her recent rock based companion. The effect would wear off fairly soon after the familiar was destroyed. In your campaign things might not have happened the same way, in which case it might be handy to have someone along with some affinity to the earth or you, as game controller, will have to come up with some reason why the galeb duhr would wish to intervene. Perhaps it just hates the ants?

Ideally the creature should be speaking to the mind of the rock sensitive person and in a language that only they could understand. However if it is the only way that the characters can escape death then allow the ancient rock creature the use of the speman tongue.

Gibbering Moulder:-

This was one occasion when I sort of had to use a kind of 'divine intervention' because it took Angel and dragged her down. She was taking damage from many mouths at once and had already lost the hit points from the bowler familiar permanently.

Luckily The Orb was there and that was one of the reasons why The Orb was in the adventure, to allay character death. It did more than just cure Angel. Unbeknownst to all but myself (until now) it actually resurrected her and with the boon of the restoration of her recently lost hits, restoring her to her previous high hit point status. This was only possible because she had the familiar for such a short time and had come by it as a result of a miscasting, so that the effect had not taken on her properly anyway.

The familiar would have stayed with her for only a limited time in any case. And because she had lost it so recently. And because she was doing AGNI's work so directly that the deity was more involved in this affair than your average spemen adventure.

The Gibbering moulder proved more powerful and rapidly deadly than I had imagined and in hindsight it was probably a mistake to put it there and allow it to get surprise on the group. It is always your option to leave these things out or to rule that it does not gain surprise or be more judicious in the way that you spread its attacks. I determine targets at random or, in intelligent species, according to sensible strategies.

In a realistic campaign a creature is likely to try to take one opponent down and make sure that they are totally dead before carrying on to the next one. In a high fantasy game characters are often knocked out and wake several rounds later only to fight again. In reality they would not be fit to do so. Structure these things as suits your tastes or those of your players. Some players will take the hard knocks but some may leave a campaign if they find the going too rough and character failure and death too frustrating.

Luck Eater:-

The Luck Eater has no physical attacks but attacks the mind of its victims. It feeds on the luck of those around it. While it is with the characters all rolls they make are at a +2 penalty to succeed. If they do not make any rolls within half an hour it will try to force them to attack one another. Anyone under its power will attack the nearest target (except the luck eater of course) The official rules say that a character must roll a saving throw v's mind attacks every round until they fail. Therefore after half an hour everyone is bound to be affected. I find this a little rough. However once the thing has had a good feed, after several rolls have been affected by its bad luck vibe, it will quit the scene. Thus the GC has the option of stopping the violence at any time. This can be a good way to take the players down to a critical condition.

Mongrelman:-

This hapless creature is not an aggressor (unlike the one in the book) This is a chance to see if your players are reading ahead and cheating or acting upon information they should not know. It is just hungry and afraid. It might even give some information about the shape of the dungeon ahead and the dangers there to face. If the players pick on the pathetic figure try to make them feel really slack about it. It looks like it was made up of spare parts of other animals spliced together very badly.

Giant Snake:-

The Snake is asleep and will not attack unless and until it is attacked or at least disturbed. There is a moral question for some characters in doing this. Also, it can crush individuals to death.

Myconids:-

The Myconids are intelligent fungi?! They communicate by telepathic spores?! The small ones which guard their outposts can send only messages signalling danger which summon more of their own kind, and nastier ones. The main defence is the hallucinatory spores of the medium sized individuals. Their larger leader types, you don't want to mess with them. If any appear who can communicate adequately the clear message should be not to even attempt to attack them. By then the sheer number of individuals turning up should be a clear enough message.

Make any hallucinations as vivid and dramatic as possible and tailor them to your group, associated with their personalities. The warriors have to fight and someone afraid of water takes a plunge etceteras. They can be fun to play with but are as dangerous as any real monsters. If a fighter imagines himself attacked by a minotaur and it hits, its damage is very real to hem, taking real hit points. If roll play is done well a good group of characters could persuade the Myconids to telepath a schematic diagram of the route to the surface. It will still be convoluted and festooned with dangers.

Pech:-

This thin, large eyed, deep dwelling gnome-like character is a prospector minding his own business. He might give some useful information if dealt with correctly.

Giant Rats:-

There can be hundreds of giant rats in a pack. The heroes shouldn't stay around to fight them all. If they do, bites do little damage but they accumulate. A 1% cumulative chance of disease per bite.

Let several hours pass, or even days if you have a good memory, before any players affected by disease begin to feel sick.

Dramatise it and have the illness progress from merely irritating to life threatening. One character debilitated by disease does a lot to slow a party down and to increase the drama of the trek. The suspense as to whether they will make it back to the ground or all die horribly.

Sandling:-

The sandlings are very sneaky and can easily look innocent until they strike. They do damage every round until killed.

Scum Creeper:-

This, like a big slug thing which scrapes the walls and other things. It obviously takes people by surprise and does small damage every round until killed.

At this point The DC's come to the surface, having met one of each of the randomly selected creatures? No I think they actually rolled to arrive and there may have been creatures on the list that they missed out on. It mattered not. They were two hundred miles away from home and in dangerous territory.

(did I miss some orcs?)

Retch Plants:-

These are fun when players try to collect them to see if they could make a source of food. They do not cause damage in themselves, though a direct hit could be one hit point at the most. The smell is supposed to attract every predatory animal for miles around to try to eat the characters. Normal predators encountered should act more aggressively than usual for the entire next week. The stench of them is difficult to remove. I believe that strong alcohol is the best to do the trick but there should not be enough available to thoroughly clean more than one victim.

Two Ogres:-

Ogres are ogres, nine foot tall (or more) humanoids, like very large goblins. They are thick headed and will attack if they think the characters are weak. They are braver than goblins but not totally fearless and giving them stiff opposition may ward them off. They will be scared of any significant and noticeable magical effects used against them.

Obliviax Moss:-

Anyone sleeping on the patch of black moss, which is like a nice comfortable carpet or pillow, will have their memory drained. It is particularly nasty for mages and clerics. You could ask people where they are sleeping or roll at random who gets the short straw unless they take extraordinary precautions. Anyone doing that is not role playing their character correctly since no-one should know. Even an expert herbalist should get a major penalty to know what the stuff is. It just is not well known, how could it be? It is rare and people who meet it lose their memories.

To regain memories you have to eat the stuff but it tastes foul and is of obnoxious texture. Roll chances to vomit and see if your player has the stomach to attempt to re-eat what has been coughed up. There is also a great opportunity to have fun with implanting randomly acquired other creatures' memories, even resurfacing months or years into the future. You could make a running joke of it.

Saurials:-

Saurials really don't belong in this part of the world or in this environment at all. They are left over from escaped slaves of The Devlin Khanate, maybe even generations removed from the original captives there. They know nothing about the world at large or how they came to be here. They have just barely learned to survive where they are. The winter is a terrible tyranny to them. In The DC's campaign it is late in the season and a race to get back before winter snows trap them on the plateau. You don't have to have it so but it will give our heroes a chance to help and befriend the saurials. Four types. Large Horn-heads are wizard types, like triceratops standing upright. Blade-backs are like stegosaurus and are clerical types. Small flyers, like pterodactyls, represent the rouges of the group. Finheads are middle sized and represent the warrior caste, they look a lot like lizard-men but more lizard than crocodile. Finheads should be most common and mostly equal to first level fighters. Flyers are about half as common and have the abilities of third level rouges. About one in ten are Blade-backs and they should be about fifth level in clerical abilities. One in twenty are Horn-heads and these probably around seventh level wizards. They are the leaders of the group. It should be obvious to the characters (and the players) that they should not be attacked. For one thing, though flyers and finheads on patrol might be spotted individually or in small numbers they will not attack. They will mark your passage and then head off to report to their chiefs. No Blade-backs or Hornheads will be seen except in a large group, heavily guarded by finheads and watched over by flyers which can quickly return to bring overwhelming odds against any aggressors. Make no bones about it. Characters who are spontaneously aggressive on spem will die sooner or later and it is better to bite the bullet and make it sooner. Besides which untoward aggression is an evil act and there should be no evil characters amongst any group of players, especially not if they are representing my Dragon's Claw.

If they insist on making a fight of it then make the odds insurmountable and do not hesitate to bring them all to a state of near death, unconscious at the very least.

If the group is to be a major problem then don't hesitate to kill them. If they need just a warning, have the Saurials shame them by bringing them back from near death and trying to teach them compassion. This from a group of lizards might do the trick.

Elf:-

Elves are secretive and do not always interact with folks they see on the road. Most often they see people, they move around them without being seen themselves. The Elves will visit a group if they are not doing evil things and seem to need help. Any group really close to death can be rescued by passing elves at any time.

Similarly if underground they can be rescued by passing dwarves.

Patrols of dwarves or elves will be met in numbers of from a dozen to forty or fifty, enough to signal the adventurers not to attack them. Even though not evil, if attacked both dwarves and elves will take spemen down and may even kill them and leave them dead.

Dwarves in particular are prone to show no mercy. Elves may have a little compassion but not if the people prove not to deserve it.

Such things are there to rescue characters and are a useful safety net but not if the players don't appreciate it.

In the book the elves are not averse to a little hanky-panky if there is a female in the group who can be approached discretely. You don't have to do this if it does not fit in with your characters personalities or you game preferences.

Axebeaks:-

These mega ostriches with vicious axe-like beaks are really aggressive and attack anything large enough to eat. Don't forget those elves are not too far away if things are going really badly for your players.

Elves again:-

Since these encounters were originally rolled up at random you don't have to repeat elven encounters if there is no purpose to it in your campaign. There is nothing more frustrating for players than an encounter which has no point to it and in which they do not know what they are supposed to say or do.

Guard Patrols of The Devlin Khanate:-

Though not all evil most of the guards of The Devlin Khanate are neutral at best. There are enough evil amongst them to make them all seem so. The Beastmen are true neutral, doing a job for a little pay and sufferance to come and go. They will extract the nominal toll that is officially required, give the proper assurances and send the characters on their way.

The patrols of mixed humanoids are usually headed by powerful creatures such as minotaurs (of the beast variety) or ogres and their behaviour will be determined largely by the example set by their commander. Minotaurs love to fight and a party of pure minotaurs may try to goad adventurers into a battle just for the glee of killing them. To show weakness to a minotaur is asking for trouble. It is possible to win their respect and get away with paying an inflated toll by showing strength of character. They are semi-noble when it comes to fighting and an individual challenge is probably the best way to get out of everyone being badly hurt.

The juvenile minotaurs are equal to third level fighters but the patrol leader is an adult minotaur with normal stats.

Larina and Aldetia:-

These are an evil wizardess and her bodyguard, a female warrior, though not of high level. They want to appear benign and friendly but they have a sort of suspicious feel to them, as if they were straining to be nice. This could be only the persons' natural awkwardness with strangers.

Try to hint at something amiss but if you cannot be subtle then don't even do that.

The bodyguard is arrogant and has a very short temper which was bound to get her in trouble sooner or later. It just happens to happen when it can get your players involved. If they support Aldetia in the battle she causes they can get in a lot of trouble. Allow the decision to be theirs. Put them on the spot. On the spot people frequently make mistakes in life.

The place they are entering is The Devlin Khanate which is a demesne of evil and an altercation with its authorities is not such a moral dilemma as it would be back in Florenia or Der Goth.

The opposition are The Lady (normal speman) and two bodyguards who may be as high as second level warriors.

In a couple of minutes the whole village will be out.

This may include a patrol of up to eight normal orcish guards.

Halflings encountered anywhere are never more difficult than chaotic neutrals and pests. At best, of course, they are the salt of the earth. Only truly evil things could detest the loveable halflings. Halflings are so affable that they can even get away with the odd misdemeanour, such as scrumping fruit.

This is a moral dilemma again. Should the characters help The Halflings to pick the fruit? In most spemen lands the way fruit is there in the common land for that purpose and the heroes probably don't know any better either. Next can they discern whether the farmer has a just claim of theft and should they help the farmer to round up the culprits (who may be executed for the crime) or help the halflings to get away?

The encounters in Devlin are more role playing than combat and as such are harder to detail and harder to run.

The Gate Guards of Devlin City are awkward and trigger happy. Almost anything can be made into a crime if they want to be picky about it. They are often headed up by drow at night and getting them to open the gates can be difficult. A good deal of money will suffice to gain co-operation as most are corrupt. Goblins, Ogres etc are easier to deal with than drow. Mind Flayers act as supervisors at night and they are impossible to deal with. Their telepathic and other psionic abilities make them very dangerous especially to characters who are of good alignments. If you see a mind-flayer beat a hasty retreat. That is a good rule to teach your players early on.

At the gate the chances of an illithid (mind-flayer) being right on the scene are small. As game controller you can just rule that it isn't going to happen. Getting in is easier during the day. Staying outside the city walls at night is not safe.

Once in, by negotiation or bribery, there are lots of petty crims who might try to pick characters' pockets. They have a slim chance of detecting a pick-pockets attempt. If they do not, try to remember next time they look for a coin or their dagger that it has been taken.

There are lots of guides and those who will claim to be guides to the city. They can be of almost any race except for faye creatures (unless they can polymorph or disguise their origins). Orcs, goblins or lizard-men may try to lure the unsuspecting into a back alley where their friends are waiting to mug them, especially if the characters have good treasure or equipment on display.

Lonitil is a pixie in disguise (polymorphed actually into a pech) and is working to help none-evil newcomers to a safe haven. Sophila's place is such a safe haven. Its security guard is a half-ogre. He is tough and should not be messed with. Though on the good side, this is a rough place and no-one here is shy of hurting people if they have to.

Sophila is friendly but worldly wise and no-one ever really pulls the wool over her eyes. She chooses to turn a blind eye where appropriate. The waitresses are nice and though saucy are good girls who don't fool around. They have the knack of letting men down easily and enjoy flirting.

The bars are all full of a mixture of humanoids and spemen. Ogres, bugbears, gnolls .. you name it... and there are several at any one place who will be spoiling for a fight if they think they see an easy victim.

The Mind Flayer, inspector's guards are bugbears which are thick-headed on their own but are directed by their commander's guile whenever che is near. (No one can tell the gender of a mind-flayer) To think the wrong thing in the presence of an illithid is a big mistake. The thing will have its suspicions aroused very easily. Try to make the situation one in which the characters feel the urgent need to flee The Khanate.

Lonitil has the connections to lead them to the boatman, minotaur Angred. Angred is a civilised 'Krynn minotaur', not like the beast minotaurs who generally swan about The Khanate.

Make the journey from Sophila's to the boatman as convoluted as possible, a travelogue of the devious ways around The Khanate. The separation from Lonitil, the quest for a guide to lead them out of the city. I believe there was a centaur there with whom they nearly got caught and a lizardman who led them to a way under the walls (or was that another book?). There is a journey through the elicit caverns beneath the city and the counter culture which resides there.

Arani, captain of the guard, will fall in love with one pretty female adventurer, if your group has one, and pledge undying allegiance to her.

Duriken, the leader of the dwarven patrol, will discharge his duty honourably. These people are working against the agents of the khanate and glad to help any none-evil creatures to escape.

Angred the minotaur is working strictly for a fee. He is loyal to his employers for the duration of the journey.

Rivers and swamps are much the same everywhere. Things like scum creepers and muck-dwellers are inevitable.

Scum creepers, I think we have met before. This time there are more than one of them.

Muckdwellers, like tiny tyrannosaurs, have unpleasant bites and spit a mixture of mud and water into the eyes, blinding the victim for d4 minutes unless a saving throw is made. (-4 penalty to hit when blinded or -2 if blind fighting skill is developed.)

Giant Otters surprise a lot of the time and can capsize boats. Their aim is to carry off a tasty snack quickly and enjoy it at their leisure. They should not be made to stick around and fight to the death except when they are controlled by a mind-flayer.

The Mind-Flayer, investigator is only interested in tracking down fugitives if he can catch them at night and within a given distance of the city. If they elude him on this night he will probably give them up as not worth his trouble.

Angred's goblin oarsmen are loyal to him when he is around to enforce them to it. They are not brave and will run away if the opportunity presents itself.

The Mind-Flayer's bugbears are in a similar position. They are a little braver and larger than goblins but would rather not fight if they can get away without it. If their leader is killed they should easily capitulate.

The adventurers' mysterious helpers are a sphinx and his ally the pixie, Lonitil, two rangers whose portfolio it is to look after good travellers and bring them safely out of The Devlin Khanate. Unbeknownst to many travellers the forces of good do this sort of thing a lot out in the wilderness.

Once off the plateau it is a pleasant day's journey to civilisation (if you stick to the established paths) which is not too dangerous. If the players have played through books two and three then they will be familiar with the village of Fontley where they solved that problem.

If not then the problem remains to be solved and you can introduce it to them via the same villager's pleas for help.

(The DC's were still not up to enough xp to all go up a level and so they needed a small adventure before they could train. They in fact were waylaid from following this by The Princess and training)

The DC's decided to attend to the duty of returning The Orb first and then were roped-in to chasing down The princess from book two and then, stuck with waiting for Preach to train, they thought they might as well train too. Your characters might agree to rescue the children first, which is fine by me. (see instructions in the book two summary).

The final encounter of this dungeon is with The High Priest of AGNI in Dar Geth, the capital of Der Goth. If they negotiate with him successfully they can earn a reasonable fee but he is not a reasonable man and will try to get the thing for free if he can, citing his priest's duty. Notice the reference to Preach's name with his church, his religious name, Father Casgoine, its only invocation in the entire saga. The figure arrived at, two thousand gold (old currency before the changeover, if you date your adventure after 44,890 it will be two thousand nickel pieces), is a result of little success at negotiating. A good roll could get them as high as 3000 and a bad roll as little as 1000.

Of course if you run the adventure with a different priest of a different deity for a different item then the negotiator will be a different person and a very different kind of person. A lawful and good priest will not try to cheat those returning the item out of their just reward.

PS running the encounters for which there are no published stats (because the characters weren't meant to fight them)

I have put a note in the HP column which shows what character type and level the creatures correspond to f= fighter r= rouge c= cleric and m= mage, number = level. You can run these characters according to this guide or you can virtually make up your own stats. If you really want to punish the characters for being silly then make it a tough fight. Feel free to assign ridiculously high levels to anyone you don't want to be defeated by them or alternately just make the npc's rolls in secret and declare every chance a hit at maximum damage until the players relent. Stats are only suggested and a parallel world person, or particularly the same person met a couple of years later, might be decidedly different from the ones that the DC's met.

This ends the summary of the encounters in book one The Orb of AGNI.

Thanks for your attention... Denzil.

BOOK TWO

THE DRAGON'S CLAW

This is the book in which The Adventures actually form their company and officially take on their name. In the series the monetary system of the world of spem is realigned some years down the track. I suggest that if you are starting a campaign in late 44,876 or early 44,877 FIR you set the date of the currency change in your parallel world a few years earlier so that nickel now takes the place of gold and gold becomes a lot more precious. In this case the fee for starting a company could be as high as five nickel pieces (Sovereigns) to register plus one nickel per person on the roll. When names are added to or taken off of the company roll it costs a nickel piece either way. (Gold pieces if using old currency values, e.g. as per official 'that other game' rulebook price-lists.) I would use their name and advertise their products (at no charge) if I was sure that I wouldn't get sued for it.

Roll play dealing with the authorities and the inefficiencies of bureaucracy wherever the opportunity arises.

If your characters have played through adventures before this one and have been paid any money at all and do not register as a company and pay taxes then have the tax man come forth and audit them and issue ultimatums. Depending upon the tax agent some discretion might be allowed, such as setting a time by which unpaid taxes must be paid. Make it possible for that deadline to be met, but just barely if this adventure is to be followed before the due date.

Adventure Number One.... The Princess's Wedding...

If Book One has been played your characters might have also been introduced to the problem at Fontley, Og's Palace adventure. They might have just finished dealing with the ogre. If not then following this adventure presents something of a moral dilemma for them. Every moment they spend attending to this there area about a dozen village children being subjected to goodness knows what by goblins and ogres who are bound not to be gentle captors. However, A Princess is important not only for herself but to international diplomacy. A war between Der Goth and Frul Yen would be disastrous for the whole south coast. With these two mainstays weakened a goblin invasion would be incredibly likely.

If the players fail to follow the trail immediately (within two days or so) it will become impossible to follow and you must report (later) that several groups went after The Princess and failed to find her. She is lost forever and the diplomatic situation between Der Goth and Frul Yen becomes severely compromised. This can bring home to the players early that their actions, even errors of omission, have serious and far reaching consequences in their world. Like they were the only ones who were equipped to succeed in this venture. If they choose not to do what must be done then they cannot assume that others will pick up the slack for them. That is how important they are in the scheme of things. That is what being an adventurer is all about. Alternatively, if you don't want them to become swell headed, you can report several days later that some other group, perhaps The Dragons Claw, have solved the mystery and come home to a heroes' welcome and rich reward, which they obviously have missed out on by their negligence. No prizes to guess who is destined to become the immortals in that version of The World of Spem after that.

If jealous adventurers go after The Dragons Claw to bring them to grief, (an exceptionally evil act) make this an impossibility. All of the major NPC's and The Deities themselves (AGNI and ISIS are particularly involved) will not allow this to happen. As soon as any PC does anything outrageously evil have them discovered captured and brought to an ignominious end. Alternative suggestion, that in your parallel world of Spem The Dragon's Claw of the books do not exist (Therefore the importance of your adventurers as an alternative) and thus these tragic scenarios won't happen. Any made up adventuring company can be made to find The Princess if you wish and that includes Orland-The Duke of Hud, Zarantin-The Royal Mage, Elterman-High Priest of Torm, highest priest in all the land, and Chug-a-Lug - Guildmaster of the alternative thieves guild, all of whom should be at least tenth level (warriors up to thirteenth) and a couple of other warriors like Sir Hentley Parmenter (10th level) and a young Duke Feodor of Arlington (also 10th level at this time. Remember that as the story progresses the NPC's also go up levels (more slowly than the beginners), allow progression of about one level each two or three years for those tied down in administrative duties most of the time).

If you have read the books you can select any NPC's who may have been around at that time, say anyone from books one to four. Make up your own NPC's for your campaign if you wish and make those who represent authorities tough enough not to be messed with.

Also important NPC's will usually have about a dozen men at arms close by of 1st to 3rd level, fully armed and equipped. (at least +1 bonus to con, dex and strength).

The Scenario:-

The young princess is suppose to be married to The Ageing (Diplomatic way of saying very, very old) King of Frul Yen. The PC's should get caught up in the curiosity surrounding this really big event... A Royal Wedding. If they are not interested then have them held up by crowds during their attempts to go about their normal business. If they think they have no business to conduct on this day then make up some urgent reason for them to get out and about. If they try not to get involved you must force them at least to be there as witnesses. If they persist in resisting plot hooks then ask them if they are seriously wanting to abandon the game. Characters who aren't going to want to get involved in adventures, which include topical local events, aren't going to be very successful adventurers and would not be the subjects of a campaign. If the characters made up are not designed to work in a game then the game should be called abandoned. Ask the players to make up new characters and to make up characters who are destined to become important heroes of their time. That is the only premise upon which a game can be made to work.

This adventure would be an ideal one in which to start a new group of 1st level or even zero level characters as it does not involve the use of many skills or much fighting. It could provide a group of absolute beginners with rewards enough to train and outfit themselves and create themselves as 1st level heroes with official recognition yet! If I was rewriting my books from the start this is where I should have started.

By whatever method or for whatever reason at least one of the adventurers, pick the one who is most likely to want to follow up on things, has to be outside the church of TORM in Dar Geth City around noon, when The Princess goes to be blessed by her own deity in preparation for her marriage. The Marriage is an important one which has at least three major public events attached to it as well as private ceremonies. To be grand the public has to be involved.

Among many prestigious arrivals at The Temple a man in robes, not necessarily known to The Adventurers, identify him as Zarantin only later when it becomes obvious or unavoidable.

Part of this adventure is the mystery and the solving of it. Do not give too many clues out too easily. Make the players work at solving the mystery.

No name guy whispers to The Captain of The Guard, any real warrior in the group (as in trained or with heraldry skills) will be able to identify rank and regimental insignia, and slips him an object (not clearly seen) discretely, as in so that ninety nine out of a hundred onlookers would not see. This may be aided by special skills or even magics, so that most ordinary folks won't even get a chance to notice. Remember the players are special in their raw abilities even if they have no specific skills. For most magical effects this can easily be explained, against all odds this person happened to have been looking in the right direction and made their saving throw.

Now continued observation should be invoked, only if they do not naturally pay attention then try to communicate to the person who has witnessed the event (or one or two if the whole party is assembled) that their curiosity is piqued.

Make it clear to them that they are on the wrong side of the crowd, away from The Captain and with the procession of dignitaries and intervening guards between them and the target. To move around to there would be extremely difficult and possible dangerous given the circumstances. Any armed man taking the direct route might be assumed to be an assassin attempting to kill a visiting dignitary.

Guards will try to intervene. People might get hurt. Build up tension based upon these considerations, so that people don't try to push through where they shouldn't for insufficient reason.

Another ploy is to have some member of the group trapped on the same side of The Captain remote from the others and not in a position to see what has just taken place. Thus someone is in position but only if the facts can be communicated to them.

Roll playing the sending of a message under these circumstances could be fun. Movement around without losing track of the target, and risking not seeing the next important event, might be another good roll playing opportunity.

Watching The Captain at least one person should see him discretely pocket the item, which could at this stage be anything. He will transfer it into a belt pouch he wears in the normal place for belt pouches, hanging from his belt, around his waist.

So far the events are still sort of ordinary-ish but curious enough to make a wary person think about it, in the middle of an important ceremony and public event.

Now the dramatic happens as anyone watching closely enough will see a small hand reach out and a small shiny blade flick out. It is all done in a fraction of a second and the culprit is secreted behind the victim. It is impossible to see if we are dealing with small spemen or halfling adult, male or female or a child.

The drawstring of the pouch is cut in an instant and the small, deft fingers take up the load and the pouch is removed from the possession of The Captain and all traces of the culprit are gone long before anyone can do so much as utter a word of warning.

The only way to mark the retreat of the thief is to see the movements of the heads of the taller people who move as che moves past them, like a wave passing through the crowd. Anyone wishing to catch the villain must act very quickly or else the chance is lost. If one should charge across the gap or start from close to the event on the same side as the robbery then they have a good chance of getting closer to the retreating rouge.

If the manoeuvre is done instantly and efficiently, catching the guards off guard, then one can make it across the gap and begin to follow or manoeuvre through the crowds and just about keep track of the target's movements. Make the players roll for initiative, observation and dexterity as well as any special skills they might have which could apply. Make following far from routine. Give them an impression of the difficulty of the manoeuvre. However at this point it is imperative to the story that at least one succeeds in catching up with the fleeing rouge. If all of the players are in on the chase then make it a contest between them to see whose skills and luck can keep them on the trail. Those who fail most miserably in either initiative or moving manoeuvres might get caught by guards and held as suspected terrorists. In any situation in which a player gets caught make the odds overwhelming and they are disarmed before they have any opportunity to do any damage to any official. Nothing ugly should result from this. A misunderstanding, an explanation and a caution are the worst that should happen.

Anyone who complains at not getting a chance to degut a soldier of His King is no hero really. Anyone acting in such a manner as to attempt to cause damage to innocents should be axed from the campaign and replaced with a none evil character. If you have to cull someone from a campaign do so early and this is one opportunity to find out dickheads and weed them out. Do not allow players to be churlish or to make their characters so. No such person would survive for long in this world. A character challenged by official guards should surrender their arms and give up immediately without equivocation.

If a new character does become necessary then make it someone who is in the crowd and they automatically see the event and take the appropriate action and have the appropriate attitudes. This is one way for any new character to meet up with the group under favourable circumstances and with a good reason to be allowed to join the group.

The thief leaves the crowded streets by a back alley. If the players have done nothing stupid to alert him he may even be unaware that he is being followed. If so then catching up to within sight of him should not be too difficult. If they have alerted everyone and caused a fuss then they have a real chase on their hands.

The culprit is obviously just a street kid trying to eke out a living, just trying to get a few coppers or even wooden pieces to survive. He is not a major villain and if anyone feels like cutting him down mercilessly or handing him over to the authorities to be executed or at the very least have his right hand cut off, then appeal to their sensitivities. A month or two ago that might have been them or one of their now closest friends and allies. Of course the player must play the character as he was created and a lawful neutral character has every intention of handing in the miscreant to the authorities unless someone of more tender heart can plead for him.

The thief is about ten or eleven years old and should not be a serious threat in combat even against the weakest mage. He, in fact, will not even attempt to fight, but will try to fast-talk and bargain his way out of the situation, even begging if necessary for his life to be spared.

Give the player the impression that this is not necessarily a bad kid and that, if treated properly, might grow up to be a useful and responsible citizen. Taking the child under one's protective wing is not an unreasonable option, offering the boy a brighter future.

Here your characters have the opportunity to make or break an NPC of the future, or even an alternate PC for a later stage of the game. Rogues are a necessary part of the adventuring business. Roll playing is much more important in most of the adventures of this book than that of the first novel, which was a strictly combat oriented adventure.

By the time that the pouch is recovered, regardless of the handling of the culprit, The Captain is gone from the scene. The Princess's coach is arriving as they make their way back to the front of The Temple and now it becomes apparent that The Princess is missing. Talking to officials at the scene under these circumstances is incredibly not possible. The scene degenerates into absolute chaos.

The importance of a stolen belt pouch pales into insignificance beside the events which are now unravelling. At this point the focus of The Players' attention should be shifted to the more important events which are unfolding around them and the question of The Belt pouch and its contents should probably be left aside for the time being.

With great effort they can talk to someone and get the story unravelling. Trying to talk about stolen belt-pouches will get them quickly brushed aside... "Don't bother me with that now...?!" I suggest you read the book, as I don't want to rewrite it here. The trail will inevitably lead to The Castle where, given the time it will take to find out anything, the official announcement of The Princess's disappearance and offer of reward for her location and/or safe return will be made.

The characters should get some time to play around with The Arrow Necklace before they can find anyone to turn-it-in to. If anyone passes an observation roll or just an intelligence check would suffice, give the first chance to those who have specific skills and in ordinary checks a bonus to those who have relevant skills (Why would players bother buying skills otherwise?). They may see that the arrow always points in the same direction. If they check it again several hours later they may find that that direction has moved. Compass needles are not common on Spem and to know about such things takes someone educated in some way, either in basic science or navigation. Similarly the idea that needles can be drawn to metals and that this might be interfering with the normal pointing direction of the arrow. If the players don't know these things and can not work it out between them then investigation will bring them relatively easily to those who do know. Zarantin if found and consulted can easily clear up these matters for them. He will disclose to them the true nature of the arrow and its relation to The Princess only if he feels that he can trust them. If they are stropky with him or seem shifty or if The GC has qualms about the characters and their actions then Zarantin will tell them that Yes, The Necklace belongs to him and he will thank them for returning it and give them some small reward, perhaps twenty nickel (old gold) or three or four sovereigns per character involved. Then, some time later, you can tell them about the group which he hired to do the job, how The Necklace was the key to it all and how they settled the matter and were rewarded. If the players are acting stupidly then let them know that they blew it and lost out on a chance to distinguish themselves and make a small fortune.

Do not regard the un-played adventure as a waste. It is, after all, all good role-playing if the characters behave according to their conception and they are treated by their world accordingly.

If the campaign is not working with the characters as made up then two possibilities come to mind. Scrap the characters and get the players to make up new ones in the light of what they have learned, characters geared towards success, or have the characters learn from their mistakes and adjust their attitudes slightly. Character growth is a good thing. A character might be able one day to say.. “I remember back in the old days, when I first started, I was such a dickhead, just like you guys are now. You know what stupid things I did...”

There are not really any creatures that the adventurers are meant to fight in this scenario (though you don't have to tell the players that). If they insist upon attacking the authorities they should be jumped upon by so many guards that they have no chance or by NPC's who are so tough and well protected that they can barely scratch them.

Once they know about The Necklace of Tracing and if they are entrusted with it by Zarantin (remember subject to his approval) then the adventure is simply a matter of following The Arrow. However this should not be until at least the next morning and the quarry is well ahead of them by then. The Arrow points initially to The East, towards Frul Yen. If they follow they will find it difficult to cross The River Floren. Alternately, if they have not done the crossing the river escapade they can be lead north and follow the procedure for crossing The Pasqudiva river with the poison vines and etc. It is an excellent way to go with starting characters.

The plot goes that somewhere along the way The Necklace will change course. If you really don't want them to find The Princess at all then have them sell The Bullseye necklace in Three Rivers, in the north of Frul Yen and when the target is located it will be in the possession of some unsuspecting merchant or secondary buyer who is travelling the wrong way, not knowing where the necklace came from originally.

In The Dragons' Claw The Princess had The Target Necklace with her. Thus The Adventurers were able to trace her. On the way there are opportunities to role play the characters with people that they meet. The landlords who will rent them rooms. Because of the ferry times they will have to spend a night at either Rivertown or River Crossings in Der Goth, to catch the early ferries the next morning. This way you can put them two days behind.

The trail goes cold. Enquiries will reveal that no-one has seen anyone looking like The Princess travel this way. Offer the players no explanation for this. There are ways it can be possible even without resorting to magic. When they reach the other side of The River Floren that is the time to tell them that the necklace is now pointing to the North and a little west. Their paths and that of The Princess have crossed during the day. Now they have to find a way across both The Floren and the Arakina or Pasquativa to the north, depending upon which side they choose to cross. The Frul Yen side leads directly across The Arakina to Fontley and there is the old dwarven stone bridge across The Floren from there. This bridge is seven miles long, an engineering masterpiece. From the other side the easiest way is across by ferry to Fontley in any case. Either way will cost them another day and they will be three days behind.

From Fontley, a good place to overnight, The Arrow will lead them to the west, over the dwarven bridge and towards the territory of The Centaurs. At the borders of The Centaur Wood centaur guards will try to turn them back. They should know enough not to try to force their way through a dozen centaur guards. Even the redoubtable Dragon's Claw were forced to compromise and try to take another way around. When it is clear that The Arrow turns to point so that the necklace can be nowhere but in centaur territory then The Heroes have to try to negotiate with The Centaurs and convince them that it is in their best interests to allow them through. Negotiation skills should be necessary but if any player gives his character a compelling argument that should suffice. Judge on the suitability of what is said rather than relying on a skill or ability check, unless the players are really floundering and then allow anyone with a relevant skill or high, charisma, wisdom or intelligence to make a roll.

Around this area you can have fun introducing the characters to The Gnomish School of Languages and a short walk to the north is the cabin of Salardin (or Saladrin) which should appear empty when they arrive there, a la *_vacancy_* spell. If they choose to explore the 'empty' room carefully they might walk into the chest which is both a *_weighty chest_* and has *_there-not-there_* caste upon it, so that moving it is a lot of fun. It invariably moves back to from whence it was carried in any case. If anyone tries to open it, it might also animate (*_frisky chest_*) and race around the room while a *_magic mouth_* will cause it to shout for "help, help, murder!" or something similar.

Circling to the south they run the risk of running into goblins, orcs or Lizard men, the latter only if they venture into the swamp and the former only at night.

Eventually they will zero in on the clearing in which The Bullseye is stowed away. The Arrow will turn full circle as they move around the clearing, pointing always to the cabin. There can be no doubt that the target is in there. Zarantin may have told them that The Arrow Pendant follows The Princess and so they might expect to find her there.

The cabin has a door and a couple of shuttered windows which will present only moderate difficulty to any rouge in the party. Breaking and entering is still a crime though. Investigation will soon find The Necklace in a bedroom draw. The cabin is a small one of simple design and built to house only one occupant originally. The makeshift partition of the bedroom will be a clue to what is going on.

Have the residents of the cabin return at any moment which is suitably inopportune for The Adventurers. Put them in a bad light if you can. Make them sweat over being caught doing the wrong thing if they have chosen to enter the premises illegally. Don't forget that the justice they will meet here is of the centaur regime. The Dwarf is a long time resident with The Centaurs, having won their trust long ago. The Centaurs will believe his side of any story easily.

The Dwarf and his companions will have the primary aim of protecting The Princesses and will gladly lay down their lives to ensure her well being and her good reputation. The human is a ranger of second or third level, one time gardener for The King. He should be specialised with a longbow and have a +2 dex bonus to add to his skill with missile weapons but no strength bonus.

The Dwarf is the opposite. He will hit mightily with a double handed and double headed dwarven battle axe, plus two strength bonus but no dex bonus. He is a dwarven warrior of at least fifth level and should be in chain mail and skullcap helmet. He also has a heavy crossbow which, when approaching the cabin under these circumstances, will be loaded.

The ranger has an animal friend in his raven which is fairly intelligent and well trained to spy out danger and to bring its owner's attention to it. This will be really difficult to hide from. Only an expert rouge with a good, solid success at hiding and who acts swiftly and decisively will have a chance to be successful, say a hide in shadows at minus twenty might suffice. Any action which might attract attention will negate all such attempts to hide.

Killing the bird should be regarded as an act of unspeakable evil and should be dealt with accordingly.

In fact any act of aggression should be extremely prejudicial.

The three figures approaching the cabin will not make any aggressive moves but The Dwarf in particular will demand an immediate and satisfactory explanation of the intrusion.

Even if the cabin is un-breached the trio will still be very wary, remember their precarious position. They have a right to be suspicious.

If a battle ensues you can prevent anyone from being seriously hurt. The Dwarf and The Ranger will fire their bows at a distance should anyone charge at them or try to sneak up upon them. The Raven will keep tabs on anyone sneaking and raise the alarm at the appropriate time. The Lady will withdraw behind nearby convenient trees and cast a few non-lethal spells. The characters might be first or second level, in which case she could catch all of them in a single *_sleep_* spell. There is no saving throw so they have no answer to that. Otherwise she may *_web_* them. She is probably a third level sorceress but only if she has to be. Give the players no knowledge that they should not know about any NPC's, keep them guessing.

There is a moral dilemma here. If any of the crew can gain The Princess's confidence then they may find out that she is Princess Vecilia. Otherwise Chert, The Dwarf's story of having bought The Necklace in River Crossings will be all that they can get from the suspects even with extreme torture.

If they believe that The Lady is The Princess then should they take her back to her father and force her into a loveless marriage which she does not want. In any case she is already married to The Ranger and is no longer a virgin, which will cause an international incident anyway. There is no real advantage to be gained that way but the characters are not forced to know that. If the refugees explain this to them the players are not forced to believe the tale. Each player must decide on the basis of the character's moral code how each character should react. That is the art of role-playing.

However, different characters may not see eye to eye on this and this can cause serious disagreements between the characters. This may determine whether these characters will function together as a group in future. If they have seriously different standards and can not negotiate between them in such a benign setting then they will never survive moral conflicts in seriously dangerous conditions, when the decisions have to be made in a split second and each one counts upon the unswerving support of the others.

If the characters decide that they can not work together and the group splits apart then it becomes a natural and inevitable end to the campaign and all may have to make up new characters, or the players may agree which characters can remain in the campaign and who is going to restart another character. Characters can no more be forced to stay together than can people in the real world. The break-up of groups would not be a rare event in such a world, so it is actually accurate roll playing to allow what should happen to happen. The members of The Dragon's Claw had many differences of opinion but they saw the value of staying together for a greater goal. Perhaps your adventurers might do the same. If they decide to try to take The Princess back then they will meet with determined opposition. The question then is, is it worth losing your life over or killing someone else. Especially when the one most likely to be killed would be The Princess. She is the most vulnerable of the opposition.

Zarantin insisted that the characters report only to him. He has the security of the nation at heart and not the wishes of The King himself. If The King gets his way then it might not be good for the nation at all. Zarantin wishes to shield The King from his own folly. However The players may not only decide to bring The Princess back but may choose not to inform Zarantin but to go to The King himself or one of his other officers. It would be easy not to trust The Mage. If they tell that The Princess was not abducted but ran away then The King will send a party to bring her back which will bring Der Goth into conflict with The Centaurs. Much blood will be shed on both sides. Zarantin, of course, will tell The King that The Princess is lost and could not be found and advise him to ask his second daughter to marry The King Tolivar of Frul Yen.

If the players stuff up and lose Zarantin's faith then there will be a lot of stuff in the future that they will miss out on, as those jobs arose from him and he will give them to someone else.

If they return and tell Zarantin that they could not find The Princess then he may give them a rather modest amount of money for their time and trouble but if they tell him the whole sad tale then he will reward them more generously and tell The King what it suits him to have The King believe.

If the players were not introduced to The Fontley Adventure, Og's Palace before then while they are passing through Fontley on their way back is a good time for that.

Adventure Number Two Og's Palace....

If they handle it right away or return there later, any move towards The Manor will alert the villagers and have them out in force prepared to bar the way of anyone who's clumsy rescue attempt might get their children killed.

About a dozen men will way-lay the group at the ford, unless your players are exceptionally wily and discrete, like going a completely different way. Not arriving at The Village at all is probably the best way not to get caught. Of course no game controller should be hinting such things to players. They have to come up with these things themselves. The Village is the only convenient place to overnight around the district. Spending nights in this wilderness anything could come out and try to eat you.

If a serious problem with the locals breaks out, the law should arrive to break it up within a few minutes or before too much damage has been done on either side, at the GC's discretion. Continuing the conflict once the Militia Captain and his men are present is sheer lunacy and any who fail to put up their arms really are asking for an ignominious death. The best strategy for The Group is to pretend to give up and look as if they are heading home. They can then apply their imaginations to returning secretly another day. One thing that the players might decide is to give up and go home for real. There is no reward in that and they will hear a few days later how some other bright company rescued the children and destroyed their captors without harming a hair on one child's head. These others of course were richly rewarded and have been hailed as heroes (perhaps again). One GC ploy would be to make the successful rival company the same one every time, not necessarily my Dragon's Claw. Make up your own favourite group of NPC's.

Approaching The Manor, however they come there, the first thing they see is Job Boy The Aghar (Gully Dwarf). He is kind hearted and simple minded soul and had been the children's real carer, keeping them away from the worst abuses to which the goblins otherwise would have subjected them. Job Boy is in favour of getting the children to safety. Anyone who attacks and kills him will make the job impossible. No matter how they approach the house without his help at least some of the children will be killed before the heroes get near to rescuing them. Job Boy is the key. He can separate the children from the goblins for long enough for a discrete raid to get under way.

The Goblins don't like minding the children so it is easy for Job Boy to whisk them away to safety, as in hiding them in the house. He can by no means actually remove them to complete safety. If he could he would have done so.

That would make The Adventurers redundant.

Again it is not the GC's job to tell the players what to do. They have to come up with these things for themselves. First, however they have to get Job Boy's confidence and talk to him. If they attack him he will either die at the first stroke or escape screaming blue murder and alerting the goblins. He should be either very easy or almost impossible to kill. It's your call how you want to play it and depends upon the general behaviour of Your Players. If they need teaching that fighting everyone is not the solution to their problems then give them a hard time here, before the campaign gets too well advanced. It is really hard to try to chastise sixteenth level dickheads. If they aren't working out fix it now and don't let it get to that impossible stage.

In the house are a dozen goblins and one Ogre. Eight goblins might come out to investigate but if battle is joined and the spemen look like winning they will arrive at the house to find all of the children dead and dismembered and having suffered worse abuses before they died.

If this is not handled carefully the names of these adventurers will be despised by many people for miles around, especially the folks of Fontley. It might even be impossible for them to remain in the area and live in the realms of Der Goth or Frul Yen, the bad reputation will affect them so badly. Getting spat on and heckled in the streets and never getting offered any jobs are the least that can happen. They can move elsewhere as the reputations will not follow them too far too fast and in a similar area gain similar jobs to the ones detailed below just the NPC names and place names will have to be changed slightly.

Ideally if The Players come up with an even halfway decent plan they should succeed, especially if Job Boy is allowed to hide the children away for them. The hostage situation is the most difficult one that anyone can be asked to play. Sneaking up to the closest approach to the house brings them through the roof hatch at the back of the stables, The guards, usually two at the front door and a pair at the back, are not particularly vigilant and a co-ordinated rush on the back door should result in the two there being locked in mêlée and unable to escape back into the house. Some magic may make this easy, incapacitating either pair of guards basically leaves the place wide open.

Once in the front The Ogre has set up one large front room as his ogre sized bedroom. If no significant noise has been made up to this point the heroes may spy him asleep in there and may gain surprise on him. It depends also on how tough your group is and how tough you want to make it for them.

An Ogre can do a lot of damage so be careful about giving Og surprise on the players with his heftiest weapon, a great club (unless they really deserve it!). Goblins individually are not tough but a dozen can put a dent in first level characters if you have them arrive all at once and catch the players in a poor defensive position. If the players have done The Orb of AGNI and risen to second level then they should take the actual fighting in their stride. Ideally a group of six is required for these games and if you have only three players they might like to control two characters each or allow them to hire a number of hirelings to pad out the party, these should act strictly upon the orders of the characters unless the characters are being absolutely ridiculous.

Another scenario is to make discrete enquiries among the villagers and find out which village men would be willing to help in such a raid, even if it was only to create a diversion. (Beware though supposed diversionary tactics would most likely get the children killed) You are The GC, play it how you see it. I am not the measure of all things.

The configuration of the house is fairly simple. A couple of rooms at the back for servants and the large kitchen, Passage leading to entry hall with sweeping staircase leading up to a balcony and then bedrooms up there set out in a square formation. Large rooms either side of the entry hall, used to be for lounge and entertaining purposes. I am not very good at maps and I am not sure if my own would be much help. On the outside there is a wide open space right around the approaches to the manor. It was built with security in mind. The stables is the only thing which provides a partial cover for approach to within fifty metres or so. Adjust lengths and difficulties depending upon the talents of your players.

In extreme difficulty. If your players really are at a loss as to how to proceed you can point out that somehow Lord Fontley the young boy did escape to The Village and hint that he might know of some way to approach the house. Investigation before coming up here or even returning to investigate (discretely) will reveal the tale of how His Young Lordship was rescued by his stable-hand, using a secret passage from the house to the stables. This same youth could now be employed to guide them back the other way.

However mostly players should only discover such things if they actually investigate and should not be led by the nose or spoon-fed information and the convenient secret passage need not exist if the players are on the ball and can get the job done efficiently without it. It is a little bit of a trashy plot device, the kind I like to exclude from my games if at all possible.

Having said that, remember that the game is supposed to be fun and an unsolvable puzzle is not much fun for anybody to play. Goblins are Th 17, Ac 5, Dmg D6, and 7 hp. They also have short bows handy. Og is maximum Ogre 36 hp, Ac 3, Th 13, Dmg 2d8+2 (very large club) or d10 with fists and 50% chance a sleep spell will work if nothing else is in its area of effect when caste. After the battle the players may find it hard to find Job Boy's hideaway for the children and they may only resurface hours later when The Aghar has decided that things are safe. Make the hideaway a secret cellar room or an ingenious aghar device of your own choosing.

Returning to the village with a cart-load of happy children and ridiculous gully dwarf should be played up as hysterically as possible. The overwhelming joy and praise of the doting parents hailing The Characters as the greatest heroes who ever lived, all this is priceless. If the players have struck a deal with Young Lord Fontley beforehand they will be allowed to take half of value from what remains in his Manor. Much of what was once valuable is ruined. Adjust what is salvageable according to what you think is fair in your campaign and what the characters need to continue to operate. Remember that half of all that they take will be taken away from them as taxes and adjust rewards accordingly. Damaged equipment may need to be repaired or replaced. Repair costs will always be about a quarter of the price of a new item at the very least. Adjust according to the damage taken. Everyone should by now have selected a religion (or choose to remain an atheist which is rare around these parts where gods really do exist and often do intervene). Any cleric must pay half of what he earns to his church, no prayers will work for them in future otherwise. Others should give a tithe (a tenth of what they have left after taxes) on a regular basis. Each player should also be a member of their guild by now. Fees are a nominal ten nickel (old gold) a year but contributions are well received and most choose to pay according to their means a similar amount to church tithes. After all it is the guild which allows them to do business.

If the players have not selected a religion and joined a guild then this is an excellent time for them to do so. These things are permanent and important commitments. If they do not do these things then they will have difficulties in future getting jobs, doing business and with a lot of really bad and hard to explain bad luck in all aspects of life.

Role play them meeting suitable priests who impress them and induct them into their religions and being interviewed by guild masters and finding suitable trainers.

Most trainers will not take on people who are not guild members in good standing.

PS. Goblins are worth about 40 xp each all up, including for role playing and treasure purposes. The Ogre is worth about 700 xp all told. Divided equally between six it's around 200 xp each. It isn't easy to get enough xp to go up a level and this whole series of five or six adventures is equal to just one level.

If your group has done The Orb of AGNI they should have been ready to go up a level at the end of that. (As I say I somehow stiffed my Dragon's Claw on xp for that adventure. I wasn't very experienced as a GC back then.) If they have not trained because they have been moving from one adventure to another then now would be a good time to introduce a few months hiatus, perhaps winter sets in and makes it impossible for them to adventure. Most sensible people would plan to train during the winter months of Novry and Decry. (Desry). If they trained after The Orb of AGNI then winter has passed. The spemen year is ten months of fifty days each, five weeks of ten days in each month. Snow covers the ground in Der Goth and Frul Yen for most of Novry and Decry and anyone who tries to move in it will find they don't move very far very fast. A snap blizzard or sudden cold-snap can freeze them to death very easily and movement during winter is to be incredibly discouraged. Make at least one of them lose their toes if you have to. Just constitution checks every few hours until they freeze to death. Yes winter is harsh this far north while two hundred miles south in Floren City it barely even snows at all (still cold enough to freeze to death though for children forced to sleep on the streets.) Keep a calendar Spring begins on Unry the 1st and the roads are quite often becoming travel-able by then.

Adventure Three Sir Broderick... Philanthropist.

The next adventure can take place at any time of year except for the winter months. It is one of the primary tournaments and social events of the year in Der Goth. People around the traps will tell The Adventurers that they must have a go in the tournament to establish their reputations. A good placing (they don't even have to win) will get them noticed and increase their chances of getting jobs and the prices they can ask for doing them.

Fighting is not the only skill on show at The Tournament, there are lots of displays and events and merely busking doing your thing, be it prestidigitation or poetry reading will earn some money and some recognition factor, so long as what you do you do well.

Character imagination in working out how to display their talents and turn a buck at The Tournament is to be encouraged. Stall fees are a nominal Nickel piece a day and entry into events a similar amount except for the jousting which is for the gentry and costs ten nickel to enter (the purse is bigger too).

Set a level of difficulty for each round of competition. The tourney goes for three days and so the first day is taken up with preliminary rounds of everything. You will have to register for any events you wish to enter early in the morning of the first day. Arriving even the night before all places in inns and taverns in the nearby villages will be fully booked. Large tents can be hired for a nickel a day or camping ground to pitch your own tents at the same price. The proceeds go to charity so nobody appreciates a skinflint on these things.

Very important guests are put up in The Duke, Sir Broderick's Castle, no you are not one of them. The King will be staying there with his entourage.

The Castle is open for inspection (again for a nickel) guided tours through the public areas only. Most people have never been in a castle before.

Duke, Sir Broderick is a portly mountain of a man with a disposition to suit his expansive proportions. He is perpetually jolly and bellicose, like an armoured Santa Claus. He is very affable and well liked, seeming guileless in his simple honesty. He is likely to say things un-diplomatic. He runs the tournament, in fact the whole thing was his idea. The money collected is to pay for an orphanage for abandoned children and soup kitchens to feed the poor. He is hailed as a visionary and a philanthropist for his efforts.

At the fair attendant upon the tourney many sights to see many people to meet. One of the more bizarre sights is a gnomish invention a hot air balloon. A gnome sits for almost the entire three days setting it up, stitching and mending a huge oval of cloth and then in the last day lighting a fire underneath it all. Everyone bets that it will never get off the ground.

Imagine the usual performers and carnival acts, fire eaters, stilt walkers, clowns, musicians, jugglers, dancing girls etc. Allow players to enter their characters in any contests they please and run the events simply for them. In combat the damage is subdual damage three quarters of it heals after a few minutes rest. One quarter, every complete four points or part thereof, will be real damage and heal in the normal way. One point heals overnight if unattended, three points if given expert medical attention. For the sake of consistency and fairness no magical healing is allowed on wounds while a person remains in a contest. Limited magical healing is given where most needed as soon as a person withdraws from any and all mêlée contests. Clerics who can effect healing are needed on hand all of the time and may be called upon to do mundane or magical healing any time during the three days. They will receive a nominal fee of ten nickel pieces per day for all the mundane healing they can do and an additional ten nickel pieces for each minor curative prayer they use. There is a shortage of healers and all priests will most likely be out of healing prayers before the end of each day. Roll a dice for the number of patients tended by normal healing and allow about twenty minutes for each of them. PS there are a hundred spemen minutes in a spemen hour and a hundred seconds in a minute but the seconds are shorter (not that that is going to affect anything in game time). An hour is approximately an earth hour just the same. That is where the two time systems come together.

During the second day two or three rounds of each tournament are run. During the third day several rounds may play but all are scheduled to end a few hours before dark. The jousting's last several rounds and grand final always go on last as this is a knightly affair and viewed as the most important contest. There are novelty events for fun such as a tug of war (you need to join a team of twelve), egg and spoon race, sack race, three legged race and so on, which players can have fun with. If everyone gets involved the tournament could extend over a couple of game sessions. Keep track of every players performance in the major events, longsword, longbow and jousting (they wish) are the premium events where people with potential get noticed.

As first or second level characters they should be up against people of much higher levels in the third and subsequent rounds. Their chances of getting into a major round, the last eight for example (quarter finals) should be slim but PC's do surprisingly well in these things against all odds. I have had people place in the last four or even win with characters. Maybe I wasn't tough enough on them. Whatever the results the player who gets highest up of your group and any in the quarter finals will get noticed and people of note will make a point of going out of their way to congratulate their performance. Sir Broderick and his fellow Dukes and Barons will certainly be watching with interest and may earmark certain warriors as candidates to be trained as knights later in their careers. PS be not confused, there are two dukes with almost the same name. They are pointed out to warriors with the warning not to confuse them. Sir Broderick the host of the event and Sir Roderick his friend and neighbour who is rumoured to be the best swordsman in all the land. Sir Roderick is tall and thin so the two are easily distinguishable. The Duke of Hud might not be able to attend but will send along his apologies and a goodly number of his knights to support the event.

When the jousting is completed all will be assembled for the awarding of the prizes and the ritual tallying of the takings. Sir Broderick himself will carry the huge sack full of coins up to the raised platform and announce the event's total and dedicate it to his charities, giving a short speech and expressing his gratitude to all who have contributed.

WARNING...BOXED TEXT IMMINENT

Sir Broderick proudly announces the takings at an all time record of more than three thousand nickel (old gold) pieces ...

"Which I will now carry to the safety of my vaults." He boasts. "In this large, sturdy sack." He invokes a little theatricality here.

"No... don't help me." He protests. "I can manage."

He pretends to stagger under the weight.

He makes his way through the pressing crowd. As he reaches the end, calamity! A man on a snow white steed rides up and plucks the sac from Sir Broderick's back and with a flourish and a wave of thanks, in an instant, is gone before anyone can catch him.

The poor knights still in their heaviest armour and on their strong but not swift chargers attempt to give chase but are soon left behind. No-one can identify the villain for he is swaddled in cloth of the deepest black. Clean away he gets, clean away!

Sir Broderick, after railing a while and making his way back to the stage makes his most dramatic announcement....

“One thousand nickel (old gold) pieces to the man or woman who recovers the thief and the money.”

“Will you take him dead?” One knight demands.

“Aye, dead or alive.” Sir Broderick answers. “Though it would give me great pleasure to run him through myself.”

Lots of people set off right away on the trail of the dozen knights whose chargers are even now poxing up the trail behind the culprit. Now ask your players what they are doing. Are they going off with the rest or doing anything else? Have they already run off after the thief without even waiting to hear of the reward?

Don't hint to them what they should do allow them to do what they are going to do or at least start to do so. Allow them to make their own mistakes.

If they follow immediately into the hills of The Sirkin Dahl to the north obviously the trail will be lost there and any search attempt will be confused by hundreds of others who are on the trail but are not really on the trail anymore. Some follow blindly after individual knights' horse-prints when the knights themselves are lost out there really.

The whole thing is a shemozzle.

The Sirkin Dahl is rumoured to be the haunt of fairies and monsters and most people fear it and generally keep away from it. Fairies indeed respond to spemen invasion up there by casting spells which are harmless except to confuse them or drive them off. Most people will end up back where they started before nightfall without realising how they became turned around.

Now, if your players decide to investigate first, as almost nobody else seems to be doing, they will find our significant things.

If they go off with the rest they will either realise that the strategy is not working earlier than most or get turned around by fairy magics or give some bright spark, with a high wisdom or intelligence score, a chance to roll. A success means that they have got the idea. To get ahead of the rest you have to not follow their lead but do what none of them is doing. You have to investigate. Allow that they have plenty of time to return and investigate before nightfall and then head off again.

Talking to people they will be told about the uniqueness of that kind of horse hereabouts and there is only one person they know of who owns such a horse, a white 'Arabian' stallion.

There are several choices of better, more efficient movement than following an already poxed up trail on foot.

Local guides will put themselves up for hire, offering to guide you through the wilderness at various prices. Shep wants a full share of the reward if you win it. Jeff wants 10 sovereigns plus one sovereign per additional day. Mort wants five sovereigns plus an additional ten if you should win the reward.

There are people with canoes who will offer to row you up the small streams which lead into The Sirkin Dahl. Various propositions and prices.

You can not help but notice that The Gnome still has his balloon inflated. It finally went up early in the afternoon and has made several pleasure flights for a variety of customers. In fact now The Gnome seems to be having difficulty getting the thing down. He may have to wait all night for the air inside to cool.

There is no doubt that the view from up there is spectacular and it goes along quite quickly in the wind, which is speeding up significantly as the afternoon goes on.

You should try to convince the players that the balloon would be the best bet

Before then, however, allow them to really investigate.

Albert the stable-hand will have much to say concerning the horse and its probable owner. The sad tale of forbidden love between Lady Betina and a young stable-hand will emerge from the gossiping lips of Sally, a young maid in the household.

If they can talk to Lady Betina she will tell of her lost love Tibalt and of her father's wanting her to marry a young knight, Sir Michael, whom she does not like at all.

If the players don't know how to investigate Madrigon The Sage is there to give advice to anyone who asks him. He will point them in the right direction to pick up all of the clues.

Tibalt's stud farm is technically within the boundaries of The Sirkin Dahl. Though sort of borderline to the region.

The surest way for the adventurers to arrive in time to see significant events is to take the balloon ride, which is fun to run.

Errol-Flynn-Balloon-Rider-Seam-Stitcher-High-Flyer- his gnomish name goes on and on but nobody ever listens to most of it... Will give the characters a ride out there as far as they want to go or until they run out of wind. Stage at least one crash into an inescapable canyon and an hour long wait for seams to be re-stitched and balloon to be re-inflated.

This is to make sure that the players do not arrive on the scene too early to see the real action.

If the players come at the adventure by another route, I don't know 'cause it always played out that way with my groups. Some of the prospective guides are out to fleece their customers and leave them stranded. The Gnome though dangerous to life and limb is at least honest and sincere.

There is the possibility of hiring horses and gear as well, for those who enquire.

If in the balloon then it is easy. Describe three riders in the hills. One pair has three dark horses, thoroughbreds. The third, riding a white steed, sneaks it into the barn of a country ranch and sneaks off to where you see him join the other two, mount his horse and take off towards the main road leading from Asquith to Dar Geth City.

Meanwhile a rider moving from the road leading out of Rivertown is accompanying a man in an open wagon. The rider heads off the main road and towards the estate in the hills, arriving at the ranch at just about the time that a party of seven or eight knights on horseback approach the place from the other side.

All this movement only balloon mounted people can track.

As the balloon speeds towards the ranch the occupants see the knights joined by the lone rider and they appear to argue with him and a couple of them tend to get physical with him.

At this point the players ought to ask the gnome to bring the balloon down as close to the ranch as possible. If they don't the balloon gets a problem and brings them down there anyway.

So they land close by in time to race over and intervene to stop knights from beating the man to a pulp, if they care to.

Meanwhile they see the three other riders join the main road and take off towards Dar Geth and one knight move over towards the barn of the farm complex from where he will be just emerging as they arrive panting their protests to the knights.

The Knight from the barn is Sir Michael and he brings with him a white horse lathered in sweat, obviously ridden hard for some miles, and a bag of coins slung across its back. Proof positive of the identity of the thief.

The farmer, horse breeder, Tibalt stands accused and all of the proof necessary to convict him is right on hand.

Good tracking rolls will reveal the traces of the man who snuck the horse back into the barn, if looked for, and this may convince the more reasonable of the knights that there may be some doubt as to what is going on. It just might be enough for a smooth talker to convince them not to kill the culprit on the spot but to take him back to stand trial.

If the players suss out that Tibalt is being framed and that Sir Michael is bent upon murdering his rival then perhaps one of the party needs to stay with him to see to it that he makes it back to stand trial. Three or four of the knights are Michael's cronies and will support anything he wishes. A couple of them are honest knights who will try to see that justice is done. Extracting the right assurances from the right knights will see the prisoner safely to his prison cell.

To really wrap up this case two things need to be done. Tibalt's story of his movements has to be checked out to gather evidence in his defence and someone should be on the tail of those brigands before they get clean away. The only way to catch them in the fading evening light is a swift balloon ride as the wind is blowing stiffly towards the right direction right now and The Gnome seems set to take off now passengers or not. I don't think that he has much choice in the matter since the balloon seems not to be exactly in his control right now.

There is a very small window in which to get all of this done. In order to gather evidence quickly enough before the trial is set things will have to be set in motion right away and it may be impossible to do all this unless the characters split up.

Try to impress upon the players this urgency. To wait or even to hesitate is to fail. They must decide quickly who will go where and do what and set at least those following in the balloon in motion right away.

Since the only promise of a fight is in following the real villains it is prudent if the warriors of the group or perhaps a warrior and a rogue are sent off in that direction. Since investigation is important in gathering evidence then someone who is good with people or with stealth should go to check out Tibalt's story. (What's your problem, not enough rouges in the party?) Sometimes characters other than rouges can be charismatic and intelligent. To stay The Knights hands from hurting Tibalt may take someone of honour and with tact, someone whom the knights will respect, perhaps a cleric or a female, someone simpatico. Anyway, the people who are in charge of such decisions are the players themselves and, as I have said, if they are intent upon making mistakes then let them. Seeing Tibalt safely to the prison is a job for one person. All it needs is an independent witness to keep anything untoward from happening.

The investigation might occasion little danger unless someone is caught doing the wrong thing. A lone rogue or mage might see this through easily.

However too many in the pursuit group will become more noticeable to those being followed and increase the risk of a serious conflict.

If anyone takes to the balloon then it comes down within sight of The City Walls and just before the riders are about to disappear inside. There is a bit of a crash and the balloon catches fire causing minor damage to all (maybe one hp each at most). They can, by a headlong dash, keep sight of the fleeing ruffians. Of course, too headlong a rush will be more likely to attract attention.

Once inside The City, Dar Geth is a hundred thousand people, it is easy for the mercenary warriors to get lost in the crowds.

Investigation is necessary to pick up the trail again.

Tibalt's story is that he went that day to Rivertown to see Morgan The Horseman about the importing of some Arabian mares so that he could start his breeding program. The Mares on order for some time are already weeks late in arriving and the prospects for them foaling this year are becoming slim. On the way back he met up with Friar Muldoon, a local cleric of ALLITUR deity of propriety and justice and accompanied him on part of his journey. This guy knows the law and is a pretty good accountant, strangely enough. The Friar will arrive back in Rivertown before nightfall, having done his clerical rounds. Morgan is a well known horse trader and will not be hard to find. Muldoon will tell of his suspicions of Sir Broderick's philanthropy. His soup kitchen comes and goes depending upon whether anybody of note is scheduled to inspect it or not and the promised orphanage has never seen the light of day. The Friar works with the poor and destitute and hears from them what is and is not happening about the district.

Morgan simply confirms Tibalt's story and puts The Man well away from The Tournament Fields at the time of the alleged robbery.

Friar Muldoon suggests that a thorough investigation of Sir Broderick's charity's books would be in order and he knows the accountant in question and where he resides in Rivertown.

Quinlan an accountant and lawyer is of questionable reputation among those who know. His fine house in the better part of Rivertown is well built and security there is good. Breaking in should not be too easy. Once inside the presentable books are easy to find. The real accounts are well hidden and secured and should present some challenge to get hold of.

One way to get in is to charm the pants off of Quinlan's maid and induce her to leave the door off the latch for you. Of course to find this out will take some investigation.

One side of the party will have a relatively quiet couple of days at Sir Broderick's Estate waiting for the others to return with the results of their investigations. It is possible to investigate there too. You will be struck with the difference between the household's public facade of well ordered tidiness and opulence and its back stairs realities of overworked staff in squalid living quarters.

It can be heard from The Stable-hand and the maid that Tibalt was sacked on the basis of trumped up accusations against him. It is clear that Betina still loves him and he her. He can be visited in his cell and will tell the truth as he sees it. Betina may even try to visit him and if so your character could help in this endeavour.

This will give the caretaker, if there is one, something to role-play while the others investigate. Sir Michael is evidently a bully a cad and a bounder. A thoroughly not nice guy. Yet he is on the social ascendant. He is a proficient knight probably third or fourth level. He drinks, womanises and gambles, none of which are proper pursuits for a supposed knight of the realm.

Sir Michael and his main supporters three or four knights and their squires and shield bearers will make a rowdy and obnoxious showing during the next three days and make life unpleasant if they can for any proponents of Tibalt's case.

Sir Roderick, due to leave on the last day of the tournament, will stick around for the trial with a couple of his stalwart knights who will act as proper gentlemen should and be there to curb any untoward goings on if things get too rough. Sir Reynard and Sir Jackson are the men to call upon if you feel threatened as Duke Roderick himself will be tied up in important duties.

If one of the characters is a female of any looks at all one of these knights might be a very tactful suitor for her. Their behaviour will stand out above that of the other knights around.

If by some stealth the real documents of Quinlan can be procured and delivered to The Castle within two days then Tibalt will have a leg to stand on. Both Friar Muldoon and Morgan The Horseman should be persuaded to attend and testify at the trial.

Now to the real action. The real villain of the piece is Votarl and his two accomplices. They will most likely be traced to an inn and sleazy dive on the wrong side of Dar Geth. Enquiries made there indiscreetly will get you a knife in the back, at the very least. This is dangerous territory as a man could easily fall victim to being mobbed by the entire occupancy of the bar, probably twenty or thirty of them mostly 1st level rogues and warriors.

A patrol of The Watch marches by once every fifteen minutes and takes about a minute to pass. The safe times to leave this place are when The Watch Patrol is making its run through. The Watchmen don't like this area or this duty and will balk at being involved in anything here. There are only a dozen of them ten 1st level, a corporal 2nd level and a sergeant 3rd level. They are in leather armour and short swords and small helm, small shield.

It is not necessary to either kill Votarl and his two men or bring them back to face trial in order to successfully complete the adventure but it would not hurt. However the risks are great in going up against these men, especially in this neighbourhood. Discretion is the better part of valour here.

Votarl is L3 Warrior, Th 16, Ac 4, hp 15, d8+1.

2x lackeys L1 W, Ac 7, hp 5, d6.

If Votarl is killed his associates will give up.

However murder is a serious crime in Der Goth. People killing people in The City had better have an excellent defence.

'We thought he was bad.' Isn't an adequate defence.

Rouges can always make enquiries at their guild and someone there will have the goods on almost anyone of note. Warriors can enquire at the warriors' guild and they will be told that Votarl is with a mercenary company hirings handled by one called Satral. Satral will tell of a black clad man who hired Votarl for a job but that he kept his face hidden and could not be identified. Although he had the accent of an aristocrat.

Votarl and his men are mercenaries and will do the bidding of any who hire them for the right price. They have harmed no-one, merely providing a service for a customer. Players may suspect that the customer was Sir Michael but there is no proof.

No amount of torture will drag the story out of Votarl or his men.

The two men actually know very little anyway. They merely held Votarl's horse for him while he did some job or other.

The correct thing to do, in the case of a nobleman who makes a mistake, is to take the complaint to The King Himself. He is the only one above a Duke who can censure him.

To make accusations against Sir Broderick in any other way is considered high treason. If Friar Muldoon is consulted he will advise the characters what to do with their evidence. If asked he is quite capable of and willing to defend Tibalt and will be prepared to do this without any slight towards Sir Broderick at all.

Any action against The Duke has to be considered an entirely different matter and several steps above the simple case of Tibalt's defence.

Getting such evidence to The King will not be an easy task. The Kingdom has watchdogs to prevent people from upsetting the apple-cart which include such talented people as Zarantin, Royal Mage. Getting anything past him might be difficult indeed. Nobles are important to the strength and stability of the kingdom. The reputation of The Nobility has to be defended. PS Sally could be a nice little love interest for one of the males in your party. She's a lovely girl really. In fact the safest way to proceed against Sir Broderick is to take the evidence and the tale to Zarantin himself, instead of trying to get around him. He knows how to deal with such matters and will do so discretely if he sees it as good for the kingdom. It all depends upon how The Adventurers handle the situation and present both themselves and the evidence.

Adventure Number Four The Dwarven King's Tomb....

I say Zarantin advisedly as he is the lead-in to the next adventure. He has a map to The Dwarven King's Tomb which he will offer to The Adventurers as their reward for services rendered to The Crown, whether he wanted things to turn out that way or not. There is a time limit on this action. Make the day when the sun shines through the eye of the needle just right about three days after the Sir Broderick affair is tidied up. Give them the map and tell them that they must be there at dawn three days hence or lose the opportunity for a whole year.

Getting across The Rivers to the east a little above Frul Yen should not be so very difficult to organise. A ferry can be taken from Hud, Rivertown or River-Crossings to Fontley which is above and west of where they need to be or to Three Rivers in Frul Yen from which a rowboat can be hired to row themselves across The Arakina. However the half mile journey has a difficult landing as the riverbank is patrolled by kobolds who love to fire arrows at intruders before they come ashore. The Adventurers could be fired at several times before they could reach the shore by volleys of twenty arrows at a time. A little further to the west is another angle of swamp with its usual compliment of lizard men, treacherous territory. Nothing is more dangerous than tackling lizard men in a sea of mud.

From Fontley a path can be taken around swinging further north and then east, with luck most of the dangers can be circumvented. It may be possible to hire a guide there for the journey. There is a Siren along that stretch of river called Demilsa.

There is also a swanmay known to locals only as a local ranger called Alminia. Both are not bad lookers. Demilsa a well built amazon like warrior maiden with skin and hair a very light green colour whilst Alminia is tall thin and graceful with a long neck and milky pale skin. Either might be persuaded to guide the adventurers into the area. If they are used people will generally not be attacked on the journey. They are Warrior or Ranger levels 3 to 5 respectively.

Once at the right location the sun will do the rest, pointing to the place on the ground which is the entrance to the tunnel complex. An otherwise solid and flat to the ground outcropping of stone is where the shaft of light will fall when the sun sits behind the eye of the needle. Some loose sand blown over the area has to be shooed away first to reveal the carvings in the rock of dwarven runes and a flat-ish sort of outline of a face. It is *magic mouthed* and will speak the same words as are carved in dwarven runes about it.

“Tell it what it wants to hear and it will let you in, my dear.”

The players have to discuss and decide what it wants to hear.

The real answer is to say that you have come to pay homage to The Dwarven King. Something similar may have an effect in a pinch but each person is only allowed one attempt, ever. It is a stone thing with an infinite memory. Once all there have tried a wrong pronunciation the thing will by no means be invoked to speak again unless a fresh person arrives on the scene. Preferably the pronunciation should be made in old high dwarven in any case. Not many, even dwarves, know this language these days.

Luckily if the characters stuff up, and give them the opportunity to, allowing each one only one response from the talking head, then The Brownie will show up and come up with the answer in old high dwarven right off the top of his head. Annoying these little know-it-alls aren't they?

The Brownie is still looking for its evil cousin and arch enemy, a Redcap. This magical battle which they play out happens every time they meet and never is resolved. It all happens so fast that no-one mortal has a chance to intervene and anything they try should have no effect on the outcome. They are helpless spectators to the constant battle between good and evil. In the end both Brownies will disappear in a puff of illogic by some means as imaginative as you can make it. The battle is one of mythological proportions and weird and wonderful magical effects cascade faster than the speman eye can capture. The reason for the feud is of course never know and would be ridiculous to them if they did manage to hear it.

PS The DC's pick up some NPC's sometimes. Your party does not absolutely have to do the same thing. Other guides are available at Fontley. The GC can make up your own favourite guides.

Coming at this place from a different direction or without any guides should occasion the players much pain. No matter which way they come they will be attacked by something. Goblins as they camp for the night to orcs as they move past the hills, lizard men if they come through the swamp area and kobolds if they take the most direct row across the river.

Shamus O' Shamus The Brownie can tell a million tales if he is probed. He is a regular fund of information, or is it misinformation? Most of what he says is ancient and mythological. Once the tunnel raises itself it is traditional dungeon. The pegs in the walls are devices. Every ten feet there are a pair of features opposite one another. Either wall sconces or pegs can be variously swung, twisted raised lowered pulled out, pushed in etc, etc. Every tenth one is some sort of trap. If people insist on trying them all then they are going to get very hurt very quickly.

The large, solid rock door to the place closes after a few minutes or as soon as everyone is thirty feet into the tunnel, whichever comes first, trapping people inside. The rock entrance is thick, hard rock and is magically strengthened. No weapon wielded by mortals will damage it in any way. The only way out is to go forward and find the way out. Only one set of wall pegs works the door leading into the real tunnels. This tunnel is the tunnel of tricks and traps designed to keep none dwarves out of the ancient dwarven city. The dwarves spared no expense on the hundreds of traps herein. They are limited only by your imagination but no trap should bring instant death. If the proscribed damage is too much then tell the players involved that they tenuously hold onto life, hovering on one hit point each until they rest and heal.

Assign different traps to different numbered pegs at random and apply them faithfully as the players try each peg. Most will affect only those standing within ten feet of the peg or sconce. One main victim may get twice as much damage as those standing close by. Pitfalls onto deadly spikes, bursts of hot steam under pressure or floods of water so intense that they cut through armour, rock falls from the ceiling all are on the cards. If you run out of tricks simply repeat them in a none predictable pattern.

After some traps have been passed the players should get the idea not to try them all. Arrows, spikes and darts shooting out of the walls are always a popular choice of dwarves.

There are a couple of special traps mentioned in the book. The details can be read from there. The secret of getting out is to go through to the end of the tunnel and work your way back from the seeming dead end. In this process only one or two traps are encountered before the peg working the exit door is found.

There is a break in the tunnel which if anyone falls down they are flushed by a violent underground stream into a quiet pool. This is the home of Alminia the swanmay. If the players haven't hired her as guide she will be met there. If she guided them to the entrance but was not taken inside then she will be there too.

The swanmay has a taste for female adventurers, especially pretty ones in a special kind of way and may try to seduce them with her feminine wiles. She is uninterested in the advances of men.

Demilsa is the opposite. If she is left outside the dungeon she will also find this place and will definitely be ready to take advantage of a man in a weak moment. If one is there then the other won't be. Getting back to the party once flushed may be impossible.

The trap room full of self resurrecting skeletons is only escapable if someone is left outside to operate the mechanism. If they are silly enough not to take this precaution then they will run out of air in a couple of hours whether they beat the skeletons or not. There is barely enough time to smash a small hole through the rock to let a little air in within that time. Of course the right tools are required, like a pick. Swords and daggers will not do the job. A heavy hammer and pegs might work. But working strenuously uses the air more quickly. The skeletons, no matter how smashed, will reform within a couple of hours too.

Once a small hole is made the air will not run out for several days and the hole can be made large enough to crawl through within six hours, which is three sets of skeletons. If the players all die then it is an end to that campaign. If one or two escape then bodies can be rescued and returned to life. One trapped outside of the dungeon may have a chance to rescue them all. Of course in extremis you can use Deus-ex-machina. Shamus O' Shamus may amble along and come to the rescue and then wander off again. This is one reason why he is around but he will not adventure with the players no matter what their wishes. The final conflict between the two little dweebs should be staged in the vault below The Dwarven King's Tomb, the main treasure vault of the adventure.

Some traps should be encountered even if the players do not try turning and poking all of the pegs and sconces. Some are set in the walls to go off as people pass by.

There is a room with real gold pieces seeded with gold bugs, an expensive trap but deadly and gold was common to dwarves way back when. Roll an increasing chance of being bitten by a gold bug with larger numbers of gold pieces handled. The bite is one point of damage and save versus poison or die. *Slow* or *neutralise poison* must be administered immediately to be effective.

Once the real tunnel opens up it is crossed by natural caverns and rough cut, none dwarven looking passageways. A tunnel to the right has a side cave with cobwebs. It is safer ignored. The giant spiders inside are save or die poisonous. They will not come out of the cavern to chase prey. If they are to be tackled burning the web half kills them and lessens their morale so that they are more likely to cower away than to fight. If people persist in teasing them they will turn swiftly and bite. There may be only one adult in there and a dozen children which are not large enough to do damage or major poisoning yet. If however the players act stupidly make it three adults at least and give the spiders first bite. Unburned webs will stick to characters and hinder their movements, -2 to hit and damage.

The tunnel leading off to the left is a nest of goblins. People making noise, like fighting spiders, and showing lights will bring a dozen goblins forth 7 hp, Ac 5, d6, Th 17. They also fire light crossbows for d4, making them hard to approach.

The dwarven set, sand controlled door-fall a little down that way is one way to lock the goblins out (which was its main *raison d'être*.) The tunnel perfectly cut forwards leads towards the real prize. If players are careful they can avoid conflict with both spiders and goblins.

Going down the goblin infested tunnel they will be attacked by ever increasing numbers of them until they either die or are forced to retreat, when the dwarven door closure will be very useful.

The tunnel straight ahead leads to another apparent dead end.

There is a secret door there of course and the mechanism should not be too difficult to find. Beyond another x junction one side leads down to an underground stream the other into a chamber which has a well in its centre. A portcullis drops down once anyone is leaning over the well. It takes only moderate strength to lift the thing again. It is faulty through thousands of years of corrosion. Straight ahead comes to the floor trap.

A fall into the chasm of the mermaid could be an unexpected delight for any male member of the party. Whatever the faller's condition she will nurse him back to health before exhausting him with other activities.

Any person's weight on the floor trap will result in them being dumped down there. Shuffling across on the very narrow ledge on the edge of the wall will get you across safely.

Further along is the wall of trigger spikes. People who have not stopped edging along close to the walls will get spiked at least once before they wise up to these. Just past the last spike is the secret door on the right hand wall leading down to the dwarven King's tomb. To get it to open takes pulling out the last wall spike. About thirty feet further along is a huge chasm, rift in the floor twenty feet wide and hundreds of feet down. The rough rock walls can be climbed with difficulty. Once one person is across it is easy to throw a rope for the others. Further along is a cave with a rust monster on the left. Two consecutive hits on any metal item will corrode it beyond use. Beyond this is a cave on the right guarded by screamers and mushroom men. See these in the Orb of AGNI adventure for details. Inflict unwary travellers with hallucinations.. Next is a T junction. Left side obvious noise of digging. Anyone going that way will be pelted by drow arrows bearing sleep poison. Failure to withdraw results in attack by a dozen drow within two or three minutes. More will arrive every two or three minutes until all is clear. The drow will not follow anyone who is fleeing. They just want to keep intruders out.

To the right a chamber with green phosphorescent slime except in one stripe along which a dark slime eater crawls. This is a very large slug like creature with a dark, slimy trail.

Anyone setting foot on the green slime it begins to grow on the soles of their shoes and up from there very rapidly. Within minutes it will cover a person completely. Alcohol or fire will remove it temporarily but it grows back as fast as you can scrape it off of you. The only way to remove it permanently is to coat yourself in the black slime trail left by the slime eater. The way to move across the cavern without getting coated is to wait for the slime eater to pass and move on its dark trail. If being chased by drow characters might get into the chamber before they notice and all get grown upon. Apart from making you green and glowing all over the slime does no damage. The drow will never touch the stuff.

Once through the slime chamber there is a large chamber of white fungi and blind, white rats. If people make their way carefully through the place they will not have any problems but if one person picks one mushroom the rats will go berserk attacking relentlessly. Roll a d10 for bites each round and each bite does one point of damage. When the biting stops there is a chance of disease equal to the total number of bites taken by each person.

The way to stop the attacks is to drop any fungus you are carrying and move swiftly to the exit.

A long tunnel leads to a chamber of bats. Moving slowly and quietly and preferably without lights will not disturb the bats. Any noise, sudden movement or bright light will stir them up. They do no harm, only causing confusion. They fill the air so completely and chatter so shrilly that anyone wishing to move rolls a d6 for direction with a 1 being forwards and a 6 backwards. It takes two 1's to counteract the effects of any 6 rolled and six consecutive 1's rolled without any 6's to make it to the other end of the chamber. Alternately you can stand still and quiet in the dark until the bats settle down and then proceed. Once orientation is lost it is necessary to make it to a wall in order to make out which way to go again. Keeping to the wall 1 to 3 are forwards and 4 to 6 are backward movements. Three consecutive odd numbers will bring you to the left wall while three consecutive even numbers will bring you to the right wall of the cave.

Another long tunnel brings you to a large cavern filled with water. An underground stream flows into it on the right, back wall and out through a hole in the floor. The whirlpool effect can clearly be seen. There is a large canoe floating around and around the whirlpool. It is impossible to get closer than twenty feet away from it. The water is very deep and treacherous. Daylight can be seen pouring in through an exit on the far side of the pool.

If players do not state that they are looking around on their side of the chamber they will not see the small exit hole behind them and to the right. It is high on the roof and just large enough for a small man to crawl through. Once inside it travels up at a steep angle and splits into two. The right tunnel dips down steeply towards the unknown. The left branch has some gentle light showing and slopes up more gently to exit on the side of the plateau. It is a climb down from there of some few hundred feet and up of some several hundred feet. The entrance to the cavern below can be seen about fifty feet to the left and below. A rough, thin ledge winds its way down from there to the plains below.

The players may have come through this without discovering the secret door which leads to The Dwarven King's Tomb. No matter. It has been a pleasant few days outing, hasn't it?

If the main chamber is found... the secret door leads into a tunnel sloping down somewhat into a chamber wherein stands a sarcophagus on a table of rock. The thick, brass coffin lid has the shape of The Dwarven King in bass-relief upon it.

He is laying there with his hands upon the hilt of his sword which lays down the length of his chest and almost to his feet, crown upon his head. The work shows incredible details of his fine robes etc. He has a craggy dwarven face with a long beard and full moustache.

Suddenly a green, glowing effigy of The Dwarven King will rise out of the metal of the lid itself and pivot to hover upright over it. It will offer its challenge in Old High Dwarven...

“Who dares to intrude upon my sacred burial chamber?”

It sounds like...

“Wer es wagen zu storen auf mein heilig beerdigung kammer?”

Most people won't be there long enough to hear all of this.

It is a magical *fear* effect put out by the spirit and everyone seeing the spectre will save v's mind attack or run in panic. Roll to see if they run to the left or the right. Left brings them to the floor trap and down to the murky depths wherein the mermaid may save them from drowning. Right will bring them to the deep chasm where a fall of hundreds of feet will cause them twenty d6 of damage, ten d6 if they make a dex check, signifying a slightly softer landing, five d6 if they have skill in tumbling and succeed in using it, basically falling into a soft spot and using a perfect landing technique.

Anyone who did not enter the room with them has a chance to tackle them to the ground on their way past, thus saving them from a plunge possibly to their deaths. Only one person can be tackled by each saviour before the whole group has passed by. Serendipity dictates that those tackled successfully were those headed to the right and the worst danger.

By special request a person in desperation morale may attempt to leap across the twenty foot gap. It takes a dex check at minus four (difficult) to make it. A failure will see them hitting the opposite wall of the chasm for d4 dmg. This will absorb momentum and they will suffer one d6 less damage on landing (in whatever configuration). If on the wall of the chasm then repeated attempts to slow the rate of descent, 3 attempts for the entire journey, will inflict d2 points of damage per attempt but reduce the damage taken on landing by a further d6. Arms and legs severely scraped and bruised, shoulders and muscles pulled etceteras.

Those who can remain in the spirit's presence will soon discover that it can not hurt them save through their own fear. There is nothing in the oval shaped room but the sarcophagus and one side of the room, which is slightly flattened, there is a shelf of rock about high enough to sit on, like a built in bench of solid rock.

The lid of the coffin is sealed with lead seals which can be broken and the heavy lid opened with some difficulty. Below the lid the remains of The Dwarven King are laid out exactly as depicted on the lid. It follows his contours precisely. The crown and the sword are made of bronze, much to the disappointment of any who intended to steal them.

(If you wish to have everything exactly as in the book then the apparition is pale white and carries a battleaxe and a shield. I don't really mind. This is a parallel reality, remember. Details may change.)

The apparition apparently understands spemen and will thereafter converse in it with his spemen visitors. Old Spemen, new Spemen, there's not a lot of difference. The Dwarven King will extract a promise from his visitors and set them upon a quest to return his crown to a bona-fide dwarven king. It is the crown with which he seems obsessed. In return for this service he will allow the spemen to take whatever other treasures they can find about the place. Anyone excepting this *geas* and not attempting to carry it out within a month or so will begin to sicken slowly and will eventually die. The only way to regain the lost hit points from neglecting the task is to take steps towards following the promise. If the promise is extracted from one particular individual then it is they alone who will feel the ill effects, any and all who make the solemn vow will be affected equally.

Failure to accept the *geas* will result in the door closing upon whoever is within the chamber and it will not open then subject to any mortal force. When the characters within the chamber are a whisper short of death from suffocation the spirit may appear again and repeat its entreaty. If the quest is not accepted then the characters will die of suffocation within five minutes. All those locked without will suffer incredibly bad luck and ill health for the remainder of their lives from The Dwarven King's Curse, which may also be visited upon their direct descendants, should they have any, unto the n^{th} generation.

The Dwarven King drives a hard bargain. He has nothing to lose. He is already dead and no-one can harm him further. There is no other reward that he could possibly receive other than seeing the dwarven artefacts back in the right hands. So The Adventurers have no bargaining power with him. The GC must be as adamant as The Dwarven King and uncompromising. Nothing less can hammer home this lesson to The Characters. The Players must be convinced of the urgency of the quest.

The way to open up the vault below The Dwarven King's Tomb, once the spirit is satisfied and gone to its rest, is to put at least the weight of an armoured adult male dwarf on the rock platform, bench. As long as that weight remains in place the Sarcophagus will move aside and stay, revealing the steeply sloping tunnel beneath. If the quest is not accepted then no force in the world will move the sarcophagus aside and the vault will remain intact. The Shaft is just wide enough for an armoured man to slide down. It is steep and smooth sided and getting back up could be a real problem. Carrying things up could be damned nigh impossible. The slope is well over sixty degrees. The contents of the vault below are 20,000 copper pieces, 1,000 silver pieces and 50 gold pieces and an old and tarnished looking spoon. The coins are not sorted and so picking out just the gold will take a good length of time. The coins are of the old kind, that is they weigh a tenth of a pound each. They are too old to be legal tender anywhere and are worth the value of the metal they are made of less the cost of reworking it. The sentimental value of antiques is not quite the same on the world of Spem as it is on Earth. Perhaps Spemen are not very sentimental. They are a practical people. Silver and gold coins alone weigh one hundred and five pounds. There are 2,000 pounds weight in copper coins and it is doubtful that the party can carry that much. They would have to have a lot of containers to put them in. Containers are sadly lacking around here. Sacks, by the way, would have to be of exceptional quality to bear the weight of being filled up with coins, assuming anyone could carry such a sack full of coins away with them. A goodly number of ropes and pitons are required just to climb back up the slope if anyone ventures down there. A rouge if completely unladen and unencumbered might make it, as ten climbing rolls at minus thirty, without ropes or pitons. Damage taken from sliding down the slope (or most of it) is a nominal d4 all told, as it is a smooth slippery dip. The landing is rather abrupt. A fall from a quarter of the way up or less yields only one point of damage.

If players have passed through the entire dungeon and not found the secret door they may try to re-enter and backtrack through the place, visiting the last six encounters in reverse order. To find the secret door, even searching every ten foot section of wall across the entire complex, will avail them nothing. They can only enter the secret chamber if they specifically remove the last of the wall bolt projectiles from its housing. In order to do this they have to stand close to the wall to get it to thrust out at them.

Give them a very slim chance of not getting hit by it, say an initiative roll against the bolt at a minus four penalty to the spemen and then a dex check at minus four (more difficult) or be penetrated for d4 points of damage. Of course, not knowing that this is the way to activate the door opening their chances of hitting upon this are pretty slim, unless they are going to try to pull out every wall spike (there are thirty of them on each side of the cavern walls.).

Once we establish the impossibility of the characters finding anything new then we can have serendipity take its part and have, for example, Shamus O' Shamus turn up, accidentally step close to the wall and almost get spiked and then in a huff pluck the bolt out. If the characters reach the inner treasure vault then the battle between the two brownies takes place in there with the spemen as hapless spectators. Then they have that long climb to negotiate to get the treasure out.

Once down from the cliff if the party is almost dead then allow them an easy trip home. They just happen to be lucky and not get attacked. If they are still relatively healthy then throw a party of goblins or kobolds at them etc. Keep at them until they are almost dead. It is the GC's prerogative, nay his duty to cheat. If it looks as if you have overmatched them and a group of monsters is about to kill them all then have the next hit by a character take down the enemy's leader and the enemy fails their morale check due to leader loss. It is always possible to make the withdrawal of a group of monsters seem plausible, if you go about it the right way. Or, seeing their leader downed the two nearest rivals for leadership fall upon one another, frothing at the mouth in their frenzy to claim the top position. The remainder of the monsters follow suit siding with one candidate or the other, forgetting their quarrel with the spemen. Such a way to let the adventurers off the hook will work once in a campaign and should be kept for when it is a real life or death situation for the players.

Other credible monsters they can meet in the wilderness between The Tomb and Hud include scorpions in the dry areas close to the plateau, an individual and unexpected attack. Something nasty like an aukumvorax wandering into their camp at night, if they camp out. There is lots of travel along the rivers and lots of water creatures they could meet like giant frogs or huge dragonflies. Things which will not attack them include nixies, especially close to the swamp. If you want to just make a quick wrap up you can easily just say, 'you arrive home'. Personally I think that getting back is just as important as gettin there.

If checked for The Crown is magical. Also the tatty old spoon is magical. If anyone puts the crown on his head even for a second, it will not then be removable short of cutting the person's head off. It is a wonderful artefact, it will fit any sized head but only just, starting off just a little too tight for comfort and then getting tighter. After several days of excruciating headaches the person's skull will finally collapse and that will be fatal. The only way to remove The Crown safely is to get it to a true dwarven king, quick smart. Only the hands of The Dwarven King himself will be able to remove The Crown from someone's head.

While The Crown is worn by anyone, all dwarves who come within sight of them will obey their commands without question.

(assuming they can understand them). The only dwarf who is not forced to obey such commands is A True Dwarven King.

It is unlikely that such an afflicted Speman will discover his power over dwarves. The Crown will not reveal its powers to anyone by any kind of inspection or investigation except by circumstances.

How often would one accidentally give a dwarf a direct command?

The Sword (or battle axe and shield) are perfectly ordinary bronze weapons in every way except that they are of dwarven make and weapons of quality. The Spoon has but one use. It can be used to stir magical potions and mix them in such a way that both potions will work normally when the mixture is taken. It avoids all of the nasty side effects of mixing potions. This can only be discovered by a proper (and expensive) analysis by a good sage. The identification should cost at least a couple of hundred nickel (old gold) pieces.

Adventure Number Five... Returning The Crown

The difficulties of finding a True Dwarven King can make an adventure all its own and there is no urgency unless some idiot dons The Crown or a month has transpired. Then all who accepted The Quest or Geas will lose a hit point every three days. Such losses will be unrecoverable until the quest is fulfilled, no matter what magical cures are tried against the curse.

If the players don't wake up to the fact that they are getting ill, you can visit them with nightmares or something to give them subtle hints as to what is going on. Never tell them directly. If they can not figure it out then the characters would not figure it out and they would die. Should any seek the knowledge of a sage or high priest on their worsening health they would come up with the solution, it would cost a couple of hundred sovereigns to do so.

Algynon The Sage, Rhodamon, Apotheca and The Stone Seeker are all unique characters. The events leading up to The DC's visiting Solaria are rather character specific and driven by the character's actions. It is unlikely that things will turn out the same way for your characters. The inclusion of a Bull Gorgon in The Angle across The River for these level characters was probably a huge mistake and I would not advise you to repeat it. You are welcome to keep such characters in your campaign to be met as Your Players' Characters blunder in their general direction but keep in mind that relationships will be different for your groups. Their interactions may well go very much differently and you have to rearrange your campaign around the players characters. Just let happen what should logically flow on from what the characters do. A quest to find The True Dwarven King could become as long an adventure as The Orb of AGNI. I have learned through GC-ing that you should never let a potentially good scenario go to waste. Good scenarios and reasons for adventuring are hard to come by, the most precious resource a GC has. Squeeze every opportunity out of the campaign. Never say 'you go there and do this and then get home again'. If you do, sooner or later, you will end up scratching for the next idea and wishing you had really used the last one.

Adventure Six.... Murder at The Minotaur.

While the characters were away there were some murders at The Inn. On returning they began some preliminary enquiries but then work of their own took them off again. The murders seemed behind them and so other things assumed greater importance. Now, however, it was happening again and now The DC's had time to investigate. General enquiries can be made of the patrons remaining and the staff of The Minotaur and Argon himself. Rhodigor, an ageing but still only moderately powerful mage, has been keeping a record of the events and knows the facts better than most. He is systematic and plodding in his methods. Who knows, left to his own devices he might solve the mystery himself, but how many people would have to die waiting for him to solve the crimes? Your Adventurers should be, like mine, people of action, people who are motivated to get the job done. Besides Rhodigor, confronted by a murderer would most likely become the next victim. I had other groups playing the game including Raima's Dragon's Claw (remember Sue's character was the originator of the name) They all had fun with this scenario.

The Centaur's weight made her fall through the floor into the tunnel by which the culprit gained secret access to The Inn, an example of how a character's unique characteristics can alter the way a game plays. Try squeezing a centaur up a spiral staircase?! (Actually down is worse for them). If you allow such characters in a 'normal' campaign setting, other races get huge advantages at low levels over the normal speman, make sure that they really suffer all of the disadvantages of their racial characteristics to punish them for their advantages and to make them really different from mere spemen. No point in calling a character a minotaur or whatever if you allow it to be played with all of the advantages of such but without any of the flavour and characteristics of the race itself. If a player wants to play a centaur or a faun then they should play that, accepting all of its disadvantages as well as gaining its advantages. Otherwise the whole campaign is unfair on all normal spemen characters and you will get the ridiculous situation in which no-one wants to play a speman. Why should they?

I recommend for a first campaign all spemen characters and only the four basic character types, especially if it is really a 'Quest for Immortality' campaign. Again make major NPC's characters that your players can really look up to. The Red Mage is a true wizard of at least twelfth level, which seems impossibly high to beginning characters. Such a one should never be slighted by first or second level characters. Similarly anyone being surly and disrespectful towards The Dwarven King or similar characters should wear the consequences, such as not being helped by them ever again at the very least. Allies are important things to cultivate and characters who behave badly to NPC's will soon find themselves without any. Make players wear the consequences of their characters' actions just as they would in any real world.

Investigation is the key to this adventure and again it is up to the players to ask the right questions of the right people. Angel's intelligence was legendary even when she was starting out. If players have earnestly tried every idea they could come up with and drawn a blank then get any character with wisdom or intelligence 18 (or only the character with the highest score in either and or skill in investigation) to roll and if they succeed then you may hint at how to go about the investigation.

There is no connection between the victims of the murders except that they all were working at or staying at the inn. The fact of the murders happening is destroying The Inn's business. Therefore someone should ask, 'Why would someone want to ruin Argon's business?'

From there it is a simple leap of logic into looking into Argon's past for the answer. The Book is not specific but if you wish you can add details as to particular incidents in Argon's early life. The women he dated and the circumstances under which they broke up. The men who were rivals for their affections and how things turned out for them twenty years down the track. Some of those couples might be still together and have any number of children and no reason to envy Argon now. To most the past is simply water under the bridge.

Hud is a lively frontier town and has a lot of adventurous people in it. It can be very rowdy and even dangerous. Make things happen around the characters as they move through the town, to give the place that rough frontier flavour. The Characters don't even have to get involved. Arguments happen all the time and play themselves out without everyone interfering. If characters are used to others' little dramas they will not rush to intervene in every domestic spat that happens. These guys only get involved when serious stuff is going down. A couple or a trio having an argument is all part of the daily routine for them. Two guys fighting is common and it is a matter of honour with which no-one should interfere. Three guys beating up on one, that's the kind of situation which will draw their attention.

Investigations about town will reveal no situations in which a normal person would take such a dislike to Argon that they would go so far out of their way to take revenge. Thus the only conclusion is that the murderer is seriously deranged and making a big issue out of a small and distant matter. Any one of the normal seeming interviewees might be putting on a good innocent act or have a split personality disorder and their normal façade might not be aware of what their demented half is doing.

Spemen knowledge of psychology is not what we have today, so characters can not know what some players will. Players should be warned against coming up with modern concepts and explanations. 'This Guy's nuts.' Is as close as they should come to any of that. The story of the pregnant girl's father is the most dramatic in Argon's life besides the people he had to deal with in his time as a City Watch officer. Any one of the relatives of people he had to kill in the line of duty or arrest who was later executed are all major suspects, too many to find or detail them all. Make up a few examples as required then point out that each person now has so many relatives that this is just the tip of the iceberg. Make the task seem impossible.

Besides speculation is useless. The only way to solve such a crime is to catch someone in the act. Thus the thing to do would be to patrol The Inn at night. Of course you have to let your players' characters do what the players would have them do. They are probably looking for easy answers.

The father moved from town right away, many years ago and changed his name, making tracing him now impossible.

Indiscrete investigations might bring reprisals. You could stage minor attacks on lone players, people giving them a bruising when they are caught on their own, particularly the none warriors. The Players might assume that this means that they are close on the trail of the murderer. In fact it is just a fact that some folks don't take kindly to being investigated and may be completely unrelated to the murders. Such side-tracks can make useful diversions. If the characters investigate these knee-jerk reactions they might unearth other criminal activities and this might lead off into any number of side adventures. Make it up as you go along, smuggling, protection rackets, all that good stuff, are going on in Hud all the time.

Eventually The Murderer will try to strike again and, if the players make up adequate security measures, then they may thwart a murder attempt or two even if they do not catch the culprit at it. Give the Guy an even chance to get away, after all he is good at what he does, he has been successful until now.

If seriously confronted he may choose to try to escape and should have reasonable means of escape organised. A nice chase scene can ensue drawing out the opposition. Those with high dex scores, low encumbrance and skill in running should get the advantages. He has all three and will be difficult to chase down, especially since he has expert knowledge of the area. He will lead The Adventurers a merry chase through underground tunnels and sewers, dark back alleys, people's backyards and over rooftops. Eventually the most mobile of his pursuers should be on his trail alone and have the choice to continue to draw further from the safety of the group or to allow the quarry to escape. At this point The Murderer may choose to retaliate, particularly if the one left alone is not a fighter. Give him the abilities of a third level fighter and thief, not impossible to achieve and +1 bonuses in dex, str, and con. Leather armour and short sword are appropriate. Ac 6, Hp 21, D6+1, Th 17. Looking dangerous to face a lone mage or rouge of first or second level. Give the others a chance to still be on the right trail and then a couple of rounds of combat should happen before they come within sight, when the varlet will disengage from combat, suddenly so that no free attack is given.

If this pattern can be repeated the escapee can wear down the leading chaser in two or three attempts or even catch them on their own as all others lose the trail.

If a character looks like dying, this is happening in a town, the shout of an approaching patrol of The Watch or some valiant passer-by can always be counted upon to see the murderer turn tail and run. Escape is his major aim. Murder is just an added bonus for him.

Character goes into negative hit points. Strange thing in the game a character with even one hit point cannot be killed by a single stroke with a shortsword. It puts hem on -6 hp's at worst.(Backstab success and double damage for natural twenty critical roll (just don't allow them) GC's option at any time).

Character wakes up. Someone is binding their wounds. It may be a random stranger or you could have your favourite NPC come in to save the day every time. It could be a sort of running joke, or at least running theme in your campaign. In a given area a particular person does this sort of thing as a sort of hobby.

While you are in Hud don't forget The Watch Headquarters is presided over at night by The Duke Orland of Hud's Son, Sir, Major Tarquin De Vinoso, Earl of Third March and by day The Sergeant in charge of The Watch Tower is a rather unsavoury character called Malek, who will not hesitate to take advantage of any female character if he can get away with it.

{It's 5 AM, I'm going to have breakfast and go to bed for a couple of hours}

Adventure Seven..... The Trollslayers.

Vendor the Merchant has just bought an estate on the edge of The Sirkin Dahl to the south east of Hud. There have been some raids on his new property in the last couple of weeks by what has been described to him as a troll. It has taken stock from local farmers and even eaten a couple of people. The attacks are drawing gradually closer to his newly purchased stately home and he is worried about the safety of his family and his servants.

He wants someone to track the beast into the Sirkin Dahl and put an end to its escapades.

The job sounds simple enough and the payment offered is well worth the trouble of a few days work. However Trolls are notorious for coming back somehow. So he seeks assurances that the hired company will guarantee to handle the entire problem and take care of the problem for good.

In case of re-infestation he wants them to promise that they will return and complete the job and all for the same up front fee. The Characters can barter up the price but he will not allow them to consider it a one off slaying. They must be in it for the long haul. A price of around two hundred of the appropriate coinage is a good level of recompense but The Customer will obviously start his bidding at much less than that, offering ten sovereigns apiece no matter how long it takes them to do the job. They can with skilful negotiation and good bartering skill bring this up to thirty or even forty coins apiece or even a lower one off payment plus a number of nickel (old gold) per day that they actually have to spend on the job.

At this point everyone is assuming that there is one troll which is doing all of this raiding and the possibility of there being more should not be raised by the GC. Let the players think what they will.

Arriving, investigation involves going around to the local farmers who are surfs on The Merchant's estate and viewing the damage, the places where people and beasts were taken and trying to piece together a pattern to it all. The only pattern is that the raids all occur at night. There is an ever changing number of days interval between raids, so that no-one can be sure on which night the next raid is expected or in which location. With several squiles of land to oversee The Adventurers will soon realise that they can not be everywhere at once. The land is such that there is no place from which it can all be surveyed ar once. It is all up hill and down dale and stands of trees dotted everywhere and houses and other obstacles to line of sight breaking up the vistas.

Organised adventurers can request a set of signals be set up to relay news of any activity to a central point in a short time. Locals will co-operate with these plans as they can but will be reluctant to risk themselves as the next targets of the raider.

Let one or two or three relatively uneventful days pass before anything happens. If the characters concentrate at the house then have the next raid take place in a remote field. If they are scattered around the fields then have the raid happen right next to the house. The Troll tearing through The Merchant's barn to kill his favourite steed is only one possible scenario. It is suitably dramatic and shows the power of a troll, to take down a doughty shire horse in one fell swoop.

Once the event is underway it should take the characters precious seconds to organise and arrive, by which time the troll is well away from the scene.

If they are super intelligent and thorough both in their planning and execution then they may catch The Troll in the act. If they do that they will be, unbeknownst to them, making the task harder for themselves because there is more than one troll. They may even get paid and go back to town thinking they have done a good job before, a few days later, The Merchant returns to complain of another raid.

This is one scenario where it does not pay to be too efficient in the first instance. If they do not catch and kill The Troll right off, (and they should not), then they will be able to follow its trail and the half eaten horse parts that it discards, back towards its lair.

The Troll however is wary and will do things to disrupt its trail.

This however is nothing to the disruption caused by The Pixie Prankster, which will plant false troll prints about the place and even masquerade by taking the shape of a troll briefly.

Having sorted out all of this it is true what they say about The Sirkin Dahl, it is an enchanted area. There are dryads who are willing to seduce unsuspecting male travellers and can hold them up for anything from a few hours to a year and a day. (In this story a few hours to a day and a half would be sufficient).

There are fauns (aka satyrs) who will beguile travellers into a charmed and drunken state and play pranks on them and or use them for their pleasure (especially females). Fauns do not mean to rob and have no interest in keeping property but they will induce people to get naked and scatter their belongings over a wide area which is difficult to search. Visitors to The Dahl often wake up with a hangover from too much drink and bereft of as much as a hat-pin and it can be almost impossible to gather their equipment together. So such people can easily lose a day or two of their precious time and lose some few precious things.

In this scenario it is a boon to The GC to split the characters up and have a dryad side-track a couple of the burly guys, who wake up too wasted to move, and a faun or a dozen strip any females of their pretensions to honour. All this can be distressing to both characters and players but there is no danger of them dying directly from it. However they may be severely weakened. Clerics might wake up without a prayer and mages with no spells in their memories and no spellbook to learn them from, and what good is a warrior without weapons or armour?

The fairies can not be blamed, they are just fun loving, irresponsible folk who mean no-one any harm.

You might allow a couple of the characters to escape the ravages of the faye folk. These can be kept on the hop trying to track down either the troll or their companions. Here is where you have to read your players. Those who are easy going could be the dupes and brut to the pranks, those who would be seriously outraged should be left to roam and investigate, trying to keep tabs on both the troll and see to the safety of their team-mates should give them plenty to do. Be careful of ruining a lawful good virgin with hopes of a respectable marriage (or a cleric whose virginity is an important part of his faith) The rule of thumb is that harmless fun should never ruin a character by destroying a mainstay of its existence. The remaining active members of the team may stay on the trail of The Troll unaware of the fates of their companions. They will meet The Gnome who will guide them to the trolls' lair in his own way, which is as much of a side-track as any of the others. If you prefer you can keep the group together and have them meet all these distractions sequentially.

Let the characters have fun with the gnomes and their hekicopter (or hopikelter) and the complex layout of gnomish defences and other devices.

The important thing is that all separated groups of adventurers should be relatively restored to health and have enough equipment back to function, even if a little weakened. The idea is to have them compromised enough so that one little troll isn't going to seem like such a cakewalk after all. They should be worried about each other's safety and about getting their most essential equipment back for a short while and weakened enough to be worried about meeting a troll even when as fully restored as they can reasonably expect to become.

The idea is that they each pick up the trail and should arrive near the troll's lair at approximately the same time. You might allow them to meet up or you might prefer to have them begin at the entrance to the lair believing that they are alone or just a group of two or three. However, no matter what you have planned things will probably work out differently. The Players actions will dictate the pace of things and the action. They may be sensible enough to avoid the lair, insisting upon searching until they find all of their party. If you don't want that to happen then have the troll attack a group which can handle it before they can effect a complete rendezvous.

About fighting trolls. Beginning adventurers, which yours are, should not know that the only ways to destroy trolls completely is by burning or acid (Acid? What's that?). They may find out such things if they insist upon careful investigation and research before they start out on the adventure. Since Vendor wanted them to start right away that might have been difficult to do. Asking a sage, he would tell them the important properties of trolls for a nominal fee of ten sovereigns. They regenerate unless they are thoroughly burned.

What you must keep track of and they must not know is that hitting trolls with medium to large sized sharp weapons causes problems. Every blow doing significant damage splatters pieces of troll all over the place. Either in a damp cave or a forest, where trolls are most often slain, there are bits of green slimy things on walls or tree boles, in short the adolescent trolls have an excellent disguise wherever they happen to fall. Roll a d4 for every hit which causes 4 or more points of damage (with a slashing or chopping weapon). The total is the number of potential trolls that might grow within a couple of weeks. The main body of the troll is the only part which will regenerate at 3 hp per round. The growth is exponential so that one week later a small splatter of troll will still be relatively small and hard to find. The day before adult hood it will be man sized, a couple of days before that it will be pixie sized, etc and hp total relative to these sizes.

At first aim for the company to kill one troll. If they are separated one group might be attacked by a troll and back it away. Then several minutes later, almost fully recovered, it may attack another individual or smaller group. Trolls are not that stupid. If brought down close to zero hp it will run and they can withdraw very fast. If damaged by fire (or acid?) they will tend to want to withdraw too. Fire does not do additional damage to trolls, only as much as it does to everything else. Contrary to popular belief trolls do not keep burning once set alight unless they are coated in oil which burns for a number of rounds. If a burning troll hits a person the person has to check to see if combustibles that they carry set alight, such as clothes and flasks of oil. The blade always cuts both ways. If you are using fire prepare to get burned. A burning troll will do d4 points of extra burning damage as you would expect to do additional damage with a burning brand or torch.

Once the players believe that they have killed the troll, if they want to just leave the caverns (or wood) then let them. That will be their mistake. Just remember several game-time days later to drag them back to finish the job.

If they know, as in have investigated and been officially told, then allow them to try to scarify the place for troll parts. Give them a chance of success, adjust the degree of difficulty according to the way they go about it. If it is a good systematic search and purge then give them a good chance. If they are haphazard then lessen the chances. Roll to see if they fail and how badly. They may have rolled to miss 5% of the troll pieces, which is fine if there were only ten pieces or less, otherwise there will be another troll in about twenty days time. For a high number figure about six or seven trolls maximum. Some pieces will die, including getting eaten by larger proto-trolls.

Once they think they are finished let them go home, unless they are too disgustingly healthy. In my books I think I ended up with three trolls. Keep trolls arriving and attacking suddenly until the characters are suitably worn down. Repeat troll piece tally and note if they remember to burn up at each site in which they were attacked, not just where the troll was finally slain. Work out how many trolls might grow back.

The campaign is under your control and new trolls can take as long as you like to work their way back to the estate. It may be a year of game time before you decide it convenient to spring it on them. By then they will be higher level characters and should be able to handle more trolls. It is good for characters to have a consistent history and for previous mistakes to catch up with them.

In the life of a company there may be personnel changes. When your Merchant comes back to them there may be only a couple of the original characters around and it may take litigation to establish who has the responsibility to do the job. Generally the obligations of a company are passed on to those who currently are signed to the company name. This may force a previously retired character temporarily out of retirement. Players often neglect to sign characters off of the company roll when they leave active service. You can use this against them.

When they think they have done with The Troll Adventure then it is a short trip of a few hours to get back to Hud. Paid up, let them think that it is over, especially if you know that it is not.

This concludes the dungeon-isation of Books One and Two which will hopefully be weblished (duh published on the web) in early 2001 (AD). Again I thank you for visiting with me and my website manager Bret Nash. If you have enjoyed any part of this or book one then please be kind enough to buy a copy of book two and three, so I can continue to do my stuff. Thanks from Denzil.

Play Your Own Adventures Cont'd... BOOK THREE

A FEW SHORT ADVENTURES

Preamble...During the adventures detailed in Book Two above your players should have gained enough experience to go up a level. If they played Book One first then they will be training up to level three after the preliminary Troll Clearing Adventure. If not they will be training up to level two. It doesn't matter terribly much. I think they should be able to handle these adventures anyway. Of course you could always put them through The Orb of AGNI now, before starting into the adventures detailed in Book Three. Such matters are always your choice.

Role play the characters finding trainers to train them up to their next level of proficiency. The professional training should take a full month of fifty days training but, due to trainers schedules and when they can become available characters may have to look around or wait for a couple of weeks to find a trainer with a month clear from them. One character might stumble across an available trainer right away and another be kept waiting for a while to start. During such times characters have an opportunity to focus on other things. The development of skills other than just 'going up levels' also takes a month of solid training altogether but this can also be split between a couple of sessions or done a couple of hours a day over a few months. In gaining some levels characters may get an additional weapon skill and an additional none-weapon skill as well, which technically speaking keeps them training for three months! We can assume that characters are working on these things during the course of their normal activities and learning things even during the course of adventures so that we don't have to have them totally none-proficient one day and completely expert the next. The new proficiencies are a result of the time they have devoted to the skills both during adventures, things picked up part-time and informally and topped off by a couple of weeks of intensive training. The rule of thumb of a month for a proficiency and of a hundred sovereigns per month of training (Per level training to in the case of going up levels) can be bent a little. The time taken for everybody's training and other activities adds up to an agreement on the part of the characters that they will meet and resume their fund raising activities in x months time or on a specified date.

The cost of training should be adjusted. If they are flush with money charge them at least the full standard rate or even more. If they are poor then allow them to find a trainer who is willing to train them for a nominal fee or other mitigating circumstances which offset the cost. The cost of training should be enough to make the characters poor again and really needing to find a paying job. This is one factor that can help to motivate the characters to risk their lives one more time.

Adventure Eight..... Miksup The Mongrelman.

The Characters have just finished training and reunited. You might like to have them spend a couple of weeks fruitlessly looking for work. Adventures don't grow on trees you know. The average adventuring company is lucky to get two or three moderately well paying jobs a year. As Companies go yours has been exceptionally lucky so far. That is a central tenet of the entire game. Try to impress upon them how comparatively lucky they are. Tales of other companies becoming skint, breaking up or coming to grief should abound.

In the course of looking for a job or even more mundane activities the characters are together and crossing the market square. It could be in Hud or Dar Geth or any city that they happen to have business in.

Suddenly there is a disturbance and the characters, curious, are drawn towards it. They find a mob of fellow spemen harassing a strange creature. Miksup The Mongrelman is a bizarre creature even by the standards of 'normal' mongrelmen. He would be ten feet tall and thin if he could stand straight up. As he is hunched and his knees don't seem to straighten he does not cut an imposing figure. He is ugliness personified and looks designed to elicit everyone's prejudices. He is called as he appears, A Monster! Spemen generally don't appreciate monsters visiting them.

The leading figures in the harassment are members of The Holy Order of The Knights of Saint Timothy. These four brash, young men, resplendent in red military style costumes and bearing the insignia of Saint Timothy's Cross, are puffed up popinjays, full of prejudices and malevolence and cocksure that everything their order stands for is absolutely right. They are intent upon cajoling the crowd of bystanders into a frenzy of racial cleansing hysteria. With the support of a large crowd these men appear to be brave but, if put on the spot they will prove to be a bunch of wankers.

The Mongrelman speaks spemen haltingly interspersed with a variety of pips and squeaks and assorted animal noises, involuntary by products of his nervous condition and mutilated vocal chords. When calm his vocal afflictions are barely perceptible. Be dramatic in the depiction of his plight and his struggle to proclaim his innocence.

If any of the players' characters has a shred of 'humanity', decency or common sense then they should speak up for him and champion his cause. If any has skill in fast-talking, oration or crowd working or has just plain high charisma then give them a chance to display these skills. Let the player say what che believes hes character should say and if they put their point across very well then allow that they have impressed the audience and swung at least part of the public opinion their way. If the players do not have the skills that their characters are credited with then allow a roll against the appropriate skill or ability score and let the combination of player success and or character success dictate the response of the crowd. If the crowd is swung decidedly the adventurers' way then The Knights of Saint Timothy will become threatened and provoked. They are the spoiled brats of petty bureaucrats, rich merchants and noblemen and are not used to being contradicted. Their leader is particularly obnoxious.

Let the argument go only as far as you decide. If it makes for good role playing then let it unfold. Anytime things get out of hand or if the thing drags on and gets stale then have The City Watch Patrol come and break it up. The Knights of St Timothy are not really brave enough to face any real figures of authority and will skulk off. If a fight breaks out then invoke the authorities immediately. Do not risk having The Characters ruined by allowing them to murder citizens in the streets. Such things are not tolerated in civilised areas and even inflicting wounds upon young nobles would be difficult to defend in court.

However, if a character misbehaves outrageously then they must wear the consequences of their actions.

The outcome of the arrival of The Watch will be a return to order and the crowd will disperse. Miksup is happy to try to assume as low a profile as possible but may need a bodyguard for the next few moments and in the present vicinity. There are those who would strike against him as soon as The Watchmen's backs are turned.

If questioned Miksup will tell his tale of the evil necromancer Ejomon and his experiments with transplanting and transmuting things.

If this tale does not raise the ire of at least some of your players' characters then the gods help you, what kind of people are you playing with? Think about moving to a better planet, as far away from them as possible.

If they do not respond out of sympathy for Miksup's plight then point out to them that an evil mage will have significant magics stored away and that defeating such a one would enhance their own power. The Characters should, by now, be beginning to get the idea that in adventuring they are growing more powerful and the vague notion that facing danger or defeating evil might have something to do with it should eventually dawn upon them. Miksup will agree to lead The Adventurers to Ejoman's estate across The Pasquativa River. It is a rare thing for a lone house to sit out in the wilderness. It is surrounded by goblins but they are afraid of what goes on in there and reluctant to approach the place. Among the goblins Ejoman enjoys the same sort of reputation as Salardin. They are superstitious and avoid confrontations with powerful wizards who have established their reputations for ruthlessness.

Ejoman's estate includes a number of outhouses and pools which house his 'pets' and future victims as well as the results of failed experiments. The assortment of different kinds of animals and monsters is quite impressive, as is the catalogue of parts that are in evidence among the constructed mongrelmen who are now his slaves.

There are about a dozen mongrelmen working around and guarding the estate at any one time. When individuals are lost or escape Ejoman quickly develops another to replace them.

In the book The Characters decide to allow Miksup to approach his 'brothers' and ask them for help in getting to Ejoman. Your characters may come up with the same strategy or come up with something else entirely. You shouldn't hint to them what to do but must play the thing out depending upon their actions.

Attacking the place the mongrelmen will be forced to defend Ejoman. They are not all good creatures, some of them are evil but none deserve to die in his defence. Judgement of them can not be accurate until they are free of his domination.

In any such attack mongrelmen and spemen will be getting hurt whilst the culprit himself will have a chance to get away or to prepare his best defences against the intruders. Have him start his preparations to fight or escape as soon as any disturbance takes place. This means that he might have time to work a *_raise dead_* .

There are lots of corpses he has made in the area to be raised, most of them missing at least one body part but that is not much of a factor with undead things.

Miksup knows which mongrelmen are safe to approach and might be persuaded to co-operate in either leaving an entrance to the house unlocked or in creating a diversion.

Examples of these are given in the book and I don't want to have to reproduce the tome here.

Ejoman is an example of a high level mage who is really fairly weak in his abilities to defend his position. The spells that he has are not ones of great destructive effect and he has typically low hit points so that any warrior who gets close to him should be able to knock him out of action in no time flat. He is nominally eleventh level and thus has one sixth level spell and so on. He should have 22 hp and Ac of 9 or worse. I wish I had his original conformation on hand but I remember that he had very little in the way of offensive spells, mostly minor necromantic spells in keeping with creating and controlling creatures and undead. He was a researcher and not a fighter. His best defences are *_raise dead_* and *_domination_*. If characters are careful he will not get much chance to use any majorly powerful magics against them.

Attempting to sneak in might raise the alarm and again, a fight with the mongrelmen will ensue. Those created for fighting, mostly from a base of orcish or goblin stock, will be equal to 1st level fighters or 2nd at best. Others are weak fighters, like zero level spemen.

The best solution is to use the mongrelmen who are of good disposition to get to Ejoman, in which case it should be possible to virtually take him by surprise.

Once Ejoman is dead (or captured, bringing him back to face justice for his crimes is always an option) most of the mongrelman will stop fighting and most probably run away.

Ejoman had some unique magics which allowed him to transplant parts from one creature to another including the nasty *_Ejoman's Amputation_*. or something called something similar. The basement area of the house was heavily protected, partly because I as GC didn't want any possibility of any characters getting hold of these spells and daring to use them. The place is almost impossible to get into in the first place and once penetrated a host of security measures kick in. Not the least of these is the explosive spell which protects the main spellbook from being tampered with. If anyone disturbs it, other than Ejoman himself of course, it will explode and destroy the book.

In The DC's story the destruction of the spells in the book caused a highly dramatic magical backlash. I had a system for generating such magical accidents. This involved a random generating of both an amount of damage from the magical explosion of unformed energy and the release of a number of random magical effects, depending upon the levels of magic set free. Basically I rolled spell and prayer effects at random until the quota had been filled. It could make destroying a powerful magical object or a full spellbook a very nasty event. However many spells are not designed to deal damage and sometimes it fizzles in a puff of *_stinking clouds_*, *_dancing lights_* and *_audible glamour_*. Some spells do not make spectacular or meaningful random events and for others you have to determine at random which person in the vicinity is the target or beneficiary of the effect. Feel free to be imaginative with random magical events and then you can choose how damaging you want them to be.

In the book I made all of Ejoman's important spells and expensive equipment destroyed. You could either do the same or allow the players the discretion to have their characters destroy the things but remember, there is a lot of money's worth there and much greater reward than the adventure warrants. It is important to restrict treasure to a reasonable amount otherwise the characters will find less reasons for adventuring. You don't want to create another group of retired fat cats. Don't forget that, whatever they earn, half of it should go to the taxman and some to pay guilds and churches and some to replace worn equipment. Make every excuse to keep the characters poor, leaving them just sufficient to buy the minimal needed equipment and training. (+ 4 magical plate mail is not an absolute essential equipment item.)

Miksup returns to lead the created mongrelmen and to care for them. He can be an important NPC and should be there whenever the characters pass by that way. The goblins' superstitions still keep them away from the place with its weird 'monsters'. Because of his unique origins Miksup becomes a moderately high level mage and priest, wielding both spells and prayers with alacrity (about sixth level in both professions).

Adventure Nine The Missing Children.

The start of this adventure looks very much like that of the last one, a run on incidents in The Market Square. The mother's pleas to find her child may fall on deaf ears but if so it will be the adventurers who are missing out on a useful adventure.

Investigation soon reveals that they are dealing with a kidnapping. The only clue is the man who looked like a seagoing man and had a distinctive tattoo of a dog on his arm. The tattoo seems to be a popular one in one particular district of the town. If they wander into the right inn (The Lazy Dog) they will see about a dozen men sporting them. The possession of a tattoo does not necessarily prove that a man is a member of an evil cult but chances are that some of these men are.

Investigation will arouse suspicion unless done very gently and carefully. From there it is not difficult to imagine members of The Company being mobbed by half a dozen of these guys when they are caught alone in a back alley. Play the villains as if they had at least half a brain and don't make them strike stupidly or to no purpose. They will not stand and volunteer to fight to the death on a whim nor will it be easy to provoke them to give away the identity of their secret cult or to lead the heroes to it.

Make the players work at investigation and visit them with the results of any blunders that they might make. The Villains may put a tail on the investigators if suspicion is aroused. The characters may well be the victim of a midnight raid or wake to find that their house is on fire around them, unaccountably.

Play the villains as an invisible and very wily enemy.

Now the thing becomes a battle of wits.

The City Watch or The Militia might get involved if there is any fighting in the street. These sometimes have clerics who volunteer a little time to help them in their endeavours to keep the streets safe. Rhabbat Singh cleric of SURYA is one such priest.

The kidnappers are worshippers of MICTLANTECUHTLI and have a weird perspective on life and death, seeing death as their reward for serving their dark lord. Any of the sect should be prepared to die rather than to betray their religion but, when death draws near faith can be severely tested.

Other officers of The Watch, including Sergeants Malek and Wilem, may be met as they are involved in investigating the inevitable disturbances. Don't forget that at night Tarquin De Vinoso is in charge of The Watchtower. He is the most noble of young noblemen and not an unattractive man.

The trail leads to the conclusion that The Head Cleric of that god with the impossible name has his headquarters in Frul Yen somewhere, from where he co-ordinates his racket of procuring children and raising them to believe that it is an honour to be sacrificed to his deity.

The way to get to this place is to somehow follow the trail, follow a child who has been taken, perhaps. The DC's used The Necklace and Pendant of Tracking and Tracing from The Missing Princess Adventure. Yes, if you allow characters to hold onto every magic item they pass-by, they will use them against you later. I probably should have had Zarantin take The Necklaces back after that mission.

Your characters might not have The Necklaces or a rat *_familiar_* to use. More mundane methods could be made to work.

The conveyor of children is called Thin John and he should be about a third level warrior of +2 str bonus and +1 dex and con. 25 hp, Ac 4, D8+2, Th 15. He is nobody's pushover. (if you need him tougher for your group make him so.

Most of his cronies will be first or second level fighters or rouges probably in studded leather at best.

If your characters arrive in Frul Yen the main hangout is a church built somewhere close to a country village. There is a house and farm buildings nearby, almost attached to the church building. The Temple is a little big to be in such a sparsely settled rural area. Such anomalies are not that uncommon on Spem. Temples are raised by contributions from the local communities and may represent the fruits of many years labour.

This is where things get complicated and plots intertwine.

Adventure Ten Ogre Revenge...(insert into ongoing adventure)

For The DC's I chose this moment to introduce them to Bruf, The Half Orc. The idea is simple. He was sent to Hud to lure The Dragon's Claw into the wilderness where Og's brothers could kick the living shit out of them. You must remember in your campaign to make characters actions have consequences which come back to haunt them periodically. You don't have to have this happen at this moment if you don't want to but I also don't mind if you do.

Bruf is a pretty smart Warrior/Rouge, being not spem he can be multi-classed. He is a formidable warrior (around third level) with an almost ogre-like strength and his skills as a rouge have given him the information that he needs to ensure that The DC's will follow him, and maybe your group would too. Bruf is one of a very few enemies of The Dragons' Claw who has the distinction of surviving an encounter with them. That is to say, he is neither stupid nor suicidal. He does his job of leading the prey to the slaughter and then takes off quick-smart, before they even realise what is happening.

Don't even ask how he came by The Necklace, perhaps a pact between villains with the same aim in mind.

O to be a fly on the wall and witness the meeting of Bruf and Thin John.

Bruf, though rough, is capable of seeming earnest and forthright. If you read the book you will notice that lots of mundane stuff is happening in and around the main story-lines. The Adventurers have relationships and private lives and relationship hassles and emotional problems. Sometimes other events happen which are not part of the main story and of which the players' characters are not the centre. This is a healthy thing to do in your game too. Have some times when they are not totally absorbed in adventuring and other things can happen. Even during the course of a story they meet people and can form relationships and make mistakes.

If your heroes follow Bruf then the two ogres, hp 36, Ac 4, D10+2, Th 15, are supported by a dozen goblins who will try to pin down the victims with shortbow fire from behind cover, which is intermittent, and not get involved in mêlée unless forced to. Normal Goblins hp 7, Th 19, Ac 5, D6 (bow 2 shots per round) or D6 (mêlée). The venue has been selected so that the heroes are in the open to the villains and in an area where movement is difficult. However the goblins are under partial cover -2 to be hit if anyone can gain a target (in addition to any range penalties and penalties for short exposure of the target.)

The idea is for the goblins to pin the adventurers down and to harass them with opportunity fire while The Ogres attack them in mêlée. The Ogres want the satisfaction of killing the spemen themselves.

After the battle Bruf will be untraceable.

Adventure Eleven The Armourer's Wagon.

This is another interruption to the ongoing campaign. On their way through The village of Fontley the heroes hear of a wagon load of armour which has failed to arrive there on time. This is another moral dilemma. They are still supposed to be on the trail of the kidnappers but the trail has dried up. Should they take time out to find this wagon while there is a possibility of a child dying if they tarry for one moment?

You too can role play the dwarf trying to persuade the adventurers, if they initially refuse him. It is always fun to play around with dwarven spirits and duels of honour.

It is a day's adventure, two days at most. The place where the wagon left the regular trail is quite easy for anyone with tracking skills to see. The path up to the east wall of The Great Rift leads to a goblin lair. The guess is that the wagon is still in there, whether the goblins meant to keep the goods or trade them.

Sneaking in is a good idea, especially if anyone has any way to become difficult to spot. Waiting until night time, when most of the male goblins leave to go hunting, is also not a bad idea except for the problem of fumbling about in the dark. (It's always dark in caves anyway).

O yes, The Quickling. He is just an amusing episode for the road. He moves so quickly that no-one has a hope of hurting him. He has no care to hurt them either. He is just a little egotist of the 'can't touch me' variety.

I don't know how many goblins there were in this place. Probably a couple of dozen combatants. To meet them all at the entrance to the cavern and stand toe to toe with them would probably have been a mistake. Cat sneaking and with *_sanctuary_* is as good as The DC's could come up with. The wagon was driven into the complex, which has a circular formation of caves near the entrance. The wagon could not have turned around inside the caves. The goblins left it loaded, because they are lazy and didn't want to have to unload and then load it again when the time came to transport the goods to be traded. It is possible to drive the wagon through the loop of the caverns and back to the entrance. Naturally goblins will complain of this and even try to flag down the horses or jump on the back of the wagon. They are all normal goblins except for a couple of leader types at 12 hp, Ac 4, Th 18 D6+1.

Once out of the caverns the wagon will move swiftly enough to allow the spemen to outdistance the goblins. They have to ride the horses hard all the way back to The Village. The Goblins will stop a couple of miles before they get to Fontley, accepting that they have lost their prize.

Paid the characters can get back home but that other, unfinished adventure is still a thorn in their side.

Back to Adventure Number Nine...

If Adventurers run out of ideas to investigate an affair then The GC can introduce sundry random factors to set them back on their way. In this case the wild card is Cat's chance meeting with Tamarilla and their relationship.

By sheer coincidence Tamarilla was raised in a family which worshipped funny named deity. Finding this out would not be easy but once found finding The Temple in Frul Yen is a piece of cake. The High Priest has to move around and give services to a widely scattered population. The numbers of people so twisted as to worship this deity are not so common as to have a huge church in each village and a weekly service presided over by a senior priest. Elicit meetings in whatever venues, disused churches, old barns, village halls, secret glades in the woods etc, these are all on the cards.

Choose a suitable location and have one mole, doesn't necessarily have to be Tamarilla but it doesn't hurt, but the person has to have a reason to tell someone, know where and when the next meeting is. Turn up there frighten the congregation, most of whom are zero level 'normal' spemen, and then allow The High Priest to slip through your fingers?! This is the beauty of The Chronicles, The DC's are not always successful, they can not be because results are rolled at random and no-one is successful all the time.

Such a secret meeting will have security measures and probably armed men who, though they may not be soldiers can still be equal to 1st level warriors. The primary aim, however, is to rescue one small child from death and most groups can manage that.

The High Priest will not only have the advantage of all of his congregation trying to shield his person but also has prayers of his own. This guy is a priest of death and about tenth level, which gives him some pretty nasty prayers that he can use.

Halgadron (Prince Hal) 60 hp, Ac 4, Th 13, D6+1 (mace).

Such a one should be able to escape most attempts to waylay him. PS The Priest and his parishioners are all pretty ruthless and burning people alive is well within their portfolio.

At the main temple complex and home of Prince Hal the list of dinner guests is bizarre. We are witnessing the coming together of some unholy alliance with more than the lives of a couple of children as stake. These creatures are obviously here to discuss some larger scheme, perhaps an invasion of Frul Yen and/or Der Goth, something which will bring a lot of death.

I remember there was a drow agent there, who had an excellent repertoire of methods by which to escape. The dining room had a servery hatch opening onto the kitchen and both heroes and villains tried to use it to infiltrate or to escape. The Drow had the advantage of being able to caste *darkness* into an area to cover his escape.

There were five women, one each of minotaur, drow, gnoll and kobold, two men and Halgadron himself.

The Minotaur, a runt for one of his race, was probably about as tough as a 3rd level fighter. Minotaurs often designate odious duties, like being an ambassador to other (lesser) races to their weaker members, those who are not good warriors. This is a mark of disrespect towards any none minotaur. The worst minotaur is worthy of meeting the best of any other race on equal terms.

The Kobold, even if it was exceptional, would have been no tougher than a 3rd level fighter. The women were probably of no rank or 1st or 2nd level thieves at best, unless they were minor clerics. The drow, I couldn't even guess at. Call him a 6th level warrior/mage. For security reasons he had decided to turn his skills towards escaping rather than have a tell tale drow corpse turn up on spemen turf. He was probably a lot more dangerous than his efforts in the book suggest. The men, two 2nd level warriors, perhaps, maybe even Hal's bodyguards.

The raid was probably a mistake, as it should prove to be for your adventurers should they do the same. All it succeeded in doing really was to get The Dragon's Claw arrested and banished from Frul Yen for all time (as at the original sentencing), on pain of death.

It should not be long before officers of the civil militia are assembled to arrest the intruders and murderers of innocents.

The Militia Captain played it cool in enticing the adventurers step by step to discard their protections before arresting them. If players are adamant and refuse then things could get ugly.

If any officers of The Militia are harmed then the charges and the punishment could get a lot worse. Death is not unusual in such cases. Make your players aware of that fact. The Judge could only extend such leniency to a group which had offered no resistance.

Unbeknownst to The Adventurers the authorities of Frul Yen will investigate the status of children fostered out to members of the sect. The Heroes may never come to know how many children have been saved by their action, that's just the way some things go. Your players might play it differently and get a more favourable result. If they maintain surveillance then they will be lead to some few places where children may be raised for the purpose of sacrifice. Of course, convincing children who have been indoctrinated by the sect for some years may be difficult.

If they secretly search The House they may find the records of all of the children and where they are housed.

Obviously rescuing a dozen children will give richer rewards. Taking proof to the authorities may avail them better than attacking the cleric. If all of the children are rescued then, over the next couple of weeks, relatives of four of them will turn up with rewards for their return, posted shortly after each child disappeared. Also The Heroes will be in good with the authorities, rather than being exiled in disgrace. Even then The DC's decided to rescue that one little girl at the risk of their own lives. It would have been a shame had they returned home completely empty handed. Lord Lytton was sympathetic to their case but he had to play things to the letter of the law.

Adventure Twelve ... The Amulet.

Zarantin is the author of the next adventure. He wishes to procure and destroy The Amulet of Control with which someone or something is causing problems to the north of Frul Yen?

This is a moral dilemma. The DC's should not be going back to Frul Yen, especially so soon. If caught they will be arrested and executed.

Yet that is where the adventure leads them. Luckily they will be in the out of the way northern reaches of Frul Yen, where chances of anyone recognising them are slim.

They meet up with the ranger, Priod Gynnar, who is to guide them to close to where the untoward activities are going on.

Oh, Zarantin's gifts (on loan) were each +1 weapons. He knows the value of keeping his allies alive.

The Young Mage, Angst is a recurring figure in The Saga. He has an extremely nervous disposition and a frail, trembling look about him. He also has a heart of gold and is the nephew (or something) of Salardin.

Priod Gynnar is somewhat unusual. She is probably a half-elf but nobody is sure. Being married to a Spemen Lord is also unusual for her kind. As all of elven extraction she is incredibly beautiful, the kind of creature who would put Angel's modest good looks to shame.

The Amulet of Control gives its wearer absolute power over all who fall under its spell. Those she chooses to subjugate get a saving throw v's mind attacks. If it is failed then The Wielder gets inside the mind of the subjugated and can see through their eyes at will. This makes the Amulet extremely dangerous.

If just one of his minions gets a glimpse of The Adventurers then the controller may send all of his inductees into the field against them. The vassals will fight as if they had one mind.

He has under his control up to one hundred hit dice of creatures at any one time. The Amulet is almost full at any given time and only if several creatures are killed will the space become available for The Controller to dominate all of The Adventurers.

The Party has to cross the wilderness and possibly to hide-out in The Wilderlands for some time. In so doing there are possibilities of being invited to dinner by other creatures and becoming the main course. All of the creatures met and probably those subjugated by The Wielder were probably rolled at random until the magic number just below a hundred was reached. Leave sufficient hit dice left on The Amulet for The Wielder to ensorcell one or two of The Party.

The DC's met a Leucrotta and some kobolds, perhaps as many as thirty, they were not subjected to The Amulet. Cat and Priod concocted to scare them off, mimicking an army approaching. This is one way to handle overwhelming odds when the attackers are small, weak and timorous. The Minotaur Lizard was also a random encounter. Th 12, Ac 5, 2D6/2D6/3D6, hp 56

Waiting for most of the most dangerous enemies to go out on a raid was The DC's strategy. Your heroes might do the same, if you are lucky, but don't be surprised if they don't. Just rocking up should give them a whole lot of trouble, possibly more than they can handle.

The house is an old stately home, from some ancient settlement of the region, and is a little dilapidated. It lacks shutters on most of the wind-holes and doors in most of the doorways. The present occupant obviously hasn't had much time to fix it up.

Off on the raid go 2 ogres, 3 bugbears, 4 lizardmen, 8 hobgoblins, 10 goblins and 20 kobolds.

Inside there are 6 gnolls several spemen, dwarves, halflings and even elves? (elves are immune to charm spells) and a centaur.

By sneaking up on The Man and either slitting his throat or simply removing The Amulet from around his neck all of his control is removed. Most of the humanoids out raiding will never return, preferring to go back to their tribes. Most of what is left in the house are benign, except for the gnolls. They will not fight if they are not provoked but will also wander off in search of home.

There is a beast Minotaur and it will attack anything that approaches it or basically anything that looks upon it sideways.

In the DC's adventure The Ogres took control of the force of kobolds and returned with them to try to gain the house for themselves. They ended up negotiating with the spemen rather than risking their forces in a pointless fight. Ogres like to have a private domain where they can keep lesser races as their servitors.

Accompanying the dwarves, elves etc at least partway home is only polite. They all will be safer travelling in a larger group together.

The Aurumvorax is a nasty, little creature, much like a very large, multi-legged badger, which will attack anything .Ac0,Th9,D6x9aks

Returning The Amulet to Zarantin he allows them to witness its destruction. He had to cast three *_fireball_* spells from his memory and a couple from scrolls before The Amulet failed its saving throw against them.

Its destruction caused a massive explosion and left a crater and a small, magic dead area around it.

Adventure Thirteen.... The City Beneath The Swamp.

The scenario begins with the arrival in town of a swarm of Gully Dwarves. These creatures are three to four feet tall, stout and robust, with arms and legs short for the size of their bodies. They are so resilient to physical damage that it is said that Gully Dwarves bounce, especially when they land on their heads. They are renowned for their distinct lack of intelligence and can be a nuisance. Mostly they mean no harm but they do get underfoot. It takes a special kind of patience and compassion to put up with them, or a strange sense of humour.

Questioned about where they came from some few of them will answer 'Home'. Asked about home they will say it was this place, not that place. Of course now it is that place, not this place. This place is this place. This place is not home, not now. i.e. it can be hard to get information out of most Aghar.

There are some few of some intelligence and one of the better ones will tell you that 'home' is no more. It went ...
'Splat! and Squelch!'

Their former home has collapsed and they have become refugees, displaced persons.

The authorities of The Town of Hud decided that it was prudent to try to kick The Aghar out of town before they wrecked the place completely. All over town there are amusing scenes as The Gully Dwarves run the troopers ragged.

In *The Book Preach* championed *The Aghar* on a whim, just to stick it to the authorities. There was something perverse in wanting to help the little nuisances. However others and perhaps some of your group too will have better reasons, such as real compassion, for helping out either the authorities or *The Gullies*.

In the course of trying to indoctrinate *The Aghar* into leaving town, *Preach* spoke with a lot of them and thus he pieced together the tale of *The Lost City* from whence they had come and considered that their tales of fabulous treasures waiting to be carried away might be worth investigating.

Some of *The DC's* had acquired girlfriends by this time and the one Dwarf which they had rescued, *Bob*, agreed to guide *The DC's* to *The Lost City*.

By whatever method or process you should lead your characters to investigate the area and supply them with a handy *Aghar Guide*. Go 'by the book' if you wish but there are millions of ways to introduce the adventure.

Things that the characters meet on the way. In the book the new-found girlfriends club together and reckon they want to go along with the company. When this bid fails they decide to form a group of their own and try to follow anyway. These sorts of events are ones which arise from the characters interactions with others. You may introduce these people to your characters but getting them to accept them as girlfriends...well it might not happen automatically. Of course the scenario of having another group want to tag along is a good one and could be sprung on your characters at any time. Hangers on often attach themselves to successful groups. The characters are best described in the book. They are first level in their respective professions at best.

The DC's also meet another adventuring group. This one has a Paladin, Cleric, 'Krynn' Minotaur Warrior and a Mage.

The characters, although having met a civilised minotaur in *Devlin*, might not have realised the difference until the salient differences are pointed out to them. The scene upon which they encroach is a misleading one. It looks as if the speman knight is being attacked by *The Minotaur*. If your players rush in to prevent him things could get nasty. The Minotaur, good as he is, will not hesitate to defend himself and his double-handed and minotaur sized axe will do a lot of damage. At a pinch the whole other group will respond too. The Mage is sequestered in a tree and has some magics he can throw at them. Make him a mage of 3rd or 4th level with some decent action spells.

The group as a whole is meant to be an even match to The DC's, or to your group in your case, so that to jump to conclusions and act immediately with prejudice could be a fatal mistake.

The Cleric, while not hidden, is out of sight at the moment and will make her way back from her ablutions within a minute (ready to use her prayers to disable people in the very next round) She being a 4th or 5th level cleric of a lawful good deity will be able to *_sanctuary_* and to *_hold person_* and use similar effects which can destroy a party's abilities to attack. She will do her best to make sure that no-one gets hurt, even if she has to incapacitate her allies. However a Minotaur will not be stayed by *_hold person_* . Once attacked the minotaur, using the principle of first blood, will attack to kill. It is his right even under Speman Law.

It does not take much investigation to discover that the pair were just sparing, even just watching for a couple of minutes will make this plain.

For the sake of Book Three this party was introduced for the sake of Book Four. The story goes that, having been rejected as members of The Dragon's Claw, the womenfolk take up with another group, this one. Peneman's group are new to the area, having arisen elsewhere and achieved some reputation there. They are a tad more experienced than The DC's (but only four).

When the group returns they find that they have lost their girlfriends to this group and they do not return. This remains a mystery until some time later.

Once there the existing entrance to The City happens to be under a poor farmer's barn. The farmer has a problem with an Anhkheg These are very nasty and their special attack, which thankfully they can only do once a day, is a particularly nasty projectile vomit of acid which can just about put a character in his grave. If the character fails a saving throw then their equipment has to save v's acid as well. Also, if someone gets pulled down an anhkheg hole they find it almost impossible to fight and it can be difficult for anyone else to help them. Th 13, Ac 2, 3D6 +D4, acid 4D8, hp 38. The deal is simple The Farmer will allow them to come and go via his barn in return for them getting rid of the anhkheg. Inducing one to come out of its complex of holes can be difficult. Following one into its holes is not a good idea at all.

Once the quest is fulfilled then they are led down into the little that is left of what used to be a city below the swamp. Whatever used to keep the water out has suddenly collapsed and the place has largely filled up with mud. Certain tracts are clear, representing pockets of trapped air in the drowned city.

Once under the swamp the first encounter is with a flowing stream of muddy water or more like watery mud. There are lizardmen here and these are lizardman conditions, where the creatures are at their most deadly. It will be akin to crossing a river filled with crocodiles except that lizardmen are more intelligent.

Characters have a good chance of being swept off their feet in the torrent, especially if they are trying to fight in midstream.

Lizardmen can pop up on anyone in any given round and their chance of gaining surprise should be very high.

There are at least a dozen lizardmen and so to stay there and fight them is sheer stupidity. The idea would be to cross quickly and efficiently and try not to get bogged down in *mêlée*.

Ac 5, Th 15, d2/d2/d8, hp 15.

Next are troglodytes. There are nine of them. They are virtually invisible until you arrive at them, excellent chance of surprise.

Their odour incapacitates anyone failing a saving throw.

Th 16, Ac 5, d3/d3/d4+1, hp 16.

Next is the haunt of an umber hulk. Its gaze attack makes it extremely dangerous, causing *_confusion_*. Your players' characters should not know about this when first they meet the beast and if the players try to cheat by avoiding the creature's gaze before the effect affects at least one of them then beat them around the head with a big stick. As in, don't allow it. Once someone is affected give someone a roll, giving preference to anyone having observation skills, investigation or similar or just plain lots of intelligence or wisdom and, of course, to those in the best position to see. Once anyone has figured out the reason for the strange behaviour of their companions they can warn those remaining.

It is a wisdom check to be able to avoid the gaze or, if blind fighting is possessed a character could even choose to fight with his eyes closed. (This could be dangerous to any fighting around hem). Th 12, Ac 2, 3D4/3D4/D8+2.

The major destination in the remains of The City is the temple which is still guarded by some sort of magical protective shell which should be almost impossible to penetrate. A dispel magic has a slight chance to bring it down, otherwise time will eventually bring down the spell, though it could last for anything from a few more minutes to a few more centuries to do so.

Treasure left laying around is very small and inconsequential. It is great treasure to a gully dwarf, you might even find a rusty, old half of a tin helmet and a nice piece of half-chewed rope as long as fifteen feet. That's the adventure. I'm done, for now.

I'll do book four one day...

Cheers, Denzil.

BOOK SUMMARY QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY SERIES

BOOK FOUR THE HAUNTED CASTLE/ etc.

The book consists of three adventures. Six young adventurers search for a living, a way of life and high adventure.

Part one... A HAUNTED CASTLE... This is a pretty standard scenario. The Dragon's Claw Adventuring Company are hired to clear out a castle which was long ago abandoned. They discover that it is a magnet for every kind of very dangerous and hideous undead creature. Clearing the castle becomes a matter of more than just destroying all of the present none-living residents. It is a puzzle to find out what draws these restless spirits into the castle and prevent it from doing so.

Part two... THE ROYAL ASSASSINS... The Dragon's Claw are asked to guard The King as an assassination attempt is expected. The plot twists as the assassins seek to disable the king's bodyguards by capturing the company's mage and holding her to ransom.

Part three... A PLACE OF SOLITUDE... The Dragon's Claw are hired to clear a remote valley of dangerous creatures in preparation for the building of a remote monastery for the highly secretive sect of Thoth, God of Knowledge. Every few square miles of land contains either from one to several powerful and dangerous monsters or from dozens to hundreds of smaller ones. The Dragon's Claw and their small band of hirelings have to battle every step of the way from the foot of the valley to its head. To add to their worries there is the threat of betrayal and mutiny amongst the ranks of their hired helpers. Can The Dragon's Claw survive these combined forces?

Along with the adventures and the constant threat of being physically torn limb from limb there is the developing relationships between these six youngsters, just coming to terms with who and what they are and trying to carve out a niche for themselves in their world. Can six people with very different ideas and opinions live and work together or will the stresses of their situation force them to wage war against one another in the ultimate test of love and loyalty?

BOOK FIVE... DROW UNDER THE CITY... etc.

Part one... DROW UNDER THE CITY.

The same six adventurers are just getting tougher and beginning to feel confident of their abilities, having weathered many tough challenges in the wilderness of Spem.

This time trouble finds them, unexpectedly, at home as they discover that there are dreaded drow invading the city from below. Bold and brave adventurers all they venture down into the depths of their planet only to find that they are not as tough as they thought they were. Down there they are blind, hamstrung and made to feel as weak as kittens.

They return to the surface chastened and having lost most of the valuable possessions that they had fought to accumulate throughout their earlier adventures. Stripped of everything but their pride they are forced, once again to start right back from their beginnings and accept any job to win themselves back a grub stake, and re-equip themselves.

Part Two... WALK TO DEVLIN...

Hired on as lowly paid guards for a travelling merchant The Dragon's Claw endure the hazardous trip out to The Dire Kingdom of The Devlin Khanate. Once there they discover the tyranny of the infamous Devlin Khan and his horde of evil minions including the nefarious Drow and the very sinister Mind Flayers. The Adventurers narrowly escape having their brains eaten out.

Part Three... THE CASTLE BENEATH THE LAKE.

The Adventurers discover a strange extra-dimensional space wherein a castle is locked underneath the surface of a lake. What sinister forces are at work here? What keeps the castle locked in its state of isolation? More to the point, once they have gained entry into this bizarre world, how can they possibly escape?

Once again the adventures are interspersed with personal moments as the six grow closer to one another, now united by the mysterious 'battle bond' which afflicts spemen who face many dangers together. Now their lives are so closely entangled that they may just end up strangling one another or otherwise bringing about the destruction of either their companions or their companionship. ©.

ZEEBRAN DENATH ... is the first novel which I actually completed, way back in (about) 1984. It was before my gaming days and is untainted by game rules and combat rounds. It started out as a simple story of a young man's quest to save the life of his grandfather by summoning a powerful wizard to help him. The Wizard, however, turned out to be not quite what he expected him to be. Neither did the journey home or the battle to save the dying grandfather as the young man discovered that, travelling with a wizard one is drawn into the magic and mystery of a mystical other world where you have to help elves to battle alien invaders. This book is pure fantasy and in it the distinctions between fantasy, horror and science fiction are not even acknowledged. In this world anything can happen. It is the only book I have written which is not tainted by adult themes and is perfectly safe to be read by or to children of all ages, from six to one hundred and six. As my first book and commemorating the death of my own grandfather it will always have a special place in my heart. One day I propose to write a sequel. I haven't got around to that yet but the book stands well on its own.

Denzil Oakes... The Author.

PS. If you want to send me money, and you are in Australia, a cheque or money order will do, for maybe two or four dollars per book you have enjoyed. Books you haven't enjoyed are for free. If you are elsewhere in the world you will have to get an international money order for the above amount. (I don't know I've never used one myself). Make out all donations to Denzil Oakes and mail to 1 Underwood Street Minto, Sydney NSW Australia 2566.