

alternate  
**REALITY**<sup>®</sup>

*The City*

## **GUIDEBOOK TO THE CITY**

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### ***Alternate Reality-The City***

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## GREETINGS

Welcome to *The City of Xebec's Demise*. Read this Guidebook before entering; it may save your life. The separate Reference Card gives instructions for using your computer to enter The City.

A partial Map of The City is at the centre of this Guidebook. Use this as a base for exploring and mapping the rest of The City. Also enclosed is an artist's rendering of major City sites that may help your mapping efforts.

You'll discover entrances that let you take your Character into other installments of Alternate Reality: *The Dungeon*, *The Arena*, *The Palace*, *The Wilderness*, *Revelation*, and *Destiny*. *The City* is the first scenario in the Alternate Reality series.

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**Note:** British spellings are used throughout this manual.

## PROLOGUE

You're kidnapped by an alien spaceship and find yourself in a room with only one exit. Through this doorway you see *The City of Xebec's Demise*. An energy field moves across the opening. Overhead is a panel with constantly-changing numbers. The moment you step through the door, the numbers freeze. This sets your levels of *Stamina*, *Charm*, *Strength*, *Intelligence*, *Wisdom*, *Skill*, *Hit Points*, and *Wealth*. The higher these beginning Stats, the better your chances of surviving in The City.

### Fantasy Role-Playing and The City

Fantasy Role-Playing isn't like any other kind of computer game: you don't control the actions of a Character – you *are* the Character. "Role-Playing" means you actively partake in the Adventure. Your individuality, intelligence, and reflexes affect your game Character's chances for survival.

Fantasy games generally use a lot of unusual words and terms, so a good dictionary is useful to have on hand in case there's something you don't quite understand.

In *The City*, you enter the game with a set of characteristics (we call them "Stats") that define your physical and mental attributes. As you wander around, getting your bearings and learning what's expected of you, you're also developing a personality. All actions and reactions are noted by the computer and stored as part of your Character.

There's no "set" response for any situation; everything depends on your Character's Stats, personality, and conduct (*and* luck!). The basic strategy in playing *The City* is perseverance. You discover what's good or bad for your Character by trial and error (use common sense).

### Death

Death occurs when your Hit Points drop to 0.

There are many ways to die in *The City*: Poison, Disease, Curses, hunger and thirst, losing battles, getting too tired, or turning off your computer without saving your Character.

When you die, your Character is removed from the Character Disk. Therefore, it's crucial to make backups everytime you save a Character.

## STATS

The values at the top of the screen show all you know for certain about your Character. Increasing them is crucial for your development. Stats are increased by certain Potions, by a first visit to any Guild, and by moving up a Character Level. They can be temporarily increased by certain Spells. *Charm*, *Strength*, and *Intelligence* also improve with use.

**Experience** is gained through Encounters with life forms in The City (you start the game with Experience points and Character Level at 0). The more Encounters you survive, the more Experience points you gain.

When Experience builds to somewhere between 250 and 300, you move up a Character Level (all your Stats influence how many Experience points you need). This usually increases other Stat points as well. Each Character Level requires about twice as many Experience points as the one before.

**Stamina** is important if you're to survive. This Stat determines your health, endurance, and how long you can hold up in battle.

**Charm** determines how other life forms react to you. If you aren't "charming" enough, you're more likely to be attacked without provocation. Bribing an opponent is easier for a "charming" Character; and the battle tactic of *charming* (an Evil act – see *Encounters*) requires a great deal of Charm. The more you use these tactics, the higher your Charm level becomes.

**Strength** is vital when you're fighting. The stronger you are, initially, the better, since you enter The City armed with nothing but your bare hands. Later, when you acquire Weapons, how well you're able to use them depends on Strength and Skill. Strength also determines the size and number of objects you can carry. Fighting prolonged battles in which you're ultimately the victor improves your Strength.

**Intelligence** enhances your Wisdom and is crucial for *tricking* your enemies (see *Encounters* – this is an Evil act). Using your Intelligence helps to increase it.

**Skill** helps you avoid blows from an adversary. It also helps in wielding certain close-combat Weapons during battle: Short Swords, Daggers, Stillettoes, and the like.

**Wisdom** enhances your Intelligence. It's important when you're trying to decide whether or not a Potion is one you want to *quaff* (see *Potions*).

**Hit Points** are very important: the more you have, the harder you are to kill (death occurs when Hit Points go to 0)! As you build Strength and Experience, you also build Hit Points.

*You are closely monitored! Many things, including your personality, are constantly being taken into account by the computer. But the Stats on the screen don't tell the whole story.*

## Physical Speed

Speed controls how swiftly you can escape disagreeable Encounters. It also governs how fast you can walk. Speed is adversely affected by many things, including carrying large loads and getting too cold.

When you enter one Guild (discover *which* one for yourself!), you're given an increase in Speed. That's the only time you'll ever know exactly how high this Stat is.

## Moral Alignment

You enter The City with Neutral morality (neither Good nor Evil). It's up to you to develop your personality. The City is designed to be harder on Evil Characters than on Good ones (although, as in "real" life, it's often difficult to see the whole picture).

Evil acts include things such as *charming* and *tricking* Good or Neutral life forms, or *attacking* them with no provocation (see *Encounters*).

To develop a Good Character, you must really be on your toes! Try to avoid battles whenever you can, especially with Good life forms. Be careful about which Guilds you join and what sorts of Spells you use. The straight and narrow is not an easy path!

Use common sense in determining what makes up Good or Evil behaviour. If something *seems* like a nasty thing to do, it probably is!

## GETTING AROUND IN THE CITY

During the first few days in The City, you're extremely vulnerable to foul play (of which there is an annoying amount). The safest area is near the *Floating Gate*. Of course, safety isn't your only consideration; there are benefits to discover in the more dangerous locales (cheaper food and lodging, better treasures, etcetera).

Keep a low profile until you're familiar with the ways of The City. And, avoid Encounters with life forms that are obviously superior (don't tease a Wizard during these early days!). **Note:** *Save games and backup your Character Disk regularly.*

Once you're familiar with The City Square (the area marked on the enclosed Map), it's time to be more daring and explore further afield.

### Time

A City year has twelve months, 30 days in each. There are 24 hours in a day, divided into 12 hours of darkness and 12 hours of light (allowing for dusk and dawn). Each AR hour is equal to approximately 4 actual minutes. However, when you're sleeping in an Inn, working, or attending classes at a Guild, time passage is (thankfully) speeded up so you don't spend forever waiting to wake up, finish work, or get out of school!

### Weather

Rain, cold, and heat can hit at any time in The City. The weather can affect your Stats if you aren't dressed properly, so it's a wise idea to ensure that you're adequately protected against the elements. If you spend too much time in the rain, for example, without proper attire, a bad cold could be the consequence! Heatstroke or a chill are other possible results of being unprepared. Being out in severe weather can make you tire more easily, too; and heat definitely produces thirst!

### Mapping

Use the 64 x 64 grid in the centre of this manual for building your Map of The City. It's a good idea to make photocopies of the grid and keep the original intact (everyone makes mistakes!).

If you look closely at The City's walls, you'll notice faint, vertical lines or subtle differences in the shading, approximately six "steps" apart (depending on your Speed). This distance corresponds to one square on the grid.

In the daytime, you can use the position of the sun to keep track of which direction you're going. At night or when it's raining, you need a Compass (see *Compass*).

### Secret Doors and One-Way Walls

A Secret Door looks like a regular wall, but you can walk through it. One-Way Walls are visible on one side; you can pass through the invisible side, but trying to go through the visible one will only prove embarrassing!

## ITEMS AND TREASURE

How much you can carry depends on Strength and Stamina, plus the size and weight of the items you're lugging. Check your Inventory occasionally to see how efficiently you're managing your objects. Otherwise, you may be unpleasantly surprised when items start falling on the ground.

You can drop objects at any time during gameplay (press **D**). Any item you drop can be picked up again (press **G**), *if* it hasn't been stolen by Thieves or whisked away by magic.

Carrying objects is not the same as using them. Press **U** and follow the prompts to use an item. This goes for absolutely anything you carry, except a Compass (it's always in use, if you own it).

Some objects are listed in your Inventory permanently, whether you actually possess them or not. If you aren't sure whether you own an item, try to use it.

Treasure (found lying about or acquired after a successful Encounter) takes many forms: Watches, Gems and Jewels, Money, Weapons and Armour, and Potions. All Treasure, except Money, is potentially Magical or Cursed. Magical items are usually very valuable; Cursed items can be a source of great despair.

### Clothing

You enter The City with absolutely no clothing. Although this arrangement is fine for nudists, an Adventurer could be in real trouble if there's a sudden cooling trend or a rainstorm. Shops offer clothing in all price ranges and weather-protection values. Use common sense in deciding which items of clothing to buy.

Aside from its advantages in protecting you from the elements, clothing also has a "dapper" value. Some life forms you Encounter are influenced by the style, fabric, or colour of what you wear.

To wear an article of clothing, press **U** and follow the prompts.

### **Food Packets and Water Flasks**

As you step through the portal into The City, you see that you've been supplied with three Food Packets and three Water Flasks. These are important staples as you will become hungry and thirsty in your travels and may not always be near a Tavern.

To use a Food Packet or Water Flask, press **U** and follow the prompts. Replenish your stock at a convenient Tavern.

### **Compass**

This is the single most important item for a new Character to own in The City. Without a Compass, it's very easy to get lost. As soon as you enter The City, go to the nearest Shop (if it's closed, come back the instant it's open). Tell the shopkeeper you aren't interested in his stock and he'll offer to sell you a Compass. Buy it!

Once purchased, your Compass is displayed at the left of your screen. The direction you're heading is always topmost on the Compass; the arrow always points North.

### **Watch**

Usually, to find out the time, you must go into an Inn. However, there will be occasions when you aren't near an Inn and could use a good Watch.

A Watch is a precious commodity in The City; you can't buy it in a Shop, but must find it in Treasure or after an Encounter. To use your Watch, press **U** and follow the prompts.

### **Gems and Jewels**

These valuable items aren't legal tender in The City, but they can be exchanged for Money at any Bank. Some Banks offer more than others (occasionally, Gems or Jewels are absolutely worthless).

### **Money**

Currency in The City is in Gold, Silver, and Coppers. One Gold piece is worth 10 Silvers; one Silver is worth 10 Coppers. Naturally, carrying your money in Gold and Silver is easier than carrying it all in Coppers. When you find yourself with more cash than you can easily tote, open a Bank account. Just be sure to keep enough currency in your pocket for food and lodging.

### **Weapons and Armour**

Even if you abhor violence, you need a Weapon for self-defence and Armour for personal safety. Some creatures in The City will attack you no matter how nice you are.

There are two ways to acquire Weapons and Armour:

1. Finding them after an Encounter;
2. Buying them from a Smithy.

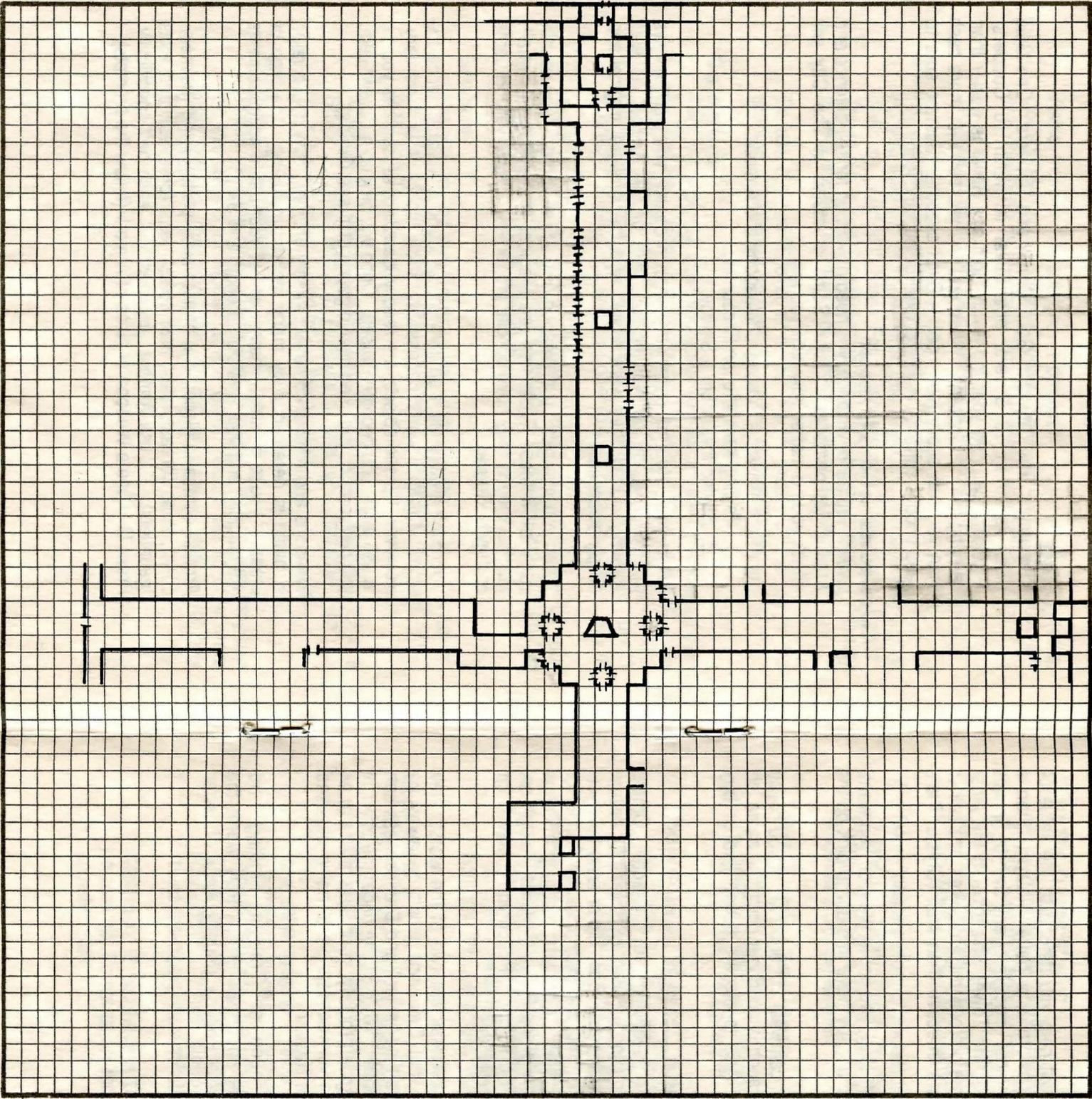
When you defeat an opponent in an Encounter, you won't always get the Weapon he was fighting with or the Armour he was wearing. Often, they were broken in battle, or were magical and simply disappeared!

When you first pick up a Weapon or piece of Armour, you usually can't tell if these Treasures are Magical or Mundane (normal). Magical means they have special properties: they're very valuable or they're Cursed.

You can't always tell if an item you've found is Magical, since the word *Magical* won't necessarily show up in your Inventory. However, Cursed objects are readily identified; as soon as you try to use them, you become Cursed. Once you pick up a Cursed item, you can't drop it; you need help to get rid of it (see **Guilds**).

Weapons and Armour come in a variety of types. Any item's value in battle is determined by many factors, including: the type of creature you're fighting; whether or not your battle accoutrements are Magical; and your levels of Strength and Skill.

Armour comes in pieces that protect body parts: head (helmets, caps), torso (breastplates, mail coats), legs (greaves), and arms (gauntlets). To use Armour, you must use each part specifically. Press **U** to use a Weapon or piece of Armour (follow the prompts).



# The City



Here are a few points that will help you determine the value of certain armaments: A Longsword is a better Weapon than a Dagger; a Flamesword is the most effective of any Sword; Shields come in all sizes and shapes, the Tower Shield being the most defensive; any Mail offers more protection than Quilted or Leather Armour; Plate Armour is more effective than Mail (Crystal Plate is the strongest!).

If, while carrying the maximum load, you find a Weapon you want, drop one of the Weapons you already have in order to pick up the new one.

Weapons, even Magical ones, can wear out or break. If you notice that a formerly formidable Weapon is no longer doing the same job in Encounters, it's probably time to discard it and find or buy another.

### Potions

Some Potions are beneficial in advancing your Character. Others are just the opposite. When you find a Potion, *examine* it for colour. For more information, *taste*, then *sip* it. Each sip or taste tells you a little more about the Potion. You can then save the Potion for later or *quaff* it to get it's full effect. **Caution:** *Sipping a Potion can cause you to receive some of the Potion's effects (though not as strongly as if you quaffed it).* To use a Potion you've saved for later, press **U** and follow the prompts.

Potions of Delusion or Drunkenness are two of the worst; they aren't deadly, like Poisons, but Delusions won't go away by themselves (many Potions are time-limited) and Drunkenness can take quite a long time to disappear. When you're under the effect of these Potions, you can't navigate properly, your Stats aren't at all what they appear, and you're very susceptible to being attacked by unfriendly life forms. Find a Healer!

There are also Potions, such as Treasure-Finding and Invulnerability, that make the Potion-taking risk truly worth the trouble. The effects of these Potions usually wear off after awhile.

## EMPLOYMENT

Part-time jobs may be available to you (*if* you meet the qualifications) at Inns, Taverns, and Banks. There is a minimum wage (depending on the job), but part-time workers do not receive any benefits or job security; job availability, duration, and wages are all determined solely by the "boss." You decide whether to accept or reject the job offer.

Some jobs are more strenuous than others, but all result in some degree of fatigue. There is also the risk of on-the-job injury (you can lose Hit Points); danger is directly related to the type of work (and there's no Workmen's Compensation!).

**Bellhops, Janitors, and Desk Clerks** are the jobs available at Inns. You must have a certain level of Strength to work as a Bellhop. Stamina is important for a Janitor's job, Charm for the Desk Clerk position.

**Bouncers, Hosts, and Dishwashers** are in demand at Taverns. Strength is the main criteria for Bouncers, Hosts must have Charm, and a Dishwasher has to have enough Skill to avoid breaking the glassware.

**Guards, File Clerks, and Coin Rollers** are necessary at Banks. Bank jobs pay more than any others, but they also have higher requirements. A Guard needs Strength; a File Clerk needs high Intelligence; and a Coin Roller must be *very* honest (Evil Characters need not apply).

## PLACES

There are six types of locations in The City. Below is an explanation of these places and the way you can interact with them.

### Inns

Inns offer lodging - for a price. They're also Time and Date information centres. When you sleep in an Inn, you're offered several choices of accommodations. The better the room, the faster you're likely to rebuild lost Hit Points. You use up nourishment while sleeping, so be careful about sleeping 'round-the-clock; it's humiliating for an adventurer to die in his sleep!

**Caution:** If you have a Disease or are Poisoned, do *not* try to restore Hit Points at an Inn. Sleeping under these conditions is usually fatal!

## **Taverns**

When you buy food and beverage at a Tavern, you automatically consume them. The exception is when you buy Food Packets and Water Flasks. These must be used (press U) in order to be beneficial. It isn't necessary to be in a Tavern to use Food Packets or Water Flasks.

Make friends in Taverns by buying rounds of drinks for the house. Everytime you buy a round, you endear yourself further to the Tavernkeeper and his customers. This comes in handy if you're broke and hungry and enter a Tavern where you're known.

Pay attention to food items you purchase. Some of them not only satisfy your immediate hunger, but also add Food Packets to your Inventory! If an item you want (Food Packets, for example) isn't on the menu, come back in an hour (AR time) after the menu changes.

Taverns serve alcoholic beverages; but, as in real life, drink only in moderation. If you're drunk, movement is hampered, manipulating screens is difficult, and you can even black out! Find an Inn and sleep it off.

## **Banks**

Banks offer investment plans for your money. The higher the interest rate, the greater the risk. It's a good idea to spread your fortune between the Banks and account types; don't put all your eggs in one basket!

Banks are exchequers where you can sell Gems and Jewelry. But they have regular hours; you can't do business in the middle of the night!

## **Smithies**

As you approach a Smithy, you may hear the Smith hammering away on his anvil. This helps if you're trying to find one of these establishments that's hidden away in an obscure corner of The City.

Smithies offer a variety of Weapons and Armour (these are never Magical or Cursed and inventories change hourly, AR time). Prices (and quality!) vary greatly, so haggling is essential. However, don't be misled; the items for sale in Smithies aren't the only Weapons in The City. Many items you find after Encounters are not available in any Smithy.

## **Shops**

Enter a Shop and you're offered a menu of the shopkeeper's wares. All manner of Clothing is available for sale. Try to bargain for a lower price, but don't insult the shopkeeper or he will ask you to leave! Say **NO** when he wants to show you his stock and he'll offer to sell you a Compass.

If the Clothing you're looking for is not available, try another Shop. Or, come back later; shopkeepers update their stock every AR hour (when you aren't on the premises).

## **Healers**

Healers can: Restore Sight (heal Drunkenness); Restore Clarity (remove Delusions); Cleanse Poison; Diagnose Diseases; Cure Diseases; and Heal Wounds (both Major and Minor).

If you've been hit during an Encounter or become ill or poisoned, see a Healer as soon as possible. There are some effects of Disease or Poison that don't show up right away, so don't wait!

Like doctors everywhere, Healers charge a fee for their services. The prices usually go up on successive visits, but there's a way around this inflation: Wait 24 hours (AR time) and return. The prices should go back down to a reasonable level.

Occasionally, you'll visit a Healer and discover that he isn't in! When this happens, you just have to find The City's only other clinic, or wait until the Healer comes back from his rounds.

## **Guilds**

The first time you enter a Guild, you're rewarded with Character-enhancing knowledge. For a fee, any Guild will help you get rid of Curses.

You may also join a Guild, but they are very particular about accepting new pledges. Don't expect to be welcomed as a member on your very first visit. Each Guild has certain Stat and Character Level requirements for membership candidates (these include the Stats at the top of the screen, as well as Physical Speed, Moral Alignment, and other Stats that you can't see). Requirements are different for every Guild.

You can belong to as many Guilds as will accept you; membership is for life.

## SPELLS

Once you're accepted into a Guild, you're given the opportunity to learn a Spell. You must attend classes on a specified number of consecutive days in order to learn the Spell. These classes last 8 hours (AR time), so you can become hungry, thirsty, and tired while learning. If you miss a day of class, you have to make it up.

Each Guild has a limited number of Spells that it can teach. The Guild "director" selects which Spell you're allowed to learn and will never offer you classes in a Spell that you already know. The quantity of items you're carrying necessarily limits the number of Spells you can acquire.

When you Cast a Spell, there's no guarantee it will work! The more you use a particular Spell, the more your *ability* to use it increases (just as Strength improves with fighting); the better you know the Spell, the more likely it is to have an effect. Casting Spells makes you tired, so use them with care. **Caution:** *Spells can backfire and cause you to lose Hit Points.*

## POISON

Swallowing poisonous Potions causes you to sustain initial Hit Point and neurological damage in line with the strength of the Poison. If you're lucky enough to find a Potion that cures Poison, drink it! Otherwise, find a Healer right away! Your Stats will continue to go down until you eventually die.

## DISEASE

Left untreated, Disease is almost always fatal. Contracting a Disease results in Hit Point and neurological damage in line with the severity of the infection (although, some Diseases don't show effects until several days have passed - an incubation period). If you get a Disease, drink a Potion that Cleanses or seek out a Healer. If you're clawed or bitten in an Encounter, find a Healer to prevent possible infection.

There are three ways to contract Disease:

1. Contact with bacteria from Mold and Slime;
2. Being clawed by a Diseased creature;
3. Being bitten by a Diseased creature.

## ENCOUNTERS

It's common to Encounter other life forms. Some areas of The City have a higher probability of Encounters than others. Also, Encounters are more common at night and when it's raining than they are on sunny afternoons.

The five categories of Encounters are listed below, in the order most favourable to you:

1. You surprise a life form;
2. You notice a life form (before it sees you);
3. You see a life form (at the same time it sees you);
4. You are noticed by a life form (before you see it);
5. You are surprised by a life form.

In an Encounter, you're given several options (do nothing at all and you may be attacked):

- 1) Attack your opponent. You move offensively, while maintaining a decent defence;
- 2) Trick an opponent, if you're Intelligent. You aren't prepared for defence if a Trick fails; plus, it's an Evil act if used against a Good or Neutral life form who hasn't attacked you first;
- 3) Charm an opponent if your Charm level is high (also an Evil act, if you're the first to attack);
- 4) Offer an item to a life form, if you have something he'll accept. (a Good act that may even save your life);
- 5) Leave to get out of the Encounter. Sometimes, this is the only solution;
- 6) Lunge at your opponent; this is a two-handed blow that lands with great force. If it fails, you have virtually no defence.

Here are some important commands not shown on any menu ("exploring" means walking around in The City when you're not in an establishment, Encounter, or other sort of interaction).

- C** Cast a Spell (you can't cast Spells in the Inn);
- D** Drop an item or check your Inventory;
- G** Get an item you've dropped or discovered;
- U** Use an item or check your Inventory;
- W** Switch Primary and Secondary Weapons;
- P** Pause the game (this suspends all time and activity; press any key to continue);
- S** Save a game (you can't save games during Encounters);
- ?** See a list of the above commands.

Tailor your Encounter strategy to fit your condition and the kind of life form confronting you. It's easier to trick a Warrior than a Master Thief. Don't expect to charm or trick mindless life forms; you'd look pretty silly trying to charm Mold!

## LIFE FORMS

There are many life forms in The City. Some are Good and some are Evil. The Good guys are usually out on the streets during daylight hours and the Evil ones at night and in the rain. The music accompanying the appearance of a life form gives you a clue to its alignment: heavy, foreboding music indicates an Evil being; lighter, more cheerful sounds mean the Encounter is of a friendlier nature.

Below is a list of some of the beings you may Encounter in The City.

**Paupers** have no ambition or have met with some catastrophe that has put them in dire straits.

**Commoners** possess no special skills or distinctions. This is your class when you first enter The City.

**Merchants** work hard to keep The City's economy healthy. You usually see these capitalist types on their way to or from wheeling-and-dealing.

**Couriers** deliver messages and parcels.

**Guards** police The City. Don't cross them! If you're being attacked by Guards, it probably means you've become Evil.

**Gladiators** fight in the Arena games.

**Noblemen** live in the Palace and are fond of Arena games. Rich and powerful, they're attended by private Guards when out in public.

**Dwarves** resist many Poisons and Magic Spells, have excellent night vision, and are terrific close-combat fighters.

**Mages and other magical types** dwell in The City. Most are associated with Guilds or other learning institutions. Acolytes, Novices, and Wizards belong to this category.

**Thieves** take anything that isn't nailed down! They abound in The City and each has his own criminal specialty (Muggers, Cutthroats, etc.).

**Assassins** strike swiftly, without warning. One blow can be the end of even the strongest Character.

**Giant Rats and Wolves** carry Rabies and love to share it by biting and clawing you.

**Brown Mold and Black Slime** leave you with horrible Diseases that are neither diagnosed nor cured easily.

**Imps** lash out with long, dagger-like, poisonous tails. They're nasty creatures; avoid them!

**Dragons** attack with claws and flame. There are Blue Dragons and Green Dragons, small and large. They usually can't be defeated with ordinary Weapons, so use caution!

**Wraiths, Ghosts, Spectres, and Zombies** hover menacingly. They're Evil creatures that require a stout heart in any adventurer who Encounters them.

**Night Stalker** is a legendary creature of the night. It's an extremely powerful beast that no one can be sure doesn't exist.

## EPilogue

The object of your sojourn in The City is to become oriented to Alternate Reality, build your Stats, and become the sort of Adventurer who can survive hardships, fight heroic battles, and solve the quests presented in *The Dungeon* and subsequent adventures.



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