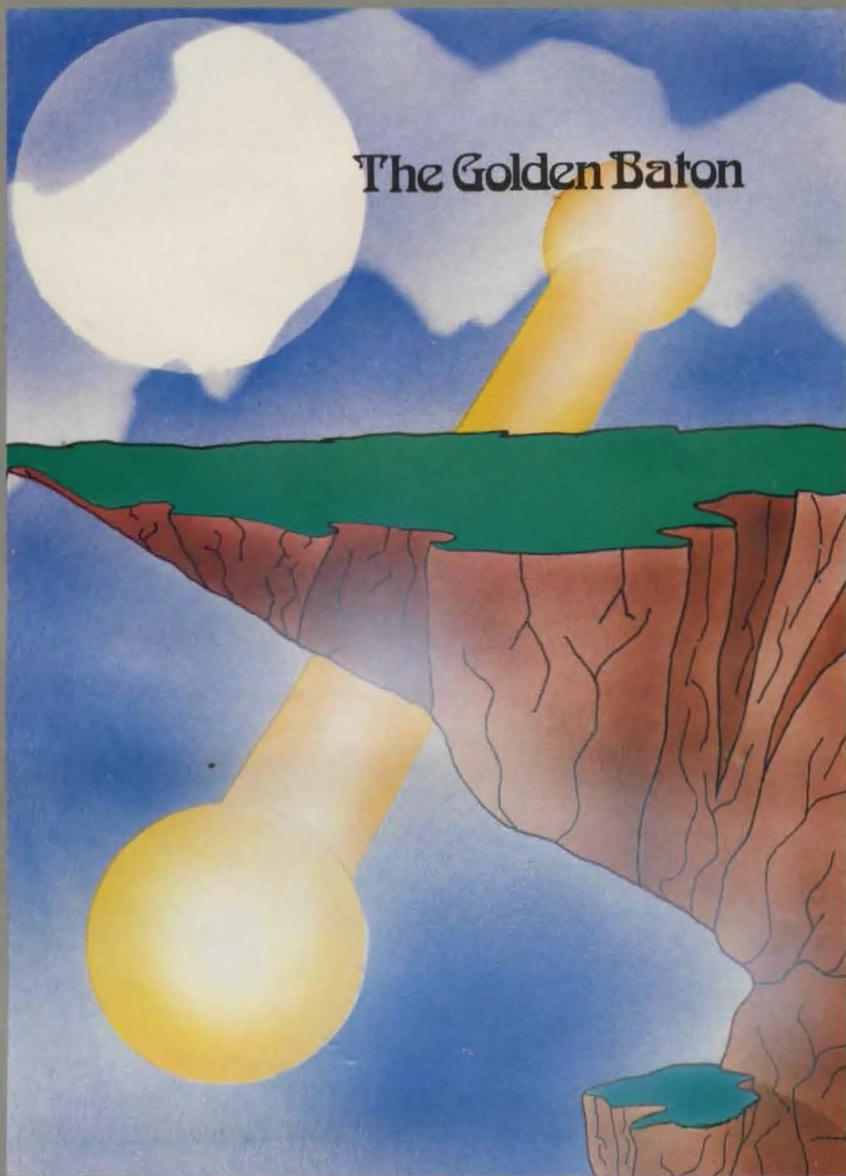


# The Golden Baton



# THE GOLDEN BATON®

Dark clouds drift ominously across the rising moon, you cringe as the night silence is suddenly shattered by the fearsome howl of some fell creature deep within the forest. Weary from travelling, unable to force yourself onward, you sink to the ground and lean back against the bole of a huge, gnarled old tree. As your aching limbs slowly relax, you silently curse the road that led you to this evil place. The noble cause that initially motivated you to undertake this deadly mission seems to pale into insignificance against the perils that you have, up until now, survived. Your mission is to recover the legendary Golden Baton, a priceless artifact that has been worshipped by your race for countless generations. The Baton was stolen from the palace of King Ferrenuil, ruler of your homeland. Many learned counsellors strongly believe that the Golden Baton holds within it a kind of life-force that maintains an equilibrium between the forces of good and evil. For many centuries your homelands have suffered no wars, no droughts or famine. King Ferrenuil fears now for the future of his people as the influence of the Baton has been taken from his lands.

Ever since the Baton was stolen, brave Warriors and hardy knights were sent far and wide through the world in search of this artifact... none ever returned.

So it was that you started out on your journey, travelling through strange, hostile lands until finally you reached this territory of Evil magic whose name is never spoken. An almost tangible feeling of malice pervades the atmosphere and weariness descends upon the traveller like a pall of death.

You draw your robe around yourself to ward off the icy chill of night and sink into a troubled sleep, mortally afraid of what the coming days may cast upon you.....