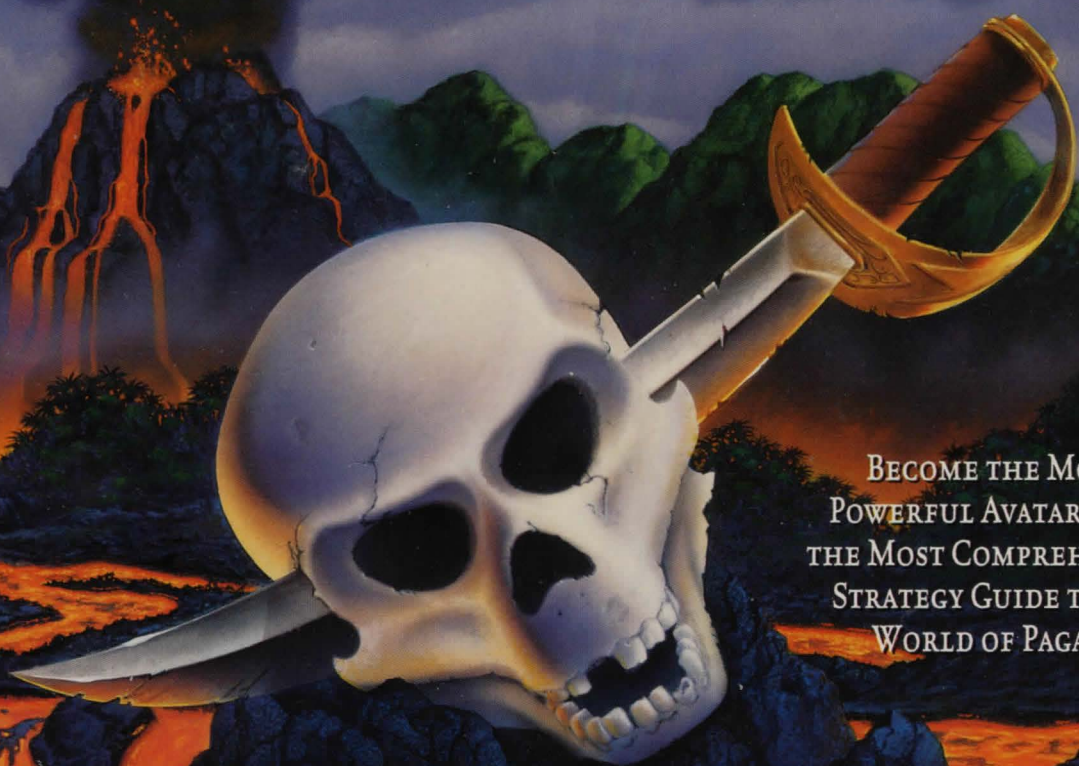


PAGAN

ULTIMA VIII



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THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE
STRATEGY GUIDE TO THE
WORLD OF PAGAN!

The Ultimate Strategy Guide

Joe Hutsko & Raymond Lueders

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Pagan: Ultima VIII

The Ultimate Strategy Guide



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Pagan: Ultima VIII
The Ultimate Strategy Guide

Joe Hutsko
and
Raymond Lueders

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Having just said that this is my first book for Prima, the truth is it's only *partially* mine. After submitting the "Traveler Advisory" section, and then writing Chapters 1 through 5, I hit an obstacle: I was scheduled to start writing my *second* book for Prima, *Rebel Assault: The Official Insider's Guide*, even though I hadn't yet finished the first one. (Roger assures me that this sort of conflict isn't so unusual. In this case, Origin's intended ship date for Pagan slipped a few months, knocking my own dating game out of whack.) Enter Raymond Lueders. Ray resumed the Avatar's journey right where I left off and took the book to the finish with nary a nag—and in record time, to boot! Thanks, Ray.

How I was chosen to author this book in the first place has more than a little to do with my past. As a freelance writer, I've written a fair share of reviews and features on and about electronic entertainment. Without those published samples, I doubt Prima would have seriously considered me as a potential author. For my first big breaks in the electronic-entertainment writing business, I'd like to thank *Multimedia World* editors Paul Worthington and Don Menn, and former *MMW* editor Suzanne Sefanac; former *PC Games* editor and expert freelancer Gregg Keizer; *Gamepro* editor Lawrence Nevez; and my "if-it-feels-good-just-do-it" *Wired* editors Kristin Spence, Mark Frauenfelder, and John Battelle.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends, all of whom charge me now and then with the confidence-boosters that keep me doing what I'm doing.

Joe Hutsko

Part



Introduction to Pagan



Traveler Advisory

Getting along on the Guardian's world of Pagan is easier when you know several important things about the place and how things work. While on Pagan you may, for example, consume potions to restore vitality or Mana (for casting spells); on the other hand, simply taking a short nap will accomplish the same results without requiring you to carry weighty vials or scrolls. For many players, survival tips like these are preferred over outright solutions because they let you focus on solving puzzles instead of learning the ropes necessary to get started on your quest.

In a word, this chapter is about managing—managing your Avatar intelligently so that you can survive the world of Pagan more efficiently and pleurably.



Save Your Life



Unlike the Ultima games that came before it, *Ultima VIII: Pagan* does *not*, in the event of your demise, magically return you to the place where you expired. Instead, you must choose to return to one of twelve saved game positions, which are stored in your diary. Yes, saving a game in progress is a pain in the rear because it can take, depending on your system, anywhere between twenty seconds and two minutes. And no, nobody likes to wait. Still, think of all that ground you've covered since your last save, all those foes you've slain, the treasures you've acquired, and all that strength you've gained. Do you *really* want to go through all of that again? Even if it does take two minutes to save a game, that's not exactly a bad thing. If you're like many Ultima fans, you may find yourself



playing for hours at a time—use the time it takes your computer to save the game to your advantage. Give yourself a break: get up and stretch...have a glass of water...say hello to your family, friends, or pet anteater...grab a snack—after all, like the Avatar, you need to restore your energy now and then, too!

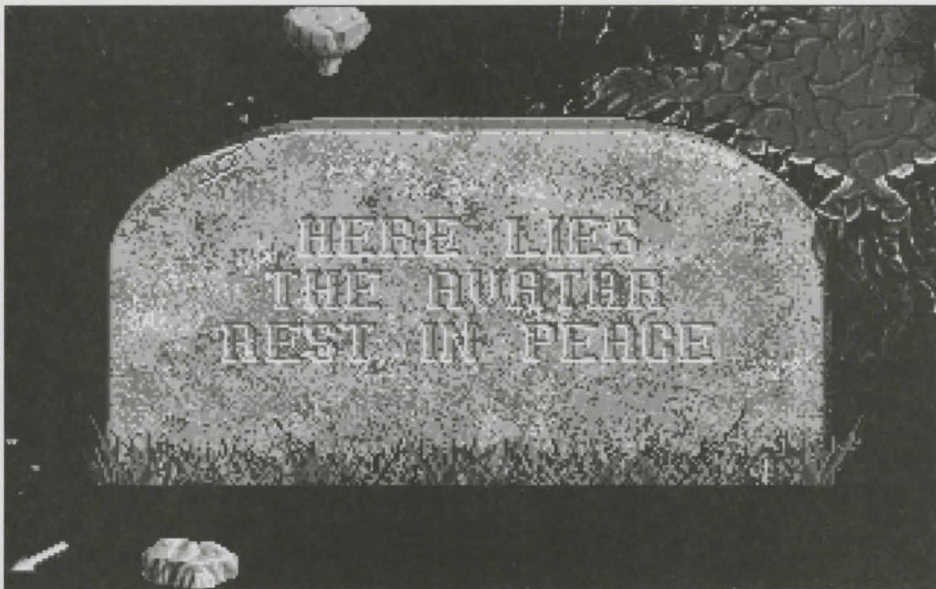
Stealing, or “Greed Is Good!”

Let’s get one thing straight right up front, gentle Avatar: Pagan is a hostile world. Your friends are few and your foes many. To survive you’ll need all the help you can get. That means you’ll need items, including better armor and weapons, food, money, jewels, potions, scrolls, books, and various other goods that you can consume or use. To get these items, you must steal. Often. And with no apology or guilt.

Don’t Get Caught!

The most important thing to remember when stealing is, *never get caught*. Take things only when you are alone in a room, or when a nearby character is in another room or has his or her back turned away from you, and isn’t watching you.

Why shouldn’t you get caught stealing? Simple: Get caught, and you’re mincemeat, no ifs, ands, or buts. The person from whom you stole will summon a spirit, who in short order tries you, sentences you, and then executes you by blowing you into a dozen wriggling bits. Great graphics; horrible demise.



Breaking and Entering

Many homes and buildings are unlocked and easy to enter. Sometimes someone will be inside with whom you should try conversing. Some characters may offer you items or let you take what you want, but most will not. If you see something you want, wait until the person leaves. Better yet, roam around and look elsewhere and come back later. Chances are he or she will be gone.

Some homes and buildings are locked. If they're outdoors (as opposed to those within the catacombs), they're usually locked because nobody's home. Come back later or after a rest and try the door again. More often than not it will be open during certain hours, locked during others.

Sometimes a house can be "broken into" by climbing onto its roof and entering via a rooftop stairway. Give it a try. Once inside you'll have the run of the place. To leave, you won't be able to exit through the front door (after all, you *did* break in in the first place). Instead, go back upstairs to the roof, climb onto its surrounding rail, then walk off the edge to leap to the ground.

Drawers and Hidden Items

When searching a home or building for items, *look everywhere*. That means not just the obvious places, like drawers and on tables, but also in hidden places, like under pillows, under hairbrushes, and beneath urns and vases.



TIP *Drawers often contain seemingly worthless contents; even so, make sure you always move items inside drawers, chests, and boxes, either aside or out of the container—occasionally useful items are hidden beneath useless items. In more than one case, keys that are essential to your quest are hidden beneath other items in drawers, or beneath objects in a room, such as under an urn. Don't hesitate to turn a room or chamber upside down when searching for items!*

Foodstuffs and Drinks

Departing yet again from Ultima's past, you don't have to eat on Pagan to survive. Yes, eating will help you restore lost Hit points a little at a time. And yes, it's fun to munch on cheese and fish and sausages, but you don't have to unless you want to or need to. That is to say, you won't die of hunger if you don't eat on Pagan the way you would have in previous Ultimas.

The things you can safely eat in *Pagan* are fish, cheese, sausage, bread, kith filets, and brown mushrooms.



Things to avoid eating include speckled or multicolored mushrooms, as well as blue mushrooms; some of these are poisonous, whereas others bring on a psychedelic state, turning your world all topsy-turvy and paisley-hued. A fun trip, maybe, but not conducive to completing your quest.

As for beverages, stay away from Tenebraen ale. It'll make you drunk and slow you down. Usually, it's recognized by its green bottle and yellow-orange label. You may drink water but doing so is not important to your survival.

Money

While there's money hidden all over the place in Pagan, it's useful for only a few things.

The blacksmith will gladly sell you armor or weapons; however, there are better, stronger weapons available to you at no cost—if you know where to find them (as you'll learn in the narrative and walkthrough sections).

Tenebrae's Captain, Darion, will offer to train you in combat by sparring with you, but there are ways of building your Strength and Dexterity that won't cost you anything, as described below in the section "Building Strength and Other Attributes."

The one place where you *must* have money is at the old wizard Mythran's house, which you will travel to early in your quest, and back to again and again throughout your stay on Pagan. Mythran sells spellbooks, scrolls, reagents, and other useful items that can be acquired only with Obsidian coins.



Because money is heavy and takes up space, and because you need it only at Mythran's, leave any money you've accumulated there, at his house, whenever you drop in on him.



When you pick up money and put it in your inventory, make sure you "stack" it on top of any money that's already in your knapsack, as described below in "Inventory and Items." Stacking money (or any "stackable" item, including reagents, for that matter) into one pile takes up less space and weight in your inventory.



Running, Jumping, Climbing, and Falling Down



Pagan is the first Ultima that lets you, the Avatar, *really* stretch your legs. Besides walking and running, you can also jump and climb. The sooner you master basic movement, the better you'll fare on Pagan.

Practice taking all three kinds of steps—single, medium, and long. Do the same for running and jumping. Practicing your full range of basic maneuvers early in the game will benefit you in two ways. First, you'll learn sooner how to think and act fast on your feet and you'll be able to progress more confidently in tight spots—like during combat or when leaping across deadly chasms—and second, you'll increase your Avatar's dexterity level, which, as with every character attribute, makes for a more powerful Avatar.

Climbing

Climbing requires a little extra attention. When attempting to climb onto a rooftop or ledge, make sure the arrow cursor is at its shortest possible length and pointing directly in front of the Avatar, *then* click both mouse buttons to make the Avatar scale the surface. If it doesn't work, chances are you're not positioned correctly in front of the surface you're trying to climb. Make sure you're nose-to-nose with it. Also, while some surfaces look like they're meant to be climbed, they may not be. As you explore *Pagan* you'll begin to recognize the differences in terrain and surface that indicate areas you can climb.

Jumping

When jumping across a chasm, or to a platform, or across a series of platforms, *save your game* before you leap. There's nothing more frustrating than watching the Avatar leap too far or too short of his intended landing and have to start all over again. In some cases, you may want to save the game as you reach each platform in a series of platforms, so that if you miss the next one, you'll start over from the last one you reached rather than the entire series.

Falling

As a rule, you can leap, or fall, a distance equal to your own height without injuring yourself. A fall from a higher distance will result in some lost Hit points, and possibly death (during the early part of the game anyway, while you're still weak and unprotected). If you do come to a place where the only way down is by falling a distance two times your height or greater, make sure you either rest or drink a restorative potion first so that the damage you receive will be minimal.



On Dangerous Ground



While most of the ground you cover on *Pagan* is easy to distinguish as safe to cross, there are some areas that may *appear* safe but are

in fact life threatening. When you're not sure of a terrain's weight-worthiness, take single steps, one at a time. If your next step will be a fatal one, the Avatar will utter the word "Whoaaaa!" Turn and try another direction, or see if there's a place across from you to which you can safely jump.

Water and Puddles

Wherever you see water, whether it's open sea or water-filled chasms, tread carefully. Safe footing at the edge of volcanic rock is white and blue, and you can walk and even run along this terrain without sinking to your death. Dark blue water is a definite downer, guaranteed.

Puddles, found mostly inside the stone floor catacombs, *always* crumble when you walk or land on them. When you encounter puddles, either go around them or jump across them.

Lava

Recognizing dangerous lava areas is easy if you know what to look for, and what to *listen* for. Lava pits are like water chasms, only instead of sinking to your death you burn. Stepping or leaping onto bright yellow lava is a definite no-no; but it's generally safe to cross or jump onto orange lava intermingled with stone floor chunks.

Glowing holes in a stone floor indicate lava traps. Step too close to these and the floor beneath you crumbles away, taking you with it. Also, some lava holes in the floor or in rock terrain indicate hidden lava spouts that gush into the air if you get too close.

Hidden lava floor traps are recognized by the *sound* they make: a distinct *plop-ploit* sound. When you hear this, move to the nearest wall and hug it as closely as possible as you walk or run through the passage or corridor. Once the sound goes away you're out of danger—from those traps, anyway.

Platforms

Platforms, whether they're in the water or floating in thin air, are thrilling—at least the first time you encounter them. The thrill wears off fast. After a few frustrating missteps, jumping from platform to platform starts to feel like Super Mario from Hell. There's no simple solution to crossing platforms other than figuring out exactly where to stand on the platform you're jumping *from*, so that you land correctly on the platform you're jumping *to*. Here, practice makes perfect; however, wherever possible, the easiest and most effective sequence to crossing certain platforms is described in the narrative and walkthrough sections of this book.

Fire Bombs (Spitters) and Fire Sconces (Shooters)

Fire Sconces, which are little holes in the wall that shoot fireballs, require agility and careful timing to pass. Watch the shooter in question to learn its pattern, then walk, run, or jump past it when it's safe.

Fire Bombs, which appear to fall from the sky, are actually launched from floor-standing spouts. Quick side-stepping or running is how to get past these spitters safely.

Floor Spikes

Floor Spikes, which shoot up when you cross them, look like a row of dark gray circles. Go around them whenever possible, or stand far enough away and jump across them. Worst case: If you're jabbed by Floor Spikes or, for that matter, hit by a fireball, get past the obstacle. Then double-click your bedroll and rest for one hour to restore whatever Hit points you may have lost.



Inventory and Items



From the very start of the game the Avatar is outfitted with a knapsack, in which you store supplies such as food, potions, extra weapons, spells, and other items important to surviving and accomplishing your quest. There are a few helpful tricks to managing your inventory and working with your knapsack that will enable you to carry more than you could normally carry.

Knapsacks

First, find a second knapsack (such as the one on the Palace rooftop) and put it in your main knapsack, creating a knapsack in a knapsack. In your main knapsack, store items you need close at hand, such as keys (or your key ring, as described below), a few potions, scrolls, and spells you've prepared. In your extra knapsack, store everything else.

The Avatar can carry only three times his own weight; however, with this knapsack trick, you can almost always take on more weight. If an item won't go in your knapsack, open your second knapsack and try dragging the item to it instead. In most cases you'll be able to acquire the item.

Key Ring

Along with your bedroll, a key ring is one of the most useful items you can acquire on your journey. Get it as soon as you enter

Tenebrae. It's located upstairs in the front right guard tower in the Palace, inside a basket that's inside a barrel. Put it in your knapsack. When you find a key, double-click on it, then click once on the key ring. You'll hear a metallic *click* sound and the key will be attached to your key ring. Without a key ring you'll quickly wind up with a bunch of keys in your inventory that you'll have to sort through every time you want to unlock something. Plus, individual keys take up space and add weight to your inventory. Keys attached to your key ring, however, take up only the space and weight of one key—no matter how many keys you attach to it.

To use a key in the key ring, double-click on the key ring, then click the target cursor on the chest or door or other locked item you want to open. If you have the right key, the lock will open. If you don't, the lock won't open and you'll need to find the appropriate key and add it to your key ring.

Stacking Items

Stacking certain items is another trick to keeping the weight and number of items to a minimum. To stack an item, drag it onto an existing item of the same sort in your inventory. This trick works mostly with spell reagents, such as bone shards and piles of wood. Although a stack of items looks like one item, clicking once on it will indicate exactly how many items are actually "stacked" inside the item. Dragging the stacked item will present a panel with a scroll bar, letting you use or move from the pile only the number of portions you need.

Pouches

Keep two pouches in your inventory. You'll come across pouches early in your travels, so don't worry about finding them right away. If they won't fit in your main knapsack, store them in your second knapsack. In one pouch, store reagents and other items necessary for creating spells. Use the second pouch for actually creating the spells. To create a spell, drag the required items into the empty spell, then use the Key of the Caretaker (which you'll get from Vividos later in the game) on the pouch. The spell will be created in the pouch. Move the spell to your knapsack or second knapsack so that it's close at hand and ready to use, and so the second pouch is once again empty and ready for creating more spells.



Resting and Waiting



Resting is how you restore lost Hit points and lost Mana points. In battle you'll no doubt lose Hit points (especially early in the game, when you're inexperienced and poorly equipped). Casting spells

causes your Mana to drop. While consuming potions can restore both of these values (red potions for Hits, orange for Mana), resting doesn't require anything but a bed or bedroll.

Get a Bedroll

Your bedroll is your best friend. It lets you sleep almost anywhere at any time, providing there's no danger in the immediate area. You can get a bedroll at the very start of the game, from Devon. It's lying right next to the fire. Double-click on it to roll it up, then drag it into your knapsack.

To use the bedroll, double-click on it (you don't need to take it out and unroll it). While you can sleep between one and six hours, you'll never need to sleep more than one hour to *fully restore* all of your Hit and Mana points. If, when you try to use your bedroll, you get the message "This is no time to rest!," walk to another area until you find a place where it is safe to sleep. Foes will not attack you while you sleep. Also, there is no time limit to completing *Pagan*, so don't worry that resting a lot will somehow ruin your chances of finishing the game within a certain time limit.

Appointments and Passing Time

Occasionally, you'll need to be in a certain place at a certain time in order to receive a special item from a character (for example, when meeting the servant Aramina at her home at the Bloodwatch hour, as described later in the narrative and walkthrough).

The easiest way to tell time is by double-clicking on a clock. You may take one of these and put it in your knapsack if you wish.

When asked to meet a character in a certain place at a certain time, go to that place and see if he or she is there. If not, it's not the right time. To wait for the character, *go away from the place you are expected to meet*, then take out your bedroll and rest for one hour. (You must situate yourself away from the determined meeting place by a distance of at least three or four screens, or else the person will not show up.) When you wake up, go to the meeting place and see if the door is unlocked. If not, then it isn't the right time yet. Leave the premises, rest for another hour, and go back to the locked door and try again. If the door is still locked, leave and rest again, as many times as necessary until the door is unlocked when you try it.

Another way of doing this is to have a clock with you. Before you rest, check the time by double-clicking on the clock. Next, use the list below to determine how many hours of rest to take in order to wake at the agreed-upon meeting hour.

Time in Tenebrae passes in this order: Bloodwatch, Firstebb, DayTide, Threemoons, Lastebb, Eventide.

When you wake, go directly to the meeting place and your coconspirator will be waiting for you.



Teleporter Recall Pads



The world of Pagan is huge, and getting around takes lots of leg work—unless you use Recall Pads, which teleport you to and from several important locations. To use Recall Pads, two things must occur. First, you'll need the Item of Recall, which the wizard Mythran will give you the first time you go to him, early in the game (as described later in the narrative and walkthrough sections). Second, you must have *seen* a Recall Pad in order to teleport yourself to it.

Recall Pads are square and gray. When you approach one, it rises slightly and glows. *You must see it rise slightly and glow*, or else you won't "remember it" in order to teleport to it later in the game. To ensure that a Recall Pad is committed to memory, walk near it or on it in order to make it recognize you.

You may use the Item of Recall almost anywhere (except Daemon's Crag and the Sorcerer's Enclave) by double-clicking on it. When you do, a list of Recall Pad locations, which you have *stood on or near to activate*, will appear. Click one, and you'll teleport to that Recall Pad. Although Mythran warns that there is a limit to the usefulness of the Item of Recall, in this player's travels it has never failed to work, all the way through to the end of the game.

The first Recall Pad you will find is located on the top of the Palace, in the center of the roof.



Table 1-1

Recall Pad	Where Located
Central Tenebrae	Located on Palace rooftop
Upper Catacombs	Just east of entrance
Argentrock Isle	Southern end, outside of stone wall
Carthax Lake	North end
Daemon's Crag	Northeast corner
Hall of the Mountain King	Southwest corner, directly south of Lithos
Plateau	Mythran's House

Table 1-1 is a list of other Recall Pads, and where they are located. When you visit these areas for the first time on foot, be sure to find and activate each one's associated Recall Pad so that you can teleport to it later.

Combat

No matter how peaceful a person you are, you'll eventually have to face off with foes if ever you're to survive and eventually depart Pagan alive. In many cases, though, you may choose to evade foes by sidestepping them, running past or around them, or using a potion, such as one inducing invisibility, to temporarily prevent foes from even seeing you in the first place. The most important benefit of combat is that the more foes you slay, the more your Strength attribute increases. Besides improving your ability to slay monsters, Strength also determines how much you can carry (your Strength value times three equals the total weight you can hold in your inventory). The second useful thing about combat is that the creature you slay may have items on its body that you can use. Double-click on the creature's body to see if it has left behind anything of use.

Vulnerability Points

While the Avatar can block, kick, and slash, the latter, slashing, is what works best against foes (provided, of course, your Avatar is equipped with a weapon). In general, facing your foe and striking is all it takes to attack. Don't worry about getting the arrow cursor directly centered on a foe's head or leg. Just face the foe and get as close as possible, then click away as quickly as you can.

Building Strength and Other Attributes

Ghouls, when taken one at a time, are relatively easy to kill. You'll find them outside of Tenebrae, and especially in and around the Cemetery, located at the extreme east end of town. After finishing one off, check your Health status before attacking more ghouls. Rest, if necessary, then take on more. After several kills your attributes will rise, making you more powerful and capable.

Power-Up Sound

During combat now and then you'll hear a sound—a rising, sucking-air sort of sound. This is a good sound, because it indicates that one or more of your Avatar's attributes has just gone up.

When you hear it, check your status and you'll see that your Strength has gone up. You'll also hear this sound occasionally when or after you make a jump or while you're running. Check your Status panel after you hear the sound after running or jumping and you'll see that your Dexterity has gone up.

Here's a secret: the more you engage in combat and exert yourself by running or jumping, the higher your attributes will rise—even if you're not fighting a foe, as in running just for the heck of it or jumping in place! Foolish as you may feel, the sooner you start running around like a madman and jumping in place and drawing your dagger and swinging it at nothing, the quicker you'll build your Avatar's character attributes. Go ahead, give yourself a workout—you'll thank yourself for doing it the moment you encounter and whip your first foe. It's a good idea to save your game whenever you hear your attributes go up, so that if you need to restore, you'll be in peak condition for the next round.

Potions

Potions come in vials and are consumed by double-clicking on them. Be careful: some potions are good, while some will affect you dangerously or kill you.

Table 1-2 is a list of potions and their uses.

Since resting on your bedroll is a quick and easy way to rebuild your Strength and Mana, consume potions when you find them if you need them; otherwise take only a few and come back to them later if you need more. Carrying lots of potions weighs you down and limits how many things you can carry.

Table 1-2

Type of Potion	What It Does
Yellow	Heals a small measure of your Hit points
Red	Fully restores Hit points, but don't consume unless your points are low, otherwise it works against you like a poison and attacks your Hit points
Orange	Restores some Mana
Green	Poison
Blue	Puts you to sleep
Black	Makes you invisible for a short period of time
Purple	Temporarily boosts your power and ability to ward off blows in combat

Bombs

Flasks and Bottles of Oil can be tossed at enemies to weaken them. To light a Flask or Bottle of Oil, double-click on it—then get ready to act fast. As soon as you double-click, the arrow pointer will change to a targeting pointer (a cross). Move the targeting pointer to the enemy or area you want to hit.



TIP Don't let go of the mouse button while the cursor is an arrow—it means your target is too far to reach or is not lined up correctly, and the bomb will explode on you if it is in your backpack, or near you if it is on the ground. Learn to throw bombs correctly and they can help you. Fumble with them and you'll wind up blowing yourself to bits.

Later in the game you'll find other exploding devices. Table 1-3 is a list of each bomb item, instructions on how to activate it, and a description of what it does.



TIP Make sure you're as far away from a Chaos Gem as possible when you throw it, as its spawns may land near you.

Chests, Chest Traps, and Boxes

Chests almost always contain things of use. Often a chest is locked and requires a key to open it. Usually, the necessary key is somewhere nearby, in another room in the house or in a drawer or under

Table 1-3

Type of Bomb	How to Activate	What It Does
Flask of Oil	Double-click to activate, then drag to desired target and let go	Causes fire explosion
Bottle of Oil	Double-click to activate, then drag to desired target and let go	Causes fire explosion
Death Disk	Drag to desired target and let go; do not double-click first or else it will blow up on or near you	Causes powerful flaming explosion
Fire Gem	Double-click to activate, then drag to desired target and let go	Causes strong fire explosion
Chaos Gem	Double-click to activate, then drag to desired target	Causes strong acid explosion, then spawns several more gems that explode after it

a vase. Look everywhere. Move objects that are scattered about the room; move or remove objects from drawers to look beneath them.

Chests are often rigged with exploding traps. There are two ways to figure out whether or not a chest is trapped. The first way is the easiest but sometimes time consuming. First, rest your character before you attempt to open the chest (you may need to unlock it first, which is safe and won't trigger a trap if one is present). Assuming your Avatar has built up a few levels of Strength, you can open a trapped chest and survive its explosion without dying. Make sure you rest again immediately afterward, though, so that your Hit points return to maximum.

The second method involves magic scrolls: the Scroll of Trap Detection, and the Scroll of Trap Destruction. These scrolls are hidden throughout Pagan, in chests and in drawers, and elsewhere. The first scroll, Trap Detection, determines whether or not a nearby chest is trapped. You must be standing close to the chest in order for this scroll to work. If a chest is indeed trapped, then move to a safe distance and cast the second scroll, Trap Destruction, to trigger

the trap and cause it to explode. You must be standing at a safe distance away from and facing the chest when you cast-activate this scroll, or else you will be injured and possibly killed by the trap's explosion.

Once you've determined a chest is untrapped or have disarmed one using the scroll of trap detection, you may open the chest and inspect its contents.



Levers and Switches



There are several kinds of switches and levers on Pagan. Most of the time they're easy to spot if you know where to look. In homes in which you see an adjacent room but are unable to reach it because there's no door leading to it, look for a switch nearby. Usually it's on, near, or around a fireplace, in the same room or close by. Switches are also located on walls, often well hidden and easy to miss. Look closely. If you see a secret room but no doorway leading to it, there's always a lever to open the way.

Be careful: there are a few trapped switches that explode when you pull them. You may want to save your game before pulling a switch, so you can restore to the point just before pulling the switch in case your action proves fatal.

In dungeons you'll find an assortment of levers that operate heavy doors, gates, and hidden rock passages. These take some experimentation to figure out (although all are described in the narrative and walkthrough sections of this book). Sometimes it may *seem* like a lever operates a gate or metal door; however, you'll notice that by simply walking up to certain gates they will open or close regardless of a nearby lever's position. If a gate closes as you approach it, turn around and walk away for a distance of several screens, then come back to the gate. Sometimes the gate will open. And vice versa.



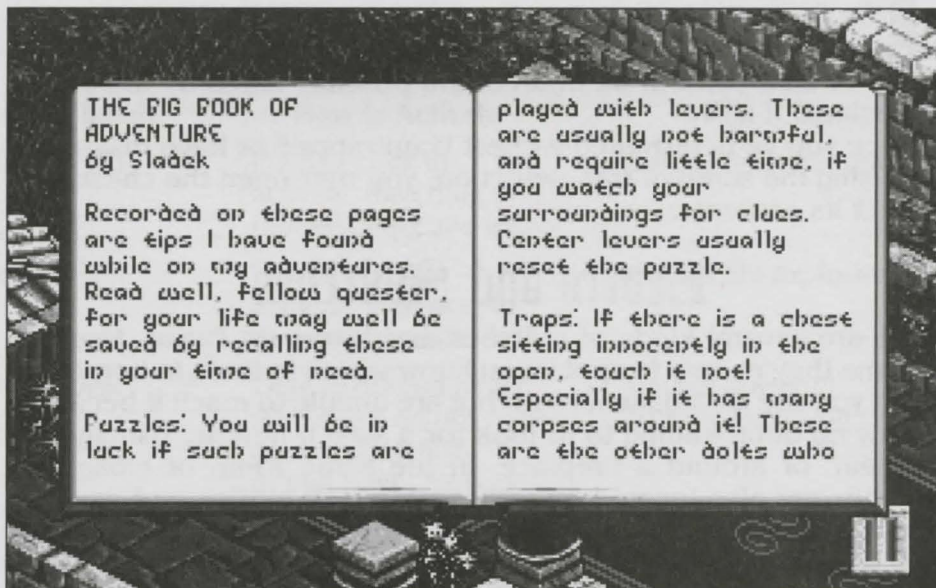
Books



Reading books you find on shelves or in chests or drawers is how you increase your knowledge, and how you learn about certain events or instructions that are important to your journey. Except for spellbooks, you don't need to carry books in your inventory after you've read them, because every important book is transcribed at the end of this book, in Appendix B. You have to carry spellbooks, which the wizard Mythran will create for you (for a price), in order to use them.



Be wary of "trick" and "joke" books. These books, bound in black leather, explode when you open them. Ha ha, very funny.



Foes



Knowing something about certain foes makes beating them (or avoiding them altogether) easier.

Ghouls are dumb and relatively easy to beat, even early in the game, when all you've got is a dagger and no armor. The stronger you get, the quicker you'll put these undead to rest for good.

Changelings look like you when you see them, so don't be alarmed when you think you're seeing your twin coming your way with his weapon at the ready. They're not too difficult to beat and halfway through battle they change back to their true, ugly little selves. When you defeat them they always leave behind treasures, including money, potions, and Flasks of Oil.

Skeleton warriors are absolutely the worst enemies to fight because even if you kill them they reassemble and come back for more. Unless, that is, you've been lucky enough to find the magical Flame Sting sword, which kills them once and for all. (You'll acquire this weapon and other magical weapons later in the game, as described in the narrative and walkthrough sections).

Invisible foes are nearly impossible to see and are identified by their red eyes. Keep alert. If you hear an extra set of footsteps that sound like your own, there's an invisible foe nearby. Look closely for those red eyes, sometimes blinking. Get out your weapon. If you can't find the eyes, start slashing in all directions. When you land a hit on an invisible foe, its outline is temporarily revealed. Keep hitting in that direction to conquer the unseen antagonist.

Kiths are like huge spiders. They're slow and easy to run past or around. If you're stuck in a corner and have to fight one, try weakening it as it approaches you by tossing Flasks of Oil or Death Disks at it.

Spirits, despite the gooseflesh-raising chill wind they conjure when they appear, are not hostile unless you are already in Combat mode, or go into Combat mode when you see one and throw the first strike. Otherwise, you can get close to ghosts without them bothering you as long as you tread peacefully.

Trolls are big and stupid and slow and easy to evade. Trolls often guard precious treasures or keys. Rather than fight them, save your game; then run in quickly and grab whatever goods the trolls are guarding, and get out. While trolls are big lugs and not very good fighters, their strikes, when they're lucky enough to land them, are often lethal with the first blow.

Seekers are those relentless red-eyed monsters that are hard to hit because of their extended snapping teeth. Try getting around them if you can. If you must fight one, make sure you're wearing strong armor—when you kill a Seeker it explodes and showers the immediate surroundings with dangerous green acid goo.

Daemons are big and fiery, and are very difficult to beat. Luckily, you'll obtain a special spell to help you evade them the first time you encounter them. Let it be a lesson to you: run if you can, since these terrible beasts usually travel in packs.

Toraxes, which look like lumbering baby dinosaurs, are rarely troublemakers. Just because you see one or are close to one doesn't mean it's going to attack you, nor should you attack it. Toraxes are slow on their feet, so it's easy to keep your distance from them without confrontation.



Weapons and Armor



Finally, the stronger your weapons and armor, the more capable you are of beating foes and enduring excruciating circumstances such as blasts, spitting fireballs, and the occasional falling rock. In the narrative and walkthrough sections of this book you'll be guided to powerful weapons and armor—many of them magical—as soon as the appropriate paths in the game's plot are open to you. (In some cases, you need to have completed certain parts of the game and acquired certain items in order to gain entry to an area containing more powerful weapons and armor.)



TIP *Later in the game, after you receive the Key of Scion from Vividos, you may take a side trip to the fabled "Secret Treasure Room," which is filled with chests and boxes containing loads of powerful weapons, armor, spells, and other useful items—many of them magical!*



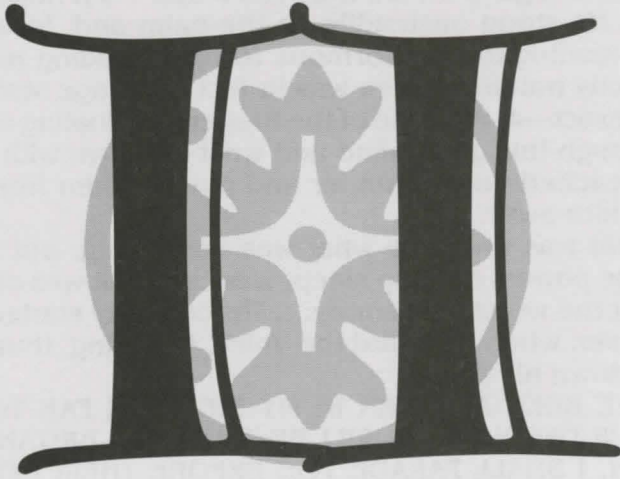
Onward Go!



It's time to face the Guardian's cruel, complex world, Avatar. The journey that lies ahead will be long and hard, but with what you've learned here you are ready to begin. You know that despite your virtuous upbringing, you must steal in order to survive. You've learned how to detect levers and chest traps, and how to disarm them. You've learned that your bedroll and your key ring are your two best friends. You've been advised on how to build your Strength and Dexterity as quickly as possible, and about how to squeeze the most capacity out of your knapsack. You are ready, Avatar.

Go now, stay alert, and remember—save often.

Part



This World Not Mine:
The Story of Pagan



Prologue: A Waking Nightmare



It began as a nightmare.

One minute he was sleeping peacefully, the next he felt himself being lifted, lifted, so high into the heavens he felt dizzy. His bed had turned into a gargantuan, fiery red hand, each finger twice his own height. He stood unsteadily on the palm and, looking down, saw a wrist leading to an enormous forearm leading to...nothing. No, not exactly nothing. There was in fact a strange star—a pentagram, to be exact—at the base of the mysterious floating appendage. It was as though this great hand and wrist and arm with its surreal origin had reached out of thin air and plucked him from slumber and carried him away.

In fact, that was precisely what was happening, but the Avatar knew well the powers of deep sleep, was certain it was only a nightmare—albeit the worst in memory.... His certainty started breaking down, however, when he heard the Voice. Booming, thunderous, it sent a chill down his spine.

"YOU HAVE BEEN A THORN IN MY SIDE FOR FAR TOO LONG, AVATAR. YOUR TWO WORLDS WILL BE CRUSHED—BRITANNIA FIRST, THEN EARTH. I SHALL PARADE YOU BEFORE THEIR CONQUERED PEOPLES AS THE FALLEN IDOL OF A PATHETIC IDEAL. I BANISH YOU TO THE WORLD OF PAGAN. NO ONE HERE," taunted the voice cruelly, "KNOWS OF THE AVATAR."



The Voice exploded into mirthless laughter and suddenly his world—this strange floating hand in which he tottered like an infant on wobbly legs—fell away.

He was falling...falling...



Stranger in a Strange Place

h e came to slowly, his eyes fluttering open.

He was lying flat on his back. Above, he saw sky. Dark and curiously overcast, more purple than blue in color. He felt queerly sodden and exhausted, as though he had swum across a great sea. Such a vivid nightmare! Blessed joy, it was only that after all, a nightmare. He closed his eyes and willed his mind to clear, to let go of the water-logged clothes he imagined himself wearing...the strange crackling sound he heard and the smell of a wood fire...the pungent aroma of...fish. Raw and cooked alike, lingering in the smoky air. His stomach at once lurched and groaned with revulsion and hunger. Wake up, Avatar, he told himself.

He opened his eyes fully and gasped at what he saw. An old man, with a weary but kind face, was standing beside him, no more than an arm's length away, staring at him. The man was dressed in a simple, tattered brown tunic. He was eyeing the Avatar with a mixture of curiosity and evident concern. Mindful of the Avatar's surprise and confusion, the aged man spoke first. "Hello, there."

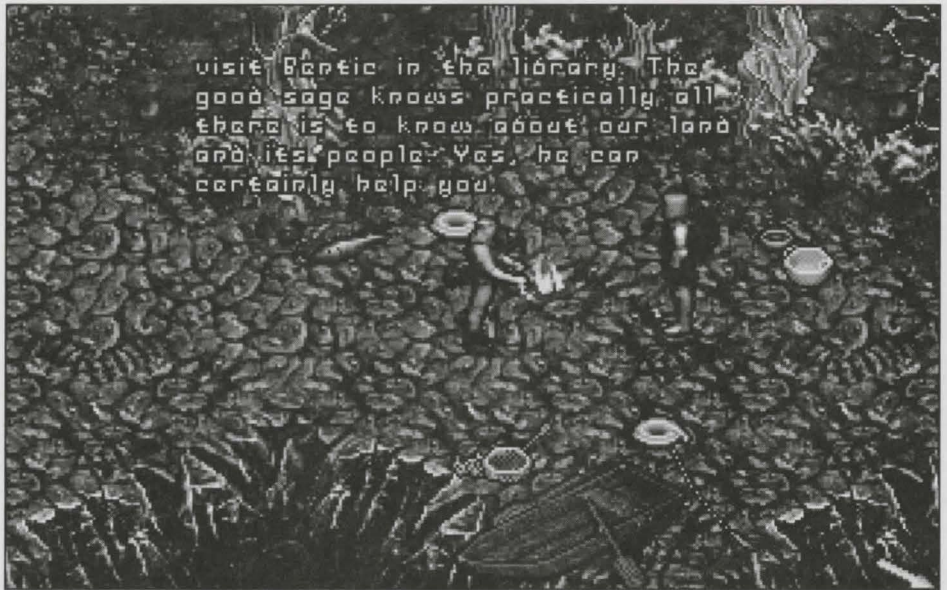
"Who are you?" said the Avatar.

"I am Devon, my strange friend. And I am glad to see you are feeling better, Stencil."

"How did you know my name?"

"I am sorry. I did not mean to pry, but when I found you, I knew not who you were. I am afraid I read through your logbook and discovered your name. Please forgive me."

The Avatar Stencil, although surprised, was not precisely angry with this man named Devon. Somehow, he sensed goodness in him. A certain quiet grace, a peacefulness...and a power. It was in



his eyes. While he appeared humble, there was something more there, something deeper, stronger. Stencil shook himself to full wakefulness.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Why, on the shore, friend."

"Shore of what?"

"The shore of Tenebrae, of course, upon the Sea of Rains."

Stencil scratch his head. "Sea of Rains?"

"Obviously you don't spend time away for the city. The story goes that the rains are quite great the farther you go from the shore. It is supposed to have something to do with Mordea's powers. Part of her role as ruling Tempest is to control the rain over the city."

"Tenebrae," Stencil repeated. "What is Tenebrae?"

"Aye, Tenebrae, the City of Eternal Twilight. They say you'll never find a more lovely place and I do not disagree, save for one place. But I will say this, the farther I am from the Lady, the better I feel. I can tell by your questions that you are not from this land. Come you from another island? Or perhaps some place that is even a greater distance away."

Stencil hesitated before answering. "Yes. That's right. I am from far away."

"I suspected as much, my friend, for your questions are most unusual. I must confess that I'm but a simple fisherman, and a poor source of information about city ways and such. I am sure there must be someone else who can tell you more." He thought a

moment. "Why, I know just the person. When you get to town, visit Bentic, in the Library. My friend knows practically all there is to know about our land and its people. Yes, he can certainly help you." The fisherman, Stencil could see, was plainly happy to be of use to him.

"You mentioned a Lady someone or other," Stencil said. "Who is she?"

"You mean Lady Mordea," Devon said. "She is the Tempest ruler of the city. Others call her a tyrant. I did not agree with that opinion. Until recently."

"What changed your mind?"

The fisherman hesitated for a moment, as though considering whether or not to say more. He eyed Stencil carefully and gave a little sigh, then continued. "Lately, the Lady has taken to eliminating dissenters. She has them executed—beheaded on the docks. At first no one was killed but criminals, but soon, anyone who showed disagreement was put to the block. I fear for the freedom of the people."

"She sounds like a tyrant, all right," Stencil said. It dawned on him all at once that he still had no idea how he'd gotten here. "Hey, what happened to me?"

Devon shrugged expansively. "I am unsure, my friend. I found your water-logged body in the deeps of Lurker's domain. What happened before remains a mystery. I discovered you in one of my nets while pulling them in."

"The Lurker's domain?"

"Aye, the sea. You were drowning in it, my friend. Any longer in it would not only have meant death, but then you would have had to walk the ocean floor for eternity to fulfill the Pact with Lithos."

Stencil could believe the first part, but that second part, about roaming the sea for eternity, sounded a little crazy to him. This must have showed on his face.

"Truth. Ages ago, our people forged a Pact with Lithos. But you will learn more about that later, in town, when you talk to others."

Was this really happening to him? Indeed, his clothes were still damp. And his body ached. If this was still a dream, would he be aware of these unarguable facts? Would he feel the warmth of Devon's fire, smell the wood burning? He did not think so. What on earth had happened to him? The Voice belonging to the terrible hand that seemingly dropped him here could only belong to one entity. The Guardian, of course. Had the Guardian finally gotten him exactly where he wanted him—in his, the Guardian's, domain? So it seemed. Damn his fate.

"I must go," Stencil said abruptly. The old man looked at him with an oddly knowing expression, as though to say, "Do as you must, but we will meet again."

"Farewell, friend Stencil. Know that you are welcome to stay with me for as long as you need. My food and provisions are yours until you wish to head for the city. Be careful in your travels, for I fear you will encounter much violence."

Stencil expressed his gratitude. "I am hungry. And I will need some supplies if I'm going exploring."

"What's mine is yours," Devon urged.

Stencil took him at his word, and helped himself to some fish. It tasted good and it made him feel stronger. He rolled up Devon's bedroll and dropped it in his knapsack. He inspected Devon's boat and thought of asking the old man if he could take it. But when he looked out to sea, and saw the storms raging in the near distance, he thought otherwise. No, Stencil thought, if the answer to his mysterious arrival on this strange place is anywhere, it is probably close at hand rather than out there.

Just as he was about to start off, Devon tapped his shoulder and pointed west, to what looked like some sort of landing or pier. "I can already see a crowd gathering on the dock. That can only mean trouble."

Indeed, a small procession was making its way to the end of the pier. Stencil would investigate, but first he wanted to get his bearings in the immediate vicinity.

"Thank you for your kindness, Devon," Stencil said. Shouldering his pack, he headed east, along the strange, volcanic rock shore. He was careful to stay on the hard part along the edge. Eventually, he came to a wall. No doubt the town Devon called Tenebrae lies on the other side. He would have to find a way in. Turning around, he spotted a small box almost hidden behind a tree trunk overgrown with strange mushrooms. He opened the box. Inside, he found two potions—one red, one yellow—and a key. He took the key and the potions and climbed up a small embankment. He headed northwest, back toward the pier with its small gathering. In short time, he was sidetracked, coming upon what was left of a small, wooden home. He stepped into the shell-like remains of the place and glanced around at the debris scattered everywhere. In the left corner, he found a chest. He tried opening it, but it was locked. Was this the chest to which his newly acquired key belonged? He inserted the key and twisted. The key turned home with a satisfying click. He opened the chest—and was knocked off his feet by an explosion.

The chest had been trapped. He scolded himself for being so eager and careless. Here not even an hour and he was already stumbling like an inexperienced fool into traps! Nonetheless, he searched the chest and found a row of strange orange disks on the remains of what had once been a human being. Shifting a skull aside, he was overjoyed to find a helmet that fit on his head almost perfectly. He eyed the disks again. Still smarting from the blast, he was uncertain whether or not to risk touching one. The disks were



flat and smooth. They looked as though they were meant for flight, to be whirled in the air with a flick of the wrist. He decided to do just that. He lifted and immediately tossed it through the dilapidated doorway through which he'd stepped. The disk landed and at once exploded in a great ball of fire. Indeed, these little disks were useful, and he took them, being careful not to drop one.

He hurried west, back toward the pier. Up close, he saw that it was indeed a dock. There was activity on it, several people gathered in what looked like some sort of ritual. As he neared the steps leading onto the dock, two barrels beside the steps caught his eye. Quickly, he checked them. In the first barrel he found a box, in which he found a dagger, which he took. In the second, he found mushrooms and a scroll. He read the scroll quickly, glancing once at the dock to make sure that the group there was still assembled. The scroll was addressed to this Lady Mordea Devon had spoken of. Its author had apparently learned that an object called the Skull of Quakes had been stolen from a place called the Upper Catacombs, and was rumored now to be stashed in another place called the Shrine. It was signed by one Lieutenant Vittek. Stencil, with his highly developed sense of recall, made a mental note of this news and left the scroll behind.

He climbed the steps before him and strolled toward the crowd gathered at the end of the dock, trying his best to appear inconspicuous. Up close, he got a clearer picture of what was about to happen. At the end of the dock, a man kneeled before a large chopping block. A scantily clad warrior woman with blond hair stood

beside him, gripping a long axe in her strong-looking hands. A grieving woman, the man's companion, Stencil guessed, stood—no, was being held back by a guard—off to the side. Another guard, this one looking more official, stood nearby as well. Beside him, a rather official, self-important-looking man dressed in an absurd purple outfit was standing tall with his nose in the air. And finally, there stood a severe-looking woman dressed in a long white gown and wearing a golden crown, some sort of royalty no doubt, the person around whom this group seemed to revolve. Was this the Lady Mordea that Devon had called a tyrant?

The man in purple spoke. "Toran, you have been accused of blasphemy against our Lady Mordea and sentenced to death by beheading. Have you any final words?"

The kneeling man responded. "I shall die as I have lived...with honor. When I face Lithos, he will not find me wanting."

The purple-attired man was outraged. "A man of honor would not have insulted his lady with seditious rumors!"

Taking a step forward, the regal woman grinned malevolently at the kneeling man. "I'm afraid that Lithos will not find you at all...for your grave shall be a watery one. The Lurker is not kind to the ones he acquires!"

Beside her, the guard holding back the sobbing woman blanched. "But this is forbidden, Lady. The Ritual of the Interment is sacred."

"Do not question my decision, Tarna. I am sure that Lithos would not want this one's worthless spirit in his domain."

"No!" cried the sobbing woman, shaking off her guard and reaching out to Toran.

"Back, woman," the senior guardsman ordered.

The Lady Mordea smiled. "Perform your task, Executioner."

With that, the blond warrior raised her axe and brought it down squarely in the middle of the condemned man Toran's head, which fell onto the dock with a terrible thud and rolled off the edge of the pier, into the deep blue sea.

An instant later, a brilliant flash of lightning cracked through the sky.

"My husband!" cried the grieving woman, hysterical now.

There was a churning in the water at the pier's edge, where the head had fallen in. From the sea's dark depth there emerged the huge, unseeing, wormlike head of what could only be this so-called Lurker. It groaned with what Stencil perceived as a cry of pleasure and thanks, then it vanished beneath the surface with the same unexpected suddenness with which it had arrived.

Astonished, Stencil gaped from person to person. No one seemed even to notice him. Except the guard, that is. "Stand aside," the guard shouted at him. "Let Lady Mordea pass."



He stepped aside and the Lady passed by without so much as a glance his way. Falling in behind her, her entourage, save for the one guard, followed her off the dock and onto a stone road that Stencil could now see led to a guarded gate that let into a huge, walled-off city. He started to follow the group but didn't get more than a few steps before he was made to stop.

"Halt," the guard ordered. "I have never seen you around here, stranger. Identify yourself and your business in Tenebrae." Stencil, still in a state of shock over what he'd just witnessed and hardly used to being talked to in this way, was only half-listening. "What just happened here?"

"The execution is none of your business. Just be glad that a treasonous, despicable criminal has been properly punished. Now answer the question."

"Right. I go by Stencil."

"Well met, Stencil. And where do you hail from?"

"A place far away."

"Another land, then. I admit your clothes are unusual, but I was not aware that there were other cities. Well, I suggest you quickly learn the customs of this city. What is your business here?"

"To return home," Stencil said, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then what in the Lady's name are you doing wandering around here? I suggest you quickly find your way. You may go about your business. Please move along and do not disturb the widow."

Stencil nodded and turned and proceeded along the stone road leading into the great walled-off city. Ten feet from the town's gate he was abruptly stopped in his tracks by another guard. "Halt, stranger! I have seen many strange things in my time, but I've never seen the likes of ya. What be yer name, stranger?"

Enough of this, already! Stencil, an outright celebrated hero, was in no way accustomed to this sort of detestable treatment. He stood tall and lifted his strong chin and met the guard's ratty eyes dead on.

"I am the Avatar!"

The guard was unfazed by this proclamation. "The Avatar? Blimey, ya say it like ya think yer important or somethin'. Listen, bloke, if you don't want to find yerself in the belly of the Lurker, yer'll soon change that tone of yers."

For the first time since this whole bad dream had begun, the full impact of Stencil's fear—that he *really* had been plucked from his world and dropped into the Guardian's—hit him like a kick in the gut. He'd try another approach. "What is this city?"

The guard's pale cheeks bloomed red roses. "What do ya mean, 'What city is this?' Do ya have a brain fever. It's only the largest pile of bricks in the known world. Tenebrae, it is! And don't you go getting into trouble."

On that note, Stencil gave an apologetic nod and bid farewell. The guard merely grunted.

He turned to face the great open gate of Tenebrae. With a sense of dark rebellion he had never before known, a feeling of otherworldly disposition that somehow befitted his character with sudden exactness, rather like a new set of strange and enigmatic armor tailored expressly for him, Stencil strode through the great stone entrance, into the city of Tenebrae.



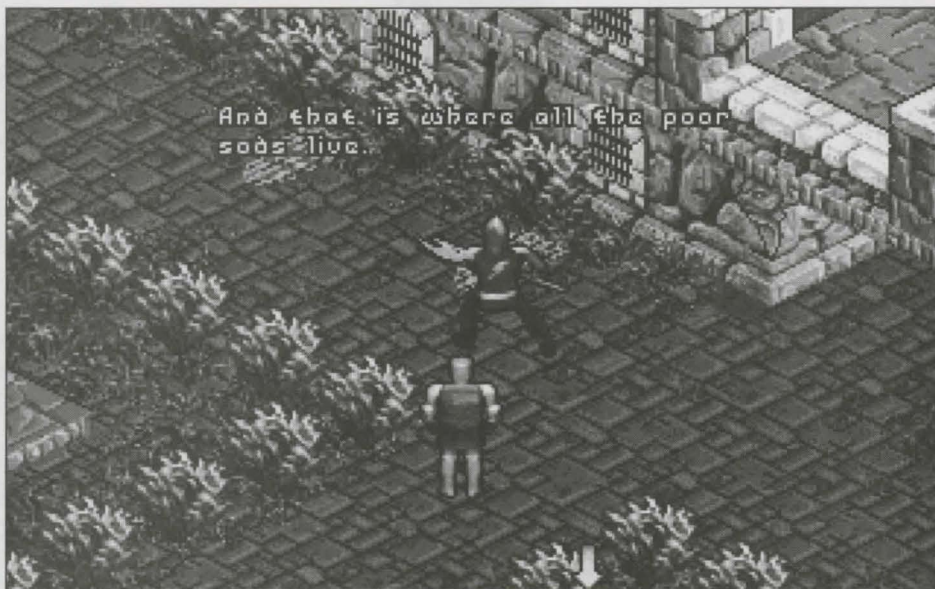
The City of Tenebrae

As he crossed the city gate's threshold, the Guardian's voice boomed in the sky like a great thunderstorm. "YES, AVATAR, SEEK A WAY HOME!" it taunted. Then, silence. It was gone just as quickly as it had come. Stencil let himself breathe again. Indeed, that was precisely what he was going to do—find a way off this strange land and back into the mostly safe confines of his beloved Britannia. Now, where to go first?

The fisherman Devon had suggested he seek out the Librarian, Bentic. That was what he would do, then, and find out whatever else he could along the way. Stencil strolled along the main road into town, taking in his surroundings. The city grounds were landscaped with shrubbery, lawns, trees, and statues. The sidewalk was fashioned of stone, moss covered in some places. The first guard he met inside the city explained to him the city's plan. "Poor sods to the west," the guard explained coolly, "rich folks to the east. That's where the Library is." The Palace, he told Stencil, lay to the north; however, he warned Stencil to stay out of it for it would only lead him to trouble.

Other guards he encountered in town offered him little or no information. Most merely looked at him with a mixture of suspicion and amusement. So, the Library was to the east. Very well. Stencil nonetheless wanted to explore the west first, the area in which the first guard had said the town's lower-class lived. In his lifetime, Stencil had learned that a town's so-called working class, its *real* people, were often more than willing to discuss with a stranger their land's history, its organization, and, most important of all, its gossip and rumors.

He turned west and headed through the gate, into west Tenebrae.



West Tenebrae



"ENJOYING YOUR STAY ON PAGAN, AVATAR?" boomed the Guardian's voice again. Was the Guardian going to taunt him like this every time he moved? Stencil decided to ignore his greatest foe's petty sarcasm and concentrate on matters at hand.

He roamed westward and a little to the south. The first building he came to was open. Inside, he found the tall, scantily dressed woman who had chopped off the head of the man named Toran, out on the windy dock just minutes before.

"Greetings," Stencil said.

"I am Shaana," the woman coolly declared. She was still holding her axe, Stencil observed, and appeared to be practicing on a rugged dummy mounted on an upright stand.

"Nice axe," Stencil said, ever the charmer.

"Yes, it is." She did not look his way when she spoke, just kept on hacking away at her dummy. He decided to try the direct approach.

"Who was the man you killed?" he said, even though he already knew the man's name.

This time she looked at him. It wasn't pretty. "You must be an imbecile to think that I know, or desire to know, anything of whom I execute. Even were I tested, there are too many to remember. Why are you so concerned about me and my victims?"

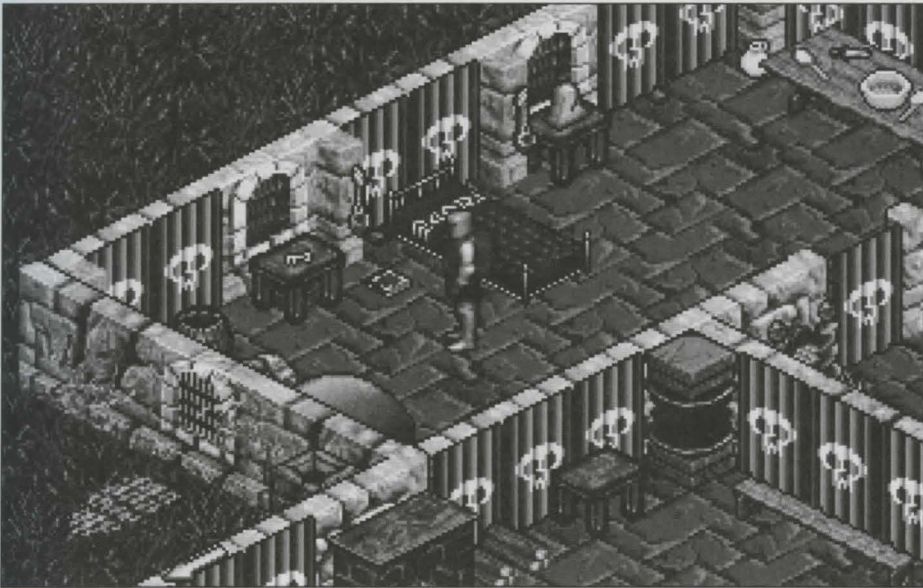
"Merely curious."

She grunted. "I am not here to satisfy your idle curiosity, stranger. One would think you were employed as a Scholar, the way you waste time with useless banter."

With that she flat-out ignored Stencil. Which was fine with him, for when she turned her back he stealthily ducked into the next room. He saw a hanging tapestry partition and slipped behind it. Her bedroom. He searched the room quickly and quietly, lest he draw the Amazon's attention to his snooping. On her bedside table he found a book. It was of no interest to him; however beneath it, he found a key. Beside her bed he saw a chest. Should he try the key on it?

The Avatar was torn. A thief he was not. But then again, this was not his world. Indeed, where he hailed from he was a man of high standing and even higher virtues. But had he asked to be plunged into this terrible world? He had not. Had he been invited here, which was a silly question, but one he worked over in his mind anyway, would he have come so *unprepared*? Certainly not. Enough of this to-be-or-not-to-be-a-thief debating. If ever he hoped to get the hell off this rock he would have to change his ways. If that meant stealing, then so be it. This almost sinister change of character was in fact the crystallization of the strange feeling that had come over him as he'd strolled for the first time through the gates of Tenebrae. Fight fire with fire, as they say. Or in this case, evil with evil.

He tried the key on the chest and it worked. He opened the chest and before he could think twice about what he was doing, the chest exploded. Once again, he had been careless. Still, he was hardly affected by the blast, nothing a quick nap wouldn't take care of. And besides, it was worth it, for inside the chest he found a



marvelous axe, which he snatched, leaving behind the meager dagger he'd found by the docks. He left Shaana's home and resumed exploring this side of town.

A little farther along he came to a stone and brown-shingle inn. Inside he found a waitress, a bartender, and a few patrons sitting at tables and drinking ale, obviously in their cups. The bartender introduced himself as Orlock. He was friendly, and eager to regale Stencil with stories about the town. Orlock said that his great grandfather had come across the lost treasure of the ancient Kings—"gold beyond yer wildest dreams." Plagued by nightmares after he'd stolen the treasure, his great grandfather had buried it to relieve his suffering. And according to legend, no one had found it yet. He then gave Stencil a brief oral history of Tenebrae. "In the early days the people were attacked by those filthy Necromancers. The mages of death commanded their minions of undead to kill everyone in town, including my great great great grandfather, John Blowhard."

"Oh no, Orlock's telling tales again." The waitress had come up to the bar to order.

Seizing the break in conversation, Stencil excused himself and had a look around. Through an unlocked door in the south wall of the inn he found a storeroom, which led to a bedroom.

Looking over his shoulder he saw that he had gone unnoticed. Inside the room he found a chest, which contained the book *Moriens: Necromancer, Prophet, Hero*. Stencil read this tome with great interest. Inside the chest he found a number of useless objects and some clothing, including a shirt gown. He decided against this one



and took instead the simple blue shirt lying before the chest. It fit nicely and protected Stencil's until-now nearly naked body.

Through the inn's west-wall door, down a short hall, he found a room with a fireplace. In a desk drawer he found a jeweled necklace, which he snatched with the idea of selling the gaudy adornment for money if necessary.

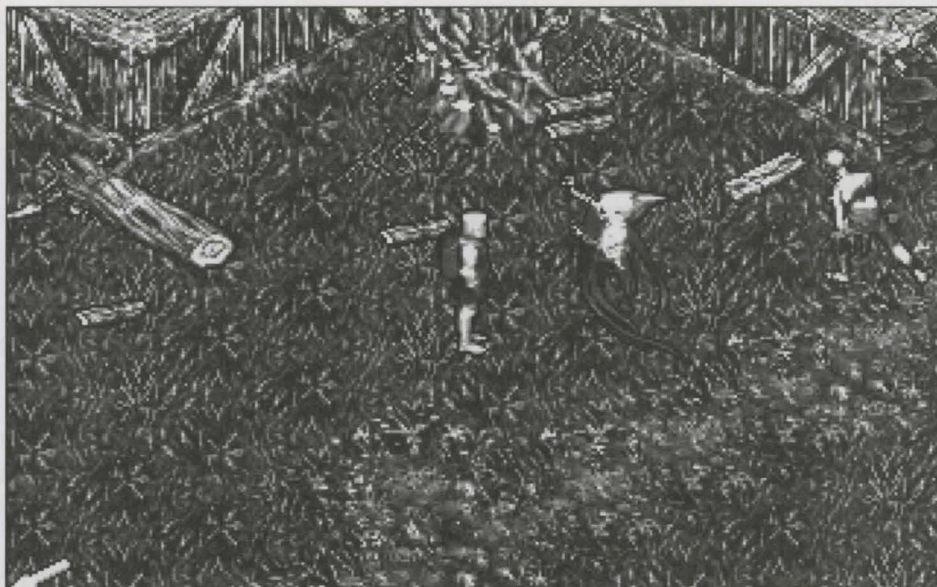
Roaming again, Stencil met a friendly man named Korick, the town's blacksmith. Korick offered to sell Stencil weapons and armor, but Stencil declined.

He'd been having luck on his own and would hope for more of the same. During their talk, Korick told Stencil how he felt the town was falling apart. "There was a great fire in west Tenebrae, and the old man that lived in one of the houses died. Some say he haunts the place to this very day." Stencil made a mental note to be on the lookout for such a place and bid the man farewell.

It didn't take long before he found it. It was in the extreme north-west part of west Tenebrae, and indeed, it was guarded by a spirit. Oddly, the visage seemed to be guarding a pile of sticks, of all things. Now what was so special about a pile of sticks, Stencil wondered.

His instinct was to draw his weapon; however, he decided to try the peaceful approach first and see what happened. While the spirit did not bother him, several ghouls sprang from the ground and began a slow approach toward him. Quickly, Stencil skirted them and sought shelter, however temporary, in what remained of the burned-down house. In the rear he found a stone staircase. He went

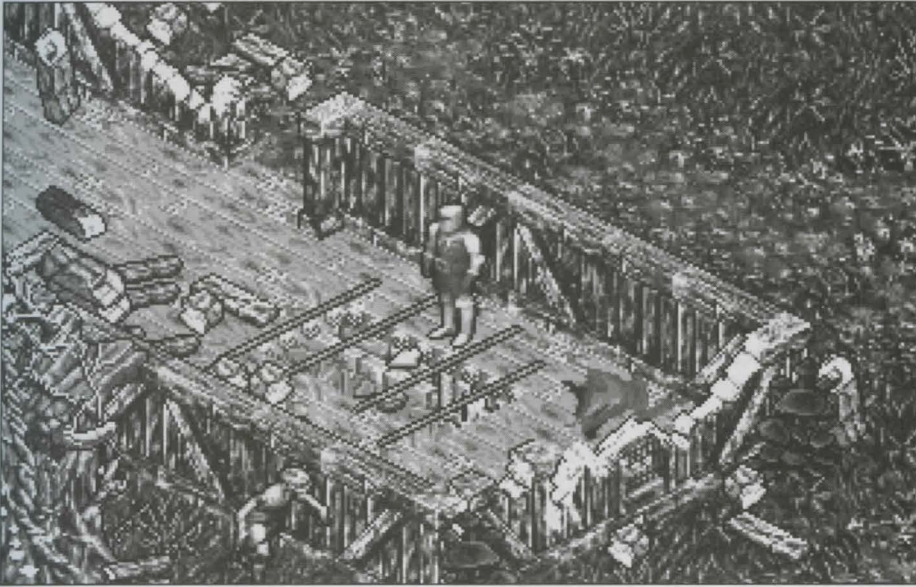




downstairs and found a woman who greeted him coldly and made fun of his attire. Poor Stencil was feeling so lost and confused as it was, he didn't need this sort of reception. Without further words, he went back upstairs. Strange woman, he thought, living in the basement of this ghoulish place. No sooner had he thought this, than he came face to face with a ghoul that had managed to drag its corroded body inside. He drew his newfound axe and after several mighty strokes managed to slay the creature. Not without some damage to himself, though. Stencil opened his pack and lay on his bedroll, resting for a short while. When he awoke he felt refreshed and ready to continue. There was nothing here of interest...or was there? Just as he was about to leave he noticed a suspiciously arranged pile of wood and debris to the right of the doorway. Indeed, beneath the debris, which he tossed aside, he uncovered a pit of some sort.

He leaped down into it and found a bag containing sixty-seven Obsidian coins. He snatched the bag, then stood on a pile of wood below the center of the pit opening and climbed back up out of the secret room.

He left the haunted house and returned to central Tenebrae, backtracking the way he'd come. He knew he should seek this Bentic, the Librarian, but the lure of exploring a little to the north, where the guard had said earlier that the Palace lay, was too tempting to pass by. Just a quick peek, he told himself, strolling through the north gate, onto the Palace grounds.



The Palace

On either side of the Palace entrance there stood a small gate tower. He tried the door on the right. It opened. The guard out front did not seem to notice. Stencil went inside. Near the entrance he found a barrel filled with edibles. Since he was not hungry, he passed them up and went straight for the chest in the room. Ready for a trap, he stood as far away as possible from the chest and opened it—and once more was knocked down by an explosion. This was turning into a routine. Luckily, this chest contained some useful potions. He drank the red potion at once to recover his strength from the blast, and he put the purple potion in his pack. He knew from experience that the purple potion would temporarily protect him from damage in combat against particularly difficult foes. He had a feeling that such encounters were many and just around the corner—best to be prepared. The yellow potion he skipped, as it was useful for healing only a small measure of his strength, and it wasn't worth the weight it would add to his knapsack. He found a sack with nineteen Obsidian coins and took those, but left the chain helmet and dagger.

Upstairs in the right-hand gate tower he found some light armor, which he exchanged for the simple shirt he'd lifted earlier, and an open log book. While its latest entry was of no interest to him, its contents were organized by time-cycle, which were listed in this order: Bloodwatch, Firstebb, DayTide, Threemoons, Lastebb, Eventide.

So this was how they tracked time in this strange place, Stencil observed. Good to know.

He crossed the short connecting bridge to the left-hand gate and went inside—and was overjoyed by what he found. Scrolls! Two of them, in fact. He inspected them: the first was a Scroll of Trap Detection, and the second a Scroll of Trap Destruction. He took them and went downstairs, where he found another chest, this one locked. On the nearby desk he found a key, which fitted the lock. Using his just-acquired Scroll of Trap Detection, he determined that the chest was not trapped. It figured. Inside he found some musty clothes, which he skipped, and a Bottle of Oil, which he took.

He exited the gate tower and proceeded north, across a heavy wooden bridge and into the richly furnished and decorated Palace. The floor was covered in black and red tile. Two guards stood on either side of a chamber entrance. Smiling to the unsmiling guards, Stencil casually sauntered to the right, through a pantry and into a kitchen. He climbed a set of stairs and found himself before a long room and another doorway that led to an elevated guard tower. He inspected the tower first and found, inside a basket hidden inside one of three barrels, a key ring. A huge smile spread across his face. If ever there were a great invention, it was the simple key ring. Like magic, it made sorting through keys a cinch, and kept clutter to a minimum. Since he'd snatched a few keys already, he attached them to the key ring. Although he'd used the keys already and probably wouldn't need them anymore, it never hurt to hang onto them, especially since having the key ring made them so easy to carry and added no more weight than its own to his inventory.

He left the small room through the west door and proceeded past two guards to the guard tower opposite. "Move along," one of the guards mumbled. It was surprising that neither guard stopped him to ask what he was doing here. Perhaps they allowed the townsfolk to tour the Palace unattended? Odd, but Stencil was nonetheless grateful for their laxness. In the second tower he found nothing of use. He exited and started across the immense rooftop for the other side. Halfway there, he stopped. In the front-center section of the rooftop he saw a training area, populated with a circle of practice dummies, all standing at attention—albeit halfheartedly. What caught Stencil's eye and caused his own heart to race excitedly were not these baggy bodies, but rather the knapsack sitting on the table in the center of the circle, begging to be taken. The guards in front were not looking. He opened the knapsack. Inside he found nothing but wine, to which he was indifferent. He removed all three bottles and placed them on the table.

What did make a difference was the knapsack itself. With it, Stencil could in effect increase his overall capacity by putting this knapsack inside the one he'd started out with—creating a knapsack in a knapsack.

A few paces beyond the training circle he saw what could only be a Recall Pad—a low platform to which he could teleport himself from another location...provided, of course, he possessed the knowledge or, if history were any lesson, the necessary object or spell or whatever it was that he needed to make the pad's conveyor magic happen. In his many years of adventuring, he'd spent who knows how many hours bouncing between Recall Pads similar to this one, like some crazy ethereal commuter.

The sight of it was at once hopeful and depressing, and he approached it with wary respect. On the one hand, it meant that whatever this place was, getting around via Recall Pads would make his travels easier. On the other hand, it implied that this strange place was huge, more likely than not. Very huge. As he neared the low, silent pad it started to rise. It lifted perhaps only an inch, and began pulsing and glittering. This was a welcome sign, for it meant that he could return to this very place at will...once, of course, he figured out how; had he not gotten close enough to the pad, it would have remained inactive, and therefore useless to him later, if he should need to return to it.

Resting on a nearby table he saw a brown leather-bound book, titled *The Final Sunlight*, by Nolandru, the blind idiot of Tenebrae. He opened and read it, committing it to memory. The book detailed a great battle between Pagan and Zealan, and the coming of the Titans. It made little sense but Stencil felt certain that that would change the more he learned about the Guardian's domain. He put



the book down and proceeded to the rear, right-hand guard tower. Inside, he found some more coins in a drawer and two candles, which he left behind. In the opposite guard tower he found another book in a drawer; however, this one seemed more like a pulp novel for passing long hours on shift, rather than a useful book with information he could use. He descended the stairway to the palace's first floor once more. He came to two doors, one south, the other east. On the wall beside the south door a plaque announced, "PALACE BARRACKS." He went inside, joining a guard in the room. He casually browsed a book titled *The Big Book of Adventure*, by Sladek, which was sitting on a nearby table. It contained much useful information, presumably offered to adventuring guardsmen. From it he learned this:

- ❁ **Puzzles** Those with levers are usually not harmful. Watching one's surroundings usually reveals clues. Also, the central levers usually reset the puzzle.
- ❁ **Traps** Be wary of a chest sitting out in the open, especially if it has many corpses around it.
- ❁ **Chests of Loot** Open at your own risk. Be sure to cast spells of trap detection before opening.
- ❁ **Trick Books** Judge these tomes by their cover, for they read differently than other books.
- ❁ **Mazes** Always mark your path! Use rocks or wood, and beware of treasure, as it is there to lead you from your determined path.
- ❁ **Spell Chits** Read only the text on the outside of scrolls to identify them—once you open a spell and read it fully its magic will be released immediately.

Noted. Stencil strolled past the guard and made his way down a flight of stairs. He came upon an enormous storeroom. He found great quantities of provisions; however, he wasn't hungry so he ate none of it. On the northern wall he found a lever, which he pulled. A heavy door in the middle of the wall dropped and he went through its opening. Inside, he found what could only be a combination torture chamber/jail house. Pity the man who was banished here, he thought with a shiver. Finding nothing of use he exited double-time, and returned upstairs to the barracks. The guard who had been in the room with him just moments ago was gone, and Stencil quickly searched the room. Beneath a pillow on the last bed in a row of beds he found a key, which he snapped onto his key ring. In the front, left-hand corner of the palace he entered a small room. Inside he found a locked chest, which none of his keys opened. He tried the key from under the pillow on a pair of double doors and they worked, giving him access to a room filled with a variety of armor, weapons, and supplies. If only there wasn't a guard standing in the corner, keeping a keen eye on him.

Oh well, maybe later he'd come back. Right now, he decided to get back on the track: finding the Librarian Bentic. He backtracked over the wooden bridge and returned to central Tenebrae, then strode through the east gate into east Tenebrae, in search of the Library.

East Tenebrae

True to the guard's description, east Tenebrae, compared to west Tenebrae, was like comparing night and day. Well, perhaps apples and oranges was a better comparison, for Devon had explained after all that the world he'd found himself in was one bathed in eternal twilight, forever caught between true day and night. Indeed, east Tenebrae was a richer place than west Tenebrae. The buildings were in good shape, many of them stone, with fenced-in yards and gardens.

The first house he came to, a single-story brown building with an awning of some sort over its entrance, was unoccupied. It did not look like a library, but Stencil investigated anyway. He found nothing of use upstairs and went downstairs, winding up in a suspicious-looking room. In a desk he found a few coins. Looking around, he determined that the room possibly led to another room, but he found no secret lever to open the way. He backtracked and searched the room upstairs, and this time found a lever hidden among the fireplace bricks.



He pulled it and heard a grating sound but nothing seemed to happen. He returned downstairs and, as he'd hoped, the lever had opened a secret door. In the first room he found a cabinet, in which he uncovered a box partially hidden beneath some clothing. It contained fifteen coins, his now. The chest beside the wardrobe cabinet was locked. In a nearby room he found its key, hidden beneath a bedside clock. He also found a bag beside the bed, containing two purple potions, which he snatched. Since his load was getting heavy, he put the potions in his second knapsack. He returned to the chest and unlocked it. Feeling well rested, he took his chances and opened it without checking for traps. It was trapped. However, he suffered only a small amount of damage. It was worth it, for inside he found legging armor, and a knapsack containing some useful potions. He drank the red one to restore his energy, but left the others. He also left the helmet he found in the chest, for the one he was already wearing was stronger.

Back upstairs he walked through an east-west passage that connected the house to a large building. It was a training hall, he determined, but at present it was vacant, save for the six dummies hanging around waiting to take a beating.

He exited the house through the door he'd entered and headed north, reasoning that a library would probably be among the larger buildings in town, so that was what he would look for. Near the northeast corner of east Tenebrae he saw two stone buildings. He entered the first one, which was ringed by a low iron fence. The door was unlocked and he entered.

A woman was sitting just inside. She seemed upset and—of course!, she was the woman he'd seen on the pier, the one who'd been sobbing through the execution. He felt terrible for having barged in on her like this and made an effort to apologize.

"Excuse me," Stencil said. "What is your name?"

"My name is Rhian, and yours?"

"I am Stencil. I'm sorry..."

"Hello, Stencil," Rhian said, clearly struggling with her emotions. "I'm afraid I'm not good company just now."

"Why do you cry?" He knew why, of course, he was just being polite.

She told him that she was Toran's wife. Stencil asked why he'd been executed. She said her husband had spoken critically of the Lady Mordea, whose wrath Toran—everyone—should fear. The Lady did not take kindly to criticism, Rhian explained. She cried that she was all alone now, for not only had she lost her husband, but her son had recently left home to become a Theurgist.

"What is a Theurgist?"

"A healer," Rhian said, a little sourly perhaps. "Oh, please do not misunderstand me, friend Stencil, I think it is grand that my son should want to be a healer. I'm thrilled, really, but I am concerned

by the suddenness of his decision. It's just that he never showed any sign of wanting to be a healer when he was growing up. Rather, he simply wanted to be a gem cutter like his father. And now that he is gone, I am left alone with no one support me. But, at least I know he is alive and well. I can always hope he will return to his poor widowed mother."

"I hope he returns to you," Stencil said. "What will you do in the meantime, to support yourself?"

"I am a weaver. I make clothing, and because—" She paused and pressed her clenched fist to her lips. "Oh, I cannot say without crying—because of my husband's execution...I have taken over the running of his gem shop. He was the gem cutter here in town. As my son is no longer here it's up to me to run the shop. Would you like to buy or sell gems?"

"Actually," Stencil said, feeling a little uncomfortable talking about business after what the woman had just been through, "I'd like to sell some gems."

Rhian apologized for not knowing very much about gems, then inspected the few things he showed her. She offered him a low price and he accepted—after all, he'd stolen them in the first place. With that, he bid the woman farewell and left with his coins. Continuing north, he found the Library in the far northwest corner of the town. Finally, he had arrived at his first determined destination. The door was unlocked, and he went inside.

Bentic the Librarian

The Library was expansive and smelled of old books and knowledge. He saw a man sitting at a table, bent over an open book. The man appeared to be deep in thought and Stencil approached him quietly.

"Hello," Stencil said.

Startled, the man looked up, plainly disturbed by Stencil's interruption. "People are trying to read," the man whispered with a huff. Stencil was taken aback. Weren't librarians known for their helpfulness? Indeed they were. Surely, this was not Bentic. He approached another man who sat reading as well, and was reprimanded in the same manner. Then he noticed a door, beside which there hung a plaque that announced "QUIET." He opened the door and entered the room.

The room was unoccupied. At the rear of the room he saw steps and proceeded up them. Upstairs, he found an old, friendly-looking man sitting at a desk. The man did not look up at Stencil, yet he seemed approachable nonetheless.

"Excuse me," said Stencil. The man looked up with a smile.

"Well, hello. My name is Bentic. It is a word of Pagan derivation. I think it originally meant 'he who toils hard' but that is not certain. I

have found a number of references to 'Ventac' in several older texts and feel that this may be the root of the name 'Bentic.' And what is your name, friend?"

"I am Stencil. Well met, Bentic. You said Pagan. What is that?"

"Why, that is the name of this place."

"I thought this place was Tenebrae."

"No, no. That is the name of this city. 'Pagan' is the name of this land, this all-encompassing world upon which we all live out our meager lives."

"What do you do?"

"By trade, I am the Librarian of this city; however, I prefer to think of myself as a student of life. One who spends his time observing all facets of life. The Library is my joy. It is where I spend all my time, studying the words left by our predecessors. You cannot believe what is in these books. They contain the wisdom of many ages. Too many people overlook the knowledge of our past generations, and because of this we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes over and over again."

"Can you tell me more about the people of Tenebrae," Stencil asked.

It was Bentic's opinion that the people of Tenebrae were a varied and unusual lot. Eventually, the pair's conversation turned to the town's government. The old man's voiced dropped to a mere whisper. "It is not quite the safe thing to discuss here. Even my interest in knowledge and books cannot protect me from Lady Mordea. You might say she has a rather...short temper. Why, just recently her guards confiscated my personal diary, though I do not have any idea why." Bentic hastened to add that the town did have its share of good citizens, and expressed his admiration for Devon, a man whom he felt had more potential than he realized.

"I've met Devon," Stencil said, feeling oddly pleased to hear Bentic speak so highly of the man whom Stencil felt was at heart a truly noble man. "You say he has potential?"

"Yes, I can't put my finger on it, but there is something there." This was intuitively how Stencil felt about the man he'd met only briefly. Bentic continued. "Call it a hunch, if you will. I just seem to feel that there is something about him that suggests greater things."

"Does Devon know how I may leave Pagan?" At this, the Librarian's eyes grew wide.

"Leave Pagan? My goodness, I don't think I've ever heard anyone ask for that, but then again, you don't act, talk or dress like anyone I've ever seen before." The old man leaned back and eyed him in much the same manner that Devon had previously, as though he were judging him in some way. He scratched his cheek and gave a little nod. "I can only suggest you speak to someone with more magical ability than I. Mythran could help you."

Bentic told Stencil that Mythran, who lived in a small house in a region known as the Plateau, had been known to dabble in the various magical arts and was a Scholar, and that he often made and sold magical scrolls and items. To find Mythran, Bentic said, leave Tenebrae north of the Palace, and head north, following a path through the Valley to the cave entrance. "Go through cave. It opens on the other side of the mountain on the Plateau."

Grateful for the old man's hospitality and assistance, Stencil thanked Bentic and told him he'd better be on his way.

"Come back any time, Stencil. I so love good conversations." With that, the old man smiled and went back to his studies.

In Bentic's bedroom Stencil looked over some books. On the table by the stairs he found one of particular interest, titled *Adventure Quarterly*. It described the Forgotten Riches of Knarl, which were hidden somewhere in a place called the Lower Catacombs. If Stencil were to find himself in these supposed catacombs, then indeed he would keep his eyes peeled for Knarl's goods, which were rumored to include magical weapons, armor, and spells.

Downstairs, he found a book on mushrooms. It stated that most were edible. The fist-sized Blue Bulgie and the Green Capper were delicious but were easy to confuse with the blue and green form of the Deamon's Paw, which can cause rashes, blisters, and general bladder distress. A helpful mushroom known for its healing properties was the yellow and green Adventurer's Friend, found in the wild. While consumption of these mushrooms often restored one's health, they also gave the consumer a general feeling of euphoria. The book warned travelers to stay away from the red Fire Mushroom, which exploded when one stepped on or near it.

Keeping in mind his aim to seek Mythran, Stencil began strolling back to central Tenebrae. He vowed to inspect on his way only those buildings that lay directly along his path. His first stop was at a wooden, red-shingled roof house encircled by a low wooden fence. Inside the red-tiled house he found a man sitting at a desk. Having learned not to disturb those deep in thought, Stencil searched the room and found two levers, one beside the fireplace and one on the northern wall. He pulled both and found a secret bedroom, and access to a room in which it appeared certain unusual forms of sorcery were practiced. On a brown pant-clad skeleton Stencil found a key, which unlocked a chest sitting on the rooftop. The chest was trapped, but what treasures it contained! Inside, Stencil found nine scrolls: four Scrolls of Trap Detection, three Scrolls of Trap Destruction, one Scroll of Restoration, and one Scroll of Healing. On two tables he found more goods: a purple potion, a Scroll of Restore Sight, and a Scroll of Invisibility. On a nearby corpse, he found a black potion of invisibility, a Scroll of Trap Destruction, and a Scroll of Trap Detection. What a lucky find! He took as many of these that

he could carry. The only unlucky thing on the porch was an exploding book, which caused him some damage but not enough to kill him.

The other building he investigated was a stone one with rust-colored double doors, situated across the path from the building he'd just departed. The building's double doors were locked, but this didn't stop him. Stencil merely stood beside the house where the roof was low and climbed up onto it. In the middle of the roof he found steps going down. Inside, he found in a small box a scroll that explained the virtues of potions, as follows:

- **Yellow** Heals, but only a small measure
- **Red** Heals fully, but should be consumed only if one's strength is low; otherwise it does damage
- **Orange** Restores Mana in times of need
- **Green** Tastes terrible and should be avoided
- **Blue** Provides restful slumber
- **Purple** Offers protection during combat and is useful against the undead
- **Black** Causes invisibility

In a basket on a table he found a red potion, a Scroll of Restore Sight, and a Scroll of Invisibility. Nearly hidden by a table bearing a statue, he found a mace, but decided to hang onto his axe rather than trade it for the mace. Behind the stairs he found a locked door, but was unable to find a key to open it. He went back onto the roof, leaped off, and returned to central Tenebrae. He proceeded north through the Palace, smiling at the guards as he went, and exited the Palace through the rear. At the Palace's rear guard tower he encountered locked doors on either side; however, he managed to heave himself onto the lower midspan that connected the towers by standing directly beneath its front face and climbing up.

Inside he found more potions, and in the right tower, downstairs, he found in a trapped chest some rugged armor gloves and a heavy longsword. He took both, returned upstairs, leaped down from the midspan, and then proceeded north, better equipped for his journey to the Plateau and Mythran the Magician.



Seeking the Plateau and Mythran

Immediately outside town Stencil came across a small guard post. He decided to skip searching it and stay as close on course as possible. Bentic said to go north, so that's the way he went. There was a certain ominous air about this side of town. The ground was mostly grass and he found a worn dirt path. A little north, a group of four or five large, green-and-gray mottled beasts grazed lazily. Stencil avoided getting too close, adhering to the dirt path. In short time he came across a hut, and to the left of that, a stable, in which several of the beasts he'd seen grazing stood huddled together. A few paces north of this strange animal farm he came to a small house. Inside it looked lived in, but no one was home. He opened an untrapped chest and found seventy Obsidian coins and a sword, which he left behind because he'd already acquired one.

He continued north until the path bent left. While Bentic had definitely said he'd find the Plateau to the north, Stencil had a hunch that this bend was the right direction to take. Still, it was better to be sure, and since he could see that heading farther north would end eventually with a high rock wall, he decided to make certain that that direction, true north, wasn't where he was supposed to go.

He came to a great pile of wood that appeared oddly out of place, as though it were there to conceal something. Piece by piece, Stencil cleared the pile. Sure enough, his perception had been right, for behind the pile he found a cave, fronted by a veil of fine-spun cobweb. He walked through the harmless web and into the cave.



The North Cave



The small opening let onto a long, dark gray stone corridor. It looked as though it had not been entered for a long, long time. Stencil came upon a large open chamber, and to the right found two locked doors. None of his keys opened either door so he went back to the chamber for a closer look. Was this Mythran's house? He did not think so, for the place was plainly deserted. In the middle of the room, the floor had fallen away. Below he could see a chamber crawling with spiders. Since the room itself held nothing of use, he leaped down into the spidery pit. He quickly slew two of the creeping spiders and then searched the skeletal remains of adventurers who'd breathed their last in this damp, cold pit. On one he found a worn but serviceable shield; however, he had to unload a few potions before he could take it, for his load had grown quite heavy. With a shield, he reasoned, his chances of survival were far greater. Climbing out of the pit proved tricky, but he finally managed to get hold of an edge of the ceiling/floor in the corner beside the night stand. He heaved himself up and out. With his new shield, he left the cave and returned to the left bend in the path that he had diverged from and followed it in a northwest direction. In short time, he came to another cave. This one, he hoped, was the one Bentic had told him to find.



Plateau Cave



He made his way along a short, narrow tunnel that bent left at the end. What he found he'd never before faced in all his years as the Avatar. A wide body of water, deep by the dark looks of it, separated him from the other side. Between the two sides he saw small, square stone platforms sticking up out of the water. Obviously, he was going to have to leap from one to the next to get across the water chasm.

He took a *medium* leap to the first stone, the one closest to the farthest-reaching point of the cave floor. A second *medium* leap, straight ahead, put him on the second stone. Looking around, he spotted a chest over his right shoulder, hanging against the wall of the watery chasm. Heeding the advice he'd gotten from the scroll he'd read earlier, Stencil decided to skip the chest, since he was already carrying all he could. His next leap would be to the stone to his left and a little forward of the direction he was facing. Before he leaped, he stepped back to the very edge of the stone on which he stood, so that he didn't overshoot the one he was trying for. He gave a *short* leap and landed squarely in the center of his intended target. He stood once more at the rear edge of the stone he was on before leaping to the next, then took a *medium* leap forward in the direction he was facing and landed safely and squarely. His next

leap would be to his right and forward. Before he leaped, he stood in the absolute center of the stone he was on and faced the direction he was about to leap. With a *medium* leap he made it to the next stone. For the next one, he stood once more in the center of the stone and faced right and rearward, then took a *medium* leap. One more stone to go. This last one was to his left, not far from shore. Before leaping he stood on the extreme front corner of his present stone, then took a *medium* leap. His final leap was a *medium* that landed him safely on the rocky shore alongside the cavern. From there, he was able to work his way carefully along the water's edge to safe ground.

He came to a raised rock area. He found a corner suitable for climbing and hauled himself up onto the next level. Nearby he encountered a lightning bolt gate of some sort. Rather than try to get through it, Stencil climbed onto a low standing platform occupied by some skeletons. The moment he set foot on the platform he was confronted by a ghoul that sprang from the earth. Six or seven chops from his sword and the ghoul was no more. Still, he'd suffered some damage from the battle, and this was no place to rest—more ghouls had materialized on the level beneath him, which he would have to cross to proceed. Fortunately, one of the skeletons he found was hiding a red potion of restoration, which he drank. He found other potions on some of the other skeletons as well. When the ghouls below had wandered away, he jumped down and then raced to the next elevated area and climbed onto it quickly. Sometimes, like now, outrunning foes was smarter and faster than fighting them.

He worked his way southwest until he came upon a dilapidated platform of some sort, bearing a long lever and chain spool. To his left he saw a pair of high, heavy gates, barring his course. Did the lever open the gates? He tried to pulling the lever but it seemed stuck. He investigated the nearby grounds for clues. Across a weak-looking rope bridge he found a broken-down room containing six levers against one wall, and a seventh lever in a center platform. He stood back and studied the levers for a moment, trying to determine what pattern, if any, would cause something to happen. He noticed that three of the levers were fronted by skeletal remains or skulls. On a hunch, he threw only those levers that were *not* fronted by objects. As a result, the left set of levers pointed toward him, and the right set of levers pointed away from him. With that, a sudden earthquake shook the cave and the middle lever moved by its own power. He went back to the first lever he'd encountered on the other side of the rickety bridge and threw it. The huge gates opened. He raced through and skirted a pair of ghouls, then found the cave's exit and wound up outdoors once more. The ground here was practically covered with red mushrooms—they looked like Fire Mushrooms, the kind Stencil recalled reading about and was warned to avoid, for they exploded if stepped on or near.

Stepping carefully, he hung close to the great stone wall from which he'd emerged and headed in a northern direction. The wall eventually veered south and then north again. Rounding the corner he could not believe his eyes. Approaching him were several exact duplicates of—himself! It was as though he'd suddenly come upon a gaggle of twin siblings! The duplicates, known as changelings, made strange laughing noises in combat. As he attacked the first of the bunch, the creature changed into a bizarre, small gray monster. As he finished it off, the creature's body disappeared, leaving behind some Flasks of Oil and Obsidian coins. How very strange, Stencil observed—but not for long, for the other creatures were moving in fast. He tossed Flasks of Oil at the changelings and hacked at any that came within his sword's long reach. Eventually, he finished off all five of them. Just as he was about to turn around and try another course, he saw a rather large cave opening. Had the creatures been guarding whatever lay inside? Was it Mythran they were protecting? Stencil decided to find out.



The Power Hammer Cave



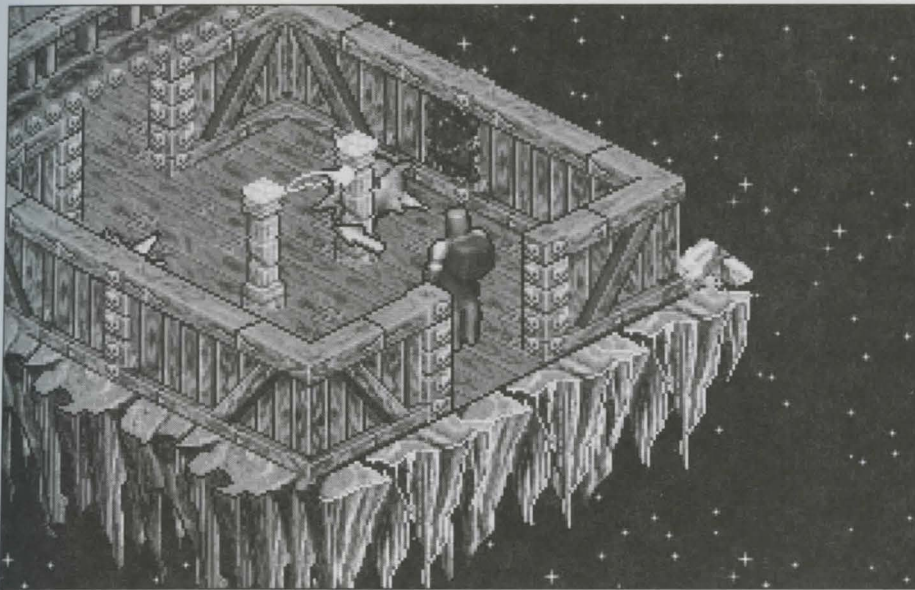
The place was brimming with fire-spitting sconces. After some careful running and dodging, he made his way deep into the twisty cavern and found a seemingly-at-peace skeleton warrior and, just beyond it, two chests. As he was searching the chest (which, naturally, exploded when he opened it), the nearby skeleton warrior came to life. Quickly, Stencil drank a potion of invisibility. He probably could have gotten past the warrior without drinking the potion, but he didn't want to take any chances. In the chest he found a hammer that, judging by its glow, he determined was magical. He quickly dropped his sword and took the hammer and raced past the skeleton warrior—he was, at this point, in no shape or mood for fighting. He wanted merely to get out of this cave alive, with his new magical weapon. More foes confronted him in the cave, including two invisible warriors he could detect only by the sound of their footsteps and their red eyes, and a large troll, all of whom he easily outran. Outside once more, Stencil rested for a short while, then headed south. Almost immediately he came upon a two-story house made of wood. A strange hum seemed to hang in the air. This must be the place, thought Stencil, as he opened the front door and walked inside.



Mythran's House



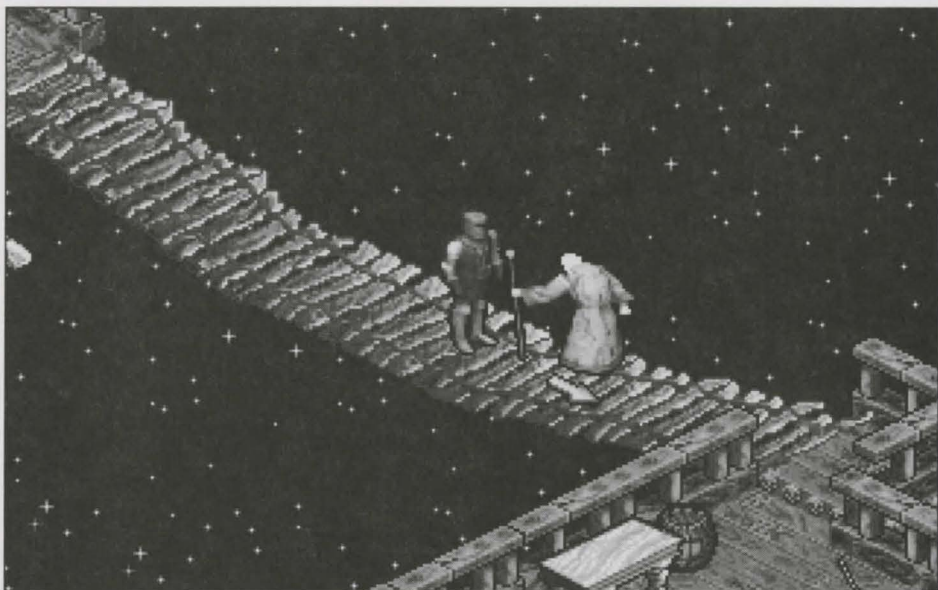
The first room—which was more like a corridor, really—was swarming with traps. Judging by the way the spike ball traps rolled and the lightning gates zapped regularly, Stencil estimated that if he were to time it right, he could simply run straight through the traps without



getting caught. Indeed, timing was everything. Just as the first lightning gate fired, he charged full steam ahead, racing straight through the narrow room to the opposite end. He suffered not a single scratch.

He walked through a dark doorway and came to what, judging by the row of mysterious-looking objects lining either side of the foyer, could only be the mage's house. It was simply too weird to be anyone else's. The interior was intriguing and colorful. The place appeared empty, however. He looked around. In a small room he found a magic dagger and 137 Obsidian coins, which he took. He saw no sign of Mythran, however, and so he went upstairs. Nowhere in sight here, either. Looking around some more, Stencil found a dormant Recall Pad situated on the right side of the room. It lifted and sparkled as he neared it, indicating that it was now committed to memory. Beyond the Recall Pad he saw a door. It led to a suspended bridge that gave the strange illusion of spanning the very heavens; he was surrounded by absolute space and stars, and it was here that he found the elderly mage Mythran, tottering along all hunched over and with a long staff in one hand, mumbling to himself and stroking his long white beard with the other hand.

The old man's eyes were the deepest blue Stencil had ever seen, and his hands were knotted yet appeared very strong, rather like petrified wood. The mage exuded an aura of absolute peace and serenity, and this made Stencil feel comfortable almost at once. Was he really standing in free space, above the universe, or was it just an illusion...



"Hello," the old man said.

"Hello," said Stencil; he was certain this was Mythran, but he decided to make sure. "May I ask your name?"

"I am Mythran," said the mage. "Can I be of assistance?"

"I have many questions," Stencil said.

This delighted Mythran. "I cannot refuse one who has traversed ghoulish passages to meet with my hospitality. What are some of these questions?"

Stencil got right to the point. "How can I leave Pagan?" The old man was taken aback. And said so. He asked Stencil if this was some sort of test, or was he serious. Stencil told him he was dead serious.

With that, the mage Mythran warned Stencil that his goal was a tremendous one, and that in order for him to leave one world, this one, for another, his own, then it was the power of the Titans he would have to face. Therefore, Mythran explained, the best place to start was with one of the schools of magic.

"Have you spoken with the Necromancers?" Mythran asked.

Stencil said that he had not, and Mythran told him that he should do so, at once. "Speak with Vividos about becoming an apprentice once Lothian has passed on her powers to him. I realize the thought of dealing with the Ritual of Death may seem distasteful, but I expect it is something to which you must become accustomed if you wish to succeed."

Mythran told Stencil that he could find the Necromancers in the Cemetery, which he could get to by taking the East Road out of

Tenebrae. He warned Stencil to be careful, for the Cemetery was crawling with undead.

"May you fare well, stranger," Mythran said. "If there is anything in my house that will aid you, feel free to help yourself. Wait. Before you go, my friend, I wish to give you two items that will assist you. The first is an Item of Recall." Like magic, the small red object appeared in his knapsack. "When you find yourself in trouble you may use this item to teleport to my front door." He told Stencil that the Item of Recall would enable him to teleport to other Recall Pads he found as well. The second item he gave Stencil was a red potion; however, Stencil did not drink it, for he was in fine condition.

He thanked Mythran for his kindness and information, then used the Item of Recall to teleport himself back to the Palace rooftop and central Tenebrae.



The Avatar's Apprenticeship

Upon materializing on the Palace rooftop, Stencil made his way back to the Cemetery by traveling first to east Tenebrae, then through the far east Tenebraen gates. "Watch for undead," the city guards warned as Stencil passed them. Mythran had told Stencil that the Cemetery lay to the east of the city, and north. His new magic dagger, which he'd obtained at Mythran's, was strong and powerful against ghouls. As for skeleton warriors, he avoided them completely, since even though he could slay them, they magically came back to life almost instantly. They were indestructible, it seemed, and he hoped eventually to find a weapon powerful enough to put them to rest once and for all.

Following the north-south road, Stencil eventually came to the gate leading to the Cemetery. He proceeded through, and almost immediately found a large building, surrounded by a low metal fence, just a few yards to the north and a little to the east.



Vividos and Lothian



He went inside the building and found Vividos upstairs. He was a middle-aged man of medium build, with an air of resignation about him. Or maybe it was sadness. Or maybe, considering his chosen profession, his seemingly downcast mood was simply par for the course in this business of conveying the dead to Lithos.

"Have you come to learn?" asked Vividos. Stencil told him that was indeed why he had come. The somber man seemed to perk up a little. "This is excellent news. I shall teach you all about our mysteries and traditions." Stencil asked Vividos to explain; however,

the Apprentice told him that he could not share this information with a person not of Vividos's order. "You could learn all if you were to join the order and become a Novice."

"Join your order?"

"Few people join. Life here is not easy but it is rewarding. A Novice is someone who has newly joined the order and has begun to learn. However, as you are not of our order, I cannot tell you much. Besides, we have many problems right now, so even if you wanted to, you could not become a Novice at this time."

"What problems?"

"Everything must be done with the right tools," Vividos explained patiently. "Unfortunately, we are missing a most important tool—our Ceremonial Dagger. It was taken from us by that mad witch, Mordea. She burst right in with her guards and simply stole it." The Apprentice shook his head sadly.

"Why is this dagger so special?"

"It was given to Moriens by the Mountain King Himself. We cannot perform our ceremonies with any other dagger but the Ceremonial Dagger. We need to get it back, somehow."

Stencil, always the adventurer, saw this as an opportunity to put himself in favor with Vividos and, hopefully, find out more about becoming an Apprentice himself, as Mythran had instructed. "I'll get the dagger back," said Stencil, matter of factly.

"You will, truly? Why, this is wonderful news. Listen closely. Mordea keeps it in her chambers. You will know the dagger by its golden hilt and serpentine blade. Please hurry, for we shall need the dagger very soon."

Very well, thought Stencil, he would somehow get this dagger back to Vividos. But would Vividos then help him? It didn't hurt to find out first, before traipsing off into what could wind up turning into a dangerous quest. He'd seen Mordea in action once already, and it was not a pretty sight. "May I meet the Necromancer?"

"If you give me the dagger, I will get you an audience with the Necromancer. Now, go."

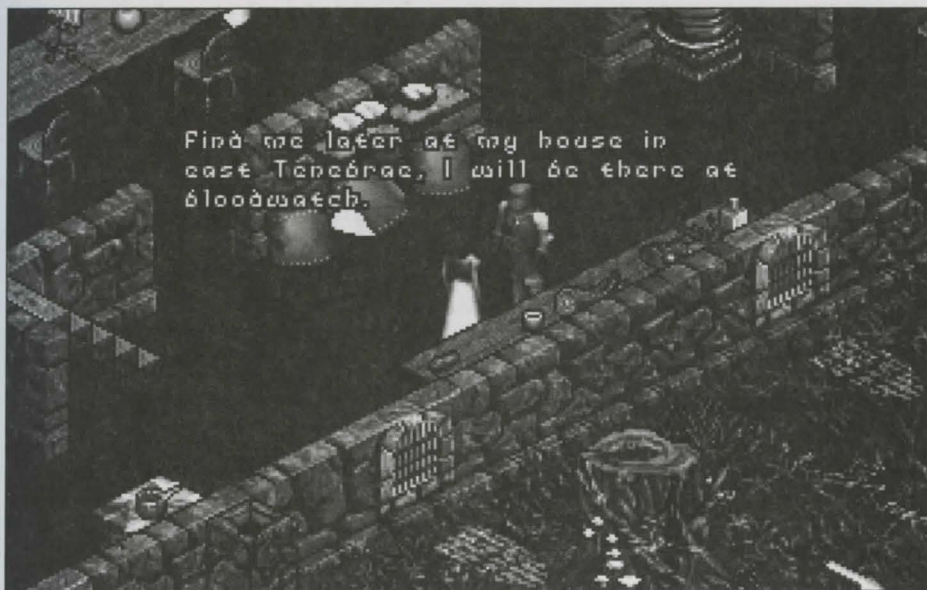
Stencil bid the Apprentice farewell, and, using the Item of Recall, teleported himself to central Tenebrae, winding up once again on the Palace rooftop.



The Ceremonial Dagger



To Stencil's surprise, the royal hall, which fronted Lady Mordea's room, was unlocked and the guards didn't even seem to notice him as he slipped inside. He closed the doors behind him and searched the room, finding a key beneath a pillow. He was in luck: the key unlocked Lady Mordea's bedroom door. At the head of her bed Stencil found a box. Inside, he found a dagger; however, by the looks of it he guessed that this was not the one Vividos needed.



The Lady Mordea's bedroom closet was locked. He searched the room but found no key. The Ceremonial Dagger no doubt lay behind that door, Stencil presumed, for it was nowhere else to be found, and Vividos had said it was in the Lady's chambers. Now...where would one as cunning as Mordea hide the key. Backtracking, he searched high and low.

On his way through the kitchen he encountered a servant who was busily catering to Mordea, who, from the dining hall, could be heard complaining that she was hungry and where was her dinner? The servant, a tall lovely woman, told Stencil that she could not speak with him right now, but she would talk to him later if he met her at her house in east Tenebrae at the hour of Bloodwatch. With that, she hurried back to the dining hall to serve the whining Mordea. Very well, thought Stencil, who headed back to east Tenebrae and searched for the woman's house. To the right of the Temple of the Divine Hydros he found a house that was locked. Since he'd just left her at the Palace, he assumed that this must be the place. She'd told him to meet her at Bloodwatch, but since he didn't have a watch on him he did not know what time it was, or when the Bloodwatch would arrive. Feeling tired, he roamed a few blocks away from the house and found a quiet patch of lawn on which to spread his bedroll and take a nap. He rested for an hour and went back to the house and the door was unlocked. Inside, he found the servant, who introduced herself as Aramina. She seemed a little less nervous than when he'd first met her.

"I'm looking for a dagger," he began.

She responded by telling Stencil she worked for Lady Mordea. He asked her about the Lady, and Aramina said it was not good for her to talk about her employer behind her back. "But I will tell you she is a hard woman. She will stop at nothing to preserve her power here. Nothing, not even murder. She hardly notices my existence. At least she does not take pleasure in tormenting me like her Seneschal does." Stencil asked her who she meant.

"Salkind is her Seneschal," Aramina said bitterly. "He sets me difficult tasks, then delights in tormenting me until I am barely able to complete them."

"What kind of tasks?"

"Well, the other day, he was walking down the hall toward me when suddenly he cornered me and began to pinch and grab my body. Do you think that's funny?" challenged Aramina. Stencil could see that this was plainly not funny to Aramina, and justly so.

"No," Stencil said, in earnest.

"No? Really? Truly, I did not find it very humorous either. He thinks it's hilarious. So I smile and try my best to stay out of his way. There is precious little else I can do."

"Speak up about it!" Stencil said, encouragingly. The woman bowed her head and blushed. This dolt Salkind was nasty, thought Stencil.

"Oh, you are very nice, and I appreciate your concern, but to whom would I speak? Lady Mordea? No, she dotes on him." Stencil couldn't say. Instead, he changed the subject. He felt he'd gained the woman's trust, and decided to try again.

"I am looking for a dagger."

"I know nothing of a dagger," said Aramina, averting her eyes from Stencil's own gaze.

"Please. I need help. Are you certain?"

"I can't say. I'll get in trouble."

"You won't get into trouble," Stencil said, assuring her that her secret was safe with him.

"Oh, I don't know why, but I'm going to trust you. Mordea keeps a special dagger in a locked chest. You will find the chest in a small closet near her bed. I have the key. I will give it to you but you must promise not to tell anyone where you got it."

Stencil promised, and Aramina gave him the key. He thanked her, then hurried back to the Palace. Since it was so close, he walked, rather than use the Item of Recall again. Past the guards once more, he entered Mordea's room. The Lady lay there on her bed asleep. He crept along the very edge of the carpet around the Lady's bed, so as not to wake her. He knew the safer thing to do would be to leave and come back later, but Vividos had told him to hurry, so he decided to take his chances and hope that by being quiet he wouldn't wake the sleeping vixen. Indeed, the key Aramina gave him unlocked

the small closet. Inside, he found an unlocked, untrapped chest. Inside it he found an ornate dagger unlike the everyday models he'd seen so far. He took the dagger and left behind the other items, for his load was already heavy. He slipped out of Mordea's room and raced back to Vividos's house.

The Ceremony

"I have the dagger," Stencil said to Vividos, who was downstairs this time, standing before an aged woman who was lying on an altar of some sort. Was this Lothian, Stencil wondered.

"Bless you," said Vividos, gratefully. "Your timing is perfect, for I need the dagger immediately. Lothian lies upon the altar, barely clinging to life. For your service I will grant you the boon you asked of me. I will introduce you to the Necromancer. But first, stand aside and witness the Ceremony of Eternity. For Lothian the time has come. Please follow my instructions closely." He turned and with much admiration and respect in his voice, addressed the woman. "Are you prepared, Lothian?"

The elderly Lothian's dry lips parted. Barely. "All my life I have prepared for this Vividos. I beg you to send me to Lithos, the Mountain King."

Vividos nodded his consent, then turned to Stencil. "Please kneel before the Altar of Passage," he told Stencil.

Vividos raised his hands skyward and spoke. "Lord Lithos, Mountain King, we come forth to send your faithful Lothian into your waiting arms. Tell us now, Lord of the Underworld, does this sacrifice please you?"

Lothian shuddered in sudden agitation. "Yes, Lord. Take me! I am ready!" the old woman cried.

As though in response to the woman's cries and Vividos's offer, a powerful rumbling issued throughout the building.

"Let us begin, for Lithos is pleased. Now, prepare to greet the ambassadors from Lithos's world."

The ground quaked once more, then erupted around the altar, sprouting three undead ghouls. Stencil was alarmed and was about to draw his weapon; however, Vividos, witnessing the very same uprising, showed no sign of concern or fear.

"The dead now surround you," Vividos said to Lothian. "Prepare yourself for your lord."

Lothian squeezed her eyes tightly shut and uttered these words: "Sacred dagger, I am your sheath."

In the next instant Vividos plunged the ornate dagger straight into his elder's heart. The old woman cried out and great jets of blood surged from her fatal chest wound. Thunder and lightning boomed and crackled in the small room and then all was quiet.

"Arise, my friend," said Vividos.

All at once, the ceremony became crystal clear to Stencil. "You are the Necromancer?" he said, a little in awe.

"I am now. With Lothian's passage, I step forward and take her place. As Lothian's Scion, I was next in the succession."

"Scion? What's a Scion?"

Vividos explained that the Scion is the Necromancer's chosen successor. He told Stencil that it was normal for the Necromancer's First Apprentice to be the Scion. Sadly, he went on, he, Vividos, was Lothian's only Apprentice. "Now I am in need of an Apprentice."

Wasn't that what Mythran had told him he would have to become in order to figure out how to get off this godforsaken place? He could barely contain his enthusiasm. "You need an Apprentice?"

"Yes, I do," Vividos said, then, after a brief pause, he seemed to consider Stencil with newfound interest. "You are a man of exceptional qualities, both physical and spiritual. Would you wish to become my Apprentice?"

"Yes. I am honored."

"Good, then it is done. As my Apprentice, I would have you begin your studies immediately. Much must be learned before you can wield the magic of a Necromancer."

Stencil asked him how he wanted him to begin, and Vividos instructed him to gather some reagents. "With them I will teach you their properties. There will be other tasks to follow. If you accomplish all of them correctly, then I shall confirm you as my Apprentice, and most likely you will become my Scion. After that you shall make a pilgrimage."

This was a lot of information for Stencil to comprehend all at once. He addressed what Vividos had told him one point at a time. "What reagents do you need?"

"I need you to bring me a sample of Executioner's Hood from the place of danger, and fallen sticks from a place where spirits roam." Stencil felt sure that the place where spirits roam was in fact the burned-down house in east Tenebrae where he'd found the ghost guarding some strangely shaped sticks. As for the Executioner's Hood, he was less certain. He asked Vividos how he would recognize it.

"It is a black, leafy plant. It rests between the graveyard and Tenebrae. Look for the Hood under what looks like a larger tree. It is really a plant, so look closely."

"Very well. You said I would go on a pilgrimage? And that I will learn magic?"

"Indeed you will, my Apprentice. By the time you have completed your studies, you will be capable of more than you ever dreamed possible."

This thrilled Stencil, but he was a little daunted by so grand a promise. "Will you help me learn?"

"Yes, of course, my student. It is part of my responsibility. But we will talk about that later. Now, please go find the reagents I asked for."

"Yes, Necromancer," Stencil said, then turned and left Vividos and headed back to Tenebrae, for the burned-down house where the spirit roamed.

Trouble in Tenebrae

"Halt, stranger!" cried a guard as Stencil approached the gate leading into west Tenebrae. Back and forth through this very gate he'd roamed over the last several hours, and now, suddenly, these two were going to give him a hard time? He was in a hurry and hardly in the mood for trouble.

"What's the problem?" Stencil said.

"That is what we wish to ask you. What do you know about Bentic the Scholar?"

Stencil considered lying to the guards, then decided that it was probably best to tell the truth, for there was unlikely to be anything wrong with admitting to having made another man's acquaintance.

"We have spoken."

The guards nodded to one another, as though they'd known Stencil's answer before he gave it and were testing him. "Then know this," said one of the guards. "For conducting forbidden research, Bentic's head rests deep within the realm of the Lurker, upon the command of Lady Mordea. Know also that as his confidant all of your actions are under observation. Now answer this. What do you know of the fisherman Devon?"

"I have met him."

"Then let me also inform you that he has been placed under arrest and imprisoned. From your association with him you are also under suspicion. Be very careful about whom you choose as friends from now on."

"Why was he arrested?"

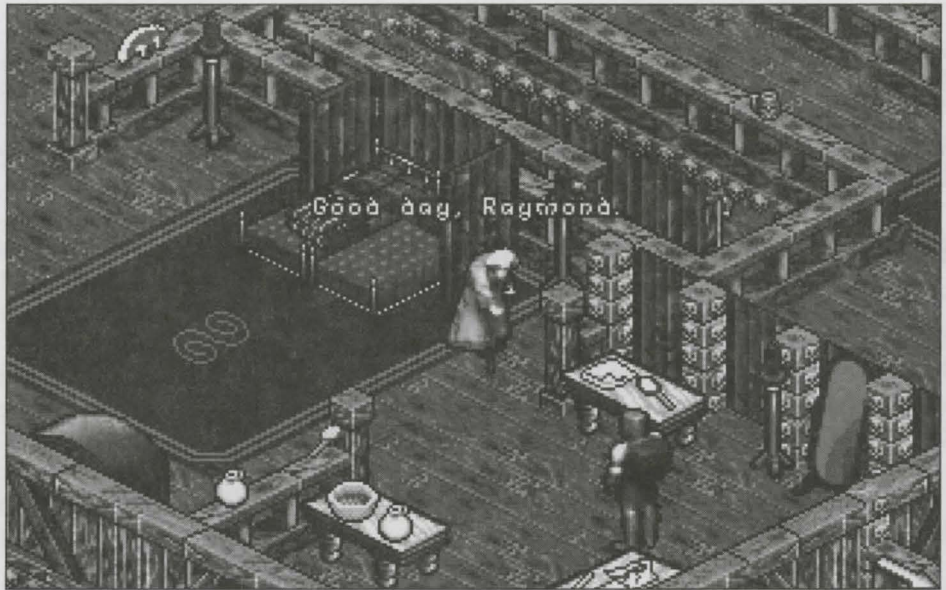
"I do not know. Ask him yourself."

Stencil almost asked the guard where Devon was, but then he remembered the dungeon-like area he'd discovered beneath the Palace. He'd bet ten Obsidian coins that that was where they were holding Devon.

Stencil took his leave, but not without one last warning from the guards: "Stay clear of trouble."

Just as he'd suspected, Devon was in fact being held beneath the Palace in a locked cell. Stencil greeted Devon in hushed tones through the locked door and asked the old man what was going on.

"I am not sure, my friend. I am pleased to see you. My good friend Bentic has been executed and I myself jailed. No one will tell me why. You must find this out for me, I beg your assistance."



“What was Bentic doing that warranted death?”

“Certainly Salkind has some explanation. He will not speak to me here, but perhaps you will find him in kind enough spirits to answer a few questions.”

Stencil promised to help. Devon told the Avatar that he had only gratitude to offer, but perhaps one day he could repay Stencil’s kindness in some other way.

Stencil found Salkind’s house in the southeast part of east Tenebrae. It was a large, ornate building surrounded by a low stone wall. A plaque in front announced: SALKIND THE SENESCHAL.

The place was empty, so Stencil did a little investigating. In Salkind’s bedroom he found a key, which unlocked a door across the hall. In the small room he faced a locked door. He found a lever on one wall in the bedroom that opened the heavy locked door in the small room. Inside he found a locked chest. Roaming through the immense house, he found another key beneath a vase in the upper left corner of the main room, which itself was filled with books and desks. The key unlocked the chest, which was trapped. It contained a Scroll of Restoration, however, which Stencil used at once to restore his lost energy. There were other scrolls as well, and three pouches, containing a total of 300 Obsidian coins.

Back in the main room Stencil browsed through the books lying around. One of particular interest, entitled *THE OFFICIAL LOGBOOK OF CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS* as recorded by Salkind the Seneschal of Tenebrae during the reign of her Ladyship Mordea, listed the “crimes” of known enemies of the state. Several persons were

listed, including Toran, whose execution Stencil had witnessed upon arriving on Pagan. Bentic, the logbook explained, was found guilty of researching forbidden subjects, for disobeying royal orders to cease all probing into such studies, for spreading lies, and for stealing books from the Library. His research, Stencil read, was confiscated, and was now secured in the dungeon evidence chamber for further review to determine the involvement of additional conspirators.

That's it, thought Stencil, the information Devon needs to find out from Salkind. He went back to the dungeon, but was unable to find this so-called evidence chamber. Just as he was about to give up, he found something curious: a suspicious-looking wall in the upper right corner of the hallway outside the jail cell. Did the chamber lay behind this wall? More than likely it did. But how to get to it? The only lever Stencil had found in the area was the one that opened the jail doorway. Was there some secret to opening the wall? Some spell he needed to know? He was at a loss. He didn't know where to turn next...or did he. Hadn't the wizard Mythran told him to come back if he needed anything? Well, he needed help right now, that was certain. With any luck, Mythran would be able to help him. He used the Item of Recall and teleported himself to the Plateau, back to Mythran's curious home.

Back to Mythran's

Mythran was not surprised to see him. In fact, he seemed to be expecting Stencil. After a quick greeting, Stencil cut to the quick. "May I have another potion?"

"There is only one spell that I have bothered to transcribe onto a scroll," said Mythran. "It enables the caster to dispel magic that seals entryways and portals. Unlike other spells, you do not need to learn this spell before casting it. However, the magic upon the scroll will disappear after you use it. So you may use each spell of opening only once. Do you wish to buy the Scroll of Dispel Magic Passage?"

Did he ever. It was exactly what he'd been hoping for. He paid Mythran fifty Obsidian coins for the scroll, thanked him, then quickly teleported himself back to the Palace. He raced downstairs and cast his new spell on the suspicious-looking wall. Sure enough, the wall blocking the room vanished into thin air. Inside the small evidence room he found Bentic's journal. He read it quickly and with great fascination. According to the journal, Devon was actually Mordea's older sibling, and that fact, that he was the first-born, meant that he was stronger than Mordea. This was remarkable news! He had to tell Devon at once—

—But he didn't get very far. For when he turned around he was surrounded by three heavily armed guards. One move, and he knew they would strike first and ask questions later.

"Thief!" cried one of the guards. "I knew you were not to be trusted. Will you come quietly? Or in pieces...?"

The guard seemed far too eager. "I'll go quietly," Stencil said with a resigned sigh.

"We will escort you to Lady Mordea."



The Fated Docks



The next thing he knew, Stencil found himself standing on the very dock where Toran had met his terrible fate. Devon, who was here as well, had been found guilty and condemned to execution. Overseeing the execution were Mordea and her followers, including Darion the guardsman, two guards, the gaudily dressed Salkind, and that axe-wielding hostess with the mostess, the Executioner Shaana. Stencil had to tell Devon what he'd discovered—that he, Devon, was in fact a power to contend with, one who was stronger than Mordea herself! Before he could utter a single word, however, the guards beat him to it.

"Hail, Lady Mordea!" cried the guards, calling attention to themselves and their prisoner.

"Oh no," cried Devon, when he turned around.

"We bring you a thief, Lady Mordea. We caught him breaking into the evidence chamber."

The evil Lady was positively delighted by this announcement. "The block always welcomes another," she said with amusement.

"Sorry to see you here, my friend," Devon whispered to Stencil. "It appears we will both become victims of Mordea."

"Please," said Shaana, bored, "one execution at a time."

"Yes, yes," piped in Salkind, "we must attend to Devon's first."

"Very well," said Mordea. "Carry on."

"Good-bye, my friend," said Devon grimly. "May Lithos forgive our spirits."

"Wait!" cried Stencil. "Devon is the rightful heir."

Everyone's mouth dropped—except Mordea's, that is.

Darion was the first to regain control. He puffed his chest out and drew his sword. "I should slay you right now for such heresy!"

"Stay your hand, Darion," said a now nervous-looking Mordea. "Soon he will be Lurker food."

"Me?" said Devon, turning to Stencil. "A Tempest? Avatar, this is not the time for levity."

"Get on with it," Mordea shouted.

"As you wish, my Lady," the Executioner said, lining up her axe once more.

"I have proof!" Stencil cried, interrupting once more. The guards struggled to restrain him. He had to hurry. Quickly, he blurted out all he knew. "I have a book that not only proves Devon is the rightful

Tempest, but also that his powers are stronger than those of Mordea! Mordea and Devon had the same father, but Devon was the first born. He is the rightful Tempest!"

"You lie!" cried Mordea, outraged by this blasphemous claim.

Salkind stepped in to smooth things over. "Mordea, I locked that book safely away!" He'd spoken too soon, however. Realizing his incriminating mistake, his face went pale. "Ooops!"

"Fool!" Mordea cried. "Now the whole world knows the secret!"

"Forgive me, Lady Mordea!" pleaded Salkind, bowing his head like a child.

"Here is my forgiveness," snarled the Lady, pushing him off the end of the dock and into the water. Salkind screamed and vanished beneath the dark blue surface. The water churned and the Lurker surfaced once, briefly, as though saluting his benefactress.

Mordea ignored the sea creature, however. "Yes, Devon *is* the rightful heir, but the truth will not save him. His head will still rest in the belly of the Lurker! Proceed with the axe!"

"No!" said Shaana, to everyone's astonishment.

Mordea was indignant. "What!?!? Do you dare to defy me?"

"I will not execute the true Tempest!"

At this, Mordea cast a lightning spell whose force knocked the Executioner to the ground. The evil Lady then turned to Darion. "Do you defy me, too?"

He bowed his head. "I cannot kill him, my Lady. He is *the* Tempest."

Mordea raised her hands. "If that is how it must be, you will all suffer!" she cried. "Foolish brother! You think your powers are greater than mine? Use them, then, to save your miserable life!" Mordea threw her arms back and unleashed a huge lightning blast on the crowd. Everyone was knocked down...except Devon.

"There will be only one Tempest," cried Mordea, raising her arms for another blast.

"Then let it be so," said Devon, raising his own arms. "Your evil must end, Mordea," the old man shouted, letting loose a great spell of his own.

"I will kill you!" Mordea shouted, striking back...but without the same force as Devon. With a great, echoing cry, the evil Lady Mordea was blown off the dock and into the water. The Lurker roared like never before.

"May the Lurker welcome you as she has your victims," Devon said to the churning sea. He let out a great sigh and turned his attention to those laying all around him. He could see that Stencil was breathing, as were Darion and the Executioner. The guards, it appeared, were dead. Stencil was coming to.

"Oh, my head," said the Avatar, looking more than a little dazed and confused.

"Avatar, at long last Mordea's tyrannical rule is over."

Indeed, there stood Devon, looking for all intents and purposes like a genuine ruler. The old man spoke again. "Now I must be the Tempest. I must use my power to undo the evil of Mordea. Thanks to your efforts, this fair society is free to prosper. Although I know your destiny lies elsewhere, you will always be welcome here. Now I must leave. I need time away from Tenebrae to contemplate recent events. I will return when the time is right to take my place as Tempest. Good-bye, my friend, and may our paths cross again."

With that, Stencil nodded and watched with awe as the Tempest Devon cast a great spell on the sea that enabled the new ruler to walk on the watery surface as though it were ground. Stencil stood watching the lone figure recede off into the sea, until he could see the old man no more. What an afternoon! All he'd been trying to do was find a few reagents for Vividos...goodness, the reagents! He had, of course, forgotten all about them. Now that his life was spared, it was time to get back on track.



Reagents for Vividos



First, Stencil went to west Tenebrae to get the special sticks Vividos had asked him to find. As he'd suspected, they were at the burned-out house guarded by the spirit he'd visited earlier in his journey. Stencil did not draw his weapon, and the spirit did not attack. Several ghouls did appear, but Stencil had no trouble outrunning them after grabbing one of the curious sticks.

He made his way to east Tenebrae once more, and searched for the Executioner's Hood where Vividos had told him to look—in the undead-laden area south of the Cemetery. In short time Stencil found the plant growing in a recessed pit, just south and a little to the east of the entrance to the Cemetery. A pair of changelings guarded the Executioner's Hood, but they were no match for Stencil. He picked several of the leafy plants, then quickly returned to Vividos.

The Necromancer was waiting upstairs, and Stencil gave him the reagents.

"You have done well, my Apprentice. For your efforts and obvious learning, I have something for you. This is the Key of the Caretaker. It will allow you entry to the Upper Catacombs. There you must go to learn more of our art."

Stencil looked at the Necromancer with a confused expression. What key? There was no key in the Necromancer's hand. He was about to point this out to the Necromancer when he suddenly remembered a similar invisible transaction had occurred with Mythran earlier, when the wizard had given him the Item of Recall, which had magically appeared in his knapsack when he searched for it. Such was the case with the Key of the Caretaker, for it, too, was now in Stencil's knapsack. He thanked his lucky stars that he'd had



room in his load to hold the key, for if he were at his maximum load limit, he pondered briefly, would the key have fit in his pack? He doubted it. Anyway, he had it now and that was what mattered. Now, what to do with it...?

"What is it for?"

"The key is an item of power that will allow you to cast the spells you will learn in the catacombs. To cast a spell, you must place the proper reagents in a bag, close the bag, then invoke the power of the key on the closed bag. When you open the bag, you will find a magic talisman within. When you invoke the magic of the talisman, you cast the spell."

Simple enough, thought Stencil. He asked Vividos about the catacombs and where to find them.

"You will find the entrance to the catacombs through the very rock itself. You will need to learn the Open Earth Spell, which you can find in the Library, and the Key of the Caretaker. Go just north of here. There you will find a small hall. Cast the Open Earth Spell upon the rock face and you shall gain entrance to the catacombs. There you must seek the Ancient Necromancers—those who have traveled the path of the Necromancer long before you and I. My ancient ancestors will teach you what you need to know of our magic."

"How am I to find them?"

"With good faith and a strong heart," said Vividos. "Do not worry, Apprentice. The Ancient Necromancers will make themselves known to you."

Stencil didn't understand why Vividos, a Necromancer himself, could not teach him what he needed to know.

"I can but say that you must learn from them the first-level spells. Those who first created the spells that you will learn will teach them to you. If you pass their tests, you will learn their magic. Then you must come back to me."

Vividos instructed Stencil first to visit his library upstairs before he left, for it contained much useful information and several reagents he could take. "To speak with the Necromancers, there is a spell you must learn. As the Necromancers are, to be certain, dead, you must cast Death Speak upon their sacred corpses. Only then shall you hear the voice of wisdom from their lifeless mouths. This spell you shall also find in the library."

Which Stencil did. As well as the useful reagents. He read several books, thanked Vividos for his training, then left the Necromancer's home for the hall that would lead him to the catacombs and the Ancient Necromancers.



The Path to the Ancient Necromancers

Just north of Vividos's residence Stencil found a low iron fence with an open gate. As Stencil walked toward the gate a spirit materialized, as though it were there to guard what lay beyond. Stencil ran past the spirit, avoiding its Fireball Spell. He quickly made his way into the hall and closed the door behind him to keep out the spirit's smart bombs and any other foes that may have picked up his trail.

The hall was lit by many flickering candelabra. He walked to the center of the room, between two demonic head statues, and there he prepared the Open Ground Spell by placing Blood, Bone, Wood, and Blackmoor in one of his empty pouches. He closed the small bag, then applied to it the Key of the Caretaker that Vividos had given him. When he opened the bag he found the Open Ground talisman. He activated the talisman and directed it at the great rock wall in the middle of the room. A huge rumbling shook the place and the wall fell away, creating an opening large enough for him to enter.

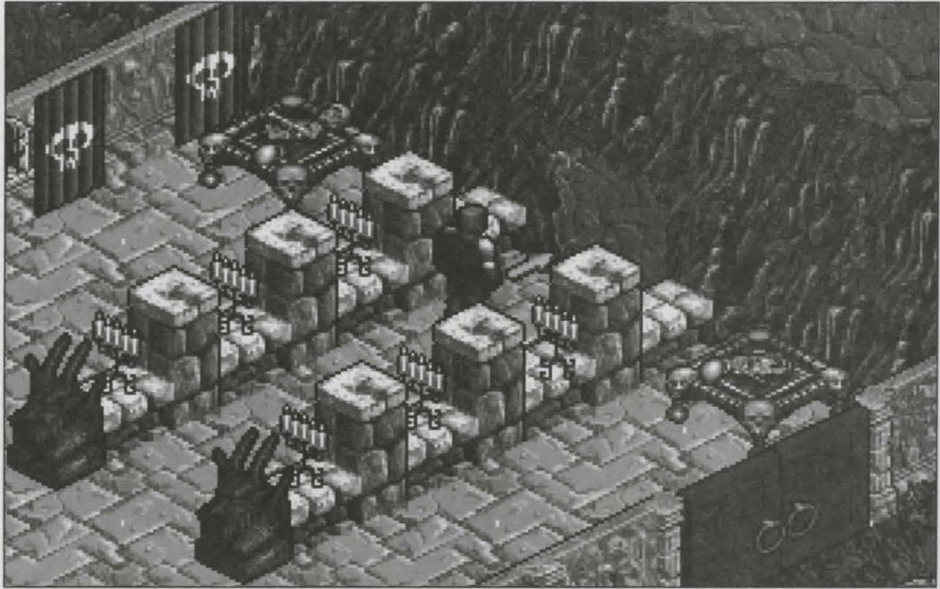


The Upper Catacombs



Just inside the opening he encountered a pair of doors, which he opened and went through. In the first room he passed a dormant skeleton warrior. Careful to avoid two fire-spitting sconces, he came to a gate. He pulled the lever in the middle of a series of three and the gate dropped. He walked through the opening and headed right.

The place was a huge morgue, with corpses in various stages of decay and skeletons occupying nearly every available resting place.



On several occasions he came upon gates that closed as he neared them. He found that by walking away a short distance, then coming back, gates that had closed would then open for him, and vice versa. In the catacombs he found a number of reagents, including bone and blood, and piles of wood, all of which he took.

In short time he came upon a door announcing, *TOWARDS FATE DO YOU TRAVEL*. It was locked and none of his keys opened it. Perhaps later he would return to this door. Continuing his exploration of the catacombs, he came across a door that read, *TO LOWER CATA-COMBS*. This door was locked too. After searching many corpses and not finding any that looked ancient or regal enough to be the ones Vividos had sent him after, Stencil began to suspect that those he sought were probably in some secret resting place. Indeed, the ancients would not be lying here among all of these common deceased, would they? He thought not.

He wandered around in all directions for a while, eventually making his way northeast from the place where he had entered, until he found an oddly out of place, cubicle-sized room, tiny in size and fronted by a door covered with cobwebs. The door was unlocked and he opened it. Just as he was about to step inside he saw that there was a pit in the floor, which dropped down into blackness. Across the pit there roamed a mumbling ghoul, guarding a small box situated on a low shelf. To search the box Stencil would have to kill the ghoul, and at the same time avoid falling into the hole. Carefully, he climbed onto the upper edge of the small room from



the outside and walked around it to the rear, above the ghoul. He leaped down into the room and landed on the low shelf, where he managed to slay the ghoul quickly without falling into the pit. Inside the little box he found a pair of magical legging armor, which he exchanged for the ordinary pair he'd been wearing, and also a pile of eighty-six Obsidian coins.

He rested and considered the pit. Clearly, with so ornate a room, and so tiny at that, the pit must lead to something, or somewhere important to his quest—the Ancient Necromancers? Indeed, the only way to find out was to take a deep breath and leap into the dark pit...



The Necromancers' Test



He crashed to the floor of what appeared to be a large cavern. Recovering himself, he found, immediately to his left, four barrels loaded to the gills with precious reagents. He stocked up with plenty of each, as many as he could carry. When he was unable to carry any more, a curious idea entered his mind: why not create the Death Speak Spells that he would need to speak to the Necromancers now, thus giving him more room in his inventory to carry more reagents (for the spell talismans themselves each created the weight of only one item)? With that, he prepared four Death Speak talismans by placing six portions of blood and six portions of Bone in his spare bag. He then closed the bag and used the magical key on

the bag. *Voilà*. He now had six Death Speak Spells ready to cast, and room in his inventory for a few more reagents.

Ready to press on, Stencil proceeded north and found a chest in a broken-down room with more reagents in it. He explored a wide opening to the west and a little to the south and came to a stairway that led up to a platform, on which he found a corpse. The first Necromancer? Indeed, Stencil surmised at once by the ornate clothing that covered its body that this was in fact the first Necromancer, so different in appearance from any of the corpses he'd seen thus far. He activated one of the Death Speak Talismans he'd prepared and directed it at the Necromancer.

The fragile being sat up straight and turned its glowing green eyes on him. It spoke. "You who would join me here at the right hand of Lithos. You who seek my knowledge. You who have taken but your first steps upon the path of Necromancy. Come closer, living one, so that we may speak."

"Are you a Necromancer?" Stencil asked, just to be absolutely certain.

"But of course I am. You have done well to find me, yet there is much left for you to find. You have not yet been truly tested."

"In what manner will I be tested?"

"Your training has already begun. The rest is for you to discover. If you prove yourself worthy, you will learn enough of our magic to gain an audience with Lithos."

"Yes, I need to speak with Lithos."

"Yes, and so your testing has begun. You will meet other Necromancers here. Each of us will in turn teach you a spell. You will need to use each new spell in order to reach the next Necromancer."

"What will happen if I don't learn the spells properly?" Stencil inquired.

"Then you will die before you meet the next Necromancer." The already grave Necromancer's raspy voice grew even graver. "Do not falter, Apprentice. You have come this far, there is no going back. To return to the surface world you must go forward."

"I am ready, Necromancer."

"Good. The first spell you will learn was written by my hand many generations ago. It is called Mask of Death. When you cast it upon yourself you will appear dead to others. Your enemies shall think you dead. To cast this spell, hold Wood in one hand, Executioner's Hood in the other. Speak the words 'Quas Corp.' Then cast it upon yourself."

"And this will help me in some manner," Stencil said, unable to hide his skepticism.

"Leave your doubts behind you and trust in your elders. If perchance you did find the barrier of stalagmites upon a short wall that

did block your path, you will now find that the stalagmites are gone. Your way to the next Necromancer is clear. Now, be gone, there is much for you to do."

With that the Necromancer lowered itself back onto its platform, closed its eyes, and returned once more to its quiet dead state.

Stencil descended the stairs and made his way east, until he came to the small ridge that the Necromancer had described to him. He climbed onto the ridge and was about to continue onward when he decided he should probably create the Mask of Death Spell now, so that it would be ready when he needed it. Following the Necromancer's directions, he created the talisman and placed it in his knapsack where he could get to it quickly. How glad he was to have done this, for when he leaped off the low ridge and started forward, he came first upon a huge kith, then three, red, fiery deamons. This, he decided, had to be where he was to use the spell he'd just learned. He cast the Mask of Death Spell and was knocked off his feet for an instant, as though he'd been struck down dead. The deamons and the kith suddenly ignored him, and he quickly ran past them and found himself in another room with a campfire going. He found a knapsack containing food. He saw another knapsack on a two-tiered ridge nearby. He climbed onto the first tier, then proceeded to the second. As soon as he reached it, two ghouls and a ghost appeared. Working fast, he snatched the knapsack, threw it down onto the first tier, then jumped down after it himself, out of harm's way. Inside it he found more reagents, which he took. He rested, then proceeded onward, to the second Necromancer, who was nearby, stationed upon an elaborate platform.

Stencil cast the Death Speak Talisman on the corpse and the Necromancer awoke.

"So you have survived your test long enough to meet me. I am Bentos, seventh Necromancer of Lithos."

"Greetings," said Stencil. "I have come to learn from you."

"And so you shall. The way of the Necromancer is difficult. You will be assailed in many ways. And this will happen before you next meet a Necromancer. Learn these words: 'Rel Sanct Ylem.' Say them while holding Wood and Dirt, then focus on yourself. You shall become hard as stone. Now, continue on your way. May Lithos smile upon you."

Short and sweet, thought Stencil. Very well. Following the Necromancer's orders, Stencil concocted the Rock Flesh Talisman so that it was ready to use. He climbed off the Necromancer's platform from its far left edge, then leaped down off the low ridge. Immediately to the right of the Necromancer he'd just spoken with Stencil came to a corridor. The corridor ahead had an ominous look about it, and the hairs on the back of his neck rose, as though this space were somehow charged with electricity. Stencil had a bad

feeling, and going on instinct, he cast the Rock Flesh Spell on himself and then proceeded at a fast run into the charged tunnel. The moment he entered the long narrow passage a great bolt of lightning sparked and struck him down—yet he was alive! Three cheers for instinct. He raced onward and was struck down twice more by lightning before he came to the end of the electrified corridor. He was briefly sidetracked by what looked like another Necromancer's platform, encircled by a low iron fence. It was not a Necromancer's resting place, however, and he proceeded forward—the only way to go, really. He raced past a huge kith guarding a corpse and knapsack, and eventually found the third Necromancer, with whom he conversed.

"Well well, you are progressing well, student. Are you now ready to learn my spell?"

"Yes," said Stencil, still trying to catch his breath.

"Very well. Always remember that no matter how mighty you may feel, everyone eventually needs help in battle. Speak the words 'Kal Corp Xen' while holding Blood, Bone, and Wood. Focus this power onto the ground, and help will soon arrive."

"What kind of help will this bring, Elder?"

"This spell will summon your deceased brethren to your aid."

"Deceased brethren?"

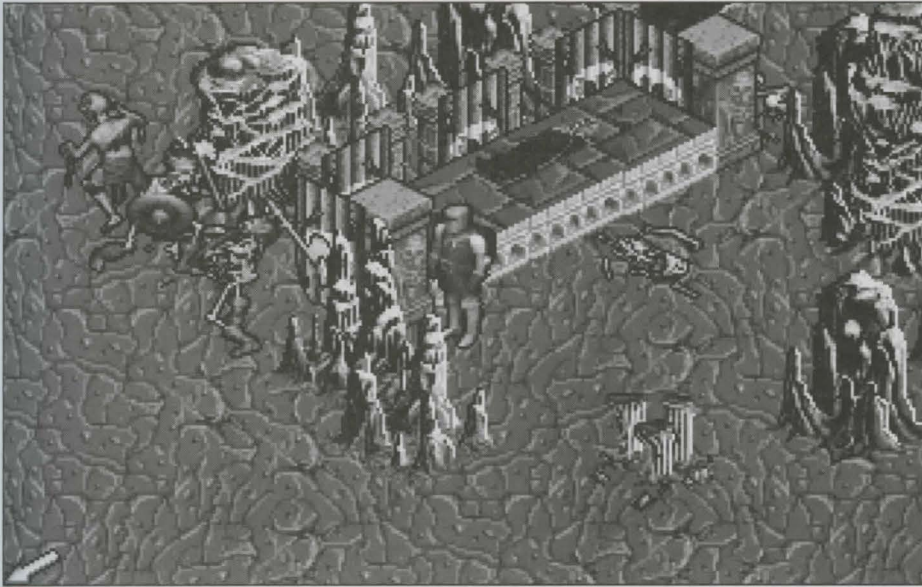
"Yes, student. Once you have joined the Necromantic order, you will never again be alone. You shall always have the company of the dead to comfort you. But enough talk, you must continue your journey. Farewell."

Before Stencil could ask any more questions, the world went black for an instant and he found himself teleported to another place—a high ridge surrounded by dark blue water. Scattered all around the ridge were several skeletons, which Stencil searched and found loaded with more reagents. He also found a shield stronger than the one he was holding, and a Death Disk.

He created the spell he'd just learned so that it was ready to use, then rested briefly.

Ready to continue, Stencil carefully walked through some lightning gates, then leaped across a small chasm onto another ridge. He quickly killed a ghoul, and then faced a skeleton warrior. He could see that the fourth Necromancer lay just a few steps away, but getting to him would prove difficult because the skeleton warrior was coming straight for him. Remembering the last Necromancer's words, Stencil cast the Summon Dead Spell on the ground. A skeleton warrior sprouted from the ground and asked him plain as day how he could be of service. Stencil pointed at the approaching skeletal foe, and his own skeletal companion proceeded to attack the enemy, making it possible for Stencil to race around the bony pair to the Necromancer's side.

"You are coming closer to your goal, live one."



"I have worked hard to do so, Necromancer."

"Do not think that the rest of your path will be easy. There is something about you that I do not trust. I doubt your devotion to the Mountain King." This surprised Stencil, for the other Necromancers had been cordial, in their own way.

"I am devoted, Necromancer."

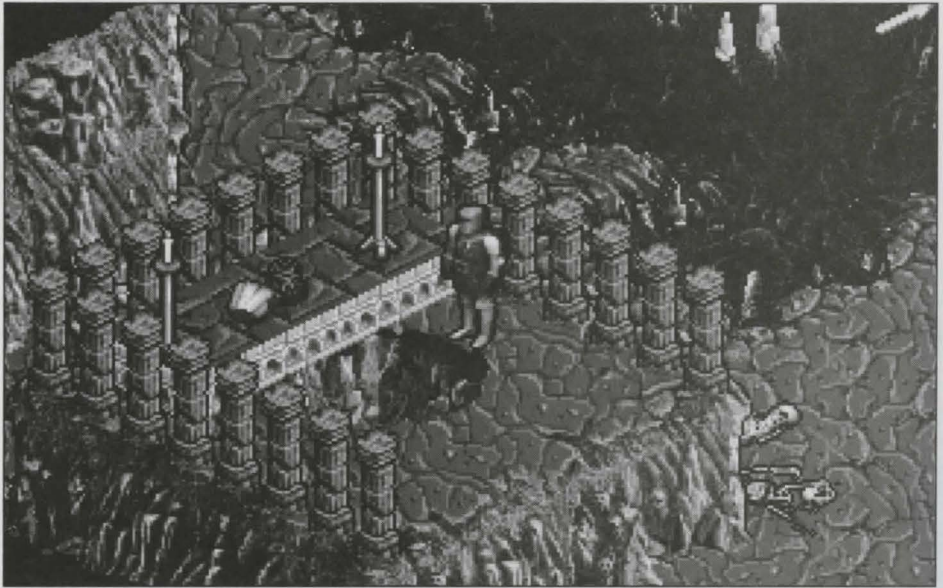
"Silence. I did not ask to hear your hollow voice. I was told to give my spell unto you and I will do so. But know that if Lithos consults me, I will tell him that I do not trust you."

"I understand, Necromancer."

"I do not care that you understand me. Listen to me, and then be gone. Often you will be assailed by undead enemies. Carry with you Executioner's Hood and Blackmoor to create the Grant Peace Spell. This potent ritual turns the undead back to the lifeless things they were before they became reanimated. Go now."

Once more Stencil was unable to ask any more questions—let alone thank the Necromancer—for he was teleported to another place all in the blink of an eye.

A little to the west he encountered a den of changelings, which he managed to wipe out quickly and efficiently. To the east and a little north he came upon a grassy clearing, where he found loads of reagents. In the center of the clearing there stood a small building, looking oddly out of place. On either side of the building and in front of it there were two treasure chests, both untrapped. Inside them, Stencil found even more reagents. Having taken all he could



carry, Stencil created a Grant Peace Talisman, rested, then entered the small room—

—and was teleported to yet another cave. Working his way south, Stencil discovered a platform. He climbed up onto it and saw what looked like magical armor, and a bag. He neared it cautiously, for the stone floor of the platform looked unsafe. In fact, it was not safe at all—ready to crumble with the slightest misstep.

Stencil took little steps, and saw a section immediately in front of him fall away. Carefully, he stepped around the new hole and exchanged his armor for this new magical armor. In the bag he found more reagents, which he took.

Heading north, he raced past a Fire Bomb spitter to a safe point on the volcanic rock ledge. Searching a skeleton, he found a key and an orange potion. He took the key, ran around the Fire Bomb spitter to its right side, and carefully walked to the edge of the ledge. He jumped across a lava chasm and climbed onto another raised volcanic rock platform. He followed the platform to its end, then jumped across another lava chasm to a lone platform.

Once more he was teleported to another cave. With only a moment to get his bearing, he found himself face to face with a huge kith. He raced past the beast and charged through a long corridor that was bursting on either side with Fire Bombs. He cut left at the end of the tunnel and ran past more bombs. He saw the fifth Necromancer's platform up ahead and hurried up its steps. Upon reaching the top, ghouls and ghosts materialized all around him—

however, the spirits were no match for Stencil's Grant Peace Spell, which he cast on them at once. He slew the ghouls with his weapon, then cast the Death Speak Spell on the Necromancer.

"Well, Apprentice, you have nearly completed your test. You seem to have fared well, young one."

"Thank you," said Stencil. "It's been hard."

"And harder still will it become. Your final test is at hand. The next Necromancer you will see is Galious. If you prove yourself worthy, Galious will provide you with that which you need to get an audience with the Mountain King."

"I am ready, Necromancer."

"You will never live to see Galious without my knowledge. A Necromancer deals always with death. Yet sometimes the Necromancer must be able to resist death in order to continue to serve. When the time arrives, use Wood, Dirt, and Blackmoor and focus upon yourself."

"How will I know when to use the spell?"

"That I cannot tell you. You must decide, and wisely at that, for you can use it only once. You must go now."

This time it didn't surprise Stencil that he was teleported to his next location. Stopping for a moment, he created the Withstand Death talisman that he'd just learned. He headed west, then north. He found a small building with a lever but decided to ignore it for now and come back to it later, if necessary. He continued west and north, where he encountered a slow-moving kith, which he was able to get past without trouble. On a raised platform he found more reagents, but no sign of the last Necromancer. Backtracking, he found an east passage that led to an open area. In short time he came upon two skeleton warriors, and a fire-spitting sponce that appeared to bar his way. He cast the Withstand Death Spell upon himself and went through the fire-spitting path. Running as fast as possible, he skirted a troll and more skeleton warriors. Eventually he came upon a small room, in which he found the sixth and final Necromancer. He closed the door behind him and approached the Ancient one, waking it with the last Death Speak Talisman.

"You have reached me and therefore proven yourself worthy. Lithos has instructed me to give you a spell that will allow you to gain entrance to the hall of the Mountain King."

"Is that where Lithos resides?"

"You already know that. Do not let your excitement cloud your mind. The hall is guarded by doors that no living creature may open. To gain entrance, you must raise a golem of the very element that is our lord, Lithos. A golem made of earth.

"Now listen carefully, for like the other Necromancers, I will tell you this spell only once. Blood, Bone, Wood, Dirt, and Blackmoor. Say the words 'In Ort Ylem Xen' and focus this magic upon a broad space of mud and the golem will be created. Seek out Stone Cove.

You shall reach it by way of the catacombs. Once you have found Stone Cove, there you shall need to create your golem. Only the golem shall be able to open the door that shall stand before you. Now be gone, to the Mountain King.”

Finally, he was through with the test...well, almost. Remembering those two skeleton warriors outside, Stencil created a Grant Peace Spell so that he could wipe them out. He opened the door and dashed for the stairs going up. As soon as he set foot on the first step, several ghouls and a spirit appeared. He focused the Grant Peace Spell on the spirits, raced up the steps, and found himself atop a low platform inside the catacombs once more.



To the Hall of the Mountain King

It was a long way down the ledge, so Stencil decided to rest. He took out his bedroll and napped for an hour. The lengthy fall turned out to be painful, but not fatal. His head cleared quickly and Stencil continued on his lengthy journey to the Hall of the Mountain King.



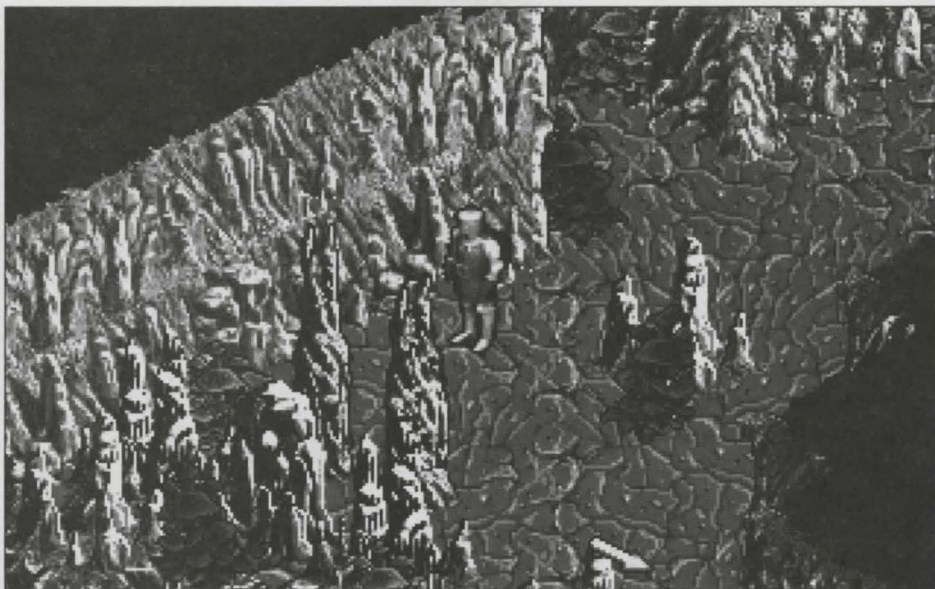
Stone Cove



First he wandered south, then west, then south again. He turned toward the east and approached a gate guarded by a shooter. Stencil did not fear the shooter because a metal shield in front of the shooter guarded him against the fireballs. Judging the circles on the floor to be another trap, he decided to leap over them. No time to waste, he thought, and continued on his quest.

Fingering a trail past the stalagmites, he located a switch on an outcropping near the gate. Just as he had predicted, the switch activated the portal. Stencil was now in Stone Cove.

"Reagents. I need more reagents," he mumbled to himself while searching through his inventory sack. So off he went in search of more ingredients. After satisfying his needs, Stencil ventured toward the north wall and noticed three entryways. He ignored the left door, which appeared to be an entrance to a cave. The right door was fronted by spikes; Stencil therefore focused upon the center doors. His commands to open them remained unanswered until he remembered the Necromancer's words, *No human hands will be able to open these doors.*

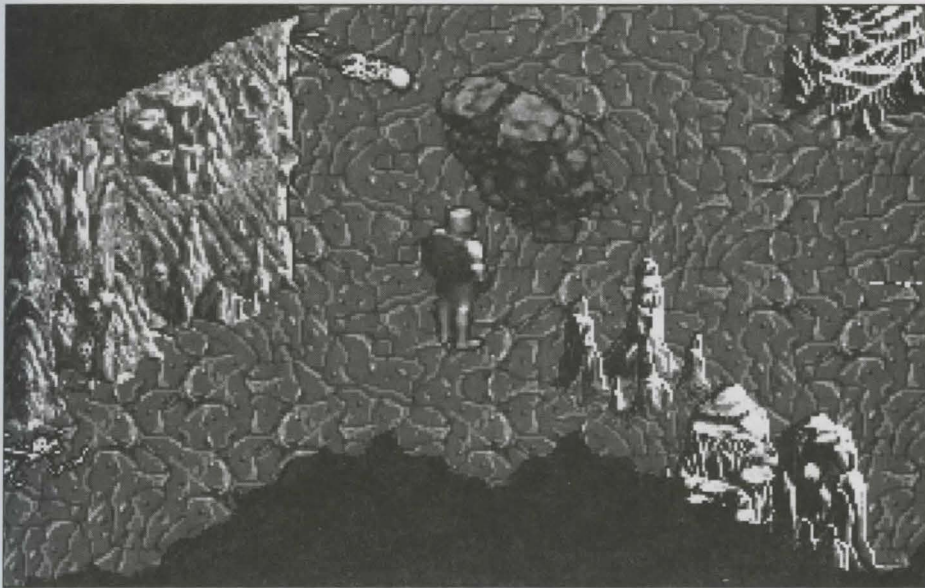


While avoiding the large seeker, Stencil combined the proper ingredients of Blood, Blackmoor, Bone, Wood, and Dirt in his bag. He used the Key of the Caretaker on the bag, which resulted in the creation of the Create Golem Focus. Standing approximately halfway between the dirt floor and the large doors, Stencil proceeded to cast the Create Golem Spell. At first it didn't work, but soon he realized that the correct method was to direct the spell at the dirt while keeping the doors in view.

Beneath his feet the earth shook. Stencil peered left, then right. To his surprise, the spell had worked and a giant golem appeared before him. Stencil's fear quickly subsided and he commanded the golem to open the doors.

The golem obeyed. But now, although the doors were open, Stencil needed to get past the golem. If I could only trick the golem, he thought. He decided to sneak by, after convincing the golem to move some nearby rocks. And that's exactly what Stencil did.

Through the doors he headed, then turned north. He approached the chasm with great caution and continued to inch forward until he reached the very edge. Using all of his might, Stencil leaped to the opposite side and continued heading due north. Eventually he encountered a dirty black-and-red checkered floor. To penetrate the building, Stencil decided to scale the wall. He searched the area for anything useful, but found nothing. Then he noticed a switch next to a large battered throne. Yielding to his curiosity, Stencil flipped the switch. At first, nothing happened. Then, suddenly, ghouls were surrounding him from every direction. Stencil gave up any



idea of slaying the ghouls with his weapon— there were far too many, and he fled.

❁ The Dreaded Floating Platforms ❁

Stencil realized that he was exhausted, but he continued along the path, which led him back to the entrance to the caverns. From there, he decided to venture west. After a brief time he came upon a bridge of skulls. He hesitated, cringing at the idea of stepping on the skulls of earlier travelers. He wondered if his own skull would soon make up part of this ghoulish bridge.

Despite his misgivings, he inched toward the bridge. Just then, as he was about to step foot onto it, a section of the bridge vanished. It soon returned, but in its place another section disappeared. He stood before the bridge and observed the rhythm of the vanishing sections. "This is going to be tricky," Stencil said to himself. It wasn't long before he concluded that, to cross the bridge, he must step on the sections as they reappeared.

After carefully navigating across the bridge, Stencil was confronted by a large golem. Realizing that he was much smaller and swifter than the lopsided beast, Stencil simply dashed past him.

Continuing along the same path, he eventually encountered some strange floating platforms. He quivered at the sight of them for he knew that one false move would mean his death. Stencil waited patiently for the first platform to reach him, held his breath, and jumped. It worked! One down, lots more to go. Platform to platform,

leap after leap. It became quite monotonous. Finally he reached the blind side of the platforms, kissed the ground on which he stood, and rested. His repose was quickly interrupted by another growling golem. Stencil easily lured the dimwitted creature to the south before darting around him and heading north—only to find, to his dismay, more platforms.

Unlike the previous platforms that moved from side to side, these vanished into thin air! Stencil's mind reeled. He wanted to turn back, but couldn't—unless, of course, he wanted to become golem chow. Stencil panicked briefly but quickly regained his composure, clenched his teeth, and made a desperate leap for the first platform. It felt solid, but he knew this feeling was about to end. Quickly he jumped to the second platform. And being a talented Avatar, Stencil managed to outwit the platforms and reach solid ground once again.



The Force Field Maze and the Gem of Protection



Continuing along the path, Stencil noticed a door in the west wall. He pushed on the door and found it to be locked. None of his keys would fit, so he continued heading north. His brisk pace was suddenly interrupted by a painful shock that seemed to come from nowhere. He looked around but didn't notice any creatures or traps that may have jolted him. Probably more trouble, he thought.

After being zapped repeatedly, he noticed a flickering blue light off in the distance. The light also produced a peculiar humming sound. Angry at himself for being such a careless adventurer, he yanked a mushroom from the ground and tossed it in the direction of the force field. Upon contact with the mushroom, the field revealed itself. With his suspicions confirmed, Stencil rummaged through his sack until he found a purple potion. It was ever so bitter but it gave him strength.

While heading north he encountered many more powerful force fields, but the potion he had just consumed protected him from further damage. After traveling as far north as he could go, he found a chest. Stencil searched through his knapsack, but found no Scrolls of Trap Detection. He decided to take a chance. He opened the chest—and there was no explosion! It was nice *not* being blown up for once, Stencil thought as he rummaged through the chest. Inside he found a brass key and a small red gem, which he quickly placed into his pack.

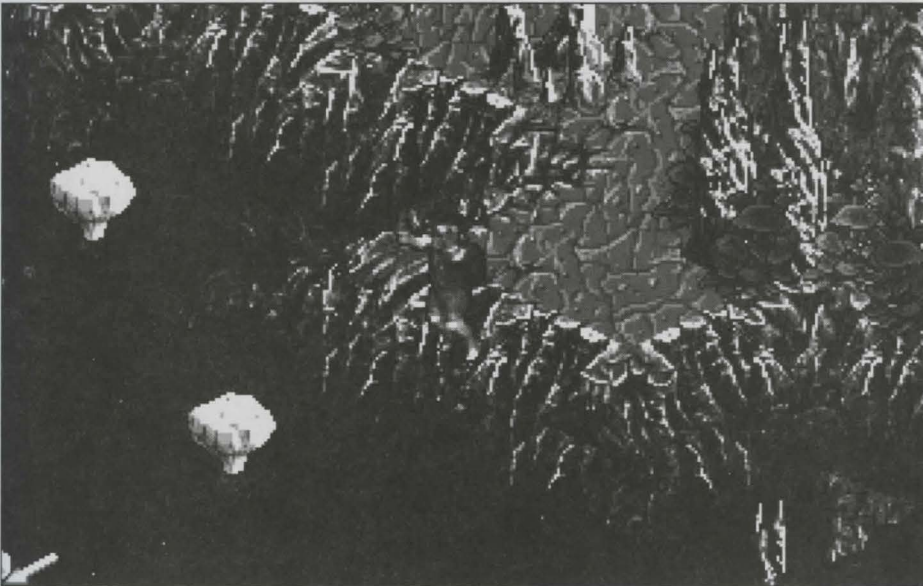
Stencil searched desperately for another route out of the caverns, but found none. It was back through the force fields, he knew. This worried him, for he had no more purple potions and he could feel the first potion beginning to wear off. Deciding he had no choice,

Stencil plunged forward. It was undoubtedly strange that he was still unaffected by the fields. Pausing between fields, he opened his pack and looked inside. There he noticed the small gem was slightly aglow. Could this be the reason he was able to pass through the fields unharmed? "A Gem of Protection," he said softly, somewhat in awe. Thankful for his good fortune, he proceeded forward.

His journey came to a halt when he stood before a familiar door. Stencil selected the key that he'd found in the chest and inserted it into the rusty lock. It eventually turned slightly and he could feel and hear the groan of the tumblers in resistance. Finally, they gave way and the door opened. He proceeded through the damp hall and down a corridor. His direction led him west, then south. Eventually, the corridor grew into a large cavern. Heading north, he came to the water's edge. He noticed that the stepping stones were covered with slippery algae—one slip, even a sneeze, meant certain death for Stencil. Swallowing his fears, Stencil jumped upon the stepping stones, and with grim determination, reached the opposing side.

While continuing in a northerly direction down another dank corridor, he spotted an indentation along the west wall. Upon further review, he discovered another passageway nearly hidden from view. His curiosity prevailed and he entered the passage heading west. The passage was very narrow, but it soon grew into a large cavern. The crackling sound of force fields alerted him, but he soon realized that the sounds were coming from quite a distance away.

Stencil was about to continue onward when what appeared to be his twin brother suddenly confronted him. Speechless, Stencil



watched in horror as his look-alike twisted and shrank into a small, but fearsome monster. Soon another changeling appeared and transformed. Stencil, finding himself unable to strike at his mirror images, dodged the changelings and darted to the southwest corner of the cavern. Here he found a chest that, after careful opening, revealed several potions. He drank the red potion immediately, in hopes that it would restore his health—and it did. He was just about to close the lid of the trunk when a glint caught his eye. Pushing all of the potions aside, he found another key. He secured it to his key ring and returned to the hall from which he had come.

He headed north, and decided to investigate another narrow passage facing west. Just like the first, this passage also opened up into a large cavern. Stencil turned north and leaped over the water. Just beyond the pool was a door, a locked door. Opening his pack, Stencil pulled out his key ring and unlocked the door with his newly acquired key. He replaced his keys and opened the door at the same time. Passing through the door he found himself in yet another passageway; this one, too, was cold and damp. Stencil paid little attention to his surroundings as he took the west path until it ended. Upon looking to the south, he noticed more floating platforms.

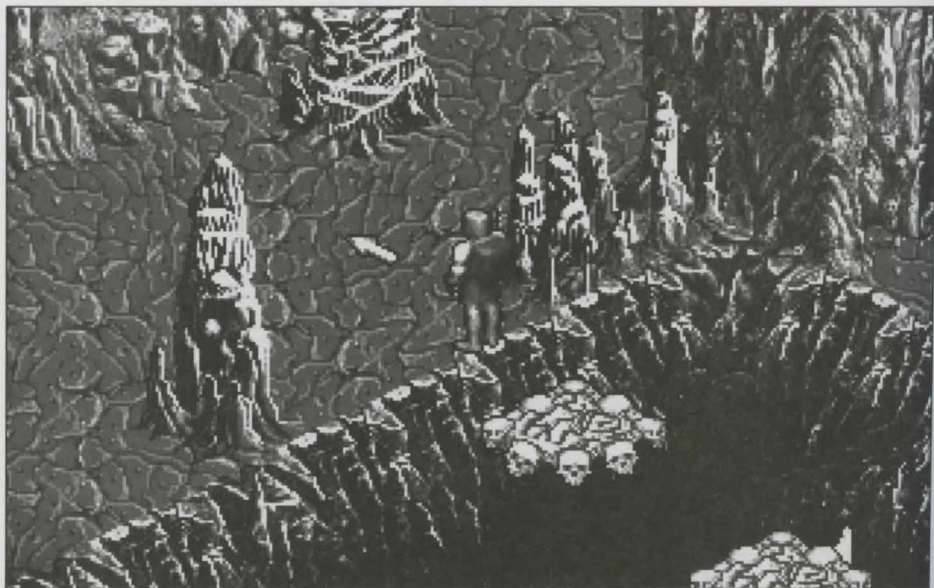


More Floating Platforms



“Oh, no...more platforms!” Stencil groaned inwardly.

Taking note that there were only three platforms, he approached the edge and waited for the first. When it was within reach, he jumped. The second platform proved slightly more difficult. Leaping



straight forward turned out to be infeasible, so he waited until the platforms rested kitty-corner from him, then jumped at an angle. Sensing that the third platform was unstable, Stencil chose to leap over the chasm to the ledge beyond.

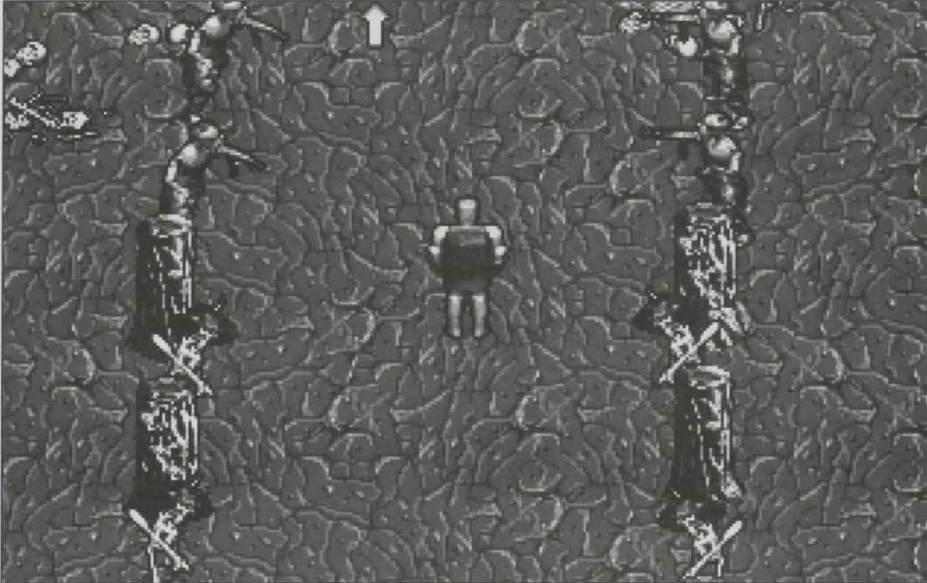
He was now at a T-shaped intersection that branched north and south. Stencil debated which path might be the correct path—and chose to pursue the southern branch. It wasn't long before he came to a large natural pulpit. Atop the pulpit, Stencil found a Recall Pad. The Recall Pad allowed Stencil to "auto-travel" to other Recall Pad locations. In other words, he would never again need to deal with those dreaded floating platforms! Finding nothing else of value, he retraced his steps to the north branch and continued on.

Meeting with Lithos

The next sight he saw caused him to draw up short. Skeletons and ghouls lined both sides of the very path he walked. Holding his weapon at the ready, Stencil continued forward. Not a skeleton or ghoul moved in his direction. His heart raced with anticipation—could this be where he'd find the Mountain King? Eventually, he approached a large granite wall. Upon further investigation, it appeared to be a dead end. Stencil frowned. He was beginning to turn away, his head hung low in disappointment, when the granite wall came alive.

"What human is this who comes before me?" the granite Lithos demanded.

"I have business before you, Lord," Stencil responded.



"What business could a live one have that concerns me?" sneered Lithos.

"Vividos is now Necromancer."

"I am aware of that, and that Lothian must now be interred. Yes, the scent of her rotting flesh shall perfume the garden of my delight."

"Lord, I beg a boon," Stencil replied, feeling the need to divert the conversation from this course.

"Bold are you to beg a boon from me, mortal. What is this boon?"

"I wish to be Vividos's Apprentice."

"You wish to be apprenticed to the Necromancer? Then fall before me and serve your master!" Lithos thundered.

Apparently he failed to fall to his knees quickly enough, for the Mountain King shook the ground beneath his feet until Stencil tumbled to the floor like a rag doll. Pleased with the vision of this mortal powerlessness, the Mountain King repeated his demand.

"Now, kneel before me, worm."

Afraid of what would befall him if he defied the command, the Avatar of Britannia knelt before the Mountain King. The King was pleased by the fearful actions of this mortal.

"To become an Apprentice you must inter Lothian into my clay."

"How do I do this, Lord?" Stencil asked respectfully.

"Ask this of the Necromancer; he will teach you, for it is his task to serve me. You may leave me now, live one. Do not come before me again until you yourself are the Necromancer!"



Returning to Vividos and Interring Lothian



Exhausted and a bit battered, Stencil badly needed rest. He looked around at the spirit sentries lining the path—he couldn't rest here. Even though they seemed to be a peaceful lot, Stencil decided not to take any chances—who knew what the Mountain King might order them to do. He dreaded the long and arduous journey, back to Vividos, that lay ahead of him. He took advantage of the Item of Recall and was teleported to central Tenebrae.

Again he materialized atop the Great Palace. After spending so much time in the catacombs, the sun's warmth was ever so welcome—he even felt a bit refreshed by it. Nevertheless, he knew that he wouldn't be able to enjoy it for much longer, for he needed to return to the Cemetery and Vividos.

On a hunch, before entering the tomb where Vividos was, Stencil dropped his second backpack to make room for future additions to his inventory. Upon entering the tomb, Stencil was greeted by the Necromancer. Not wanting to waste any time with small talk, Stencil got straight to the point.

"I have met the Mountain King."

"Since you are still alive, I can see he approved of you. Now I have something for you, my Apprentice," said the Necromancer.

"Something for me?" Stencil repeated, alight with curiosity.

"Yes, but not yet, my Apprentice. Did Lithos tell you there is one last task you must perform?"

Stencil confirmed that this was indeed the case.

"What did he tell you?" Vividos pressed on.

Stencil explained that he must inter Lothian into the Mountain King's clay before he could become the Apprentice.

"That is correct. Take this key, the Key of Scion, and use it to inter Lothian."

Not seeing any key, Stencil assumed Vividos must have used the same sort of magic he had seen Mythran use earlier. A quick inventory check confirmed this to be true. Fortunately, he had had room in his knapsack for the key. If he hadn't made room earlier, the key would have been lost.

"Where is Lothian?" Stencil inquired.

"You will find her outside the tomb, near the northeast corner of the building. There her body awaits you to send it to the Mountain King."

After bidding each other farewell, Stencil departed once again. First things first, he thought. He needed to retrieve his jettisoned knapsack. With both sacks on hand, he shuffled his inventory items for better balance, thus making his sacks easier to carry. He now headed toward his next destination. Walking to the northeast corner of the building, just as Vividos had instructed, he found Lothian. She was clothed in ceremonial robes and was encompassed by candles. She didn't appear to be dead, merely asleep.

"Lord Lithos, I have come to inter Lothian into your Earth as you commanded," said Stencil.

An unseen voice responded, "This does please me well, live one. Come to me now, let me enfold you into my arms, Lothian."

The ground opened beneath her and Lothian took her rightful place amongst her peers, the other past Necromancers. Having completed his task, Stencil returned to Vividos to learn of his next destination.

"I have interred Lothian," Stencil proudly boasted.

"You have shown yourself well, you have served with bravery and great knowledge. I have decided to name you my heir in the Necromancer line. Now you are ready to make your pilgrimage," Vividos declared.

With a tinge of apprehension he replied, "Oh yes, my pilgrimage."

"Yes, it is customary for the Scion to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Moriens to pay homage and hope for a visitation."

"Where is this place?" Stencil asked, hoping that he didn't need to return to those dingy catacombs.

Vividos confirmed his worst fears when he said, "You must return to the catacombs. First go to the Upper Catacombs. Once there seek out the signs that mark the way. I would think that you have already seen them. There are signs that guide you to many places—the Pit of Death is one of those places."

"I must obtain a visitation?"

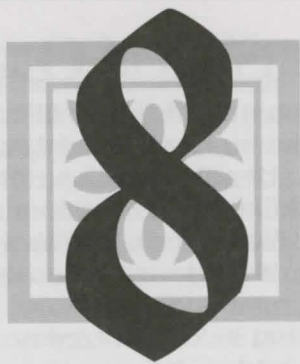
"Yes, well do I remember my pilgrimage. Long did I travel and such an adventure it was. When I arrived at the holy birthplace I did see such a wondrous sight that first I thought myself to be mad."

"What did you see?" Stencil asked, perplexed by the conversation.

"Perhaps it is best that I do not tell you. I would not want to color your expectations. After all, everyone comes away from their pilgrimage with a different experience. But be certain that your experience shall be a profound one."

Rather disappointed that he failed to learn what Vividos had seen, Stencil bid him a fond farewell. He knew in his heart that this might be the last time he ever saw a living person again, for this would be another perilous journey.

"Farewell and good luck, my Apprentice."



A Visitation with the Zealans

Stencil left Vividos's tomb and was once again greeted by the light. Although he trusted Vividos, something motioned to him that it was the Zealans, and not Moriens, he needed to seek. Perhaps in his grief, Vividos had failed to see this error. With this inconsistency resolved, he returned to the north shrine. Once inside, he needed to cast the Open Earth Spell to reveal the entrance to the catacombs.



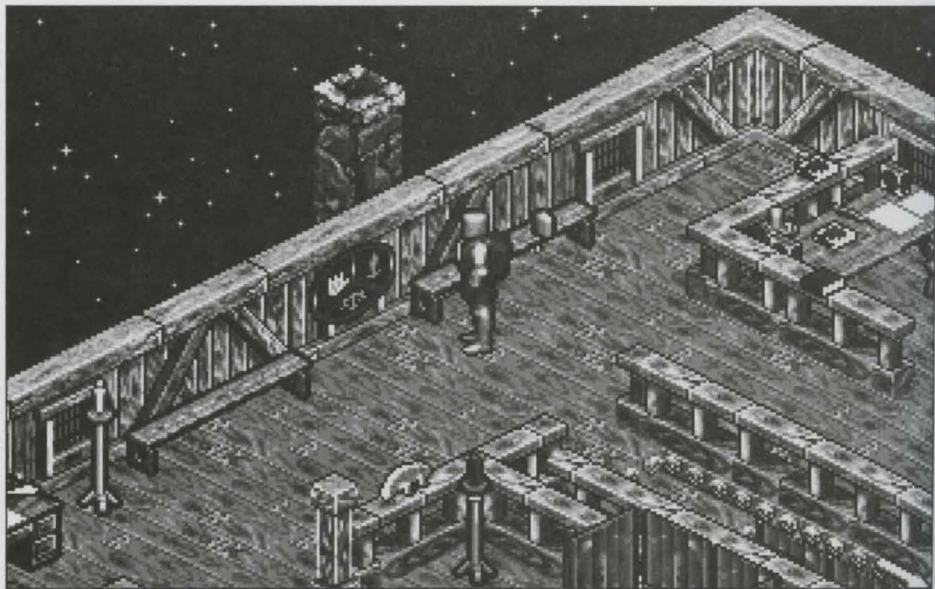
The Skull of Quakes

The wall parted and a stench of death filled his nostrils. His first wish was to turn back, but he knew the only way to get home was to get through this quest. Heading to the northeast, he eventually reached an unusual building. Next to a door on the east side was a tarnished brass plaque. Stencil brushed away the spider webs that obscured the engraving. It read, mysteriously, *TOWARDS FATE DO YOU TRAVEL*.

The door was locked and he discovered no keyhole. He lunged at the door but it failed to budge. Nearing the point of frustration, he remembered the Key of Scion given to him by Vividos. When he held the key to the door, the eyes in the key glowed an eerie green. His second attempt proved more successful, since the door gave way effortlessly. He put the Key of Scion safely back into his knapsack and entered the strange edifice.

Passing through the doors, he noticed an increase in temperature—that indicated there was lava nearby. After traveling down a flight of stairs, Stencil could actually hear the bubbling pit. He ventured west and found the molten rock. Finding no way around the lava, he decided to jump over it. This proved to be less difficult than he anticipated, and soon he was back on his way.

When the path turned north, he came across the body of one who had fallen before him. A search of the corpse revealed a book about the Zealans and the Ceremonial Shield. He read the book

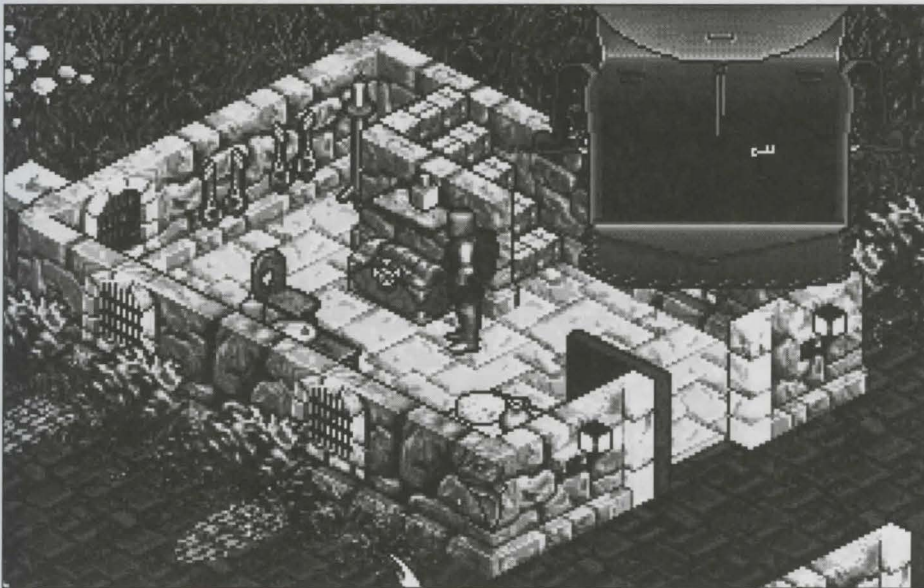


immediately—for there was no room left in his inventory—then continued north through a set of double doors.

Heading in a north-northwest direction led him to the rolling spiked balls. Running swiftly past them, he headed north once again. The path twisted to the east, then led to a fork. Looking down the north path he noticed a fence maze. He decided to bypass the north path and go east. This path led him to a square room containing a chest that was guarded by a row of fences. Stencil attempted to reach between the bars, but found that his hands were much too large. He had to find another way to lower the gate.

A quick pan of the room revealed five large levers and four skull candles. One by one he moved the candles as far from the chest as possible. Not knowing which lever would lower the gate, he yanked the closest one. Unfortunately, that was *not* the correct lever. Instead of opening the chest, it literally turned his world upside down. He remedied the situation by pulling the same switch a second time. He chose another lever, which simply moved all the other switches. Finally, Stencil found the correct switch that, when activated, lowered the gate around the chest.

He opened the chest with great anticipation. And considering the difficulty he had getting to it, Stencil was sure it contained some great treasure. Inside, though, all he found was a key. A bit disappointed, he took the key and secured it to his key ring. Stencil believed that this newly found key must fit a lock guarding a special hoard.



A door to the north came into view. Perhaps this was the door that the key might fit. Indeed it was, and the key slipped into the lock with ease. Stencil rotated the key and the door opened. But beyond it was no treasure for him to plunder or any fine weapons or magical armor for him to wear. All Stencil found was another passageway—no different than the many others he had already traversed. He resolved to follow this path; maybe a treasure was hidden nearby. It took him north, past four fire shooters, then east, south, and finally, west. His hope was realized when a chest caught his eye.

Using extreme care, he pried the chest open. Although it did explode, he sustained only minor damage. While searching through the contents he found a skull. Upon further investigation, he realized that this skull appeared to be different from the multitude of other skulls lying about. Not knowing if this skull would later be needed, the Avatar tucked it safely into his knapsack. While his knapsack was still open, he pulled out his bedroll and spread it out on the ground. It wouldn't be very comfortable, but he badly needed to rest. After healing himself with an hour-long nap, Stencil rolled up his makeshift bed and continued on his way.

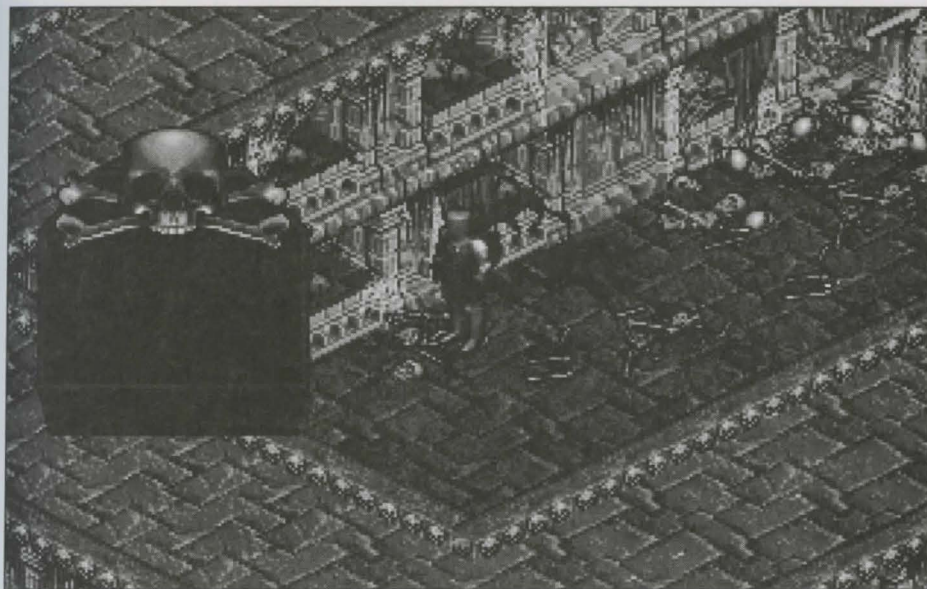
Stencil believed it would be best to retrace his steps back to the road crossing. He then headed north and entered a fenced-in area. It wasn't long before he realized that he had just entered into a maze. Unsure of the outcome, Stencil cautiously stepped onto the first pressure plate. He hoped that by stepping on the plate a gate would lower. Just as he thought, the pressure plate toggled the gate—allowing him access to the next section of the maze. Continuing in the same fashion, and heading in a northeast direction, Stencil eventually reached a large, black-and-gold raised platform. Exhausted, Stencil rested briefly. He took a deep breath, and sighed. Examining the platform gave him the idea of climbing the platform and bypassing the maze by walking over it. He found the platform base to be slick, which almost caused him to abandon his plan. But then Stencil found a niche, which was all he needed to pull himself up. Walking to the far west end of the platform, he leaped from the platform over a fence. He landed a bit hard, but he was well on his way out of the maze.



To the Level Below



Stencil walked north, leaving the maze area, then followed the path west. He turned south into a long corridor. Blocking his path were two large spiked balls. They were rolling back and forth, guarding the entire length of the passageway. Stencil wondered briefly about what sort of magic kept the balls in motion; he finally decided that he didn't have time to analyze the spiked balls or, for that matter, their reason for existence, since they weren't going to help him get home.



Scaling the west wall proved to be useless. “Too steep, too steep,” he groaned. In frustration he stomped to the east, but in his haste he miscalculated the distance between himself and a spiked ball. It caused some damage, but nothing a little nap wouldn’t take care of. It did serve the purpose, however, of reminding Stencil to be more diligent. Enough careless mistakes and he’d never see the light of day again.

Almost as far south as one could go, Stencil found a small cove. From within this cove he was safe from the rolling balls. He wiped away the sweat beading on his brow and noticed that the nearby wall wasn’t as steep as all the others. He began to find a way up the embankment. In a recessed area of the wall, several large mushrooms grew. He had no intention of consuming them, so he decided to use them as footholds.

Upon the crest of the cliff, Stencil brushed the smut from his clothing and mumbled something about his age. He briefly examined his surroundings and noticed a deep pit, containing spikes, that he would need to jump over. Unfortunately, his left leg throbbed and he was badly in need of rest. The pit would just have to wait. Stencil shuffled through his pack and withdrew his bedroll. He threw it on the ground and reflected on the day’s events.

An hour later he awoke, feeling refreshed and ready to continue. He collected his inventory items and went to observe the pit. It was huge. So huge, in fact, that he would have to put everything he had into making it across. After mentally preparing himself for the

moment of truth, he gave all his strength to his legs and leaped to the opposite side. He moved on, happy to have defeated that obstacle.

He took the first passage to the north, which led him to a tombstone that read, *AMREZHAR by the Ancient Ones He Is Met*. Stencil hadn't the foggiest idea as to what it meant. On a nearby table he noticed a bag. In the bag were a few reagents, which he gladly snatched. He left the bag behind for he already had a similar bag in inventory.

Mixing the proper reagents in his bag, he created the Open Earth Focus. Standing directly in front of the tombstone, he cast the spell. Where once was solid ground, there now appeared to be a gaping cavity. Further inspection of the hole revealed a lower level. Stencil jumped in.



The Marble Room



The ground was soft and his landing was easy. Walking south led him to a fork that branched east and west. Since the east path was blocked by stalagmites, he went west. The path turned sharply north and brought him through a set of open doors. The path again turned, to the east this time. He entered a room strewn with marbles. These marbles triggered thoughts of his childhood and his beloved Britannia. Wistfully he walked among the marbles, remaining cautious so as not to slip. He headed toward the north corner of the room, where he found a large stone wall and a metal gate that barred his way. On the other side of the fence he spied a platform supported by four tall posts rising out of the ground.

Try as he might, Stencil could not find a way to lower the gate. In a fit of frustration, he picked up a blue marble and hurled it across the fence at the platform. *Ping!* The marble struck the very top of the platform and, lo and behold, the gate lowered. What an incredible stroke of luck! Quickly he crossed over the gate's threshold before it closed.

Beyond the gate was a large room with two platforms. These platforms could be raised and lowered by throwing one of the two switches nestled on the floor. The platform to the west was already in the raised position, so Stencil simply walked beneath it. On a table he found a key and snapped it to his key ring. He raised the platform to the east by pulling its corresponding lever. With the sound of grinding stone the platform rose. Under the platform was a chest in which he found yet another key. A quick search of the room revealed a few other items, but Stencil took none for his load was already almost too much to bear. To the north began his exit when he spotted a light-beam trip wire. Gauging it to be only ten inches off the ground he jumped over it with ease.

The Stair Puzzle

He continued his journey by traveling north until he came to a T-shaped intersection. Stencil chose to head east. This particular trail led him beyond a trio of bizarre staircases that seemed to lead nowhere. Before each staircase was a pressure plate. Stencil stepped on a plate and watched in amazement as one of the staircases slid downward. He searched the grounds and found a clock. Deciding to use the clock as a counterweight, he placed it upon a pressure plate. It took a few tries before Stencil realized that the staircases only moved in a downward direction, and that the clock needed to be placed on the pressure plates in the correct order.

He studied the movements of the staircases patiently. He numbered the plates from left to right and kept track of his progress by scratching the correct numbers in the dirt with a stick. Upon completing the puzzle, a doorway appeared at the top of the central staircase. Smiling triumphantly, Stencil looked at the scratchings in the dirt:

31-32-12-23-31-32-12-13-23-12-31-32-12

Stencil reached the end of the staircase and passed through a doorway, all the while hearing a strange sound. It was then that he saw the source of the crackling noise—two light beams surging with electricity. Unassisted, Stencil knew he had no chance of surviving even the slightest contact with such powerful beams of light. Unsure of what next to do, Stencil rifled through his knapsack and found the items necessary to cast the Rock Flesh Spell. He proceeded to concoct the mixture of reagents while mumbling the words, "He created the Rock Flesh Foci." Stencil cast the spell upon himself—and immediately felt his body become hard and statue-like. He flexed his left leg, then his right. "So far, so good," he mumbled while lumbering through the light beams. The power of the beams knocked him to the ground. He rolled his stiffened body from side to side to no avail, so he rested until the spell wore off.

The Zealan Statues

Fully recovered, he jogged down a flight a stairs, skipping every second one. He reached the floor and turned to the west. A pair of towering double doors appeared and Stencil fumbled for his key ring. The key that he had found in the platform room, near the marble room, was the one that unlocked the doors. The second set of doors aroused his curiosity, since they were slightly ajar. This must be a place of worship, he thought as he walked down the center aisle past the pews flanking his left and right. The aisle ended at a stone altar. To the right of the altar was a dead body. Carefully

Stencil moved the body aside. Beneath it he found a key and placed it on his key ring. While his knapsack was open, Stencil retrieved the Ceremonial Shield that he had obtained at Mythran's home. He placed the shield in the center of the stone altar.

Just beyond the altar he noticed three large statues. He approached them cautiously. Stencil was standing amidst the figures when one of the statues began to speak. What he heard next were the most delightful words that could ever have touched his ears. To Stencil's complete surprise and delight, someone actually knew his true identity.

"Greetings, Avatar, we are aware of who you are and from where you come. We also know what you seek. And we wish to help you. You must achieve your destiny."

"What is my destiny?" Stencil replied, directing his question to no one in particular.

Through motionless lips the statues replied. "That is not important now; now we wish to help you in your quest. Behind us lies the tomb of Khumash-Gor."

"Who was Khumash-Gor?" asked Stencil.

"Only the most fearsome warrior who ever lived. Eons ago he was a great chieftain to our worshippers, but now he lives forever entombed in honor of his valor. With him rests an artifact that is the key to tremendous power. It is made of Blackrock, a substance with which you have considerable familiarity."

Stencil's attention grew at the mention of Blackrock, for he knew that without it, getting home was impossible.

The statues continued, this time on a more somber note. "The small object is shaped like a pyramid, but be warned—even in death Khumash-Gor has kept the fighting spirit onto which he held so tenaciously in life. He will not part readily with his possessions. Good luck, Avatar."



Khumash-Gor



After taking a moment to digest the information he received from the statues, Stencil decided to prepare for his meeting with Khumash-Gor. Believing that Khumash-Gor could not possibly hold his human form, Stencil created the Grant Peace Focus, which would be effective against those who have crossed over, but have not found peace.

He tried to open the doors behind the statues, but they were locked. Stencil shuffled through his keys but none of them fit. Deciding that the Dispelling Magical Portals Scroll that he had purchased from Mythran might work, he unrolled the scroll to release the magic. The doors swung open freely.

Using all his stealth, Stencil clung to the wall in hopes of sneaking by Khumash-Gor, thus avoiding a confrontation. The booming voice of Khumash-Gor shattered that hope.

"Who is foolish enough to disturb the sanctity of Khumash-Gor? If you've come seeking treasure, it's death you have found!"

With that Stencil was charged by the ghost of Khumash-Gor. Using the Grant Peace Spell he had prepared only moments before, he silenced the warrior forever. Beyond the throne he found two small boxes. The right box contained a small piece of Blackrock called the Obelisk tip, which he safely tucked into his knapsack. For the first time in his quest, Stencil felt a little closer to home. His feelings of joy, however, were confused with guilt, for it was a shame to destroy a great chieftain who had stood the test of time. Not wanting to commit further sacrilege, Stencil left the rest of the tomb untouched.

When Stencil reached the statues, they again spoke to him. "Well done, mortal. The item of Blackrock which you now possess is the first key to unlocking the tremendous power within yourself."

"What power?" he asked, a bit confused as to what the statues meant.

"Beyond Earth, Water, Air, and Fire there is another element. A fifth element. You have heard of it before. It is Ether. Like the others, it will assume a form of titanic proportions. You are to be that Titan. The Titan of Ether. We know the power is in you, but it is up to you to find the courage to use this power. You must take the followers from the other Titans. You must take their power just as our followers were ripped from our grasp. Continue your quest for the powers of the other Titans, for that is the way to gain their followers. The greater the abilities you can accrue the better the chance you will have of weakening the other four and eventually standing with them as more than an equal. Go now to find those called Hydros, Pyros, and Stratos. You shall find Hydros in her underground temple; the other two dwell on the surface."

When they had finished, Stencil bid them farewell.

"Farewell and good haste in your quest."

Not quite sure of his next destination, Stencil touched his Recall Pad and chose central Tenebrae. Just as before, the light dimmed and his head began to spin. The dizziness ended as he found himself atop the Great Palace. Somehow he knew he needed to return to the Cemetery and the catacombs that lay beyond. And that was the direction he took.



The Element of Air

This time he didn't stop to talk with Vividos, but went directly to the shrine. He entered the shrine, and brought together the proper reagents to create the Open Earth Focus. As before, he cast the spell while facing the north wall.



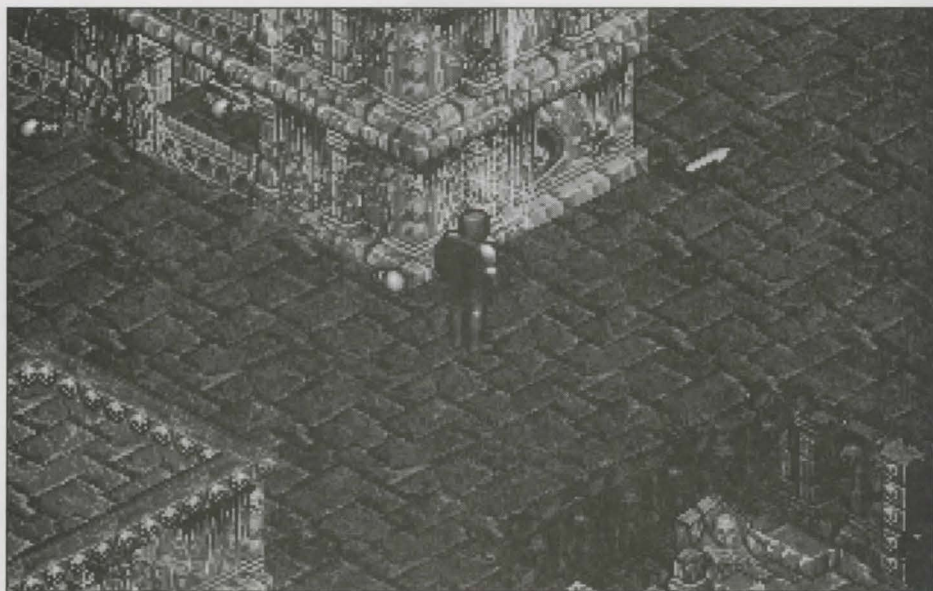
To Argentrock Isle



Once inside the catacombs, Stencil made his way through the tangle of tunnels toward the southeast. When he rounded a corner, he almost stepped on a slumbering skeleton warrior. The skeleton awoke and wasn't too happy about his rude awakening. Stencil turned and noticed an odd-appearing wall, but he didn't have time to study it since a ghoul now appeared and joined the skeleton in hunting him. Not having the time to concoct a Grant Peace Spell, Stencil simply swallowed the black invisibility potion that he was carrying.

He waited until the creatures could no longer see him before returning to the wall. There was a red hole in it, about the same size and shape as the Skull of Quakes he carried in his knapsack. He removed the skull from his bag and shoved it into the hole—it was a perfect fit. The ground began to shake, then everything turned black. Soon the darkness lifted and a large hole appeared in the ground. Stencil saw a flight of stairs leading down into the hole.

No longer invisible to the creatures, he quickly trotted down the staircase and into a small room where he felt quite safe. In this place he found a Recall Pad. This answered his prayers since he no longer had to go from Tenebrae through the Cemetery to get into the catacombs.



Stencil decided to make his way back to Stone Cove, for there he could replenish his stock of reagents. Halfway to his objective, as he was crossing the stone bridges, he spotted a doorway to the east. Vowing to take only a quick peek, he veered from his intended path and approached the door, which was fronted with spikes.

The door was locked and all of his traditional keys failed to open it; however, the Key of Scion gained him easy access. He entered the room and swiftly had to sidestep a handful of vicious spiders. He noticed the path was quite different here—it was paved with cobblestones. This piqued his interest and he picked up his pace, curious to see what lay ahead.

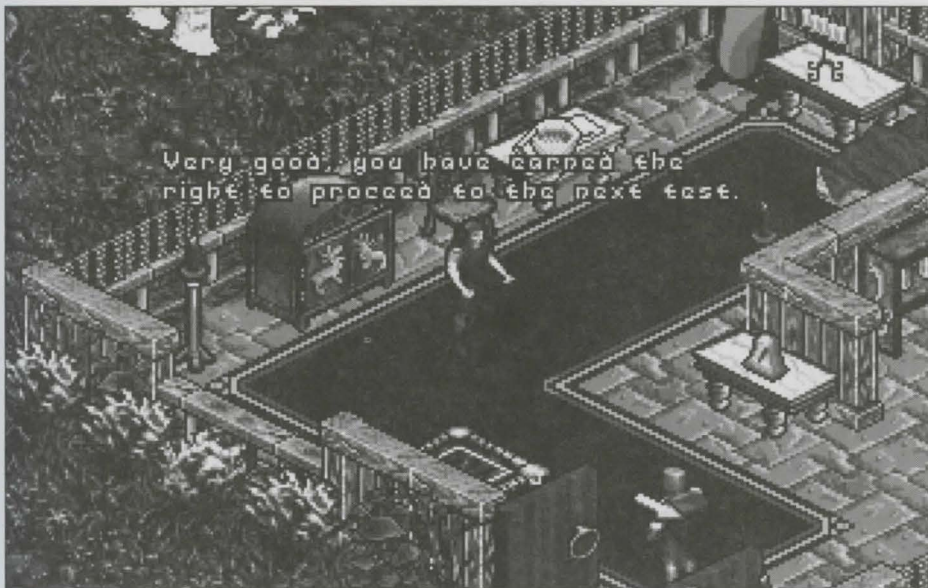
He crossed over a wooden bridge and came upon something completely unlike the rest of the catacombs—a grassy, peaceful meadow replete with plants and animals. He found a Recall Pad, which he activated. Slightly to the northwest he came to a stone wall with an entrance that led to a small settlement. How strange, he thought, a town within the depths of the catacombs—he was very curious about the occupants.



Gaining Enlightenment



Walking to the west, Stencil came to a large building that appeared to be some sort of commons area. He decided this was probably the best place to start acquiring information. Upon opening the door, he found himself in a large, clean white chamber with a stone altar at its center.



He approached a man wearing a white robe, hoping to talk to him, but he was politely and quickly rebuffed. Obviously this man was too busy to speak with a stranger. Looking around, Stencil saw no one else in the room, so he decided to explore the others. He chose a door to the rear left of the room. To his good fortune, there was someone in that room. This man was dressed in a sleeveless blue shirt and was carrying a very intimidating sword by his side. Stencil decided to approach him with great respect.

"Excuse me," Stencil said cautiously.

It turned out that the man was very friendly. "A fair day, stranger."

"And one to you, sir."

"You are new here. My name is Brother Xavier. Are you searching for healing?" the gentleman asked.

"Yes, I am new here, and my name is Stencil," he replied.

"Well met."

"What do you mean by healing?" Stencil asked.

"Yes, this is a place of healing. Do you require my skills as a healer?"

Feeling healthy at this time, Stencil told Brother Xavier that he didn't need his skills at the moment, but assured him he would seek him out if he needed them later.

"Oh, it is pleased, I am, that you are well."

"What is this place?"

"This is Argentrock Isle. It's home to those who follow the Great Titan of Air, Stratos," Xavier replied, with pride.

"Who is Stratos?"

"Stratos is the greatest of the Titans. Worthy of the respect and admiration of all—even of those who aren't followers."

Remembering what the statues of Zealan had said about gaining the followers of the Titans, Stencil became more interested and asked, "Who are the followers?"

"We are the Theurgists. By devoting our lives to Stratos we are able to touch a small portion of the Titan's power and use it to heal."

"He is worthy of respect, you say?"

"Yes, even for one such as yourself, who is obviously not enlightened, Stratos can offer great things."

"What do you mean, I am not enlightened?"

"You are not of our order and have not heard the Mystic Voice of Stratos. Once you have heard the voice you become enlightened," Xavier said, with an air of authority.



The Test of Wisdom



"I wish to become enlightened."

"This is a noble cause. I hope you have the mettle for it. The tests to gain enlightenment are fearsome."

"Tell me of the tests," Stencil replied, a bit offended by Xavier's lack of confidence.

"It's good to see you are interested. I am responsible for administering the tests. The first is the Test of Wisdom. The second is the Test of Centeredness," Xavier explained.

"Tell me of the Test of Wisdom."

"The Test of Wisdom is the first test you may take in your journey for enlightenment. This test consists of five questions I shall ask you. The questions will test your knowledge of the ways of the Theurgists. You must answer all five correctly to pass the test. If you are thinking of taking this test I strongly suggest you spend some time studying in the monastery library. Do you still wish enlightenment?"

"Aye."

"That's the spirit. You have some backbone after all. You are only the second in recent times to come for enlightenment. I will ask the five questions; if you answer all of them right you may pass to the next test. Do you wish to continue?"

"I am ready. Please continue."

"You sit in a tavern sipping a mug of ale, when the Stalwart Fighters around you begin to brag on the deeds done in the honor of their Titan. Do you join the camaraderie and tell of the glories of Stratos or do you remain quiet?"

"I would remain quiet." A nod from Xavier told him he had answered correctly.

"Why is wisdom greater than brawn?"

"A weapon destroys, wit builds."

"Is it better first to comfort a sad child or punish a wicked one?"

"It is always better to comfort the sad child first." That was an easy one, Stencil thought.

"Your only child has run away. He returns after a life of debauchery and crime several years later. Do you welcome him home, allowing the past to go unpunished, or do you turn him away until he has redeemed himself and regained your trust?"

Stencil knew he could never turn his only child away. "I would welcome him."

"Good, here is your final question. Your liege lies dying wounded in battle. You fear he won't live long. He asks how the battle goes, and you know the troops have been routed. How do you answer?"

Having fought in many a battle, Stencil knew of the need for honesty between comrades. "I would tell him the battle is lost."

"Good, you have earned the right to take the next test," said Xavier with respect.

The Test of Centeredness

"Tell me of the Test of Centeredness."

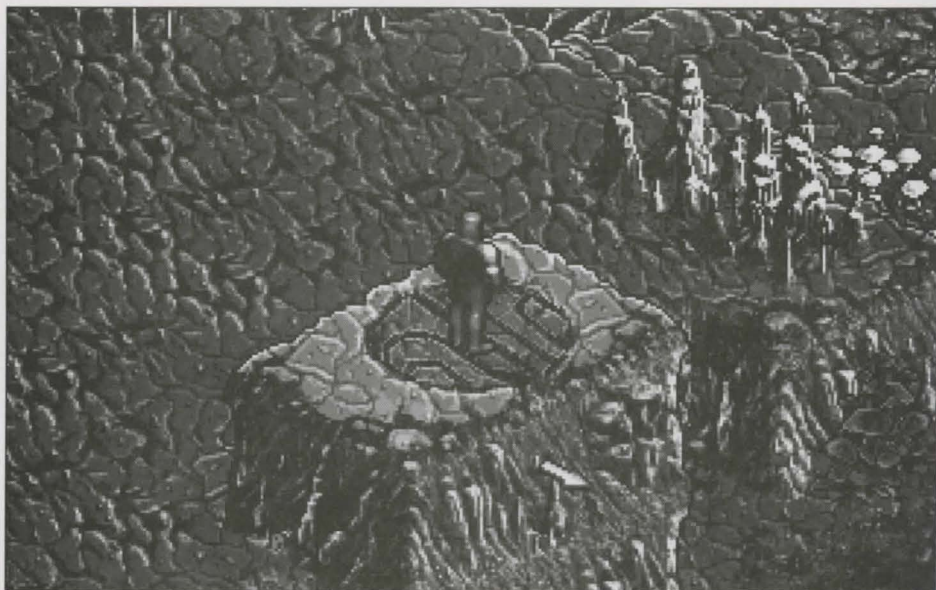
"The Test of Centeredness is the second test you may take on your quest for enlightenment. During this test you will find yourself on a high rock. The winds will test your strength, balance, and courage," Xavier explained.

"May I take the Test of Centeredness?"

"Yes, I think perhaps you are ready. You must travel to Windy Point and climb to the highest point on the rock. Once atop the rock, Stratos will begin her testing of you. Her winds will blow you, but you must stay atop the rock, for to fall means almost sure disablement and possibly death. Good luck, friend."

His stomach churned at the mention of death—he lived with danger every day, but putting himself in the path of danger, on purpose, was another story altogether. In addition, Stencil didn't care much for heights. With grim determination, Stencil set out to find Windy Point.

He left the monastery and headed west. He walked out through the stone wall, the back way, and made his way across a field until he came to a natural high wall. Following the wall to the south, he came to a section of wall that wasn't as high as the others. It was here that he climbed up. He noticed one section of the wall that stood higher than the rest. He felt this was a good place to wait for the test to begin. Reaching the apex of this outcropping proved to be very difficult, but finally he accomplished the task. The top was flat and square, and a circle with five curved lines was carved into the rock. He had hardly a moment to admire the view when the wind began to blow.



It started as a gentle breeze, but gradually increased to hurricane proportions. It took everything he had to keep from flying off the ledge like a discarded piece of paper. Leaning into the wind helped some, but he needed to be very cautious, for when the wind changed directions he could easily find himself blown off the ledge. Hours seemed to pass before the winds finally diminished and the air was still once again. Exhausted, Stencil descended from the high platform and down the second ledge.

He returned to town to seek Xavier—and to inform him that he had completed his second test. He first searched the monastery, but he found no one there. Eventually he found Xavier in a wood-framed building to the north of the monastery.

"Excuse me," Stencil started.

"Good to see you, Stencil."

"I have completed both of your tests," Stencil boasted.

"Wonderful, I am most pleased you have now earned the right to assume the title of an Initiate. So, Initiate Stencil, you must now find the Honorable Stellos. He will guide you in the next step on your journey to enlightenment. You can find him in the monastery at this hour," Xavier concluded.

"Good-bye."

"Be well, my friend."



Creating Foci



As he returned to the monastery, Stencil realized that he had forgotten to ask Xavier what Stellos looked like. He hurried back to

where he had last seen Xavier, but he discovered that Xavier was now deep in meditation. Not wanting to disturb him, Stencil tiptoed out of the building. He would find Stellos by himself.

Stencil entered the monastery and spoke to the first person he saw. It turned out that this was the same person who had coldly rebuffed him earlier, during his first search for Xavier. The man still looked quite involved in whatever he was doing, and Stencil was sure he would get no information out of him.

Feeling the weight of his knapsack, Stencil decided to drop his second pack until he felt more rested. It was much easier to walk without hauling that extra weight around. The next man he came to was wearing a white robe with dark blue trim. The man, who appeared to be ancient, had gnarled hands and eyes full of wisdom. Stencil knew he need look no further; he had found Stellos.

"Pardon me, good sir."

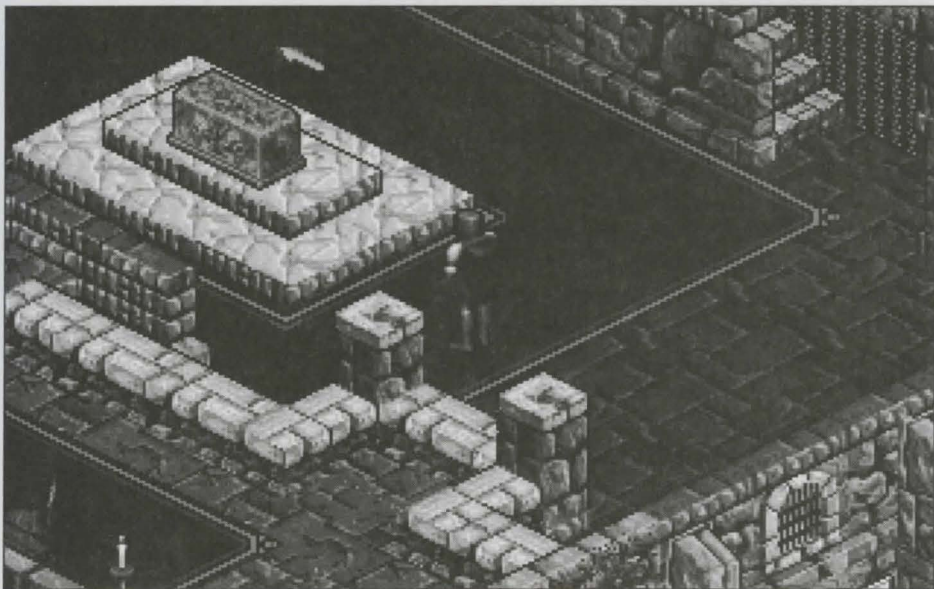
"Welcome, stranger," the man replied, in a voice mellowed with age.

"I have passed the first two tests."

Stellos's eyes crinkled as he smiled from ear to ear. "Yes, I know. You have proven yourself worthy to bear the title of an Initiate. Now you are ready to begin learning the spell that Stratos grants us. However, before you do, you must construct your Foci."

"What are Foci?"

"A Focus is a talisman of great magical power. It is a channel. It allows the wielder to touch a small part of the great power of Stratos and use it for the specific purpose for which the Focus was designed.



Such as healing. It is a powerful item, but in the hands of the inexperienced or weak, it can kill."

"How do I construct the Foci?" Stencil questioned.

"The construction of the Foci is the most important task an Initiate in the Order of Enlightenment can undertake. The Foci are wrought of the finest silver, found only in the caverns under our monastery. These caverns are dark and fraught with fearsome creatures. Using this key, you will be able to enter the caverns."

Seeing no key, Stencil reasoned that Stellos had magically deposited it in his knapsack, just as Mythran had done earlier. Curious about this fine silver, he continued with the conversation.

"What do I do with this silver?"

"You must take the silver to the blacksmith Korick in Tenebrae. Only he has the skill to forge the Foci. But these Foci will be without power. You must return here, place them upon the Altar of Focus in the monastery, and call upon the name of Stratos. If you have met with her approval, she will then fill them with her power."

"Good-bye, then."

"May you be well," Stellos wished.



Silver for the Foci



Stencil retrieved his second inventory sack, placed all his inventory items—except one potion of restoration and his bedroll—into the second inventory sack, and left the first behind. He knew the pack would not be disturbed, for the integrity of the people here was quite evident. He walked north into the kitchen, where good food was available, but Stencil's hunger could wait. Instead he took the stairs located at the back wall down to the caverns below.

From the cavern entrance he headed east and used the brass key to unlock the door. In front of him were two electric fences. Stencil readied himself, then attempted to run past them. He came through the first one unscathed, but when he reached the second he was zapped and thrown to the ground. Feeling groggy, he raised himself and tried again. This time he made it through. Fortunately, on the ground lay a dormant skeleton guarding a red potion. He took the potion and drank it in one swift gulp. The taste was vile, but there was no denying its refreshing results.

He made his way to the south, where in the distance he could hear the popping sound of a fire spitter. Walking a bit further he found the spitter, and cradled in a niche near the spitter his first piece of silver ore. Ducking his head low and running in a zigzag pattern, Stencil reached the ore and quickly tucked it into his inventory. Retracing his steps, Stencil stretched the distance between himself and the shooter before stopping to examine the silver. It was smooth, round, and looked similar to the other rocks in the

caverns—only smaller. By its hefty weight, Stencil knew he was indeed holding the correct object in his hands.

To the east he found a passage that led him to a large cavern. The moment he entered, he found three more pieces of silver. He was now halfway to his goal of collecting eight nuggets. Further to the east he came across more accursed changelings that took on his appearance. He also noticed that the changelings were guarding several pieces of ore. Not in the mood to fight, Stencil simply skirted around the changelings and snatched the ore. A quick sweep of the cavern revealed one more piece of ore wedged between a large rock and the wall. He exited the cavern through the same passageway he had used to enter it. Walking north he came to a house, but he could find no entranceway. When Stencil turned, he spotted his final piece of silver and returned to the kitchen.

Korick the Blacksmith

Stencil located his knapsack and touched the Item of Recall, which teleported him to Tenebrae. He headed southwest and located a large, single-story stone building that belonged to the blacksmith. Unfortunately, no one was there and the doors were securely locked. Feeling a bit drained, Stencil walked a few blocks and found a soft patch of ground where he rested his weary bones. An hour later, he went back to Korick's blacksmith shop and found the doors to be ajar.

"Excuse me," said Stencil.

"Fair greeting, mate," the man responded in a heavy accent.

"Could you make me a Focus?"

"Do you have a chunk of silver ore? I require one to forge the Focus."

Stencil told Korick that he did have a piece of ore and handed it over to the blacksmith.

"Good, you have the silver. Which Focus do you require?" the blacksmith asked.

"Sextant."

Korick made the Focus promptly and handed it back to Stencil. The workmanship was impeccable. It was smooth and round, clearly the work of an expert. Stencil asked him to make another Focus.

"Do you have another chunk of silver ore? Which Focus do you require?"

"Pointing Hand," Stencil answered.

Soon he had another completed Focus at hand. One by one, Stencil asked Korick to create all eight of his Foci. Once they were all completed, he had a set of finely crafted Foci.

"There, your Foci are finished. Good workmanship, no?"

Stencil wholeheartedly agreed with him. They shook hands and Stencil took his leave. A touch of his Recall Pad sent him back to Argentrock Isle.



Energizing the Foci



Stencil materialized on Argentrock Isle. This time he failed to notice the beauty around him, for he made haste back to the monastery. Acting on Stellos's orders, he placed the Foci on the smooth gray stone altar in the midst of the monastery commons. Stencil could tell each Focus had received the power of Stratos, for when he picked them up, he could feel a tingle travel up his fingers.

Now that he had the charged Foci, he needed to learn of their powers. Stencil thought that the best way to accomplish this would be to read the spellbooks he had caught sight of earlier. In the rooms about the monastery, he found a book on each of the Foci. Armed with his new Foci knowledge, Stencil set out to speak with the townspeople.



The Third Test



Strolling through the settlement, he came across a man in a sleeveless blue shirt. Stencil judged him to be about his own age, but with a slightly heavier build. Before Stencil had time to extend a greeting, the man shouted, "Have I met you before?"

"I don't believe we have met before," Stencil replied, a bit surprised.

"My name is Torwin—what's yours?"

"I am Stencil."

"Well, hello, Stencil, what brings you here?"

Instead of answering the man's questions, Stencil replied with a question of his own. "What do you do here?"

"For now, I am only a healer. But that's because they have not recognized my superior abilities."

Now, it was Stencil's experience that braggarts usually have something to hide. He decided to play along with the man to see where the conversation would lead.

"What superior abilities?" asked Stencil.

"Why, my talents for magic," the boastful man retorted.

"Who will recognize your abilities?"

"Everyone. I never make an error when casting magic. I constructed my Foci correctly on the first try and they are the finest of all the Foci, I might add."

"You are a healer?"

"Yes, why else would I be here? Anyway, are you in need of healing?"

Stencil denied it.

"Actually, I'm relieved, Stencil, for I do not want to take precious time away from my studies. No one has the abilities I have. I will suffer no one to surpass me. I must do the best. I will do the best. Now, if you will excuse me."

Some bedside manner, Stencil thought, as he watched Torwin retreat. He would have to keep his eyes and ears open for more information about this shady character. He proceeded to explore the building and met Stellos, or at least he thought it was Stellos. The man turned and revealed that his clothing was slightly different from that of Stellos. Stencil decided to speak to the man.

"Pardon me."

"Hello, may I help you?"

"I have passed the Tests of Wisdom and Centeredness." Stencil was not quite sure why he told the man this, but the man had a kind face and a look of wisdom beyond his years.

"You have? But you've just arrived on our island. I don't believe we've ever had anyone complete them this fast. Stratos will be pleased with your accomplishment. Now you must find Stellos and begin the next part of your journey."

Thanking him for his compliment and directions, Stencil left in search of Stellos. He found him in the monastery.

"Pardon me."

"Welcome, stranger."

"I have constructed my Foci," boasted Stencil.

"Very good, you are well on your way to becoming a full Adept. The next step is a test of all you have learned. You must return to the caverns under the monastery; you will know what to do when you arrive there."

Before Stencil had a chance to ask any questions, Stellos dismissed him. A bit confused, he made his way back to the caverns. Upon entering the caverns, a scream echoed through the air. It was a horrible cry of agony and Stencil ran in the direction of the screams. Across a body of water he noticed a wounded Torax. Stencil wondered if this was the test of which Stellos had spoken, and what he should do.

Thinking back to the books he had read earlier, he knew he had the power of healing—but how could he reach the Torax? He remembered his Aerial Servant Focus. If he couldn't reach the Torax, the Torax would come to him. He cast the spell and brought the beast across the water and gently placed her on the ground. She was badly hurt and barely clinging to life. He called on the powers of his Healing Touch Focus, which breathed new life into the creature. Fully recovered, she rolled to her feet and walked away.

The Lost Foci

He hoped that this was the test, for he couldn't wait to get out of the caverns. Once above ground, Stencil was off in search of Stellos. He explored the monastery, but Stellos was nowhere to be found. He continued his search and, eventually, found Stellos near the back of the monastery by the garden.

"Pardon me, sir."

"Welcome."

"I have passed the third test," said Stencil.

"That is a wonderful thing, but you must excuse me for I don't have time to celebrate with you. Something terrible has happened that requires my full attention."

"What has happened?" Stencil asked, truly concerned.

"Brother Xavier has lost his Focus of Healing."

"How did this happen?"

"No one is sure. Poor Brother Xavier is beside himself with grief. It is very unlikely that an Adept would misplace this. But if he knows more he is not telling me."

"Do you think it was stolen?" Stencil whispered.

"It wounds me deeply to think that one of our own would stoop so low as to steal from another enlightened one. It goes against Stratos's teachings. But she also teaches mercy and compassion. So if it was stolen by one of our own I will not hold it against that person, but rather help him find the path of enlightenment again."

The tone in his voice told Stencil that he was truly upset about this turn of events. He felt that Stellos needed to be alone with his thoughts, so he bid him farewell. Not knowing where to go next, Stencil decided to seek Xavier. He returned to the monastery where he found Brother Xavier.

"Excuse me."

"Good to see you, Stencil."

"Hello, Brother Xavier."

"What may I assist you with?"

"I have met Torwin."

"Strange young man. I thought quite highly of him until you arrived. I thought he was the best student we ever had. But..."

"He was a strange young man?" Stencil asked, unsure of what Xavier was implying.

"He was always unusual. We would often find him standing in the shadows outside different houses. What he was doing we could only guess. When confronted he offers no explanation, he just wanders off. He has taken an interest in the Resurrection Spell."

"The Resurrection Spell?"

"Yes, it is possible to bring the dead back under the proper conditions."

"Under the proper conditions?"



"It will cost your eyesight. This is why Stellos is blind. Because of this high price Stratos gives that spell to only one Adept at a time. It is, after all, a very dangerous spell."

"It's a dangerous spell, you say?"

"Most certainly, for to cast it one must journey to the City of the Dead and face the minions of Lithos. More than one caster in our history has not survived that encounter."

"What were you saying about Torwin being the best student?" Stencil asked, trying to change the topic back to Torwin.

"Well, he was the best student until he reached the third test, but he could not pass it. I have heard he is trying to reach Stratos and hear the mystic voice without passing the third test."

Thanking him for the information, Stencil shook Xavier's hand and took his leave. His conversation with Xavier echoed in his head. Stencil thought that this would be a good time to find Stellos and get his advice. Returning to the garden, he found Stellos.

"Hello," Stencil said.

"Welcome."

"I have met with Torwin."

"He is one of our newest Initiates. He has shown tremendous progress. Until you came along he was our best student. Recently he's been doing some interesting research."

"Oh really, what sort of research?"

"He has been looking into the possibility of combining Foci to increase their power. Although I don't believe there is much chance, I don't like to stifle creativity and individuality."

Stencil bid Stellos farewell and was now sure that Torwin was up to something—and that he was probably behind the missing Foci. He needed to find Torwin, and fast. His search ended after entering a wooden building in the southwest part of town. That was where he found Cyruss attending to his studies.

"Pardon me."

"Yes?"

"Have you seen Torwin?"

"Ah, no, I have not."

Stencil was sure Cyruss was hiding something, for at the mention of Torwin's name he paled considerably. Stencil had to learn the truth. Reaching into his knapsack, he called upon the power of his Hear Truth Focus. He then posed his question to Cyruss again.

"Have you seen Torwin?"

"No" (yes, I have).

"Where is he?"

"I don't know" (he told me he was going to Windy Point for something important).

"Why are you covering up for him?"

"I'm not covering up for him" (I think he is the one who took the Focus. I don't think he meant any harm by it).

Having this information, Stencil set out for Windy Point. He hauled himself up the first ledge at Windy Point. To the west he saw Torwin.

"Torwin!" Stencil shouted.

"Go away, leave me alone!" Torwin's voice was thick with frustration.

"Someone's Focus is missing."

"I know nothing of it."

"I believe you do."

"I know not, I'm telling you. Why, I haven't even seen Brother Xavier."

Recognizing Torwin's mistake, Stencil's suspicions were confirmed. "But you knew it was Brother Xavier."

"Well, I didn't steal it, I only borrowed it."

"What do you mean, you didn't steal it?" Stencil asked, knowing that the Focus was in his possession.

"I told you I am not a thief, I only borrowed it. I needed the magic in it for my father."

"What magic in it? And what does that have to do with your father?"

"Foci are very strong lines to Stratos's power. I thought with two I might be able to draw more power from the great Titan of Air. My father's name was Toran and he lived in Tenebrae, my home. He is dead now, killed by that evil Mordea," Torwin cried in anguish.

Remembering the execution witnessed on the docks, and the conversation with the devastated Rhian, his attitude toward the man

softened. Perhaps it wasn't madness that this man suffered from, but grief.

"Toran was your father?"

"Yes, he was a good man, not afraid to speak his mind and he was killed for it."

Stencil asked why Mordea decided to order his death.

"She had him executed for speaking his mind. Is that right?—can a man's life be snuffed out for mere words? Is that right, I ask you?"

Stencil felt that Torwin was quickly losing his weak grip on sanity; reluctantly he told him that he had witnessed his father's execution for himself.

"Then you saw as his head was severed from his body with a single swing of the axe. In that instant the most important man in my life was taken from me and I could do nothing about it. Not then, anyway."

"What do you mean, you could do nothing about it, but now you can?" Stencil asked.

"I could do nothing about it then, but with what I have learned here, I will make things right!" Torwin boldly exclaimed.

"How will you make things right?"

"I will use the magic from Stratos to bring my father back to life and have my revenge. Yes, I will bring him back from the Pit of Death and have my revenge!"

It was then Stencil remembered that Torwin had not been at the execution and had not witnessed his father being fed to the Lurker. It pained him so to utter the next words: "Your father is not in the Pit of Death. He lays with the Lurker."

Torwin screamed, "You lie! He is in the Pit of Death and I shall bring him back and I shall do it now!" And with that Torwin turned and raced toward the ledge. Just before reaching the ledge, he dropped the missing Focus and, without so much as a second thought, jumped to his death.

"Torwin!" Stencil shouted into the darkness.

Bending to retrieve Brother Xavier's Focus, Stencil noticed that Torwin had also dropped a ring. He considered taking that, too, but in the end he left it, as a small marker of the events that had occurred here today.

Slowly he made his way back into town, and sought Stellos.

"Pardon, sir."

"Welcome," Stellos greeted him.

Taking the Leap of Faith

Stencil related the events leading up to Torwin's demise.

"The loss of life is always a tragedy," said Stellos, "and the loss of one so gifted is an even greater loss for those who won't receive his

healing. However, I am glad the Focus was found. You have shown yourself to be ready to pass the final test to become a full Adept."

"There is a final test?" Stencil asked, a bit surprised.

"Yes, in the final test there are no creatures for you to fight, no riddles to answer, no problems to solve. There is simply you and your belief. You must rely upon your own ability and your faith in Stratos's power."

"How do I take this test?" Stencil asked, a bit worried, for he was a little unsure about his faith in the power of Stratos. This was not his world and these were not truly his gods. He was seeking enlightenment only to further his own goals. He wondered if he would be able to get through this test.

"You must travel to Windy Point, where you will find two black pillars. Stand between those pillars. If you truly wish to hear the Mystic Voice, you must then take the Leap of Faith."

Stencil recalled the black pillars from which Torwin had jumped. This thought worried him, for Torwin's faith in Stratos's power had seemed unshakable. He bid Stellos a fond farewell and went to find Xavier.

Stencil found Xavier and returned to him his Focus. The two exchanged pleasantries and then Stencil was on his way once again. He made it back to Windy Point, to the exact spot where Torwin had committed suicide. Standing between the pillars as instructed, he filled his lungs with air, held it a moment, then jumped. Just as he began to fall, he felt his body being lifted by some unseen force. He safely landed on a platform floating in air.

He leaped from the floating platform to another. He then followed the floating platforms to the north, then west, until he finally made it to a platform that was far larger than the others. Stencil let out a ragged sigh and was knocked to the ground—then his body floated high above the platforms. "Don't look down," he mumbled to himself. "Just don't look down." Soon a sweet, almost angelic voice broke into his thoughts.

"And yet another child is found. Please, small one, come closer."

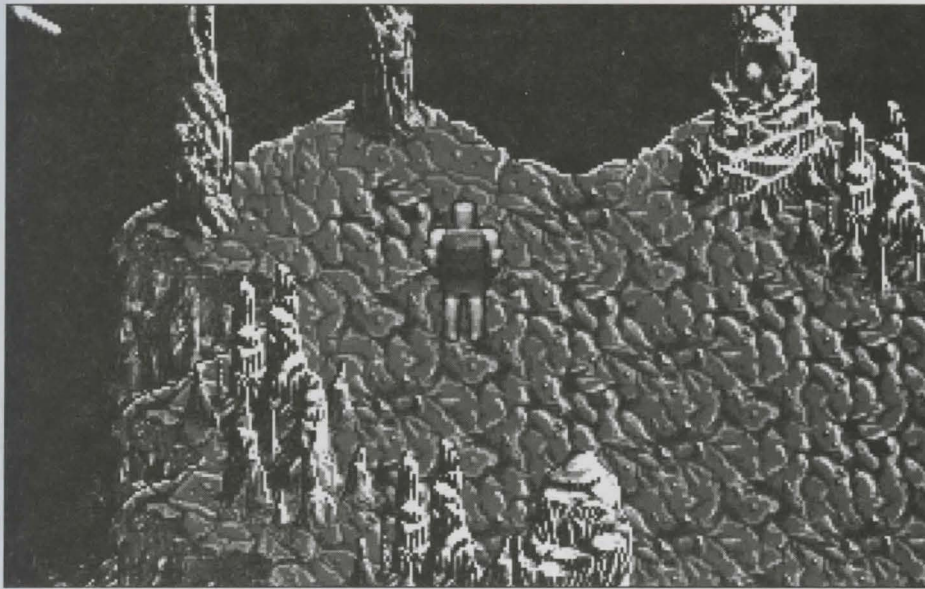
"Who are you?" he asked.

"Who? Such a dear child. So very young. Why, he is no more than a babe. I am Stratos, Titan of Air. Giver of Life. To reach me took great courage. I wish to reward you."

"You wish to reward me?"

"Take this Focus with you, Adept, and you will be able to cast the Air Walk Spell at will," the voice crooned.

Not since childhood had anyone spoken to him so soothingly. It was almost as if he were in the protective arms of his mother. Perhaps that was because Stratos believed herself to be the Giver of Life, the Mother to All. Stencil wanted to know if this was the case. "Who are your children?"



"Why, all who live. Do they not all partake of my gift of sweet air. Some have forgotten their mother. But they will return. They always do. When they are hurt or ailing they will come to me for healing."

"Tell me of yourself, Titan of Air."

"I am the breeze that cools your cheek on a warm day. I am the raging wind that drives the waves before it. I am the fuel that feeds the tongues of flame to heat your supper and the teeth that bite in the winter. With my help my children can be cured of their illnesses and pain; without me they die."

"How are they healed?"

"Through the Breath of Wind my chosen children have the power to heal."

"Tell me of the Breath of Wind."

"The Breath of Wind is that through which I touch my children. Its location is known only to the Honorable Stellos."

With that Stencil had his next destination. He was sad that his time with Stratos was coming to an end, but he needed to press on with his quest. So he bid Stratos farewell and thanked her for her kindness. She gently lowered Stencil to the ground. He had finished his business in Argentrock Isle, for the time being, and with a touch to his Recall Pad he was teleported to the Upper Catacombs.



The Element of Water

Stencil appeared on the Recall Pad in the Upper Catacombs. Purely out of curiosity, he read the time on the clock that was sitting on the table. Threemoons. He made his way up the stairs. Before revealing himself entirely, he cautiously made a visual sweep of the area to see if it was free of bloodthirsty foes. All was clear.

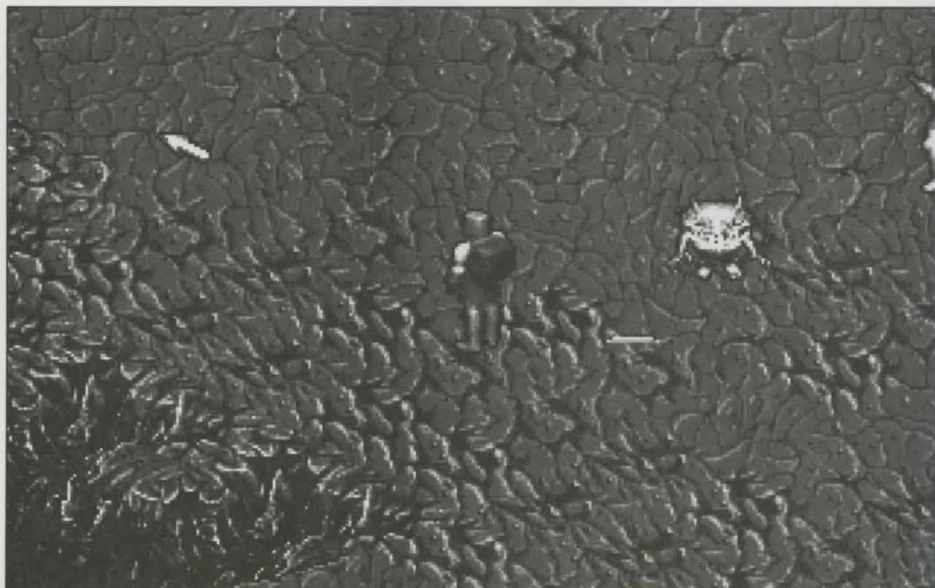


Carthax Lake



He entered the region of the catacombs where he had found Argentrock Isle. Just as he crossed over the bridges outside the entrance to Argentrock, he spied a narrow passage just to the south. He squeezed through the slim channel and emerged in a large burrow known as Carthax Lake. A skeleton warrior, which had been standing nearby, immediately homed in on him and advanced with his axe poised for battle. Stencil didn't want to waste time battling this skeleton; they were impossible to kill. He moved east, only to find his way blocked by bubbling lava. Flinging a look over his shoulder, he saw the skeleton warrior approaching. It was either jump or get pushed in. Collecting himself, he vaulted the lava. He could feel the cuffs of his pants singe, but he made it to the other side.

He proceeded southward, through a lightning bolt fence. He then came to a gate. Locating a switch on the wall, he pulled it and watched as the gate slowly lowered. His Key of Scion opened the locked doors that awaited him. This brought him to a large, cold cavern. When he saw the Recall Pad on his left, he knew he was in a place of significance.



He decided to go west. He traveled in this direction as far as he could, then veered south. When this direction was exhausted, he went east. Finally he had to turn north. He traveled only a short distance before coming to the edge of a lake. Slightly to his left, there was a bridge. He hurried along the bridge until he came to a point where it had broken away. Across the break, he saw the rest of the bridge with yet another bridge crossing it. He jumped across the void and landed on the next section. He decided to see where the crossbridge took him. It landed Stencil on a plateau. In the center of this large plateau he came upon more water. Stretching out into the water was a shiny, white marble platform. He was walking out onto the marble structure when, to his surprise, out of the water rose a creature unlike anything Stencil had ever encountered.



Unleashing the Lurker



As the water came to life, Stencil knew he had found Hydros, the Titan of Water.

"Who dares?"

"Are you...Hydros?" Stencil stammered.

"Indeed, pitiful man, I am. Know that it is into my domain that you have trespassed. Why do you disturb my rest?"

Stencil was taken aback; in sharp contrast to the soft and gentle Stratos, this Titan was hard and unyielding. "I wish to attain the power of Tempestry."

"Ah, a wise request from one who has made the journey to my home. But alas, your wish must go unfulfilled for I am trapped. I cannot help," the Titan said.

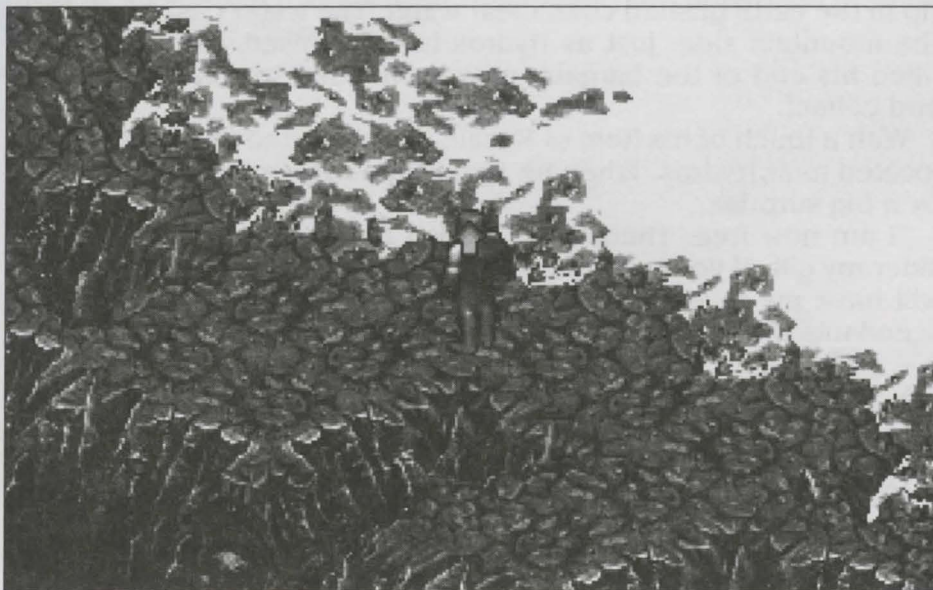
"What can I do to help?"

"If you will assist me, my gratitude will be boundless. The task is simple. Merely open the ground next to the gravestone of my captor's beloved, releasing the waters on the cliff side. Do that and I shall be free."

That didn't sound too hard, Stencil thought. He did wonder, though, why someone had felt the need to capture the Titan of Water. It couldn't be a valid reason, could it? Stencil reasoned that it could not—after all, everyone needs water. Wanting to continue his quest, he vowed to free her and then he bid Hydros farewell.

"Farewell, mortal friend."

Returning past the broken bridges, Stencil headed to the west. He came to a cavern entrance. When he walked through it, he was confronted by a fierce troll. Stencil had no time to fight, so he fainted to the left and ran around the brute to the right. He entered another cavelike area. Going west he came to a stone wall fronted with spikes. Slightly to the left, there was a break in the line of stakes. He scaled the wall and squeezed between two of the metal studs. He walked north until he came to a wall with a fence built into its depths. There were two switches also located on the wall—which one to use? He pulled the switch on the left, and the gate lowered. Stencil wondered what the other switch did, but just before pulling



it he had second thoughts; it seemed too much like tempting fate. Stencil hurried through the hole in the wall, where the fence had once barred his way.

Racing past another lumbering troll, he came to yet another fence. The fence somehow sensed his approach and opened automatically. "Why can't everything in this place be so accommodating?" Stencil muttered. From here he wandered to the north. At the first available junction, he turned west and came upon a troll guarding a chest. Wondering what could be in it, he rushed past the troll and targeted the chest. A small explosion rocked Stencil upon opening it. He shook off the effects of the discharge and quickly proceeded with the search. What he found made suffering through the blast all worth it: a pair of leggings. These were no ordinary leggings. The purplish tinge surrounding them indicated to Stencil they were magical armor. Able to withstand far more damage than traditional leg plates, they would give him an advantage in battle. After dumping the old battered ones he was wearing, he slipped the new ones on with ease. A perfect fit.

Wearing his new armor, he made his way to the west, where he came to a pool of water. Keeping himself pressed against the right wall, he slowly managed to get past the deep pool. He proceeded northeast, where he came to a cave access. Cautiously, he entered. Once inside, he found a tombstone. He wasn't sure if this was the grave of which Hydros had spoken, but since he had seen no other burial mounds, he believed that it was.

He brought together the proper reagents needed to fabricate the Open Earth Focus. "Des Por Ylem."

The ground in front of the tombstone buckled and split. From the rip in the earth gushed cold, clear water. The water cascaded down the mountain side, just as Hydros had promised. Stencil had fulfilled his end of the bargain; now he needed to return to Hydros and collect.

With a touch of his Item of Recall, he teleported to the Recall Pad located near Hydros. When he again found Hydros, he was greeted by a big surprise.

"I am now free. Thank you, foolish one, for your actions. Consider my gift of your wretched life as payment for your deed. Now I will have my revenge upon your pathetic kind. I will slay the descendants of my jailer. Let us see who can reach Devon first."



A Warning for Devon



"Oh God, what have I done?"

He needed to seek Devon and warn him of his impending doom. But how could he ever beat Hydros? He would have to hurry. He ripped open his knapsack and touched his Item of Recall, teleporting

himself to central Tenebrae. He rushed down the staircase and burst into the throne room, without so much as a knock.

"Hello, Stencil."

"The Lurker is free."

"I had feared as much when the rain began and the people came to me. I couldn't stop it. Then I knew something was wrong. At first, I had hopes that you had simply found another Tempest who was older. Yet somehow I felt that wasn't the case. Tell me, friend, how did this come to pass?"

Oh God, he called him friend. How was he going to tell him it was he who had unleashed the Lurker? How would Devon react when he knew that, to further his own goals, he had doomed an entire population? But he hadn't meant any harm; he had been misled. He hoped Devon could find it in his heart to forgive him. Stencil took a deep breath and admitted his wrong doing.

"It was my fault."

"That doesn't surprise me. From the day I cut you from my net, I knew of the luck that followed you; whether it is good luck or bad luck I did not know. Nor, for that matter, am I sure now. Nevertheless, the rains must cease or the land will flood again, as in the days of Kalen and the wars with the Zealans and, my friend, I believe it is up to you to end this cataclysm. Though I am loath to suggest this—perhaps the Sorcerers who dwell across the river of lava in the catacombs can help."

Thanking him for his understanding and his direction, Stencil bid his friend good-bye.

"Farewell and good luck."

Devon had mentioned those who lived on the other side of the river of lava. Stencil knew what this meant; the time had come for him to meet the Titan of Fire.



The Titan of Fire

Stencil touched his Item of Recall and arrived at Argentrock Isle. He didn't stay there long, though; instead he walked back through the entry door and into the main catacombs. He made his way back toward Carthax Lake, where he had found Hydros. From this entrance he headed north, then east. He found an entrance to a cavern that he had never been in before. Curious, he decided to investigate. Here he had to contend with a lightning bolt fence. Before running through the fence, he backed himself against the wall and gained as much speed as he could. After managing to avoid being shocked, he continued his exploration.

In the southwest corner of this cavern, Stencil found a very sturdy gateway. There was a large switch on the wall and when he pulled it, the large metal gate lowered. The only problem was, another slid up in its place. Thinking there must be some other way past the gate, Stencil searched the area and found another switch, this one small and well concealed. It was located on the same wall, not distant from the first. To his surprise, when he pulled the switch the large gates didn't open; instead, a small trapdoor on the left appeared. Stencil clambered through the small square hole. His Key of Scion open the locked door that lay just behind the gate.



Speaking with Beren



When he looked down at the ground, he saw it was made of cooled lava. He was near the river of lava; he knew he was in the right place. He walked to the south, where he came to a ledge. After a jump, Stencil now found himself on a peninsula surrounded on

three sides by bubbling lava. He walked west to the lava's edge. Peering across the steaming molten rock, he saw a man standing on the opposite shore. But before he had a chance to send over a greeting, the other man's voice rang out.

"I don't know who you are, but you are quite resourceful to have come to this place. Welcome to the Mouth of the Daemon. This cavern was once the first test for those wishing to join the Sorcerers' Cabal. Someone...has rendered it mostly useless by directing an underground river this way. Quite a remarkable thing to do, don't you agree?"

"Thank you. I was the one."

"An interesting solution to the first test of Sorcery. Perhaps if you seek to enter into the Cabal, the Master will deem it proper that your next test be to restore this cavern to its prior state—hmmm? Should you somehow find a way to reach the point upon which I stand, you will soon find yourself in the home of the Sorcerers. I suggest that you seek out the Sorcerer known as Bane. She is quite knowledgeable in our ways and might be persuaded to help you. Farewell."

In a flash of light he was gone. But soon he reappeared on a higher ledge.

"Oh, I almost forgot to mention. Do be careful beyond this cavern. The Sorcerers there do not take lightly to insults, attitudes, or even posturing. Remember, you live at our pleasure when you are in our Enclave. Fair warning." Then he was gone.

Stencil rummaged through his knapsack until he came to what he was looking for: his Air Walk Focus. Calling upon the power of Stratos, he jumped easily to the other side on a gust of air. He landed gently on the spot where that man had just been standing. Stencil wiped the sweat from his brow and ventured southward along the craggy outcroppings breaking the surface of the lava. Finally, he came to a wall. In the center of the wall he found a passage. He climbed up a small ledge and continued to the south, following the brick path.



A Conspiracy with Bane



He turned east at the first intersection. At the end of this path he found a Recall Pad. As he approached, he watched as the pad rose and glittered in response to his advance. Knowing the pad was activated, he returned to the main path and continued on in a southerly direction. At the next intersection, he went west. He came upon a building with a door. Next to the door was a plaque that read, *AYCO-LYTE BANE*. He tried the door and found it to be open, so he entered to see if anyone was home. Someone was.

"Ah, a stranger comes to the Enclave. How rare. You are also a stranger to the island of Morgaelin, are you not? So I thought. And what might your name be, my friend?"

"I am Stencil," he replied.

"What an interesting name. I shall be sure to make note of it. However, you have need of a name that has meaning in the Elder Tongue. I sense your name is Daemion. It means Fire of the Sky. Do you like it?"

Not really, thought Stencil, but then he remembered what the man had said to him earlier and decided it would be in his best interest to hold his true thoughts in check. He'd best not offend this woman, so he replied in the affirmative.

"It gladdens me. Perhaps later when you have earned it, you will be given a True name."

He wanted to tell her that he already had a true name: it was Stencil. But again he didn't want to offend her, so he held his tongue.

"With what may I assist you," the woman continued.

"Could you please tell me of the Enclave and Morgaelin?"

At the question, a smile spread across the woman's face. It seemed she was happy to have someone new to talk with.

"The Sorcerers' Enclave sits in the arms of Daemon's Crag, overtopped by the mountain Morgaelin. The volcano is the namesake of the island."

"Tell me about the Sorcerers."

"If you wish, but know this: the real power of the True name will be given only to one initiated in our ways. Would you know about the current Sorcerers, or perhaps some of those who went before?"

After a moment's consideration, he asked to know of the current Sorcerers.

"The living Sorcerers of the Cabal are divided into two groups. The body and the will. The body is made up of all the Acolytes and the will is that of the Master."

"Could you tell me of the Acolytes?"

"The Acolytes are poorly led by the First Acolyte, who is more beast than man. His name is Vardion and you would do well to avoid him, as his odor can be most offensive. I, of course, am also one of the Acolytes. Then there is Gorgrand, sometimes a bit slow and easily led astray by those he thinks are of greater importance. Lastly, there is Beren. A man to be trusted. He is as good as his word and his word is beyond reproach. You could do worse than to take his advice in all things."

When she finished, Stencil asked about the First Acolyte. He was curious about her comment of his being more beast than man.

"The First Acolyte is chosen to be the Master's second in command and he tends to the daily running of the Enclave. The Master

needs someone who understands the people. Vardion is not this someone. Far to the contrary, he lingers in the past. Observing outdated traditions for tradition's sake, but I digress. Perhaps you grow bored with this line of conversation?"

"No, no, please go on."

Her voice lowered. "I will entrust to you further knowledge of our predicament. I have reason to believe that Vardion is preparing to assassinate the Master. He thinks the Malchir breaks with too many of the old traditions, but fears his powers. Should he kill Malchir and become Master, he will return the Enclave to the days when Sorcerers were shunned by the rest of the island's populace.

"This brings me to the point—I must ask a favor of you. I need someone to enter into the confidences of the First Acolyte and acquire from him his True name. This will aid me in knowing Vardion's motives. Will you do this? If so, I can offer you a position as a Disciple, or even Acolyte, should Vardion's intentions be murderous."

The mention of doing someone a favor gave Stencil a reason to pause. The last time he did someone a favor, he was tricked into releasing evil upon innocent people. And now, here it was again. Should he trust this woman? What could he lose? He decided to put aside his grave feelings of misgiving and place his faith in Bane.

"I accept your terms."

"Good, you are perceptive and wise, my Daemion. First, to become a Disciple Sorcerer you must be sponsored by an Acolyte; I shall do that for you. Second, as your sponsor I will give you a True name. Daemion you are to me and Daemion you shall be to the Fire. My inner sight judged your name correctly. I have always had that ability. To lend power to your True name I must reveal mine to you. Sabiane it is and it means Well of Stars. Now, your first task as my Disciple is to gain the confidence of our illustrious First Acolyte and obtain from him his True name. I care not how you do this, just get it."



Deceiving Vardion



With this she turned away and silently dismissed him. It was now up to him to find Vardion and learn his True name. How he was going to accomplish this, he hadn't a clue. He spun on his heel and left Bane's house.

He was walking down the neat cobblestone way when it suddenly dawned on him: he had gained Bane's True name; perhaps if he posed to Vardion as one seeking knowledge, he could get Vardion to agree to be his sponsor, just as Bane had done. He worked out the details in his mind as he moved on down the road.

As he wandered, Stencil took note of all the plaques hanging outside the doors of the houses he passed. He finally came to a house bearing the name, First Acolyte Vardion. He went to the door

and found it open. Inside the building he came upon a large man, completely dressed in black.

"Who are you?"

"I am Stencil."

"I don't care about your name—I want to know who you think you are to enter my Sorcerers' Enclave, without my permission."

"I merely seek knowledge."

"We don't give that away, it's earned. Now why are you here?"

"I go where I will," Stencil angrily retorted.

"Ah, there is some fire in you after all, but in truth, while in the Enclave you shall contain your fire and watch your step. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now what do you want of me?"

"Who are you?"

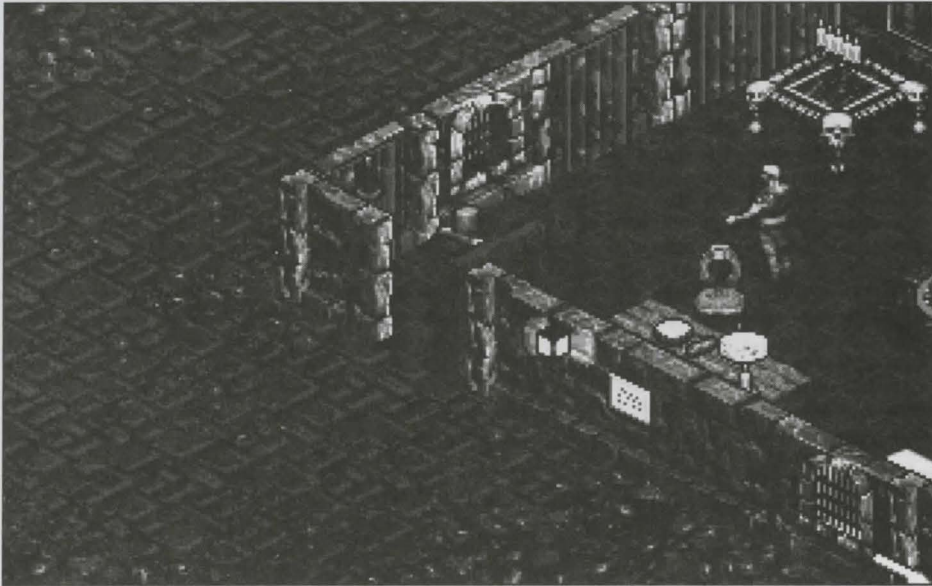
"I am Vardion, the First Acolyte of the Sorcerers' Enclave. Keep this in mind."

"What does it mean to be the First Acolyte?"

"It's a position of respect. I handle the affairs of the Enclave and our dealing with Tenebrae."

Stencil was curious as to the nature of the Sorcerers' business with the people of Tenebrae, so he asked Vardion, "You have dealings with the people of Tenebrae?"

"Of course! Do you think we grow our own food or make our clothes? We give Tenebrae the knowledge that the Lord of Flame will remain bound and that the volcano will remain dormant. In



return, they free us of the necessity of handling our more basic needs."

The filthy blackmailer, Stencil thought. Taking advantage of the people of Tenebrae; why, he ought to be ashamed of himself. But Stencil kept these thoughts to himself. Instead, he led Vardion to believe that his deal was a splendid one. "Shrewd bargaining on both sides, eh?"

"Your perceptions are both insightful and correct. Perhaps you would be interested in joining our order and learning our ways."

"Yes," Stencil said, with an excited edge.

"Excellent. I will see to your tutoring, but first you will need to complete a task for me."

"Whatever you want, I will do."

"Your enthusiasm is encouraging, but your blind acceptance doesn't give me much faith in your ability. Are you prepared to undertake my task?"

"Yes."

"Excellent. the pact has been made. You will now be my Disciple. I need to learn your True name now. The Fire gives you the True name of Daemion. Hold tightly to that name. It is your strength as well as your weakness. My True name is Morduin. Reveal it upon pain of death. Your task is to gain the True name of Bane. She is deceptive and conniving. Don't be fooled by her friendliness. She is power hungry. It is my belief that she seeks the death of the Master, in order to become the most powerful Sorcerer of Pagan. We must find out how—if the Master dies, war will break out among the factions. Then the possibility of losing control of the Lord of Flame will increase. I cannot let this happen. Will you undertake this task?"

Stencil's head spun at this unexpected turn of events. Not knowing what to do and not wanting to anger this obviously powerful agent of the Titan of Flame, he blurted, "Yes!"

"Good. Then hurry."

Stencil was once again dismissed with a demand and a turned back. He stumbled out into the street, his head reeling. He knew that helping one would mean the demise of the other and, in turn, helping neither would mean his own slaughter. Stencil felt like a pawn, caught in a power struggle between two people who would stop at nothing to gain complete control.

Needing time to think, he wandered through the village to the north and west. He came to a stone bridge that crossed over a river of lava. The bridge led him to a set of open double doors set into a stone wall. As he neared the entrance, the doors slammed closed. Irritated, he tried to open the doors but found they were locked and there was no keyhole. Try as he would, Stencil failed to open the doors. With nowhere else to go, he returned to town.

The Death of Vardion

He had to make a decision and make it fast. "I pick Vardion," he mumbled to himself. "No, no, I mean Bane...I mean Vardion." He again turned it over in his mind and in the end he chose Bane. She seemed to be the least power hungry of them all and the most sincere. He returned to the building where he had first found Bane. He entered without bothering to knock.

"To what do I owe this meeting? Did you learn Vardion's True name?" Bane asked, a bit too enthusiastically.

For the briefest of moments, he considered lying to her, but that would solve nothing and might indeed cost him his life. He answered in the affirmative.

"Wonderful. Give it to me and I will end Vardion's dealings."

When she said nothing more, Stencil began to doubt his judgment. But his heart told him it would be no different if he gave Vardion the information *he* sought. So he strengthened his resolve and followed through.

"It is Morduin."

"Ah yes, Dark Flame. I should have guessed. Now prepare to witness his undoing!"

At her command, the largest and most fearsome daemon he had ever seen appeared. It asked how it could serve his mistress, and to Stencil's complete horror, she sent the daemon to destroy Vardion. In a flash of light, the beast was off to carry out its orders. Before long, another flash of light brightened the room and when the smoke cleared, a very imposing man stood where the daemon had been only moments before. By the authority in his voice, and Bane's reaction to it, Stencil speculated that this was the Master.

"I sensed a deemonic presence in the Enclave. What is the meaning of this, Bane?" the Master demanded, in a roar so loud that it shook the trinkets that adorned the shelves.

Falling to her knees, Bane pleaded, "Forgive me, Master. Vardion was planning to assassinate you. Along with this stranger, I summoned a daemon to rid us of this threat. Surely you understand."

"I understand nothing. Get up! You have destroyed an Acolyte at a time when I need him. What am I to do?"

Pointing in his direction, Bane explained to Malchir that he, Stencil, had the power to fulfill the position of Acolyte. Malchir agreed and offered him the position as Acolyte—if he could prove himself by passing some tests. Stencil agreed to be tested and to accept the position, if he should pass. Satisfied, Malchir returned to wherever it was he'd come from. Bane then turned her attention to him.



The Library



"Take this key and go to the Library to study and collect the necessary items. Learn our ways well! Return to me when you have completed your studies and I will conduct your test. Good luck."

He made his departure from Bane's residence, without so much as another word. He set out in search of the Library and the knowledge it contained. He located a massive stone building southwest of Vardion's house. Using Bane's key, he gained entrance to the Library's large double doors. Upon entering, Stencil found himself in a study room with a large pentagram on the floor. There were several men pacing about, deep in thought. Stencil left them to their studies and made a beeline for a door he saw at the back of the room. Through that door he found a wealth of information and useful items. There was a book for each of nine different spells. Taking his time, he carefully learned each of the spells. In another book, called *The Art of Flame*, he learned that candles, either black or red, were needed to create spells. He would also need reagents. By arranging the proper candles and reagents along the correct points on the pentagram, a caster could empower symbols with charges of a chosen spell. Also contained in this book was a section describing the pentagram. There are five points along the outer ring, and each has a name, and the names read like this.

5 4

3 2

1

- 1 Aphelion
- 2 Mesostel Pa
- 3 Mesostel Ze
- 4 Perivolcan Pa
- 5 Perivolcan Ze

He studied the books until he was sure he knew how to use the pentagram and how to create the charged Foci. He grabbed up all the wands and symbols he could. Stencil also took three candles of each color. He now filled the rest of his pack with reagents. He wished he could take a few more, but his knapsack was at maximum capacity. With all this in hand, he felt ready to take the tests. He set out in search of Bane.

Begin Testing

He went to Bane's house and again entered without knocking, only this time she wasn't there. Stencil was sure he would find her at Vardion's place. When he entered the building, she turned away from Vardion's now lifeless body and greeted him.

"To what do I owe this pleasure, Daemion?"

"I am ready to be tested," Stencil said, as confidently as he felt.

"Are you? We shall see. Your test will consist of enchanting a Focus. You may choose either Flash, Flame Bolt, or Endure Heat. If you find you are not ready once the test begins, you may leave, but the test will be forfeited. Do you wish to begin?"

"Yes."

"Your test begins now. Fail not. I will not tolerate failure in my Disciples."

He decided to make the Endure Heat Focus first. Carefully, he placed a red candle at both perivolcanae on the pentagram and black candles on the other three points. Next, he dug two pieces of obsidian out of his knapsack and placed them snugly against the red candles. Next to the black candle at the Aphelion, he placed a piece of iron. Finally, in the center of the pentagram, he laid one of the rods he had found in the Library.

"Sanct Flam," he spoke aloud, when he was sure everything was just right.

After several spurts of flame, the rod in the center of the pentagram glowed with the power of Pyros. He looked at Bane to see her reaction. She praised him, then encouraged him to continue. Stencil settled on Flame Bolt as his next challenge.

He exchanged the red candle at Perivolcan Pa for a black one, and replaced the black candles at Mesostel Ze and the Aphelion for red. At Mesostel Pa, he placed a pile of ash. A piece of pumice found its place at Perivolcan Ze and a lump of iron at Mesostel Ze. In the center, he laid a symbol.

"In Ort Flam."

This time nothing happened; something was wrong. He was sure he had properly laid all the elements of the incantation. Stencil made a quick review of the pentagram and soon he found the problem: the candle on the Aphelion was not lit. With this little problem solved, he began the procedure again.

"In Ort Flam."

Poof! As before, there were several flashes and the symbol in the pentagram was now charged. Stencil didn't even bother to look over at Bane this time. He knew he had done it correctly and was now eager to finish the test. He only had one spell left to concoct, Flash. He set about completing the task at once.

He placed red candles at both Perivolcanae, and one at the Aphelion; the other spaces he filled with black candles. He tucked a

pile of ash next to candles at both Mesostelae and at the Aphelion. A symbol he placed in the center. Making sure all of the candles were lit, he began the incantation.

"Flam Por."

With that, it was done and he had created all of the spells that were expected of him. He turned when he heard Bane speak.

"Very well, Disciple. You are now ready to seek out the Master. Go to the Obsidian Fortress. The gates will no longer bar you. You are a Sorcerer now and only the Master Malchir has the right to revoke this, should you fail his tests."



The Trials



She wished him luck and sent him on his way. Once outside, Stencil began to think about where the Obsidian Fortress might be located. He was sure that the double doors he had failed to open earlier were the entrance to the Fortress, so he headed in that direction.

When he reached the bridge, he peered down into the void. A slow-moving river of lava made its way under the bridge. It had to be the river of lava described by Devon. He quickly crossed the bridge and went to the doors. This time the doors swung open and Stencil entered with great trepidation.

Once inside the stone fortress he was greeted by a stately old man, whom Stencil remembered to be Malchir.

"Greetings, Disciple. You will remain within this fortress until you have found my Inner Sanctum or you are dead. Even then, you shall not leave this place. Within the chamber beyond this hall, you will see the fate that befalls those who fail. The trials of the Obsidian Fortress begin now."

In an eruption of flame he was gone, but in his place were two fierce and hungry daemons. Caught off guard, he had no time to reach for a weapon or spell, so he simply darted between them and raced down the stairs. At the bottom of the staircase, another huge daemon awaited. But there was something different about this one—he had a glint of life in his eye. He wasn't one of the soulless killing machines that he had encountered so far. With his hand on his sword he approached with discretion. To his surprise the daemon greeted him.

"Greetings, Disciple. I am Arcadion. You have managed to defeat or evade the first guards of the fort. And now you have shown an inkling of wisdom in not attempting to attack me. Perhaps you are worthy...perhaps not. Regardless, for reward, I will assist you now, by giving you access to the rest of the fortress and offer the use of my pentacle and sundry items you might need in preparing spells."

Stencil sized up the daemon. Although capable of doing great damage, Stencil felt that he was peaceful and accommodating.

Stencil felt confident that he would not anger the hulking creature by asking a few simple questions.

"Could you tell me of the Obsidian Fortress?"

"What would you like to know about it?"

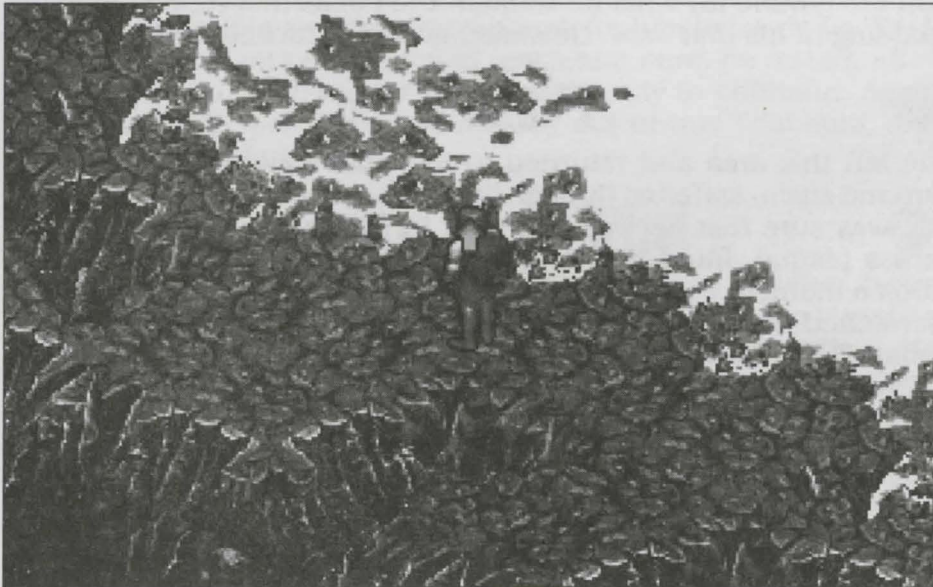
"Where is Malchir's Inner Sanctum?"

"Through the gateway, beyond the pillars, in the rear of the chamber. But not until you have succeeded in accomplishing the Trials will I allow you to go to the Inner Sanctum. He awaits you now, so be quick."

"Farewell."

Just beyond the daemon, Stencil located a room with a large pentagram and a chest full of reagents. In a wooden barrel he found candles, both red and black. He also saw wands, symbols, and rods, there for the taking. Not knowing if he would get such an opportunity again, Stencil decided to make up some spells. After a quick inventory check, Stencil determined he had enough ingredients to concoct six spells. He created Extinguish, Ignite, Armor of Flames, Explosion, Summon Daemon, and Banish Daemon. He also had the Flame Bolt, Endure Heat, and Flash symbols that he had created to pass Bane's tests. This brought the total number of Foci he was carrying to nine. It was all he could carry, so he hoped it was enough. He walked to the back of the alcove and onto a small stone platform. There he was swallowed by a surge of flames.

Upon arrival, he took note of a large cavern, but he saw little else. Stencil walked forward. He came to a pile of corpses and



skeletons, indicating to him that there was danger nearby—even if it wasn't immediately evident. The danger made itself apparent soon enough, and it manifested itself in the form of a large, homicidal skeleton warrior, headed straight his way. For a moment he considered fighting, but he decided against it. He had, after all, just begun his Trials and who knew what he would come up against. He would be at a disadvantage were he tired and battered. With this resolved in his mind, Stencil darted to the left and past the skeleton.



Extinguish Trial



He wandered around the cavern, trying to get a feel of what his Trials would involve. Shortly, he came to a passage with a shining brass plaque attached to a wall. Getting close to the plaque, Stencil could see that it read *AN FLAM*. Extinguish. This must be the first of my Trials, he thought. I better be prepared. So he pulled out of his knapsack the symbol holding the Extinguish charges, and continued down the passage.

He followed the passage until it spread out into a broad den. In the center of the cave was a pentagram, not unlike the one he used to construct his symbols. Around the pentagram, five fires burned hotly. In the center was a helm. Peeking out from beneath the helm was a blue-glowing symbol. Stencil realized that he needed to obtain the symbol from the grasp of the burning pentagram. He cast Extinguish upon himself and with a hiss the flames were doused. He stepped forward and moved the helm aside, without even a thought of taking it, for his own magical helm suited him just fine. On the ground lay what he wanted: the Focus that represented the passing of his first Trial. He snatched it and tucked it in his pack.



Flash Trial



He left this area and returned to the main cavern. He wandered around again, suffering through only a few encounters with enemies. He was sure that he was lost until he came upon another shiny, brass plaque, fitted to the stone wall. It read *FLAM POR*. Stencil took a moment to remember what that meant. At a bit of a loss, he scratched his chin in thought. Try as he may, he could not recall what *FLAM POR* meant. "Oh well," he said to himself. "I'll just have to figure it out when I get there."

It didn't take long for him to remember what *FLAM POR* meant. When he got to the beginning of his next Trial, he found the ground was covered with red Fire Mushrooms. I won't get five feet without being blown to bits, thought Stencil.

He dug the Flash wand out of his bag, and cast it on himself. He chose a small clearing, a short distance ahead, as his destination. Stencil's life force ignited into an intensely bright flare that shot

forward and targeted the clearing. Then the spell burned itself out, and Stencil again stood in his true form. He continued through the rest of the Fire Mushroom field in a similar manner.

When he had passed the bulk of the mushrooms, he then had to cope with a corridor occupied by massive spiked rolling balls. There was not an inch of space where he might squeeze by the studded spheres. Using tactics similar to those that he had employed on the Fire Mushroom fields, he flew by the balls in a blaze of light.

After passing through several corridors of spiked balls he came up against a daemon. With as much speed as he could muster, he cast the Banish Daemon Spell. The daemon raised his arms in anger at being exiled, and in the next instant he was gone. But Stencil had not been fast enough—the daemon had hurt him, and Stencil now began to feel the effects. He knew this was no time to rest, though, so he pressed on, bruised and bleeding.

The next obstacle he had to overcome came in the form of a spirit. Behind the apparition was a blue glow that told Stencil he was almost finished with this Trial. He had taken a beating from the daemon and felt he could not stand a fight with this phantom. So he eluded the shade and ran towards the blue light.

It was sitting so innocently on a platform that Stencil was sure it was some sort of trap. He didn't have time to analyze the situation, though, because he could hear a wisping sound behind him. A look over his shoulder confirmed it was the ghost, coming ever closer to him. So he grabbed the symbol. Without stopping to put it in his bag, he darted out of the room and past the shadow.

When he came to the rolling spiked balls, he proceeded to cast the Flash Spell on himself, just as before. Midway through the balls, he found himself in an area large enough for him to lay down. Feeling sure that no antagonists could reach him here, he rested. After an hour's sleep, he felt rejuvenated and ready to continue. Again using the Flash Spell, he made his way out of this Trial area, and back into the main cavern.

Endure Heat Trial

Stencil searched the main cavern until he found another brass plaque. This one read, *SANCT FLAM*. Stencil didn't have to translate this one, for the rising temperature told him it said Endure Heat. He entered the Trials area. The Trial began as a maze, weaving through sharp stalagmites. Lying in wait for him, hidden in the crevices between stalagmites, were several skeleton warriors and ghouls. He evaded the skeletons by sneaking through the tangle of pointy outcroppings, only to find himself boxed in by a couple of ghouls. A few chops with his weapon and the ghouls were no more. He had to move the rotted corpses to get past them and carry on with his Trial.



He finally got through the maze and was standing on the top of a high cliff with bubbling lava below. Stencil started to cast the Endure Heat Spell on himself but before he had a chance to finish the spell he was attacked from behind. He turned to confront his aggressor but, to his dismay, he discovered this was no ordinary adversary—this was a child. No matter how hardened he had become in this place, he was still the Avatar of Britannia and he was not going to attack a child, not even if she had charged him first. Quickly, he finished his spell and leaped over the edge of the cliff.

He landed very hard, and under his feet some of the cooled lava broke away, leaving him dangerously close to the molten rock. He remembered the spellbook on Endure Heat: he could walk on lava as long as it wasn't the hottest burning yellow lava. So he picked his way across the molten rock, carefully sticking to the cooler orange lava.

When he reached the far end of the lava, he saw a ridge to his right. As he began to climb the ridge he noticed a huge daemon walking back and forth, guarding a chest. He ducked low and called on the power of Pyros to recall this daemon, using his Banish Daemon Focus. A moment later, when the coast was clear, he dragged himself up the ridge. He walked to the chest and opened it quickly. *Ba-Boom!* An explosion of mammoth proportions blew Stencil half-way across the room. It took him more than a few moments to recover from this one; in fact, while he was down he decided he

had better take a nap to recover completely from the damage. When he awoke an hour later, he felt well enough to continue his quest. He walked to the open chest, and retrieved the symbol.

His Endure Heat Spell had worn off while he was sleeping, so he needed to recast it upon himself. Once the spell was in place, he retraced his steps back across the thick, steaming liquid. Still waiting at the top of the cliff was the small child who had attacked him earlier. She had also brought along a few of her friends. Stencil, not relishing the idea of being bitten by four little girls, skirted around them and left them in his wake.

In the maze, the skeletons were again waiting to trip him up. He was sure the ghouls had regenerated themselves, and that they, too, were after him. Swiftly, he got through the maze and out into the relative safety of the main cavern.



Armor of Flames Trial



He had almost finished his Trials—only one symbol left to obtain—and he intended to find it with as much speed as possible. He saw a brass plaque on a wall in the distance, but before he could get close enough to read it, a fire bolt slammed into his head. It was then that he knew he had entered the Armor of Flames Trial. Backing away from the passage entrance, he cast the Armor of Flames Spell upon himself and reentered the test area. While being battered by flame bolts from all directions, Stencil made his way south and east. Eventually he came to a dais sporting four stone spiders. Before he had a chance to get a closer look at the shrine, a daemon emerged from the shadows and started in his direction. He cast Banish Daemon on the beast and with a screech the hulk was gone. It was then that Stencil noticed what the daemon was guarding. It was a beautiful shield, crafted from the finest silver. Its purple cast told him it carried a magical spell. He quickly exchanged the shield he had for the new one.

A little farther to the south, he saw the symbol he was searching for laying on the ground. He grabbed it and began his retreat out of this Trial. He needed to hurry, for he could feel the effects of his Armor of Flames Spell beginning to wear off. He finally succeeded and returned to the main cavern.

With all of the symbols in his possession, he returned to the portal that had brought him to the testing area. He climbed up onto the raised platform and vanished in a flash of flames. He reappeared in Arcadion's lair. Moving across the pentagram, he approached Arcadion.

"You have performed remarkably well, Disciple, or should I say, Acolyte. For if you please the Master, that is what you shall be. Go to him now. The gateway will take you to his Inner Sanctum."



Summon Pyros

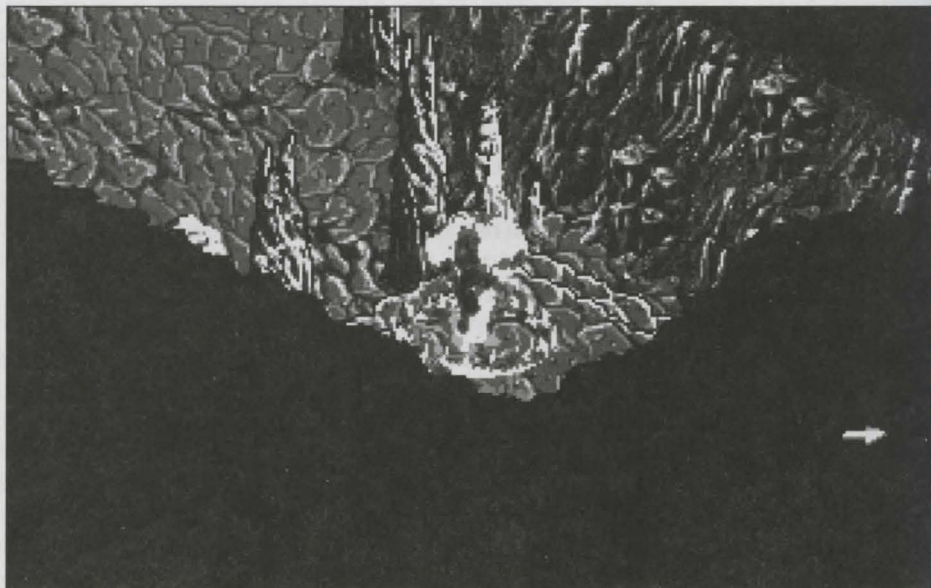


Without so much as a farewell, the daemon walked away. Stencil turned and went back to the gateway platform. Just before he stepped on the landing, he decided to check his inventory—he wanted to make sure he had enough spells and candles. When he was sure he was prepared, he stepped onto the stone rising and was again engulfed in flames. When he appeared on the other platform, it seemed like he had returned to the Trials. But when he moved forward, he discovered he was indeed in another place.

It was Malchir's Inner Sanctum.

Malchir's voice boomed like a drum. "I see you have endured the Trials, which means that you have nearly completed your training. I will test you now, to see if you are worthy of being an Acolyte. To become one, you must first cast three spells. You may use my pentacle, one of my statues, and my reagents to prepare. I will be the target of each. Fear not, they will do me no harm. First, cast the Flame Bolt Spell, then the Explosion Spell, and finally the Summon Daemon Spell to assault me. Do these in order. Failure will mean your life. There is no turning back. The test begins now."

Stencil did not need to use Malchir's pentagram, for he had come prepared. He got right to the business of casting spells at Malchir. He pulled the Flame Bolt wand out of his knapsack and aimed it directly at the old mage's chest. The shimmer surrounding Malchir told Stencil that Malchir was using his own brand of magic to protect



himself from the assault. The powerful flame bolt appeared out of the wand and flew at Malchir. When the bolt of flame hit Malchir's force field, it immediately diffused.

"Good. Now the Explosion," Malchir said, encouragingly.

Stencil reached for his Explosion symbol and aimed it directly at the old man. The spell detonated right where Malchir was standing. Again he came through unscathed. Lastly, Stencil summoned a daemon. Malchir had no trouble making it disappear.

Unexpectedly, Malchir summoned his own daemons to destroy Stencil. Stencil pulled his Banish Daemon symbol out of his bag and returned them to wherever they came from. He had done it! The smile that spread across Malchir's face told Stencil he was now an Acolyte.

"Excellent. You are now worthy of the title of Acolyte," Malchir stated.

Stencil asked what this meant. Malchir informed him that it meant he was to participate in the Ritual of Flame. They must hurry to the Great Pentacle, where the other Acolytes awaited. Before Stencil had the chance to ask what all this meant, he was teleported to a new location. He found himself in the presence of the other Acolytes, standing around a huge pentagram.

"I am glad you are all here. I hope I have not caused you any inconvenience," Malchir began.

"Well, a little," Bane said.

"I was rather busy," Beren piped up.

"Enough. We have matters of importance to talk of here," Malchir thundered, fed up with the complaints of the Acolytes. "Place your candles on the points of the pentagram," he continued.

Stencil was unsure of what was going on and what to do, so he followed the example of the other Acolytes. He placed the red candle that was in his knapsack on the point in front of him.

"Now ignite the candles," Malchir commanded.

"Yes, Master," all responded.

"Kneel before the Lord of Flame."

"Yes, Master."

"Now speak the words of the chant. You must concentrate on them throughout the entire ritual," Malchir ordered, in a voice that commanded obedience. After the Acolytes had chanted, Malchir spoke again. "I believe all is ready. Prepare for the coming of Pyros, Lord of Flame!"

The sound filling the cavern was deafening. The pentagram that was carved into stone was now ablaze, blinding Stencil. His senses were overloaded and he felt himself draining away. Then, suddenly, out of the center of the pentagram rose Pyros in all his flaming glory.

"For what pathetic reason have you summoned me?" he demanded.

"I need your knowledge," spoke Malchir.

"Your simple mind cannot hold an inkling of the knowledge I have," sneered Pyros.

"I command you to give unto me your knowledge," Malchir demanded again.

"I will feast on your entrails, mortal."

"I think not. Now give me the information I require," Malchir said, sensing that Pyros's resolve was beginning to weaken.

"What question will you ask?"

"I have read legends of a great fire that hangs in the sky. What do you know of this?"

"I am the only fire!" roared Pyros.

"So you have no knowledge of the sun. If your knowledge is so limited, then so be it. I will now have some of your power. Give it to me! Your power is almost too much for me to take!" Malchir shrieked.

"Your flesh will burn in my volcano," taunted Pyros.

"Strengthen your defense," Malchir commanded his Acolytes. "He seeks to break our resistance!"

"I have found a weakness in your defense!" bellowed Pyros, just before he turned on Stencil and knocked him to the ground with unseen power, thus breaking the circle of Acolytes.

"We have barely managed to contain him," gasped Malchir. "Channel your energy to me and we will send him back."

It seemed Pyros grew even bigger as he commanded Malchir to prepare for death.

"No," shrieked Malchir, "I have the Tongue of Flame and by its power, I banish you!"

In a final burst of heat and flame, Pyros sank back into the depths from which he had risen.

When it was over, Stencil was completely drained and numb, but before he had a chance to recover, Malchir turned to him and said he wanted to speak with him. The tone of his voice told him that this was not a good thing. Malchir dismissed the other Acolytes before turning back to him.

"Owing to your poor performance, I was not able to absorb as much power from Pyros as I would have liked. This irritates me. Accept this as a reminder. Never irritate me again!"

Defeating Malchir

Before Stencil could react, he was toppled by a Flame Bolt. It was sent by Malchir as punishment for his misdeed. When he finally regained his footing, Malchir was gone. Thoroughly exhausted, Stencil rested. When he awoke an hour later, he was ready to carry on.

He walked back into town, where he was hoping to visit with Bane. He was unable to find her, but he did find the other Acolyte, Beren. Stencil tried a friendly greeting, but he was sternly rebuffed.

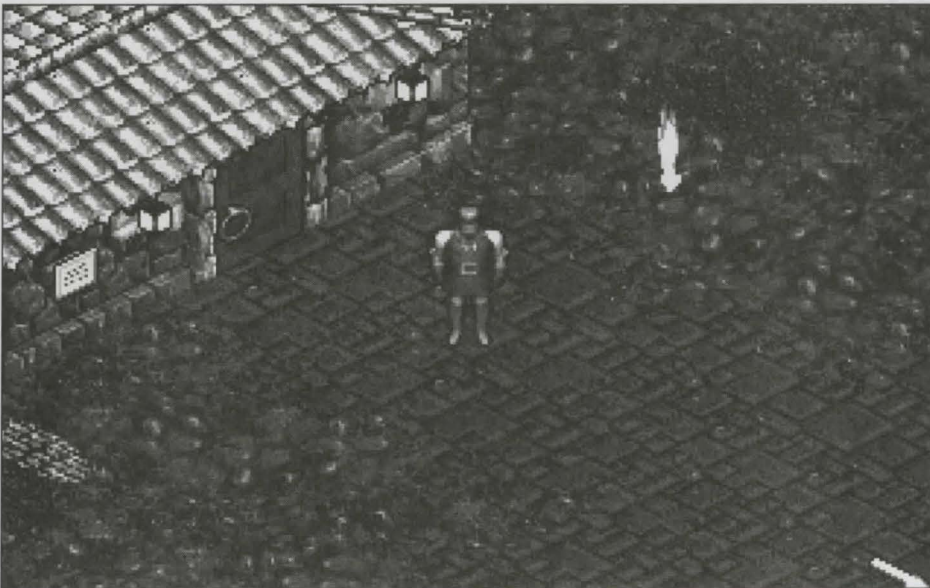
"Do you know what you have done? You've allowed Bane to destroy the most powerful Acolyte that has ever been. I shall never forgive you, even though Malchir has. Leave me!"

Stencil decided to return to Malchir and see if he could make amends, somehow. He returned to the Obsidian Fortress. He walked through the fortress unaccosted by any hostile creatures and all seemed well. At least until he met up with Malchir.

"I did not send for you, insolent child. The fortress is my sanctuary and for breaking its sanctity you must die!"

In the next instant, Malchir encompassed the two of them in a ring of hot, burning flames. He summoned a beastly daemon to destroy him. Trapped within the circle of flames, Stencil had nowhere to run. "I'll fight fire with fire!" Stencil cried and summoned his own daemon to assault Malchir. Then he dug into his knapsack and pulled out his Banish Daemon Focus and sent Malchir's daemon back to hell.

Malchir wasn't as fortunate. The daemon Stencil had called had defeated him handily, and Malchir lay dead on the floor. Stencil cast an Extinguish Spell to put out the ring of flames. As distasteful as the thought was, he knew he must search the body. The inspection revealed a pair of arm guards, which he took, and a book, which he read. The book was called *THE TONGUE OF FLAME* and it described the Blackrock fragment of the same name. It spoke of how the Blackrock fragment was the power that kept the Titan of Fire bound. It warned of the dangers of unbinding Pyros, by walking though the Great Pentacle with the fragment in hand. Stencil made



mental notes of the important sections, for his backpack was already too heavy for him to bring the book along. The search of Malchir's body also revealed the Blackrock fragment in question. Stencil grabbed the chunk of Blackrock and shoved it in his pack.

He now had two pieces of Blackrock and he was that much closer to home. He remembered that *THE TONGUE OF FLAME* had warned that if the holder of the blackrock piece were to enter the Great Pentacle with the piece in hand, it would unbind Pyros. He decided to see what would happen if he did this. Upon entering the Great Pentacle, the sky reddened and firestorms rained down from the sky. Pyros was now free, never to be recaptured again.

He had gotten what he needed from this place, and it was time to move on. Stencil touched his Item of Recall, only to find that it didn't work. Perhaps he was too far into the Enclave for its powers to be effective. The only way for him to leave was to walk. He started toward the entrance to Daemon's Crag. Once he reached the entrance, he tried his Item of Recall again. This time it worked and he chose the Upper Catacombs.



The Titan of Ether

With no clear idea about where to go next, Stencil thought about the Pit of the Dead. He had yet to visit there and he figured it was about time. Stencil wasn't sure why he felt drawn there; perhaps it was something Torwin had said. Anyway, he made it his next destination. It was his understanding that the entrance to the Pit of the Dead was located in Stone Cove, so he headed back there.

It was a long and boring trip back to Stone Cove. When he finally reached his destination, he was worn out, and he rested. He knew the door he sought was located in the north wall, but before going there he restocked his cache of reagents. He filled his pack with an assortment of reagents, making sure he had at least one of all the ingredients he could find. When he had taken his fill, he walked to the north wall.

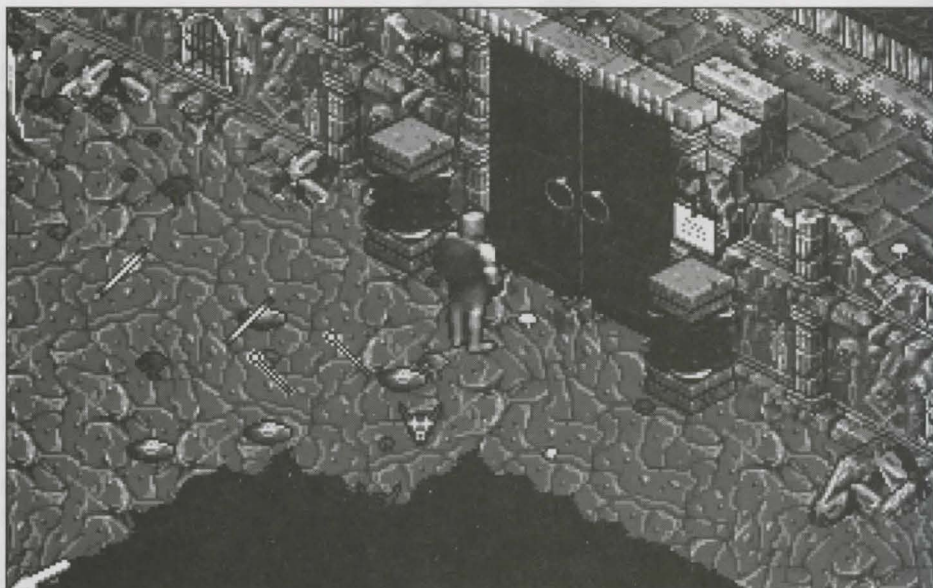
Again he came to the three doors. He knew the double doors in the center led to the Hall of the Mountain King and that the cave entrance led back to the Upper Catacombs, so by the process of elimination, he knew the door fronted by spikes was the correct choice.



The Heart of the Earth



He found the door to be locked, but with the use of his Key of Scion he gained entry. The door opened with a loud squeak that made Stencil wince. Now any enemies will know I'm coming, he thought. He redoubled his stealth as he passed through the door. To his relief, there were no foes waiting on the other side. As it turned out,

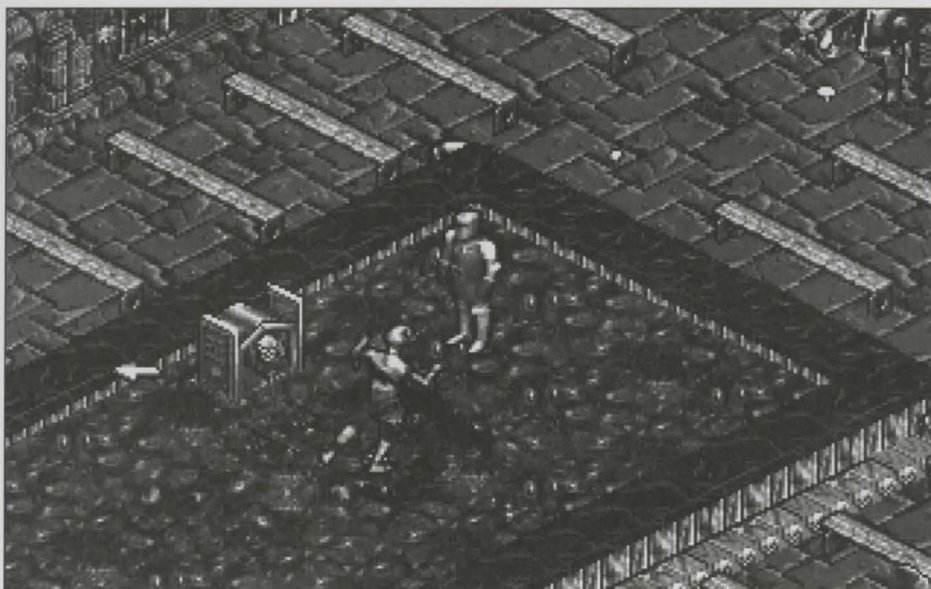


there was nothing on the other side, just another long, dank corridor that led to the north and west. He decided to follow the walkway to see where it would lead him. It led him to a half-destroyed building.

The doors on the south side of the building were locked. None of his keys, traditional or spiritual, opened the doors. Trying to climb over the wall proved fruitless, but by craning his neck and standing on tip toes, Stencil could peer over the half wall. On the other side he caught a glimpse of some dirt—he had just found his way in. Thankful for the reagents he had grabbed earlier, he composed an Open Golem Spell. Standing on tiptoe again, he aimed the spell at the dirt. He didn't see the golem being made, for when the earth shook he was thrown to the floor. Stencil then commanded the golem to open the door. Just as he hoped, the doors swung open under the golem's power. He got up and darted through the entryway.

Through the doors was a set of stairs that seemed to lead nowhere. Skirting them to the left, he unfortunately came too close to a dormant skeleton warrior, who awoke at his approach. Even more unfortunate was the fact that when the first skeleton awoke, his partner on the other side did as well. Even in full health, Stencil didn't think he could defeat both of these warriors, so he hurried to the arena in the center of the room.

It was in this arena that the dirt he had used to create his golem was located. He climbed up onto the wood frame surrounding the dirt. Before stepping off the wooden ledge and into the mud, he concocted an Open Earth Spell. Ahead of him he could see a grave.



The second he stepped on the dirt toward the grave mound, two ghouls sprang from the earth. Four chops apiece with his weapon did the trick. He walked to the headstone and tried to read it, but the epitaph was obscured by time. Standing back a bit, he cast the Open Earth Spell. Where the earth was torn open, Stencil saw an item that gave him reason to be very happy—the Heart of the Earth Blackrock piece. He snatched it from the void and tucked it in his pack.

He walked back to the edge of the arena and saw the two skeleton warriors still waiting for him. Stencil lingered on the wooden frame until they had moved away, then jumped down to the stone floor and darted for the door.



The Secret Treasure Room



Having found the Heart of the Earth, he backtracked northwest through Stone Cove and emerged once more in the gray, cold Upper Catacombs. Stencil rested for an hour to regain his energy.

Recalling Vividos's instructions about the Door of Fate, he headed northwest in search of the golden door he encountered earlier in his journey. In only a short time, he stood before the door. Reaching into his knapsack, he withdrew the Key of Scion that Vividos had magically transferred to him. Activating it, he directed its mysterious energy at the door. A click indicated to Stencil that the door was now unlocked.

Upon opening the door he immediately heard the booming sound of fireball bombs. He assessed the room quickly and raced around an open lava fissure, targeting a pair of levers directly across the room. Speed was of the essence. Throwing the lever on the left, he heard and saw the narrow metal gate on the left drop. He ran to it and ahead he saw a number of fire-spitting wall sconces. Timing it very carefully, Stencil ran past the blasts, one after another, until he found himself at a dead end. On his right was another bubbling lava pit. To the left was a chest. When he opened the chest, he found a pair of battered gloves and a well-worn helmet. He left both for someone else to find. Stencil turned and ran back through the fire blasts, returning all the way back to the room with the fire bombs. Just before he entered the room, however, he tried the two levers by the narrow gate to see if they would open the wide gate on the other side. The right switch merely closed the gate; when he threw the left he heard the sound of a gate moving somewhere nearby. Hoping for the best, he ran through the narrow gate and saw that the lever had in fact opened the wide gate. He bolted through it to get past the deadly reach of the fire bombs that were exploding all around him. Ahead, he saw a skeleton warrior standing against a wall—axe and shield at the ready. Keeping one eye on the dormant skeleton, Stencil quickly concocted a Grant Peace Spell just in case the troublemaker came to life. Luckily he did not, but Stencil was glad the spell was ready anyway.

Dodging more fire blasts he headed west, searching the corpses as he went. Eventually he came to another gate. This one was open and he went right through. Directly across from the gate was a tomb with an inscribed plaque. What is this, wondered Stencil. He searched the body in the tomb, locating two yellow potions. On the right was a barrel, in which he found a third yellow potion. Since he was short on space, he left all three. He rounded another corner and came to a long corridor broken and oozing with lava. Rather than hop from stone to stone, Stencil opted to hug the left wall, going east until the hall offered safe passage once again. A little farther ahead he found a glowing Scroll of Healing, which he took. He then came to an open fence. Stencil went through the fence and onto an L-shaped section of floor overhanging a lava pit. On the right was a tomb that contained nothing more than a handful of useless bones.

Heading west, he saw a pair of skeleton warriors at the ready. He braced himself for combat, but the skeletons remained quiet. How odd, Stencil thought, for they appeared to be guarding an open doorway. As he approached the entrance the doors slammed shut and a fireball sconce blocked his way. Trying to avoid the fireball, Stencil lost his footing. Struggling to regain his composure, he jumped a little to the right. It was then that something very strange happened—the lights dimmed and in the next instant Stencil found himself inside a room full of marvelous treasures. Boxes, flasks,

weapons, and chests lay scattered and stacked everywhere. Going from one to the next, he was astonished to learn that there were many useful and enchanted items. He assessed each one's worth until he determined the right combination. He decided to take the Flame Sting sword as his hand weapon. For armor, he donned the odd square helmet and the glowing magical shield. He took some other weapons as well, and vowed to experiment with them at the next opportunity. Was it possible, he wondered, that he had finally stumbled upon a weapon capable of downing those pesky skeleton warriors for good?

Having pilfered everything he wanted, Stencil was turning to leave when he stopped dead in his tracks—there was no way out! In panic, he began feeling the wall for a hidden switch. He jumped and leaped and tried to climb the wall. Nothing worked. He was backing up to get a better view of the wall when suddenly the lights dimmed again. He was on the outside once again. With these powerful new items, surely his chances of leaving Pagan alive were considerably better. He had a bad feeling about going any farther in the direction he was heading, so he decided to leave. With a touch of his Item of Recall he went to Argentrock Isle.

The Breath of Wind

When he arrived, Stencil didn't bother stopping in town, but went directly to the Leap of Faith. With the power of his Air Walk Focus, he made the jump to the first platform. As before, he leaped from platform to platform until he stood by Stratos. Not wanting to be lulled into complacency by the sweet voice, he cast Reveal on her to expose her true identity. To the north, on a pedestal, was what he was looking for: the Blackrock fragment. Using his Aerial Servant Focus, he brought the Breath of Wind Blackrock fragment safely to him. It was now time to get the final piece of Blackrock—he knew it was the fragment that went to the sea, so he chose to search out Devon, the fisherman. If anyone could help him, it was Devon. He touched his Item of Recall and chose central Tenebrae.

The Tear of the Seas

Stencil appeared as usual on the roof of the Great Palace. Without pausing for a moment, he ran downstairs to the royal hall, where he found Devon.

"Hello, Stencil."

"I need the Blackrock fragment," Stencil blurted out.

A confused look clouded Devon's face. "I am sorry, my friend, for once it is I who don't understand you. What is this Blackrock fragment?"

"The Tear of the Seas."

"I have not heard of it. What exactly is this Blackrock tear?"

"It is a large, dark stone."

"Your description is vague. Considering the once active volcano, I don't think you will get far asking for a large dark rock. I...Wait! Years ago, I cast my nets in a new area; the catch was plentiful. In one of my nets I found a stone made of an unusually hard substance, even harder than obsidian. I still have it. Do you wish to see it?"

"Yes," Stencil said.

"I believe it is in a chest in my study. Here is a key. I hope it helps you."

The two men shook hands. Stencil thanked Devon for his generosity and then took his leave. He went southwest and came to the open door of Devon's office. Looking inside, Stencil could see an expensive wooden chest. As he walked to the box, he pulled out of his pack the key Devon had given him. Being careful not to scratch the chest, Stencil put the key into the keyhole. It turned with ease. Inside was the last of the Blackrock pieces. He had all the pieces required to recreate the Obelisk. He was so close to his goal, he could almost see his home.



To the Ethereal Plane



The next person he needed to see was Mythran—if anyone could help him, it was he. So with a touch of his Item of Recall, Stencil was off. He appeared on the Recall Pad in Mythran's peculiar home on the plateau. He found Mythran deep in study on the second floor. Stencil felt a little bad about disturbing the old man, but he was too close to his goal to let that bother him. He broke into the man's thoughts with a greeting.

"Hello, Stencil," Mythran greeted warmly.

"Hello, Mythran," Stencil started, "I want to recreate the Obelisk."

Shock registered on Mythran's face and he exclaimed, "You want to recreate the Obelisk! Do you mean you wish to reconstruct the Blackrock Obelisk of the Great Temple?!?" Then it dawned on the old man what Stencil intended to do. "Oh, I see, you want to use the Obelisk as a conduit, a way to leave Pagan. I know just the spell you need. You must cast the Ethereal Travel Spell. I don't know where the spell will send you on your first attempt, though I expect the Titans will intervene and direct your journey. Should you encounter and defeat them, know that you would have the worship and admiration of all Pagans. Good luck. You are ready for the final spell I can teach you. Before we begin, I must confess the eternal pursuit of knowledge on this dreary island is costly. I am afraid I



must charge you a modest fee to help defray the cost of my studies. Please accept my apologies for this inconvenience, but I must ask for 250 Obsidian coins for the spell."

Stencil was a bit alarmed when he heard this, for he did not have the money. He hurried back to the Recall Pad where he had stockpiled his money. A quick count confirmed he had only 187 coins. Another setback. He would now have to find some money to continue his quest. Stencil teleported to central Tenebrae and began searching residences—he was determined to search until he found what he was looking for. Stencil took anything of value, it didn't matter. The money he kept in his knapsack, and the jewelry he sold to Rhian for cash. When he finally had the 63 coins needed to bring his total up to 250, he teleported back to Mythran's. Again he found Mythran upstairs deep in thought.

"Hello, Mythran, I want to buy the scroll now."

"Ah, yes, the scroll, the Ethereal Scroll, right? I must still ask for 250 coins."

"I will pay that," Stencil said thinking of the stolen loot in his bag.

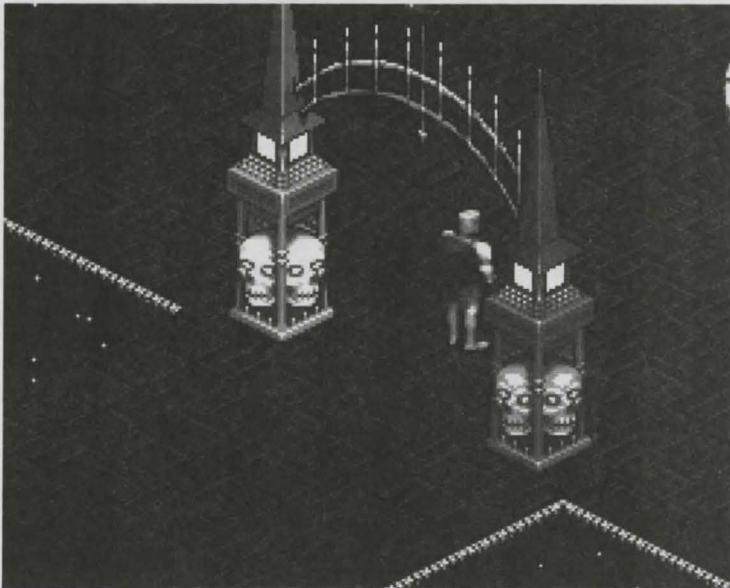
"Very well, here you go and good luck," Mythran wished.

Stencil now had everything he needed. The time to leave this place forever was at hand. Stencil took a deep breath and opened the scroll.



The End Game

Stencil appeared on a blue platform, floating in a black void filled with stars. The platform was a large square, with four paths leading off in the four directions of the compass. At the start of each path was an archway, supported by skulls that bore a remarkable likeness to the Guardian. He chose the path to the north and walked under the archway. That path led him to a



rectangular black building. When he entered the building he was teleported to the Plane of Water, a place that looked very similar to where he had found Hydros.

He followed the broken stone cliffs, northward. As he was walking along, a loud roar on his right drew his attention. A massive sea serpent craned its neck out from the depths of the crystal blue water. Its jaws opened in warning: "Fall into my waters and you are mine," it seemed to say. Stencil declined the invitation and continued on.

He came to a bridge. When he climbed up it, he found a large section missing. He had to leap across it, for he found no other way around the water. A little farther down the path he came to yet another broken bridge, which he jumped with as much ease as the first. Hardly a quarter mile away from the second bridge, he came to a third. This one, like the others, was broken, but unlike the first two it had shifted so that the connecting piece was now over his head—instead of in front of him. He grabbed hold of the second piece of bridge and by swinging his legs he gained enough momentum to propel himself up onto the bridge segment. He took a moment after this episode to rest. When he had regained his breath, Stencil continued his quest to find Hydros. Walking west, it wasn't long before he came to an enormous marble monument. The structure was gleaming white with a picture of a shark carved into the center. As he approached, Hydros rose from the water.

"Don't be foolish enough to think you can defeat me," screeched the Water Titan.

Stencil ripped open his knapsack and yanked out the Tear of the Seas blackrock piece. The piece hummed in his hand when he aimed it at Hydros, and she screamed even louder. Soon, she was no more. A bolt of green lightning flashed and struck Hydros's monument and Stencil was teleported back to the Ethereal Realm.

Stencil wasn't sure what had happened to the blackrock piece he had used on Hydros, so he looked into his backpack to see whether it was there or not. It was, only it was different now—it carried a strange aura. Stencil reasoned that in defeating Hydros, her energy had somehow been lent to the blackrock. Perhaps if he could gain similar results with the other pieces it might be the key to his returning home.

Stencil now had to choose another path to follow. He decided to go under the archway to the west. When he entered the door to the plane, his world dimmed. When the lights came up, he was in the Plane of Fire. The temperature was also a dead giveaway as to his location.

He followed the path to the north. When he came to a T-shaped intersection, he opted to go east. The first thing he came to was a star pattern on the ground with glowing squares on each of the ten points. He tried to manipulate this star in many different ways, but

he saw no outward signs that his efforts had caused anything to happen. He decided to leave this puzzle for later and see if he could come up with something, somewhere else.

Next he came to a bridge. When he reached the crest, he discovered it was broken. The other side of the bridge was too far to jump, so he returned down the bridge and continued east. After a short walk, he came to yet another bridge. When he climbed up this one, he found this bridge to be broken as well. The only difference here was that he could jump to another section of bridge. Getting as close to the edge as possible, he leaped far to his right and landed on another section of the elevated structure. When he looked down at what he had just jumped over, he saw a pit of the hottest burning lava.

Stencil walked north from the bridge until he came to a large, natural stone stairway. It was a long walk fraught with changelings and seekers, but he finally made it to the top. It was here that he came upon a sight that he had not seen since leaving Britannia: a living tree. He hardly had a moment to reflect on how beautiful the tree was when, from behind a stalagmite, a daemon emerged. Behind him was another. Stencil darted to the east, where he discovered a small elevated shrine with several wooden steps leading up to it. Stencil flew up the stairs to see what was up there. At the top of the shrine he found a small jewelry box. Inside the box he discovered a number of small gray balls. He grabbed them all and stored them into his bag.

He returned to the star puzzle, which just happened to have as many glowing squares as he had gray balls. Stencil placed one of the spheres on a blue square, and to his surprise, the ball turned bright red and then disappeared. "Hmm...I wonder what will happen if I put a ball on each one of the squares," Stencil thought. He decided to give it a try. One by one he placed the balls on the squares, and one by one they turned red and disappeared. When the last ball had faded from sight, a platform rose out of the lava, and behind that one came another. He concluded that he must jump from platform to platform to reach Pyros.

When he had passed the platforms and again stood on solid ground, he walked north. It wasn't long before he came upon a grisly sight—the bodies of several bloodied children lay scattered about as if attacked by some vicious beast. The smell of sulfur permeated the air. The combination of the dead babies and the stench almost made him vomit. He swallowed hard and forced himself to press on. It wasn't long before he came to a large circular structure, flanked on both sides by two stone daemons.

Out of the center of this edifice rose Pyros, angry at being challenged by a mere mortal.

"I am impressed by your impudence, child. You shall be rewarded by an eternity of torment!"

With that, Pyros breathed life into the stone daemons and sent them to destroy the mortal. As the daemons approached, Stencil reached into his bag and pulled out the Tongue of Flame that he had gained from Malchir's death. After using the fragment in a manner akin to the one he had used on Hydros, the Titan of Fire ceased to exist. As before, Stencil saw a flash of green lightning just before he was returned to the Ethereal Plane. A quick check of his inventory confirmed that the Tongue of Flame blackrock piece now carried the same aura as the Tear of the Seas. "Two Titans down, two more to go." He chose to see which Titan lay to the south.

When he entered the plane he knew he was in the domain of Stratos—the Titan of Air. Walking to the northeast, he came to some floating platforms. To the east he saw a floating walkway that led to some magical armor. But Stencil decided to forgo the eastern path and the armor in exchange for whatever lay to the northeast.

He jumped from platform to platform to the northeast. Just before he jumped onto a very large platform, he heard the voice of Stratos reprimanding him as a mother would a wayward child.

"Wicked, wicked child. You have tried my patience."

In the next moment, Stratos made the wind rise and whip. Struggling to keep from toppling to his doom, Stencil took the Breath of Wind from his bag and used it on Stratos. When she saw what he was doing she cried out, "Now what have you done, you ungrateful child! Your greed breaks my heart."

This was the last thing Stratos ever said, for she was now destroyed. Once more, Stencil was teleported back to the Ethereal Plane. In his bag was the Breath of Wind, shimmering as were the rest.

He had one Titan left to defeat, the Mountain King. By the process of elimination, Stencil knew he must lay to the east. Through the entrance Stencil found a stone passageway. He followed it to the north and west, to a small ledge. He climbed the ledge with ease. A little farther to the west the ground broke away from under his feet. An investigation of the void revealed a sleeping ghoul laid to rest in the hole. He left the ghoul without searching the body. Continuing to the west, he came across a slew of foes. There were far too many of them for him to fight, so he sneaked his way between them.

To the west, he came to a wrought iron gate surrounding a pit of lava. Taking note of several rocks laying on the ground, he grabbed one and tossed it into the lava. It didn't sink. He tossed another, and this one did sink. Unable to think of any other way to cross the lava, Stencil tossed rocks in until they formed a clearly marked path. He skipped across the lava to the southwest, unharmed by the bubbling molten rock.

When he reached the other side, Stencil was immediately confronted by a skeleton warrior. He dealt with him by feinting to the left and running past him to the right. From there, Stencil headed

north, then west. He came upon some platforms rising out of the lava. The last thing he wanted to deal with was more platforms, so he set out to find another way around. He noticed, at the outer edge of the lava, a small ledge with cool orange lava beside it. Stencil was overjoyed at not having to deal with the platforms after all, and proceeded to cast Endure Heat on himself. Slowly and carefully, Stencil walked around the outer edge of the lava.

When he reached the opposing side he found himself in another cavern, filled with the minions of Lithos. Moving as fast as he could, he headed for the southwest corner of the cavern. It was here that he found Lithos, the Mountain King. His reaction to Stencil was not unlike that of the other Titans, but with the help of the Heart of Earth blackrock fragment, his cries were silenced. The Mountain King crumbled at Stencil's feet. Again he was teleported back to the Ethereal Plane.

He had finally energized all of the blackrock pieces, save the Obelisk tip. He lent energy to the tip by using it on himself as he had done with the other Titans. He felt a bit drained, but the piece did not destroy him as it had the others.

He arranged the pieces on the giant gray pentacle found in the middle of the Ethereal Plane. He put the Obelisk tip at the Aphelion. From there, he placed, in a clockwise order, the Breath of Air, the Tongue of Flame, the Tear of the Seas, and the Heart of Earth. When the pieces were in place, out of the center of the pentagram rose a large black gateway. In the faces of the gateway he could see the souls of those trapped by the Guardian.





Stencil collected himself for a moment. He knew this was the way home. In him was a mixture of joy and sadness. Here in Pagan he had met a great many people, worthy of his friendship and respect. But more than anything he longed to be home in his beloved Britannia. With a silent farewell to the people of Pagan, he stepped into the gateway.

It was as if he were walking on clouds, soft and dreamlike. Tall silver pillars stretched high into the sky, the tops far out of sight. Stencil was pulled along by a power that remained unseen. When he came to the end of the clouds, he was on a high cliff overlooking the land he loved. The land of his birth. He was home at last and had again outwitted the Guardian. Stencil hoped this would be the last confrontation with the Guardian he would have, but in his heart he wasn't so sure.



Down and Dirty Walk-Through



Chapter 2



Arrive in Pagan

- Talk to Devon.
- Learn basic information about Pagan.
- Roll up the bedroll, and put it in your inventory.

Watch the Execution

- Go to the docks to watch the execution.
- Approach the execution area, and witness Shaana behead Toran.
- Answer Tarna's questions.



Chapter 3

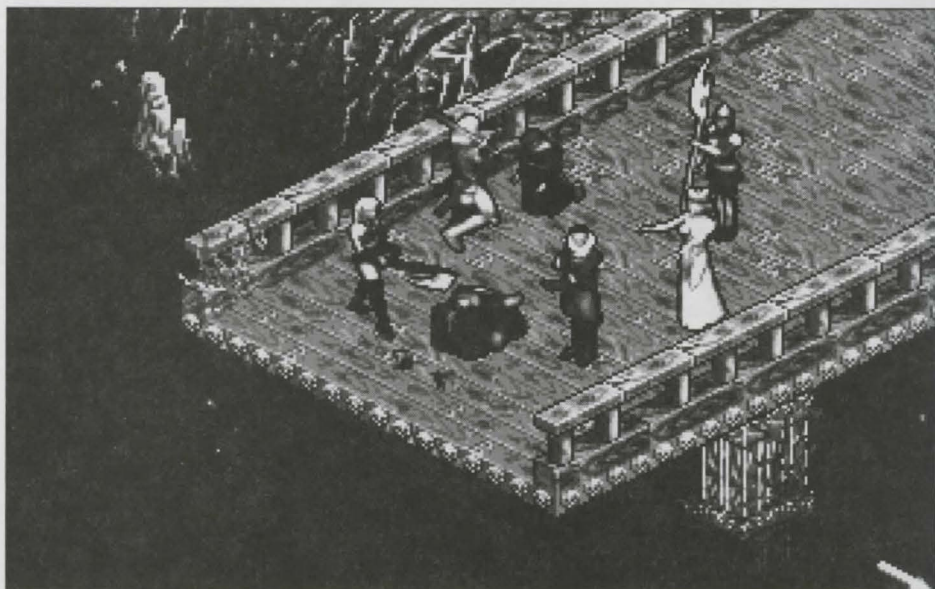


Meet the People of Tenebrae

- Go into Tenebrae. Answer the guard's questions.
- Talk to the townspeople.
- Find and activate the Recall Pad located on the roof of the Great Palace.

Speak with Bentic

- Go to the Library and speak to Bentic.



Ask if Devon knows how to leave Pagan. Tell him you want to leave Pagan.

Ask about Mythran, and where he can be found.



Chapter 4



Find Mythran

Go through the cave, and cross the water by jumping from stone to stone.

Cross the rope bridge.

Throw all the levers without bones or skulls in front of them.

Return across the bridge and use the lever in the small ruined building to open the iron gates.

Avoid the traps in Mythran's house by running straight through.

Get Korghin's Fang, a dagger of increased accuracy, from the backpack on the first floor.

Find Mythran.

Speak to Mythran

Tell him you have many questions.

Tell him you wish to leave Pagan.

Tell him that you are not testing him.

Get the Item of Recall from Mythran.

Activate the Recall Pad.

Use Item of Recall and select Tenebrae.

Chapter 5

Go to the Cemetery and Find Vividos

Find Vividos in the large mausoleum in the center of the Cemetery. He tells you of the Necromancers' past and of the dagger that Mordea has taken from them.

Ask about joining them.

Ask about the dagger.

Offer to get the dagger.

Return to central Tenebrae, via the Item of Recall.

Find the Key to Mordea's Bedroom

Go to the royal hall while Mordea is eating in the dining room. Find the key to her bedroom. It's under the black skull cushion. Open the door to her bedroom and look for the dagger.

Talk to Aramina

Find Aramina's home—a small wooden building in east Tenebrae. She is there only at the hour of Bloodwatch.

Ask about the dagger.

Tell her she won't get in trouble.

Get the key to open the closet in Mordea's bedroom.

Return to the Great Palace.

Return to Mordea's Bedroom

Use Aramina's key on the inner door.

In the closet you will find a chest; open the chest.

Take the dagger.

Return to Vividos

Give Vividos the dagger.

View the ceremony.

Ask if he is the Necromancer and what a Scion is.

Ask to be his Apprentice.

Offer to get him reagents.

Return to Central Tenebrae via the East Road

Talk to the guard on the East Road.

Learn that Bentic was executed and that Devon is imprisoned.

Find Devon in Prison

- Go to the Great Palace dungeon.
- Use the switch next to the prison door to open it.
- Tell Devon you will help him learn of Mordea's motivation.

Find Salkind's House

- Learn of the logbook he keeps in his room
- Read the logbook; it mentions forbidden research sealed in the dungeon behind magically locked doors.

Return to Mythran's

- Talk to Mythran.
- Buy the Scroll of Dispel Magical Portals from him for fifty Obsidian coins.

Return to the Great Palace Dungeon

- Use the Scroll of Dispel Magical Passage on the wall near the doorless room.
- Read Bentic's research.
- The Palace guards will arrest you and take you to the docks.

Reveal that Devon Is the Rightful Heir

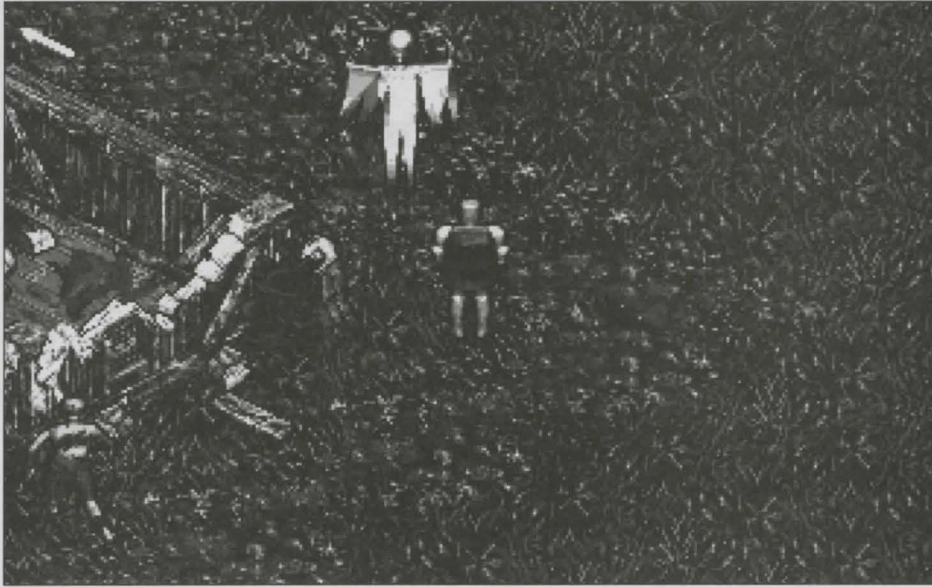
- Tell everyone that Devon is the rightful heir.
- Watch the ensuing battle.

Get Reagents for Vividos

- Get a three-pointed stick from outside a burned-out house in west Tenebrae.
- Get Executioner's Hood; it can be found off the East Road in a sunken pit, guarded by changelings.

Return to Vividos with Reagents

- Get the Key of the Caretaker.
- Read all of the books upstairs.
- Take all available reagents.
- Take the bag.



Chapter 6

Go to the Upper Catacombs

Go into the shrine, north of Vividos's residence.

Cast the Open Earth Spell on the north wall of the shrine.

Watch as the wall crumbles; this is the entrance to the Upper Catacombs.

The Upper Catacombs

Find the small, roofless building in the northeast corner of the Upper Catacombs

Enter the building; when the floor drops keep holding the right button, then quickly click the left button. You will catch the other side of the hole. Release the left button, then click and hold it again to pull yourself up.

Kill the ghoul.

Open the box.

Take the magic leggings and coins.

Drop into the hole.

Speak with the First Dead Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the first dead Necromancer.
Learn the Mask of Death Spell.
Walk northeast until you come to a ridge. Climb it.
Avoid the kith and the three daemons.

Speak with the Second Dead Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the second Necromancer.
Learn the Rock Flesh Spell.
Go north, then west.
Cast the Rock Flesh Spell on yourself.
Run through the corridor. The spell protects you from the lightning.

Speak with the Third Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the third Necromancer.
Learn the Summon Dead Spell.
Be teleported to a small plateau.
Go east through the lightning bolt fences and over a chasm.

Speak with the Fourth Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the fourth Necromancer.
Learn the Grant Peace Spell.
Be teleported to a different cave.
Get the reagents.
Go north, past the changelings, to a building in the middle of the grassy area.
Enter the building, and be teleported to the next area.
Head south to some stairs.
Head north, then west.
Jump the lava.
Climb up onto the raised walkway.
Follow the walkway west, then north until you reach the end.
Jump to the next raised platform to the east.
After teleporting to the next cave go west, south, and west.

Find the Fifth Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the fifth Necromancer.
Learn the Withstand Death Spell.
Be teleported to the next cave.
Go west, then north.
Follow the northeastern wall until you reach a Shooter with no way around.

Cast the Withstand Death Spell.
Head west, north, east, and north
Enter the building with the stairs.

Speak to the Sixth Necromancer

Use the Death Speak Spell on the sixth Necromancer.
Learn the Create Golem Spell.
Use the Grant Peace Spell on the spirit guarding the stairs.
Take the stairs to the Upper Catacombs.
Head south, west, south, and east.
Pass through the door to the Upper Catacombs.



Chapter 7



Stone Cove and the Doors to the Hall of the Mountain King

Find the gate in the southwest corner of the Upper Catacombs.
Move the switch on the stalagmite to lower the gate.
Find the large black double doors in the north wall.
Cast the Create Golem Spell on the dirt in front of the doors.
Command the golem to open the doors.

The Hall of the Mountain King

Head north.
Jump over the chasm.
Find the red-and-black checkered floor, to the north.
Climb over the building's wall.
Pull the switch next to the throne.

The Disappearing Bridge and the Dreaded Floating Platforms

Return to the entrance to the caverns.
Go west until you come to a disappearing skull bridge.
Cross the bridge on the pieces as they appear.
Dodge the golem and follow the passage until you come to the floating platforms.
Cross the chasm by jumping from platform to platform.
Lure the next golem to the south and run around him to the north.
Jump across the next chasm on the disappearing platforms.

The Force Field Maze

Go to the north.
When you come to the force fields, swallow a purple potion.
Go north through the force fields.
Find and open the chest.
Take the Gem of Protection and the key.
Return through the force fields.
Use the key you just found to open the door in the north wall.

The Stepping Stones

Go west, south, and west.
Head north until the cavern opens up.
Jump across the water on the stepping stones.

Find the Key

Continue north.
Take the first passage to the west.
Go to the southwest corner of the cavern.
Find and open the chest.
Move the potions and get the key.
Go back to the main corridor.

Use the Key

Go north.
Take the second passage leading to the west.
Go north in this cavern.
Jump the water.
Open the door with the key you just found.

More Floating Platforms

Head west through the door.
At the end of the passage, go south.
Jump to the first platform.
Jump to the second platform at an angle.
Jump over the third platform.

Find Lithos

Walk to the south.
Activate the Recall Pad.
Walk north.
Lithos is the north wall.

Ask to be Vividos's Apprentice.
Say you will perform the Ritual of Interment.

Return to Vividos

Use the Item of Recall and choose central Tenebrae.
Return to the Cemetery.
Speak with Vividos.
Get the Key of Scion from Vividos.
Inter Lothian.
Agree to go on your pilgrimage.



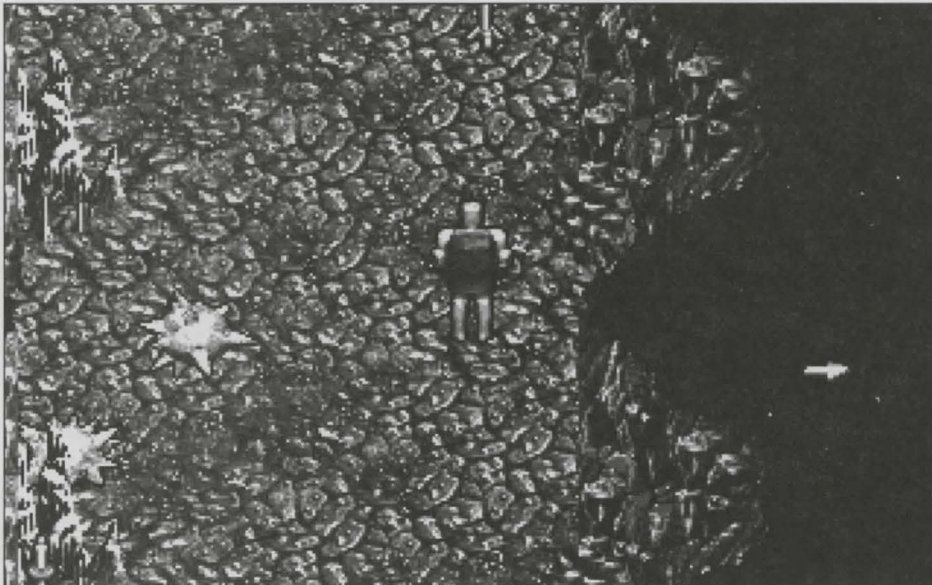
Chapter 8



Return to the Upper Catacombs

Head northeast to a building with a plaque saying, *Towards fate do you travel.*

Use the Key of Scion to unlock these doors.
Go down the stairs.
Cross the lava to the west.
Go north, then northwest.
Avoid the rolling spiked balls.
Go north, then east.
Enter the room through the east wall.



The Chest and the Skull of Quakes

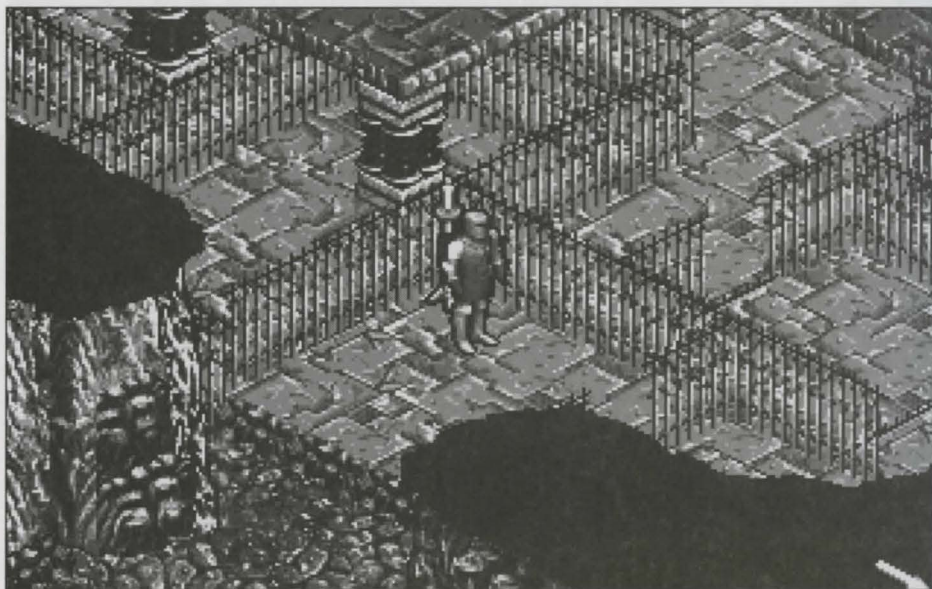
- Move the skull candles away from the levers.
- Find the right lever to lower the fence.
- Get the key out of the chest.
- Follow the northern passage out of this room.
- Go east and south.
- Open the chest and take the Skull of Quakes.
- Return to the passage leading to the room with the chest and the fences.
- Go north into the fence maze.

The Fence Maze

- Enter the fence maze.
- Go to the northeast corner of the maze.
- Climb up on the raised platform.
- Jump from the northwest corner of the platform.
- Exit north out of the maze.

The Second Level

- At first chance, go west, then south.
- Avoid the rolling spiked balls.
- Climb the west wall.
- Go north to the gravestone that reads, *AMREZHAR by the Ancient Ones He Is Met.*



Cast the Open Earth Spell on the grave.
Jump down to the lower level.

The Marble Puzzle

Go south until you reach a fork in the road.
Go west, then east.
Enter the room with the marbles all over the floor.
Throw a marble at the top of the tall structure on the other side of the gate.
Go north through the now lowered gate.

Get the Keys

Retrieve the keys that are under the two platforms.
Jump over the light beam trip wire and go north.
At the T-shaped intersection go east.

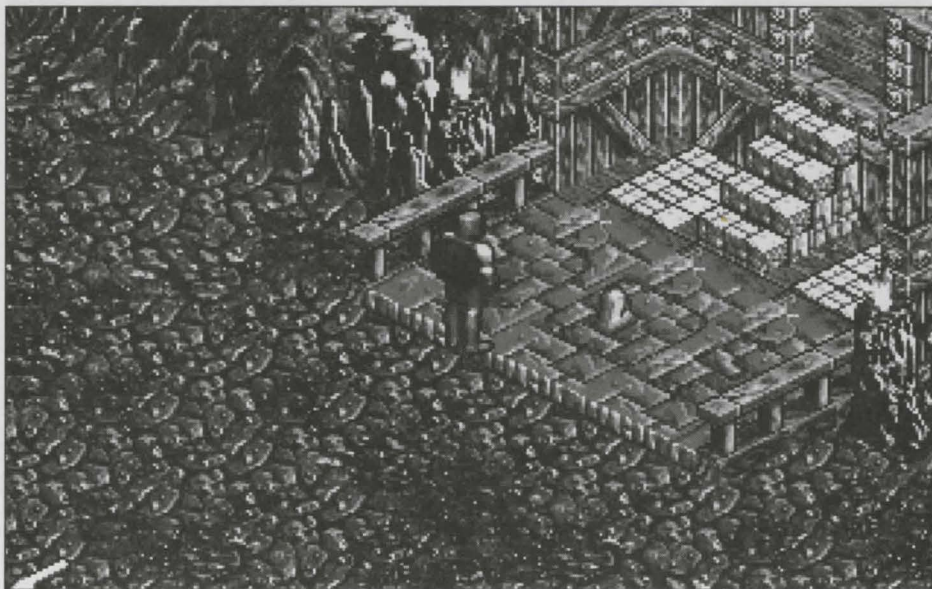
The Stair Puzzle

Number the pressure plates in front of the three stairways, from left to right: 1, 2, 3.

Place the clock on the pressure plates in this order:

3,1,3,2,1,2,2,3,3,1,3,2,1,2,1,3,2,3,1,2,3,1,3,2,1,2

Make sure the stair stops moving before moving the clock again.
Go up the stairs and through the newly created door.



At the top of the stairs cast the Rock Flesh Spell on yourself.
Run through the light beams and down the stairs.
Go west to the locked door.
Open the door with one of the keys from under the platforms.

Find the Key and Place the Shield

Walk down the center aisle, until you reach the altar.
Look under the dead body on the right to find a key.
Place the shield you got from Mythran on the altar.

The Zealan Statues

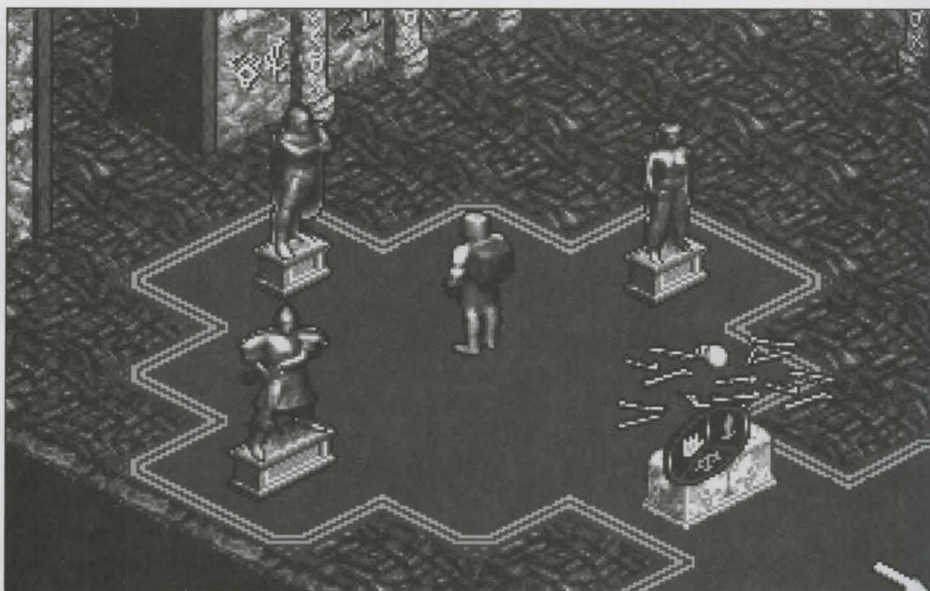
Walk forward until you are standing among the statues.
Listen to them tell you of Khumash-Gor and the piece of blackrock called the Obelisk tip.

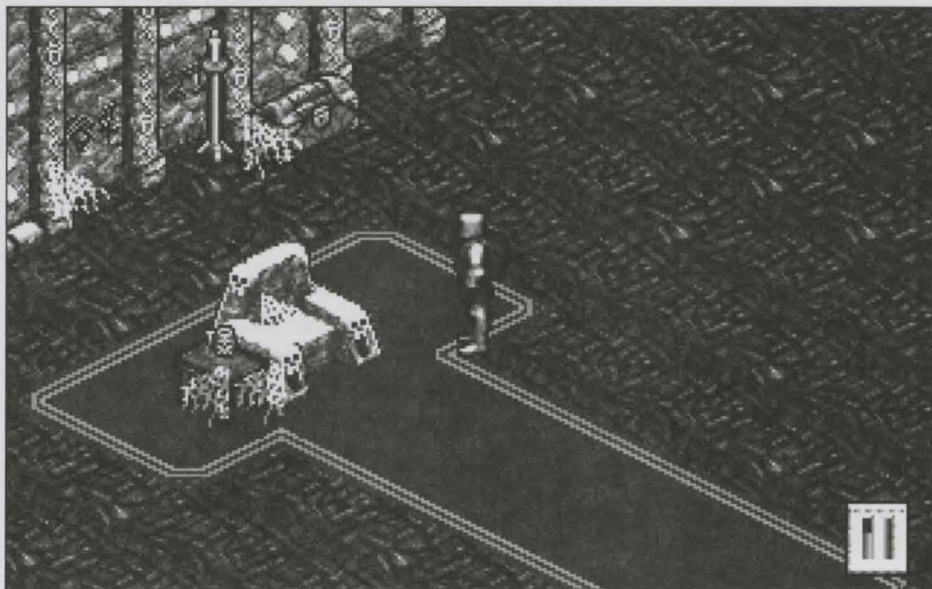
Khumash-Gor and the Obelisk Tip

Concoct a Grant Peace Focus.
Use the Dispel Magical Portals Scroll you bought from Mythran to open the doors.
Use the Grant Peace Spell on the ghost of Khumash-Gor.
Open the small box on the right to find the Obelisk tip.

Speak with the Statues Again

They speak of a fifth element and that this is your destiny.





Find and Activate the Recall Pad in the Upper Catacombs

Return to central Tenebrae, and go to the Cemetery.



Chapter 9



Find Argentrock Isle

Enter the Upper Catacombs as before.

Go to the southeast corner of the catacombs.

Find the red hole in the wall.

Stick the Skull of Quakes into the hole.

When the lights come back up, enter the new hole in the floor.

Activate the Recall Pad.

Go in the direction of Stone Cove.

When you pass the natural stone bridges, look for the doorway to the east.

Take the cobblestone path to Argentrock Isle.

Cross the bridge and find the Recall Pad.

Speak with Xavier

Find Xavier in the monastery; he is wearing a blue sleeveless shirt and carrying a sword.

Learn about Argentrock Isle, the Theurgists, and Enlightenment.
Ask for Enlightenment.

Take the Test of Wisdom

Read the books in the monastery to get the answers to the test.
The answers to the test are:

1. Tell the truth about the battle.
2. Welcome your child home.
3. Sacrifice your sight to heal the sick.
4. Remain quiet.
5. Weapons destroy, wit builds.
6. Always give truthful testimony.
7. Comfort the sad child first.
8. Enjoy breezy evenings on the porch.
9. Tend the injured.
10. Look for honesty in companions.

Take the Test of Centeredness

Ask Xavier to administer the second test.
Go to Windy Point: it's a tall platform to the west of the monastery.
Climb the platform.
Stay on top until the wind stops.
Return to Xavier; he will tell you to speak with Stellos.

Speak with Stellos

Find Stellos. He is wearing white robes with dark blue trim.
He tells you that you must prepare your Foci.
Obtain the key to the caverns from him. He tells you to get silver ore from below the monastery.
Go below the monastery via the stairs in the kitchen.
Head east from the cavern entrance.
Unlock the door with the key from Stellos.
Go east past two electrical fences.
Find eight pieces of silver ore.

Construct Your Foci

Teleport to central Tenebrae and go to west Tenebrae.
Find Korick in a large single-story stone building in the southwest corner of west Tenebrae.
Ask Korick to make your Foci one at a time.
Return to Argentrock Isle.
Enter the monastery.
Place each Focus one at a time on the altar in the center of the room.

Find Torwin and speak with him; he is wearing a blue shirt with no sleeves, but no sword.

Speak with Cyrrus; he is in a white robe with light blue trim.

Find Stellos again and tell him of your completed Foci.

Take the Third Test

Ask to take the third test; Stellos will send you back below the monastery.

Once in the caverns below the monastery go west to a ledge.

Cast the Aerial Servant Spell to retrieve the wounded Torax from the other side of the chasm.

Use the Healing Touch Spell on the Torax.

Xavier's Missing Focus

Talk to Stellos; he will tell you that Brother Xavier's Healing Touch Focus is missing.

Talk to Xavier. He will tell you of Torwin's odd research.

Talk to Stellos again. Say you talked with both Torwin and Xavier.

Talk to Cyrrus.

Cast Hear Truth on Cyrrus, to learn of what Torwin is doing.

Go to Windy Point.

Talk with Torwin; after he takes the Leap of Faith retrieve the Healing Touch Focus he drops.

Return to Stellos and tell him you found the lost Focus.

Give the Focus back to Xavier.



Take the Leap of Faith

Talk to Stellos again. He tells you it's time to take the Leap of Faith.

Return to Windy Point.

Stand between the pillars at the ledge and jump.

Jump from platform to platform until you come to a very large platform.

Talk to Stratos and receive the Air Walk Focus.

Learn about the Breath of Wind blackrock fragment.



Chapter 10



Find Carthax Lake

Return to the Upper Catacombs, outside the entrance to Argentrock Isle.

Take the passage to the south.

Take the east passage and jump over the lava.

Now go south past the lightning bolt fence the entrance leading to Carthax Lake.

Throw a switch on the wall to the lower gate, then use the Key of Scion to unlock the door.

Find Hydros

Activate the Recall Pad.

Go west, south, then east, following each direction as far as you can go before turning.

Go north to the edge of the water.

Follow the water until you find a bridge.

Take the bridge until you come to a break, then jump across the break to the other section.

Follow the crosspiece that is attached to the second section of bridge; it leads west, then north.

Find the white marble platform leading out into the water.

Walk out onto the platform.

Speak with Hydros

Agree to free Hydros.

She tells you that you must open the ground near the grave of her captor.

Release the Water

Return across the bridges and head west to find a cave entrance.

Run past the troll.

Enter the next cave.

Head west until you see a wall on the north with large spikes on the top.

Climb over the wall between the spikes.

Head north until you come to a wall with a fence built into it.

Pull the left switch, walk through gate.

Go west; avoid a second troll.

Go through the next gate and continue north, then west. Take the magical armor from the chest guarded by the troll.

Go west again.

Walk along the right wall to avoid the water.

Go north, then east through the cave entrance.

Go north.

Find the tombstone and cast the Open Earth Spell.

Return to Hydros.

Learn that Devon is now in danger from Hydros.

Go to Devon in the Great Palace.

Tell him you will resolve the storms.



Chapter 11



Find Daemon's Crag

Return to the Upper Catacombs.

Go north and east from the entrance to Carthax Lake.

Find the hidden switch on the wall to open a secret door.

Use the Key of Scion on the locked door.

Go through the lava tubes, jump down from the ledge, and walk to the western edge of the lava.

Speak with Beren

Talk to Beren across the lava.

Use the Air Walk Focus to reach the spot where Beren was.

Find Bane

Pick your way south across the lava, staying on the stone outcroppings.

Walk through the center passage on the south wall.

Activate the Recall Pad.

Take the first path west to find Bane in her house.

Tell her your name.



Ask about the Enclave, Morgaelin, the current Sorcerers, the Acolytes, and the First Acolyte.

Agree to her task.

Learn her true name.

Speak with Vardion

Reveal your name.

Tell him that you go where you will.

Ask about the First Acolyte, and his dealings with Tenebrae.

Agree to his task.

Watch Bane Kill Vardion

Tell Bane Vardion's true name.

Watch as she summons a daemon and converses with Malchir.

Accept the vacant position.

Agree to take the tests.

Get the key to the library from Bane.

Study and Get Items from the Library

Go to the Library; it is west and south from Vardion's.

Learn the spells. Learn about the blackrock fragment and the Ritual of Flame.

Grab all the wands, rods, and symbols you can find.

Take three candles of each color.

Take as many reagents as you can hold.
Return to Bane.

Take the Test

Create Flame Bolt, Endure Heat, and Flash Spells, using the pentagram on the floor.

The Obsidian Fortress

Go to the Obsidian Fortress. It is northwest of the library, across a stone bridge.

Talk with Malchir.

Banish the daemons summoned by Malchir, or run past them.

Go down the stairs to Arcadion's lair.

Talk to Arcadion; he is a large daemon.

He offers you the use of his pentagram and reagents.

Walk into the room with the pentagram.

Make sure you have these Foci in your inventory before going any farther: Extinguish, Ignite, Flash, Flame Bolt, Endure Heat, Armor of Flames, Explosion, Summon Daemon, and Banish Daemon.

Walk to the platform located at the back of this room.

You are teleported to the Trials.

The Extinguish Trial

Cast Extinguish on yourself to put out the burning pentagram.

Take the symbol from under the helm in the center of the pentagram.

The Flash Trial

Cast the Flash Spell to get past the Fire Mushrooms and the spiked balls.

Banish the daemon.

Get past the spirit and retrieve the blue symbol.

The Endure Heat Trial

Avoid the skeletons and ghouls while getting through the maze.

Cast the Endure Heat Spell to cross the lava.

Cast the Banish Daemon Spell on the daemon guarding the chest.

Cast a Trap Destruction Spell on the chest.

Open the chest and retrieve the blue symbol.

The Armor of Flames Trial

Cast the Armor of Flames Spell on yourself as soon as you enter this trial area.

Walk east until you come to a shrine with four stone spiders around it.

Get the magical shield.

Go south and get the blue symbol.

Malchir's Inner Sanctum

Return to Arcadion. He will now tell you the teleporter will take you to Malchir.

Talk to Malchir.

Cast Flame Bolt, Explosion, and Summon Daemon, in this order, at Malchir.

The Ritual of Flame

Do everything that the other Acolytes do.

Watch the ritual.

Be punished by Malchir.

Malchir's Death and the Tongue of Flame

Return to Malchir. Once he is dead cast the Extinguish Spell on yourself to get out of the ring of flames.

Search Malchir; read his book, entitled *THE TONGUE OF FLAME*.

Also take the piece of blackrock called the Tongue of Flame.

Take the Tongue of Flame through the Great Pentacle to release the firestorms.

Return to the Upper Catacombs and go to Stone Cove.



Chapter 12



The Heart of Earth

Go to the Pit of the Dead; it is behind the door with the spikes.

Use the Key of Scion to open these doors.

Find the half-destroyed building.

Create a golem to open the doors on the south side of the building.

Climb into the center arena.

Cast the Open Earth Spell on the tombstone.

Get the Heart of Earth.

The Secret Treasure Room

Return to the Upper Catacombs.

Find the golden door in the northwest corner of the Upper Catacombs.

Use the Key of Scion to open the door.
Cross the room and throw the left switch.
Run through the narrow gate.
Throw the levers next to the narrow gate.
Run through the narrow gate to find the wide gate is now open.
Go through the wide gate.
Go west.
Open the next gate with the switch on the wall.
Go through the gate.
Rounding the corner, hug the left wall to get past the unsafe corridor.
Continue east.
Go through the fence.
Step onto the L-shaped section of floor overlooking a lava pit.
Go west until you find a door guarded by a skeleton warrior.
Face a recess in the north wall.
Jump high toward the wall.
You will be teleported to a secret treasure room.
Take a magical helmet and shield and the Flame Sting saber.
Jump toward the wall you came in; you will be returned to the outside of this room.

The Breath of Wind

Return to Argentrock Isle.
Use the Air Walk Focus to jump across the Leap of Faith.
Talk to Stratos.
Cast the Reveal Spell.
Use the Aerial Servant Spell to take the Breath of Wind from the pedestal to the north.

The Tear of the Seas

Go to central Tenebrae.
Talk to Devon.
Get the key to the chest in his study.
Find his study in the southwest corner of the Palace.
Open the chest and take the Tear of the Seas blackrock piece.

To the Ethereal Plane

Go to Mythran's.
Buy the Ethereal Travel Spell for 250 Obsidian coins.
Use the spell.
You are teleported to a blue platform floating in a black void.

Chapter 13

The Plane of Water

The Plane of Water lies to the north.

Once you enter the black building you are in the Plane of Water.
Follow the rocky path to the north.

At the water's edge you will see stepping stones. Go west, jumping from stone to stone.

Use the Tear of the Seas on Hydros.

You are returned to the Ethereal Realm.

The Plane of Fire

The Plane of Fire lies to the west.

Once in the plane, follow the path north.

When you have gone north as far as you can, go east.

Go east until you pass two bridges; climb the second bridge.

Jump off the broken end to the other side.

Climb the large natural stairs.

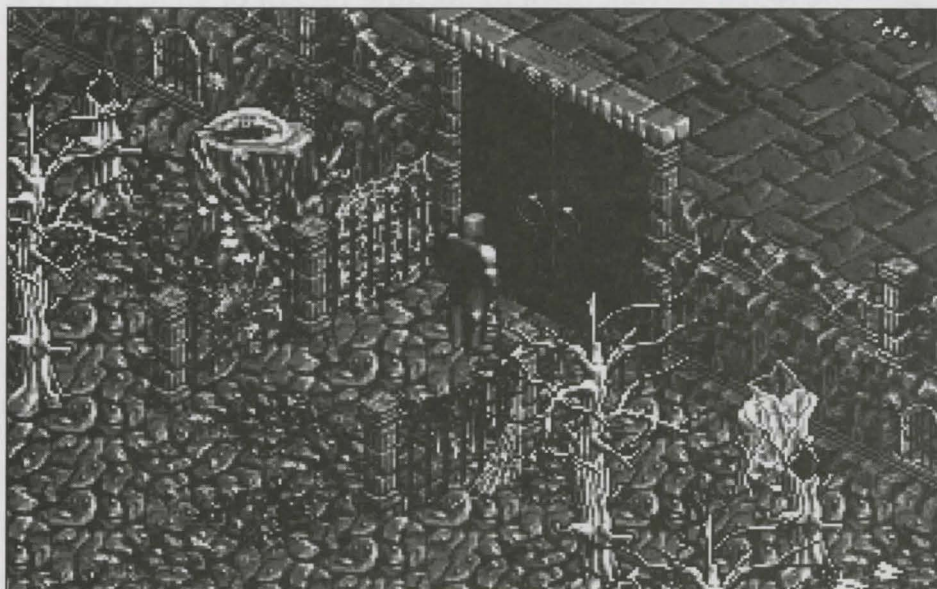
Find the shrine.

Climb the stairs and take the gray spheres out of the jewelry box.

Return across the bridges.

Go west until you find the glowing star puzzle.

Place one gray ball on each of the squares, around the star.



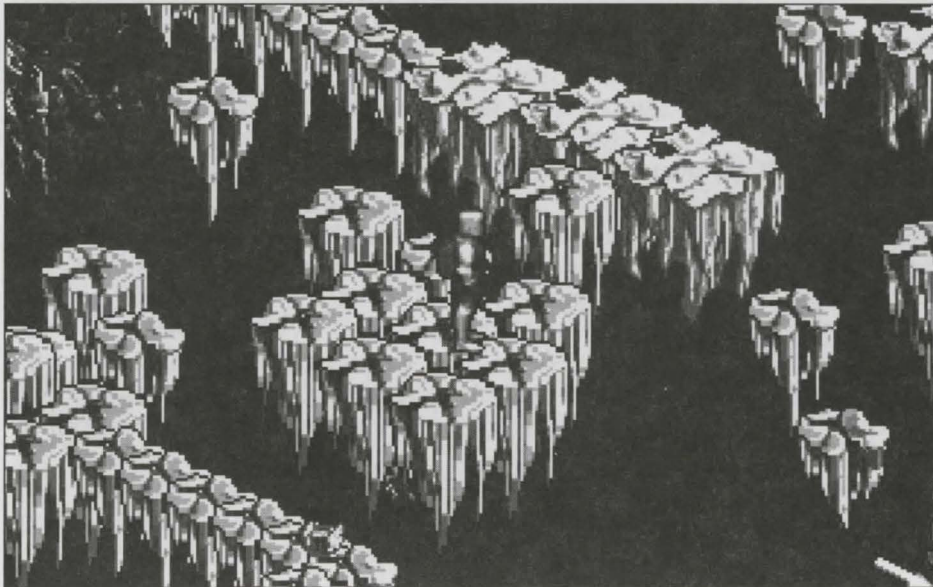
The balls will turn red and disappear.
Out of the lava, stepping stones will rise.
Jump from platform to platform across the lava, heading north.
Find Pyros to the north.
Use the Tongue of Flame on Pyros.
Be returned to the Ethereal Realm.

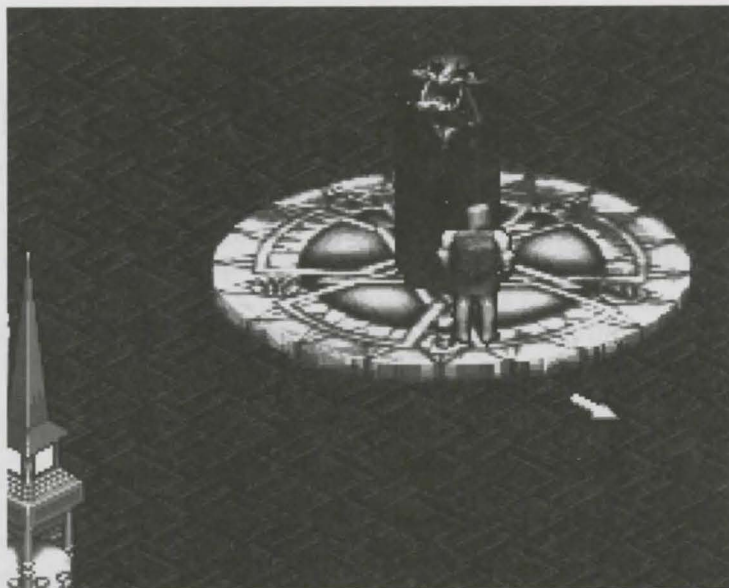
The Plane of Air

The Plane of Air lies to the south.
Leap from platform to platform in a northeasterly direction.
Use the Breath of Wind on Stratos.
Be returned to the Ethereal Realm.

The Plane of Earth

The Plane of Earth lies to the east.
Go northwest.
Toss rocks onto the lava to reveal an invisible walkway over the lava.
When you reach the other side go north and west until you come to some platforms.
Jump the platforms to get over the lava.
Find Lithos in the southwest corner of this cavern.
Use the Heart of Earth on Lithos.
Be returned to the Ethereal Realm.





The Black Gate

Use the Obelisk tip on yourself.

Place the energized fragments on the gray pentagram.

Put the Obelisk tip at the Aphelion and then in a clockwise order place Air, Fire, Water, and Earth.

Walk through the Black Gate.



The Pagan Library



The Books of Earth



The Big Book of Adventure: By Sladek

Recorded on these pages are tips I have found while on my adventure. Read well, fellow quester, for your life may well be saved by recalling these in your time of need.

- **Puzzles** You will be in luck if such puzzles are played with levers. These usually require little time, if you watch your surroundings for clues. Central levers usually reset the puzzle.
- **Traps** If there is a chest sitting innocently in the open, touch it not! Especially if it has many corpses around it! These are the other dolts who fell for it.
- **Chests of Loot** Rarely do chests have anything in them. Open them at your own risk. It will serve you well to carry a magical scroll to check for traps within these!
- **Tricks of the Trixter** Judge them by their cover for they read differently than other books...
- **Mazes** Always mark your path! Use rocks or wood. Never bread crumbs! Beware of treasure! It is there to lead you from the path!
- **Spell Chits** Always read the text on the outside of these scrolls to identify them. Once you have opened them, their magic will immediately be released.

Dispelling Myths: The Truth About Magic

Many are the rumors of the magical and the supernatural that exist outside of the Titanic magic. Now, of course any reasonable person knows that any such thing is nonsense. Any thinking person must know that the Titans are the only magic in the world. However, in the interest of fairness, for any who may doubt that the true magic is held by the Titans, I have investigated three well-known reported cases of magical occurrences that fall outside of the Titans' influence. The first episode of magic that I investigated was an occurrence in which a woman who lives outside of Tenebrae claimed to know something about a ghost who had some magical capabilities. The woman's name is Kilandra, and she makes her living as a fisherwoman. Let me assure all that this woman knows nothing of the supernatural. In fact, Kilandra knows virtually nothing at all. Quite frankly, I found this woman to be completely mad. She would ramble on constantly about her daughter to such a point that I began to believe that her daughter does not even exist. All of the outlandish stories about her daughter could not apply to just one person. Therefore, in my expert opinion, the daughter is purely fictional. Anything else that Kilandra had to talk about were things that the fish told her. Therefore, it is perfectly clear that this woman is completely mad and anything that she has to say cannot be believed. The second event that many people have reported as magical is the mysterious lights of the Plateau. Very few people have even reported having seen these, yet the lights have lived on in Pagan lore for a very long time. Many people believe that these lights are some sort of magic, which is generated by some unknown force of nature. Others believe these lights to be some sort of magical energy created by the hermit that lives upon the Plateau. Such opinions are, of course, the result of people spreading unsubstantiated rumors without looking into basic facts. I have disproven the myth that these lights even exist by doing what others simply would do: I took a leisurely stroll up to the Plateau and investigated things myself. I walked up to the Plateau, which, by the way, is a lovely walk that I recommend for everyone, at least once. Once on the Plateau, I met with the old hermit who lives there. Now, I must say that this was the most difficult part of my investigation. This old man, Mythran is his name, was a gruff, unfriendly fellow. This Mythran has nothing to do but lay about all day long, yet getting him to answer my questions was like pulling teeth from a troll. He spoke to me in short, sharp sentences which he usually spit into my face. And the worst thing of all is that this silly old man thought that he knew more of the world than I did! Well, I did manage to get Mythran to assure me that there were no magical lights that danced about upon the Plateau. I am sure that he would not lie to me as I am employed by the Lady Mordea and therefore carry her influence. The third instance

of magic that I have disproven beyond the shadow of a doubt is the alleged existence of a magical axe, called Deceiver. This axe is supposed to be found on a small island off of Stone Cove. The island, which cannot be seen by land, is supposed to be reached by stones that rise above the water, only to sink again in a matter of moments. As I had no intention of going through those awful catacombs, I sailed to Stone Cove to investigate. I can assure you, one and all, that there is no island off of Stone Cove and there is certainly no magical ax. Nor did I see any rising and sinking stones. Of course, the stones were the only plausible part of this ridiculous story. I did think it quite possible for the Lurker to create just such a thing, so that She may amuse Herself. So there you have it, dear reader. Irrefutable proof that there is no magic in the world other than that which the Titans have chosen to create. I realize that this book may take a little bit of fantasy out of some people's daily lives, but if we are to better serve Our Lady, we must all live in the here and now.

Groogaan's Helpful Guide to Mushrooms

Although many forms of vegetation disappeared after our sun ceased its cycling and our world entered into a state of eternal twilight, many plants, especially mushrooms, have adjusted to the lower level of sunlight. Mushrooms have prospered and have become the dominant form of vegetation on our landscape. These range from the man-sized monster Brown Cap all the way down to the finger-sized, yellow-and-red Silent Sleeper. Most mushrooms are edible; mushrooms like the fist-sized Blue Bulgie and the Green Capper are delicious with any meal, although they sometimes may be confused by the less experienced for the blue-and-green Daemon's Paw, which can cause rashes, blisters, and general bladder distress. A helpful mushroom known for its healing properties is the yellow-and-green Adventurer's Friend, found in the wild. When consumed, these mushrooms tend to restore health, as well as give the consumer a general feeling of euphoria. Known to keep monsters at bay is the Stench Mushroom. Applying small quantities of this mushroom to our skin is guaranteed to ward off most creatures, except for those who are undead, who seem to be quite attracted to its pungent odor. The only way the smell of the mushroom can be removed, once applied, is by bathing in the juice of the Ammotio plant. A mushroom that you should generally stay away from is the Fire Mushroom. This little mushroom is unusually high in sulfurous ash and tends to explode when stepped on.

Bentic's Journal

In my investigation of the royal blood line, I have uncovered many facts and these facts have led me to more questions: Keldan the

farmer, son of Treal—forced to marry Lord Kean’s daughter, Celidia; why would royalty want such a simple man? Keldan and Ariel. Did Celidia ever know? If so, when did she find out? And how? Ariel had a child, a son. Did Keldan send her away to protect them from Celidia or did Celidia order it? Celidia demanded a child. Mordea is born with the powers of Tempestry. Yet, Lord Kean was no Tempest, nor was his wife. But where is Keldan and Ariel’s son? Both mother and child were sent to live with the fishermen. Devon knows not his own father...could Devon be a Tempest?!? If so, by his being the first born, his powers would be stronger than Mordea’s. I must investigate this further, although if Mordea should uncover my quest my life would be forfeit...

The Final Sunlight:

By Nolandru the Blind Idiot of Tenebrae

The final moments of sunlight were glorious moments, ones we would have cherished had we known they were to be our last. The war against our very kindred seemed never ending, day after day of bloodshed. In their eyes burned the hatred of intolerance. And these flames kindled the fire of violence. After a while, it became easy to forget the faces of those you had slain—a sister with one chop, an uncle with another. Yet still they came, outraged that we dared to listen to the voice of warning. By the time the Destroyer came we were ready. Not for the Destroyer, but for an end to the fighting. Too many had not heeded, so we thought. Too many refused to acknowledge the might of the Titans. We were doomed to devastation, but with the doom came the sickening thought of peace and silence. In the end, we wondered, would Pagan and Zealan know one from the other as lifeless corpses filling the pyres, the result of the Destroyer’s carnage. But then came the Titans. First rose Lithos, the Mountain King. Then came Stratos, the Mystic Voice and her sister Hydros, the Lurker. Finally, the blazing image of Pyros, Lord of Flame, appeared to challenge the Destroyer. On the ground, both Pagan and Zealan alike ceased battle, awed by the presence of these Titanic Elements. The sky became a whirlwind of smoke, dust, and hail as the Titans joined forces and began to rise up. As the battle was fought above, the very land upon which we stood was rended piece from piece; mountains shifted, rose, and spewed fiery death. Wind ripped through buildings and torrents of water cascaded over the walls of the cities. The very enemies who stood against each other, bared fangs and flashing eyes. We were unable to face off—blinded by smoke, tumbled by the quakes, scorched by the searing flames. There was naught but chaos. And when the fight ended and the Destroyer was vanquished, there was naught but ruin. The quakes ceased, the winds slowed, the waters calmed. Pagan again saw

peace. Despite the recent battle, the moment was one of serenity. But the sun was no more. There is no knowledge of where the light of the sky had gone. There is no true night, but there is no true day. And the Titans, demanding ever-increasing sacrifices in payment for their deeds, offer no answers.

Earthen Magic

Beware unto any who may read this tome: The power of the Mountain King is great, and the dread sovereign of all. Clay and Earth are to be feared and respected. Therefore, as you read the words of might contained within these pages, know that the power the Mountain King will grant to you is great. Use the power that you learn here wisely and remember: the Mountain King can take from you anything that He has given you. Do not abuse that which you learn, while in the services of the mighty Lithos. The first spell that the student of Earthen Magic must learn is the Open Ground Spell. The use of this spell will open the sacred clay of our Father, and allow you to enter therein. The reagents needed for this spell are Blood and Blackmoor. Speak the words *Des Por Ylem* to create the magic token, then you shall be allowed to envelope yourself in the arms of the Mountain King. The second spell that a Student must learn is *Death Speak*. This must be for the student to first learn from the long dead Necromancers of old. From their dead lips shall come words of knowledge and power. So that the student may speak to his dead tutors, the student must know *Death Speak*. The reagents needed for *Death Speak* are but Blood and Bone. Use these reagents together with the words *Kal Wis Corp* and the student shall then be able to learn from the ancient Necromancers.

Moriens: Necromancer, Prophet, Hero

Let none doubt that no greater hero did ever walk the lands of Pagan that the Immortal Moriens. Moriens did earn the title of Immortal as he still walks at the right hand of the Mountain King. Dead in body, but not in spirit, Moriens's legacy of greatness and heroism will live on into eternity. Many young children who have not yet learned of Moriens's true wonderment do often look with innocent, upturned eyes and ask with voices filled with awe of the great man of which they've heard their playmates speak. Then do the parents sit down with their children and tell them the story of the greatest of all magic users. The First Necromancer, Moriens's greatness became obvious when he was still a young boy. At the age of seven he slew a troll that did threaten his father. Although the troll was terrible and large, an armed with a deadly club, Moriens stood unafraid. The blessed child, Moriens, stood with a sharp stone in hand and hurled the stone with a very great force. The stone

struck the troll in the eye and landed with such a force that the troll did fall dead, and Moriens's father was saved. The great feats of Moriens did not end with his victory over the troll. When Moriens was just beginning to grow into manhood, a strange man did come into his village. This stranger did speak well and claim to be a prophet. Many people did come to hear this man speak for he did offer salvation to those who would follow him. But Moriens in his great wisdom did see the man for a charlatan and rebuked him. When the others heard Moriens, they too saw that the man was a false prophet and did stone him to death.

Such was the greatness of Moriens. But the greatest story of Moriens's greatness is the story of the pact which Moriens made with the Mountain King. Great is the power of the Earth Titan and terribly did he shake the ground. For, unbeknownst to mortal man, the Mountain King did have a great hunger for human flesh. Therefore, Lithos would tear open the land and in would spill his victims. Moriens knew of Lithos's longing, for Moriens was wiser than any other. Without fear, Moriens did tread beneath the ground to find the Mountain King. In the City of the Dead, Moriens did confront the great and mighty Mountain King. Lithos shook the ground, yet still was Moriens unafraid. When Lithos asked why Moriens had come before a Titan, Moriens told Lithos that he knew of the Titan's hunger. Therefore did Moriens offer a bargain with the Mountain King. Should Lithos spare the people above the ground and let them live to old age, Moriens himself could ensure that upon death. All of the remains would be offered on to Lithos. If this bargain should be kept, promised Moriens, the almighty Titan would have his fill and the people above could then live unafraid. Lithos, being most impressed with this fearless mortal which stood before him, did agree that such a bargain would be a good thing. Then did Moriens promise that he personally would inter all of the dead, giving over their bodies to Lithos. So impressed by Moriens courage and self-sacrifice was Lithos that he did give his Necromancer a great prize, the Heart of the Earth. This treasure, which is the largest diamond shaped object in the world, is made of a pure and lovely blackrock. So rare is this blackrock that there are only five pieces of it in the entire world. And so proud was Moriens of his treasure that he did vow to never give it up, but to carry the Heart of the Earth into the City of the Dead and hold it for eternity. Countless are the stories of Moriens's greatness and power, truly too many for this tome to contain. But to tell any more of Moriens's glory would be immodest and unworthy of such a noble man. This then ends the incomplete life story of Moriens: Necromancer, Prophet, Hero. So written by my hand in the Great Tomb, completed at the time of Bloodwatch, Moriens Necromancer.

The Books of Air

The Spell of Restoration

One of the most powerful spells available to the Theurgist, the Spell of Restoration restores the recipient to full health, providing the recipient is still alive upon the beginning of the casting. It will eliminate wounds and maimings and will cure disease. This spell is one that the Theurgist will find to be in great demand. The Focus for this spell resembles an open hand. The words that must be uttered upon casting the spell are "Vas In Mant."

The Spell of Reveal

The Spell of Reveal is a dissipation spell, meaning that it will actually dispel another type of magic, specifically the Spell of Invisibility. When the Theurgist casts this spell, a wave of energy moves away from the caster in ever-increasing concentric circles. These energy waves will dispel all forms of invisibility. The Focus used for this spell is an open eye, and the casting words are "Ort Lor."

The Spell of Aerial Servant

One of the more impressive of the Theurgic spells, Aerial Servant is also one of the most versatile. Upon casting, a whirling being of air is called into existence. This being will accept the Theurgist's directives to manipulate or move any object. One of the more interesting aspects of this spell is that the Aerial Servant is able to move objects through another solid object, such as a door or wall. The Focus used is an arm band and the casting words are "Kal Ort Xen."

The Spell of Fade from Sight

The Spell of Fade from Sight is another very versatile spell, as it allows the caster to become invisible to the sight of nearly all mortal beings. The Focus representing this spell is a closed eye. The words to be spoken are "Quas An Lor."

The Spell of Air Walk

The Air Walk Spell is the most highly valued spell a Theurgist can learn, for it is only through the use of this spell that a Theurgist can reach Stratos and hear the Mystic Voice. When this spell is cast, the Theurgist is capable of jumping a great distance with the aid of the surrounding air. It is interesting to note that the first time a Theurgist experiences this spell is when he has completed the Tests and seeks Strathos for the first time. If Stratos is pleased with the Theurgist, then she will grant the spell without the use of a Focus. From that point on, however, the Theurgist must have the Focus representing wings to cast this spell. The words of power are "Vas Hur Por."

The Spell of Healing Touch

The Spell of Healing Touch is the least powerful of the healing spells of Stratos and one of the first usually learned by Adepts. The Focus necessary to cast this spell represents a pointing hand. The words that must be uttered are "In Mani."

The Spell of Divination

The Divination Spell is a most practical spell. It allows the caster to know his exact location, the time of day, the day of the week, and the current month. The Focus necessary for casting this spell resembles a sextant. The spell also has a vocal aspect. The words that must be uttered are "In Wis."

The Spell of Intervention

The Spell of Intervention is a powerful spell. Upon casting the Spell of Intervention, the Theurgist calls into being a wall of air that blocks all damaging forces. While this spell will protect the caster from all blows and striking attacks, it will not protect the caster from immersion in lava or water. The Focus for this spell resembles a fist and the words used are "In Sanct An Jux."

The Spell of Hear Truth

A useful spell for any number of reasons, the Spell of Hear Truth allows the Theurgist to hear both what the speaker is saying and the truth. If the speaker is indeed speaking untruthfully, the truth, as if carried on a breeze, will come to the caster. The Focus resembles a chain. The words spoken upon casting are "An Quas Lor."

Spell Recipes

Explosion

A bolt of flame is released when the Sorcerer invokes the Explosion Spell, shooting forth unerringly to the object of the Sorcerer's ire. Upon reaching its destination it explodes, causing heavy damage to all things caught within it's range.

Runes

-Vas Ort Flam

Red candles

-Perivolcan Pa, Mesostel Ze, and the Aphelion

Reagents

-Ash at Mesostel Ze

-Pumice at Perivolcan Pa

-Iron at Mesostel Pa

-Brimstone at the Aphelion

Ignite

The Ignite Invocation brings fire into existence upon a substance that will accept it. It can be used to light a single candle

or, if the Sorcerer focuses the energy upon himself, it can light all within a range determined by the power of the Sorcerer.

Runes

-In Flam

Red candles

-Aphelion

Reagents

-Ash at the Aphelion

-Pumice at both Perivolcanae

Armor of Flames

The Sorcerer is bathed in a corona of flames that ward off fire of a magical nature. These flames will protect the Sorcerer for a time, then vanish.

Runes

-Vas Sanct Flam

Red candles

-Both Pervolcanae and Mesostel Ze

Reagents

-Ash at Mesostel Pa

-Obsidian at both

Pervolcanae

-Iron at the Aphelion

-Brimstone at Mesostel Ze

Extinguish

By use of the Extinguish Spell, the caster attempts to douse a fire. When focused upon the Sorcerer himself, all fires within a certain range will be quenched; otherwise it will douse the fire upon which it is specifically focused.

Runes

-An Flam

Red candles

-All black

Reagents

-Pumice at both Perivolcanae and the Aphelion

Endure Heat

The Endure Heat Spell creates a shimmering field around the Sorcerer that will allow him to touch any nonmagical flame and remain unhurt. A Sorcerer with this spell active can even endure the heat of lava if it is solid enough to support his weight.

Runes

-Sanct Flam

Red candles

-Both Perivolcanae

Reagents

-Obsidian at both Perivolcanae

-Iron at the Aphelion

Banish Daemon

The Banish Daemon Spell attempts to force a daemon to return to the Plane of Fire from which it was summoned. Although not always successful, this is a Sorcerer's best defense against these beasts.

Rune

-An Flam Corp Xen

Red candles

-Both Perivolcanae, Mesostel Ze, and the Aphelion

Reagents

-Ash at Mesostel Pa

-Pumice at Mesostel Ze

-Iron at both Perivolcanae

-Daemon bone at the Aphelion

Summon Daemon

This dangerous ritual of binding will summon a daemon to attack a foe of the Sorcerer's choosing. The danger of this spell lies in the fact that if no victim is specified the daemon will attack the summoner.

Runes

-Kal Flam Corp Xen

Red candles

-Both Perivolcanae, Mesostel Pa, and the Aphelion

Reagents

-Ash at the Mesostel Ze

-Pumice at the Mesostel Pa

-Obsidian at both Perivolcanae

-Daemon bone at the Aphelion

Flame Bolt

A bolt of flame is released when the Sorcerer invokes the Flame Bolt Spell, shooting forth unerringly to the object of the Sorcerer's ire. Upon reaching its destination, it explodes, causing moderate damage to all things caught within its range.

Runes

-In Ort Flam

Red Candles

-Perivolcan Ze, Mesostel Pa, and the Aphelion

Reagents

-Ash at Mesostel Pa

-Pumice at Perivolcan Ze

-Iron at Mesostel Ze

Flash

By means of the Flash Spell the Sorcerer can move from one visible place to another without actually traversing the intervening space.

Runes

- Flam Por

Red candles

- Both Perivolcanae and the Aphelion

Reagents

- Ash at both Mesostelae

- Pumice at the Aphelion

The Art of Flame:

By Maedrom

The First Acolyte of the Cabal Fire is the Crucible of Life. Before it, all impurities are burned away. All that remains is a pure, unclouded will. A Sorcerer should revel in this and know that power is his servant. The will of the Sorcerer is the Crucible of the reagents. But I speak herein not of reagents, but instead of the Foci of Sorcery. The first focus we Sorcerers created was made by casting a metal disk with shavings of a blackrock-like substance. This substance was found throughout the island, and in fact all of our Foci use this substance, to a greater or lesser degree. The disk was then engraved with the pentagram symbol of Fire. This dedicates it to our purposes. No Sorcerer should be without this symbol, as it is the outward token of our superiority. A note about the Sorcerers' pentagram symbol: it may cast several of the Ignite Spells as well as the Extinguish Spell. Any other power, it may cast but once. The symbol, while versatile, lacked power. So we crafted a wand. It was only stable with less of the blackrock, but a gem from the core of the volcano gave it the power necessary. These Fire Gems focused the will of the Sorcerer's own inner fire. The casting capacity of the Sorcerer's wand has the power to focus the Ignite and Extinguish Spells in quantity, as well as the Flash and Flame Bolt Spells to a slightly lesser degree. In an attempt to further increase the prowess of our spells, we created a rod, suffused with blackrock, with a fine gem at either end as well as the center. This Focus allowed the casting of spells of a defensive nature, in addition to those of the wand Casting capacity of the Sorcerers' rod. This focus can cast the urand spells in greater measure, and is empowered to cast the Endure Heat, Fire Shield, and Armor of Flames Spells. Master Corodin continued upon the work of the others by making another Focus in a similar vein. It is formed mostly from solid blackrock, fused into the shape of a staff by the power of Pyros. At either end, it holds a Fire Gem, capped within the blackrock metal. The casting capacity of the Master's Staff is unknown, but it can cast Create Fire and cause explosions as well. I myself, becoming consumed with the idea that a more efficient, more powerful Focus was possible, crafted the most powerful Focus of all. Using the bones of Pyros's daemonic servants, I made a fine powder. Then mixing this powder with clay

and blood of said daemon, I fashioned a small replica of it skull with fire gems as its eyes. I baked it in the heat of lava, and it hardened to the strength of good masonry. With this talisman, I was able to summon daemons to do my bidding, and banished them with mere words. The wielder of this Focus should truly be considered the Master of the Enclave.

The Tongue of Flame

This object, named by Corodin, the first Master Sorcerer, has been handed down from Master to Master since the binding of Pyros. It is the key to the power of the Sorcerers. If you are reading this book, then most likely you are now the Master Sorcerer, having either outlived or killed the Master. As such I admonish you always to keep both this book and the Tongue in a safe place away from prying eyes!

The Tongue was used in the binding to house a portion of Pyros's being. This allows all Sorcerers to call upon his powers in ways that we have defined as spells. The rituals involved are used to provide protection for the Sorcerer creating the enchantment. Another power that the Tongue imparts to the one who wields it is the ability to amplify the power of spells and spell Foci. Perhaps its most important purpose is its ability to summon forth and banish Pyros himself. This is a truly dangerous exercise and requires four Acolytes, but the rewards can be great. His knowledge is often useful, and His power is seemingly limitless, as is His temper. Should He become free in this Ritual of Fire, as is quite possible, know that you have most likely doomed Morgaelin to a flaming death.

A final warning: Should the Tongue of Flame ever enter the Great Pentacle, the fate of all Pagans will be sealed. The Lord of Flame shall be rejoined with the power in the Tongue and as a result, He will be forever unbound.

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Steve Schwartz is a professional writer, computer expert, and psychologist. He has written about computer and home arcade games for more than 15 years and is the author of more than a dozen computer and game books. He is the author of *Battletoads: The Official Battlebook* and *Parent's Guide to Video Games* (both from Prima).

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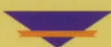
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Raymond Lueders has been tackling computer games for more than a dozen years. He is a freelance writer, graphic production artist, and the author of many books and magazine articles that contain in-depth solutions and precise gaming strategies.

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