

Shards of Moonlight

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A Jotun of the West Gamebook
Adventure

A Part of the Chronicles of Ardorell Adventure Series

Shards of Moonlight

**First Book in the Jotun of the West
Interactive Gamebook Series**

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Introduction

This book is an interactive fantasy gamebook adventure, and serves as both story and introduction. As a story it is the tale of a young warrior's first test of courage. As an introduction it brings to the reader the culture and histories of the Jotun, and more specifically the character of Tansen'Delving; youngest son of Agror'Delving, Chieftain of Kraal Delving and Consul of the Jotun of the West. Who he is, and the destiny that he must fulfil, plays an important role in the Chronicles of Arborell gamebook series. It seems fitting that the story of his journey from committed enemy of the Four Nations to their only ally is one that should be told. This book is the beginning of that story.

In this gamebook you are the main character, the success or failure of your quest determined entirely by the choices you make. The destiny of Tansen'Delving is completely in your hands. To get the most out of this gamebook please read carefully the rules and directions given below. Shards of Moonlight is a solitaire adventure with its own rule system, set in a world with its own unique histories and cultures. If you wish to learn more about the world of Arborell then all the information you will need can be found at www.arborell.com. Information specific to this gamebook can be found in the four appendices provided at the end of the adventure. We should begin however, by providing a short introduction on the nature of gamebooks; what they are, and how they should be used.

A gamebook is an adventure divided into many parts, a work of interactive fiction that allows you to make choices as to how you might wish to proceed within the story. You will combat those that stand in your way, collect artifacts and other items that may prove of use, and ultimately win through to your quest's end.

To read a gamebook in the same way as you might read a novel will make little sense. It is both a game and a book, where the endurance and skills of your character are every bit as important as the choices you make. It is important to note that even though this adventure has been designed to be read both on-screen, or as a printed copy, it still requires that you roll dice where necessary, and maintain a paper character sheet to record your character's progress. To enjoy Shards of Moonlight you will need the following items:

- two six-sided dice,
- a pencil or pen, and
- a printout of the character sheet provided at the end of this book.



To prepare properly for your quest you must first determine the rules of the game, how to create your character, how to combat your foes, and how to account for items found or decisions made. Once you are familiar with the rules and have created a character, you may then begin with the introductory section that sets the scene for the adventure to come. Each section of the story will give you options that you may take, combats to complete or questions that you must answer. It will be how well you play the game that will determine your ultimate success.

CHARACTER CREATION

Shards of Moonlight requires that you spend a small amount of time considering the attributes of the character you will be playing in the story. In this gamebook you are Tansen'Delving, most favoured son of Agror'Delving, Chieftain and Consul of the Jotun of the West. If you are unfamiliar with the world of Arborell, and the brutal nature of the Horde, then there is much information that can be found at the Chronicles of Arborell website and within the numerous books that makes up the chronicles themselves. Such information is not necessary to enjoy this adventure however.

The introduction to this book entitled "The Plains of Tor'eth" gives everything that will be needed to begin. I have included four appendices that provide additional information on the Jotun. One is a short history of the Horde, the other an oration by one of the greatest leaders of the Jotun of the West. The third recounts the history of the emurion'ka and its relationship to the Silvan Tree. The fourth appendix is a short telling of an old Jotun folktale. It has been included within these appendices due to a reference made to it in one of the sections of the story. These texts give a hint to the origins of the Jotun, and the motivations for their aggression against the men of the south. It will suffice to say that in this adventure you play the part of a Jotun, a three metre tall giant of the northlands of Arborell, and that you are far more than you seem. All the rest can be uncovered as you progress through the story.

You will find within this book a character sheet, provided as a pdf document and also available in a simple text format as well. This sheet provides you with space to determine your character attributes, keep notes on what you find on your quest, and record the combats you will be forced to complete if you are to be successful. Most important in your preparation for your quest is the consideration of your character attributes.

CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

At the top of the sheet you will find a list of five character attributes; strength, agility, endurance, luck and intuition. Your character has fifty character points that you must distribute between these five attributes. You will notice that each attribute has a set of numbers given in brackets next to them. This is the minimum and maximum limits that can be ascribed to each. For example, the strength attribute allows for a minimum number of character points of 5 and a maximum of 11. How strong you want your character to be will be determined by the number of points you give him within this attribute. All fifty points must be used, but they must be spread within the limits given for each. Distribute these points carefully. It is not only strength and endurance that will see you through this quest.

Once you have determined your character attributes the next step in developing your character is to choose two talents. These talents enhance certain aspects of your character's ability to complete this quest and should be chosen carefully. It is not mandatory that you do so, but you may choose two of the following ten talents. Write the talents you have chosen into your character sheet, and if you wish write the specific nature of these talents into the Notes section as a reminder.

CHARACTER Talents

1) Strength of Gedhru

A player with the Strength of Gedhru allows an automatic success for any Strength or Agility attribute test required if you are trying to climb, or drag yourself, out of a hole or pit. The traps and dangers that litter the ruins of the world are a constant threat to the success of any quest and a strong arm can save you from many of them.

2) Hamulkuk's Courage

This talent is for those who enjoy charging into combat without thinking, only to discover their opponent more than a match for them. If you choose to possess Hamulkuk's Courage you will obtain an advantage of +1 to your Combat Value purely due to your faith in your own abilities. This advantage lapses in each combat if you lose even one endurance point. A wound will automatically return your combat value to its normal level for the duration of that combat. Your next combat will find your Courage once again restored.

3) Back to the Wall

A character who possesses the Back to the Wall talent will gain a temporary +1 advantage to their Combat Value if fighting any creature whilst trapped in a room, dead-end or narrow ravine. If you are lucky enough to survive the combat, your Combat Value will return to its normal level once you have found a way out.

4) Beast Slayer

If you choose the Beast Slayer talent you will gain a +1 advantage to your Combat Value when fighting any creature other than Hordim or Man. Note that this talent cannot be chosen if you already have chosen the Hammer Focus or Vehmin Bane talents. Critical hit rules apply if you are facing any beast other than a Dragon and have selected this talent.

5) Vehmin Bane

A Jotun who possesses the Vehmin Bane talent will enjoy a +1 increase to Combat Value during all combats with any Man of the South. This talent cannot be chosen if you intend to choose either the Beast Slayer or Hammer Focus talents as well. Only one of these three talents can be used during any one adventure. Critical hit rules apply if you are facing any living Man and have selected this talent.

6) Leap of Fate

The Leap of Fate talent allows a player the opportunity to re-roll any three unsuccessful jumping attempts. This talent applies to any attribute test required as a part of a leap.

7) Skin of the Teeth

Choosing the Skin of the Teeth talent provides a player with the ability to survive a reduction of endurance points to zero or less. This talent allows you the opportunity to keep fighting after being reduced to zero in any combat, but for only as long as you win all further combat rounds in that fight. If an opponent can be defeated before your character is wounded any further you will survive, and be given 1 bonus endurance point to continue your quest.

8) Shaman in the Making

A Shaman in the Making exhibits unusual affinity to EarthMagic. This affinity is expressed in a heightened sense of intuition. This talent gives the player a +1 to their Intuition attribute and the ability to re-roll on any two failed intuition tests. If you already have 5 character points ascribed to your Intuition attribute it is within the rules to increase this attribute to 6 if you choose this talent. If this is the case all Intuition tests will automatically be successful and the ability to reroll is not necessary.

9) Hammer Focus

A Player who chooses Hammer Focus will have a +1 increase to Combat Value for as long as they wield a warhammer. If at any time a hammer is lost, or replaced with a more potent weapon, combat values must be returned to normal levels. Note: This talent cannot be chosen if you are intending to choose either Beast Slayer or Vehmin Bane talents. Critical hit rules apply if you are facing any living foe other than Dragons and have selected this talent.

10) Blessed by Providence

If the talent of Blessed by Providence is chosen you may re-roll any two failed luck tests during the course of your adventure. This talent cannot be chosen if you intend to choose the Leap of Fate talent as well. Only one of these can be chosen at a time.

Once you have finalised your choices regarding character attributes and talents you must then look to the completion of the remainder of your character sheet.



Combat value

Your character's combat value is one of his most important attributes. This value is determined by combining the strength and agility attributes you have given your character, adding any bonuses allowed from talents you may have chosen and then recording it on your character sheet. Although a high combat value is useful in the course of this adventure there will be times when you must rely on something other than brute strength to see you through. How combat value is used in the adventure is described later in this introduction.

Endurance points

Endurance points are the measure of how healthy your character remains as you progress through this adventure. When you have determined how many character points you wish to ascribe to this attribute record it on your character sheet. During the course of your quest your endurance points level can never exceed this initial value. They will however, decrease as you are injured in combat or fall victim to the traps and other dangers that will confront you. If your endurance level falls to zero then you have died, and it will be on another attempt that you must look to finishing your quest.

Notes

Whereas there are many gamebooks that provide separate spaces on their character sheets to record such information as artifacts found, treasure uncovered etc, Shards of Moonlight requires only that anything interesting found or identified on your quest be written into the notes section. You will find that you will visit specific places and converse with important entities, find some

items on your travels and record information for further reference. All this can be done in the notes section of your character sheet.

Jotun to English translations

There has been included on the character sheet a small section of translations of important Jotun words you will encounter on your quest. This is purely for your information only and should help as you begin to uncover the true nature of why you have been sent beyond the Alerion Gates.



Combat Resolution.

Depending on the choices you make in this adventure there will be times when you will need to defend yourself. Combat is resolved in the following manner:

- Record the combat value and endurance points of your opponent in one of the boxes provided on the character sheet.
- Roll two dice and add your combat value to what you have thrown. This is your combat strength for the round.
- Throw two dice and add it to your opponent's combat value. This is your adversary's combat strength for the round.
- Compare both combat strengths. The higher combat strength wins the round and an amount of endurance points must be taken from the loser's total endurance points. If the winner of the round has a combat strength four or more points higher than his opponent then he has struck a heavy blow and four endurance points must be taken. If the winner of the round wins by three points or less then he has struck a minor blow and only one endurance point need be deducted.
- Combat continues until either yourself or your opponent's endurance points fall to zero. At that time the combat is finished and one of you will be dead.

Critical hits on double rolls of 6.

The rules above apply for all combats conducted within this quest, however for a player who has chosen either Beast Slayer, Vehmin Bane or Hammer Focus talents a further rule applies. If at any time in the course of a combat you roll a double 6, and you possess any of the talents mentioned, then you have rolled a critical hit and will have killed your opponent outright. This advantage applies to all combats except when fighting Dreyadim or Dragons, or if the text specifically excludes this rule from the combat.

The Jotun Code of Honour

It is an important point to note that the Jotun of the West adhere to a strict honour code. When a combat is commenced they will not cease fighting until their opponent is dead or flees the field of battle. They do not run from any attack, and as has been proven in many battles against the Four Nations of Men, they do not leave any wounded behind. Entire cruets of Jotun warriors have fallen in defence of their wounded; and as is also the case with their greatest nemesis amongst Men, the Dwarvendim, they do not retreat from a position once a standard is planted by its bearer upon a field of battle. It is a truth of Jotun life that this code is enforced rigidly.

Testing your character's attributes

There will be times during your quest that one of your character's attributes may be tested. Whether it be your strength, agility, intuition or just pure luck you will be required to roll dice against them to determine if you have succeeded or failed. It is a straightforward test. If you are required to test against your strength for example, you will be required to roll two dice and then compare the number rolled against your strength attribute. If the number you rolled is the same or less than your strength points then you have passed the test and can proceed according to the options given for being successful. If you roll higher than your strength attribute then you have failed the test and another path in the story will open for you. All attributes except endurance can be tested. Apart from your strength attribute, all other attributes are tested with a single die.

Note: In this rule system attributes are not reduced each time they are tested. Apart from endurance, which will vary according to the combats you complete, all attributes remain at their initial starting values for the duration of the adventure.

Nahla Cakes

In the world of Arborell the Nahla tree is of great importance to both Man and Hordim. It is said that the fruit of the Nahla is so powerful as a recuperative medicine that even the smallest amount can increase health and vitality. For centuries travellers of the realms and wastelands of the world have used Nahla fruit to sustain them on arduous journeys. For the Men of the Four Nations, Nahla Bread is the preferred method of preserving the power of the fruit for long journeys. For the Hordim it is Nahla Cakes.

On your journey you have in your possession three Nahla Cakes. Each may be eaten at any time on your quest and each will restore up to one dice roll of endurance points. When you decide you need to bolster your health, roll one dice and add that number to your endurance points. The only restrictions in their use is that they cannot be eaten during combat, and no matter what number you roll, your total endurance points can never exceed their initial value.

Starting your adventure

When you have completed your character sheet, and are satisfied with the distribution of your character points you are ready to begin. Shards of Moonlight begins in the warmth of high summer upon the Plains of Tor'eth. You need only turn the page.

The Plains of Tor'eth

In the rising shimmer of a hot afternoon the two figures waited, their forms distorted in the rippling heat of the day. About them the barren plains spread to the horizon in every direction and upon this featureless expanse one stood, the other bent upon his knee as he studied the ground at his feet. Both were quiet, the breeze that blew in gusts from the west spreading small drifts of dirt and sand around their heavy boots. There was not a sound to be heard, only the bluster of the wind disturbing the solitude of their thoughts. It was a silence that could only last a short time.

"Why are we here Old One?", asked the younger, his voice impatient.

The older of the two stood and looked at his companion. For three days they had travelled into the south, far into the borderlands that separated their people from the Nations of Men. They were in no danger but it had been an arduous journey, one the younger of the two would have preferred not to make. The older straightened and brushed dirt from his hands.

"You may be the favoured son of our Chief, but I will tell you Tansen'Delving that I am nobody's "Old One". Whilst I live you will address me as Shan'dari, Shaman of Kraal Delving and your superior in all things." He finished wiping his hands and bent to retrieve his travelling pack. Then he turned to the other and smiled.

"Of course, when I am dead you can call me anything you like."

The younger laughed and shook his head in dismay. He knew he was not going to get a straight answer out of the old conjuror, and the Fates knew he had tried enough in the preceding days. Of all his father's command staff he enjoyed the company of the Shaman the most. There were mysteries in the old goat's head that could not be fathomed, and knowledge that only he was privy to. What they were doing in such a desolate place was something only his father and the Shan'dari knew. It was knowledge he was going to find out. He was not going to give up.

"Enough of your diversions magic-weaver. We have travelled further south than is wise and yet you still will not tell me why we are here. Am I being punished for some unforeseen transgression?"

The Shaman looked to the south and placed his large hands over his brow, shading his eyes from the light of the suns above.

"You think you are being punished? How do you think I feel having to endure your whining for the last three days. Can you not trust that Fate will bring such knowledge to you in its own good time?"

Tansen'Delving pulled at the straps of his pack and remained quiet. There would be other opportunities, but he could tell the Shaman's patience was wearing thin.

"Where to now then?"

"South of course. I can tell you that we are making for the Spires. It is there that the reasons for your journey will be revealed."

Together they set off, making a southerly heading for the curious landmark known to the Delving Jotun as the Spires. Tansen had heard of them but had never been far enough south to see them for himself. If nothing else the journey will have been worth the trouble just for a chance to see the monoliths.

Ahead the ground spread as a series of undulating hills, shallow and devoid of any plant life, as sterile and as unappealing as any other part of the borderlands. Tansen had discovered quickly however, that even in such a place life had found a foothold, and as he walked beside the Shaman he searched the ground ahead for tracks or other sign. He was getting hungry and something fresh would be preferable to the Nahla cake they had been forced to live on whilst on this endless journey.

The afternoon wore on, and as the twin suns drifted into the west, the two Jotun watched the ground ahead. It was the younger that saw the summits of the Spires first. They appeared black

against the deep blue of the late afternoon but in the distance between them he could see little more. The Shaman nodded his approval and looked to the lowering suns.

"Good. We should reach the base of the Spires by midnight. It is there we must wait and then your questions will be answered."

Shan'dari turned again to the south and continued. He said nothing more. For his part he did not like what he was about to do. The Chieftain's son was a good friend, and although the prophecies had been very specific as to who must go, he could not help but feel that he was sending the young Tansen into something he was ill-prepared for. Prophecy could not be argued with however. It just was.

Beneath a darkening sky the two travellers made their way south. Ahead of them the Spires rose slowly, the forms of three distinct rock formations growing in the gloom. The excitement on Tansen's face belied the anxiety that was starting to find its way into his thoughts. There was good sense in the old Jotun saying that secrets travelled with danger as their silent partner. Whatever the reasons for their journey he knew they would be found at the base of these giant towers of stone.

The two Jotun rested for a short time at dusk, eating a small meal and making observances to the setting suns. It always meant good fortune if prayers and sacrifice could be made prior to an important event. Tansen gave up a measure of his blood to ensure his own good fortune. The Shaman burned grain and supplicated himself to the setting suns before they both again turned to their journey. Together they found new energy in the cool of the night, and under a dome of blazing stars moved silently towards the rocks ahead.

Shan'dari watched his young charge moving in the gloom ahead of him, his powerful form running strong across the wasteland, sure and confident as he forged his way southwards. It occurred to the old Shaman, and not for the first time, that the boy had the makings of a great chieftain. One who could bring the disparate Kraals of the Jotuni together and fulfil the prophecies that had been given to them so many years before. It was up to the vagaries of Fate now however. He had done all he could to ensure the young warrior's safety. Now it would be up to Tansen himself to survive the night.

Together they ran the remaining distance to the base of the Spires.



In the hour before midnight the two Jotun reached their goal and took refuge at the base of the largest of the great rock formations. Reaching more than three hundred metres into the air, it stood out on the plain as a massive stone finger pointing into the heavens, weathered and beaten by exposure but unbowed by the march of time. Tansen fell to the ground and reached for his water-bag, his chest heaving with the exertion of the run. It felt good to be so fatigued but he was losing what patience remained to him.

"Now Shaman, we have reached the Spires and it is time for you to tell me why we are here."

Shan'dari stood bent before the younger Jotun, his hands placed firmly on his knees as he tried to regain his breath. He motioned to his charge to wait and tried to straighten himself. He was getting too old for such things but his duty was clear. When he had recovered sufficiently he pulled Tansen to his feet and without warning struck him with a closed fist across the head, sending him reeling sideways against the face of the rock at his back.

Tansen did not react nor return the favour. To lay a hand on the son of a chieftain meant certain death, unless the act had been sanctioned by his father. He waited instead for the Shaman to explain himself.

Shan'dari saw the surprise in the boy's face but nodded his approval at his lack of action. He could see in his charge's eyes the need to understand what was happening, not blindly retaliate as a Jotun of lesser standing might. He was ready.

"Tansen'Delving, you are the son of a Chief, heir to the authority and responsibility of your Kraal and the wealth of its chattels. On this night you are to undergo your deskai, your Right of Passage. Listen to your better as you are told of the task you must perform."

Tansen took a step forward and made move to speak, his mind full of questions, but the Shaman hit him once again with such force that he fell to the ground.

"Do not speak son of Agror'Delving. It is not your time to question what is about to happen, only to listen, and do that which is asked of you." The Shaman dragged Tansen back to his feet and pointed into the south.

"Before the foothills of the Great Rift can be found two broken arches of stone, mighty in their aspect and known to the peoples of this world as the Alerion Gates. They guard the entrance to a wide valley, which we call the Shattereen, which in its turn opens into a series of lesser canyons in the mountains behind. Somewhere within the confines of these defiles can be found the Temple of the Moons. It is your task to find the temple and drink from its well. You have the remainder of this night to do so. This is your test, your deskai. Succeed, and I will be here waiting for your return. Fail, and the exile of these barren plains will be yours until you draw your last breath."

Shan'dari turned his back and stared at the rocky ground at his feet. There could be no more words between them until Tansen returned. The young Jotun stood for a moment and then went to say something but held his tongue. He knew that his initiation as a warrior of the Jotun of the West had begun and there could be no appeal, no turning from the deskai he had been given. Quietly he grabbed his warhammer and waistbag and turned towards the south. He had no idea where the Temple of the Moons resided, nor what dangers might lie between himself and the completion of his task, but he was of the Jotuni and for a warrior nothing was impossible.

The old Shaman watched as his charge ran into the night, taking nothing with him but his weapon, a few Nahla cakes in a bag, and the burden of his honour. The boy was still two winters from the time when he should normally take the deskai and prove himself a warrior. The son of Agror'Delving was no ordinary child however. If the prophecy of his ancestors was to be fulfilled then Tansen must take the challenge now and do what no other Jotun had done before; find the Temple of the Moons and drink of its dark waters. The Shaman looked to the diminishing figure and knew also that in the dark recesses of the Great Rift a far greater destiny loomed before the young Jotun, but that was something he would need to discover for himself.

In the cool of the evening Shan'dari found a comfortable nook within the base of the Spire and settled to wait for the return of his charge. The boy had no idea what he was about to confront, or what he might find beyond the gloom of the Alerion Gates, he had only to survive it.

Turn to section 1.

Sections

1

In the solitude of the wastelands your form is a swift shadow running across the undulations of the dunes. Under a sky of burning stars you run onwards, your only companion the wind and the sure knowledge that there can be no failure in the completion of your task. Ahead lies the crumbling stone of the Alerion Gates and the unknown dangers that lay beyond them, but the possibility of failure is your only concern. You have been given your deskai, and until you have drunk from the well of the Temple of the Moons you will not stop, nor shirk from any danger placed before you. You are a Jotun of the West, and for your people no task is too great, or too dangerous.

You have not been given much time though. Whatever might lay beyond the Gates will not allow for an easy passage. The deskai has been chosen to test the limits of a warrior's strength and bravery and you cannot see that such a test will be anything other than lethal. It is a possibility that has your blood pounding at your temples as you run.

In the shadows of the night there are doubts that cannot be disregarded however. The customs of your people should have left your deskai until the passing of at least two more cycles of the seasons. No Jotun is told of the time of his trials, but you have never heard of anyone having been brought so far south to complete them. In your mind you know there is reason to the old Shaman's machinations and it is clear that he acts with the authority of your father, but whatever the reasoning you know that you are up to the challenge. Whatever this deskai might have in store there is nothing that you, or the power of your warhammer, will not be able to overcome.

The hour after midnight passes as you come to a halt before the Alerion Gates. Against a dark sky they stand as two broken pillars of stone reaching upwards to the stars. In a more ancient time they would have formed an arch, meeting at a point some one hundred and fifty metres overhead, but as you stand breathing hard from the exertion of your run they loom above you as fractured outcrops of rock barely recognisable as the artifice of skilled hands. You pause for a moment and listen to the night, regaining your breath as the winds of the plains blow drifts of sand about the base of the gates. It is then that you see a length of old wood jammed into a crack in the base of the Gate. About a metre in length it is unremarkable except for the tightly coiled red string that binds one end, and the three white feathers tied loosely to its wrappings.

Do you wish to take this piece of wood? If so, go to section 31. If you would rather leave it where it is turn to section 18. If you choose you may also test against your intuition attribute. If you pass the test turn to section 24. If you fail this test you will need to make up your own mind and choose one of the previous two options.

2

The slopes prove quickly to be a difficult terrain to traverse. Littered with huge boulders, and cut at many points by loose areas of broken rock and dirt, you find yourself labouring against an unsafe footing that threatens to slide from beneath you. Uppermost in your mind is the time limit set for the completion of your deskai and keeping to the edges of these hills is taking up far too much of it. For a moment you consider what you should do but then circumstances are taken out of your hands.

From high overhead you hear the rush of wings and instinctively you crouch down against the hillside. There are many flying creatures in the world but only one can send a cold shiver along the spine of a Jotun. Against the stars above a shadow is moving swiftly, speeding across the sky as it searches for prey amongst the canyons and defiles of the foothills. It is a Rift Dragon, the

largest and most vicious predator of the Great Rift. Such serpents are huge creatures that can grow to more than eighty metres in length. You have no doubt that if it sees you it will kill you.

Quietly you lay still upon the incline. It is known that these Dragons spot their prey in the dark with senses attuned to both movement and sound, and there is a slim chance that if you remain perfectly still it will pass you by. As you lay against the slope you watch as the creature glides easily through the night air, following a wide arc that tightens in ever decreasing spirals above you. It must have seen you before but now cannot find you against the backdrop of the crumbling hillside. For more than ten minutes you remain motionless as the Dragon circles overhead. It is long enough that you begin to wonder if this is to be your fate, unable to complete your deskai as the serpent hovers mockingly above, unable to move until the rising of the suns sends it home to its lair. Still, you console yourself, it has not seen you, yet.

It is as these thoughts test your patience that you begin to feel something happening about you. You lay still upon the slope but there is movement beneath you, an imperceptible sliding sensation that quickly gains momentum. Too late you realise that the hillside is slipping away around you.

In a flurry of crashing rock, and speeding waves of moving dirt, you find yourself unable to do anything but move with the flow of the slope as it picks up speed, racing towards the valley floor below. Caught within its grasp you do not notice the form of the Rift Dragon alter its course and speed towards your position, all you can do is try and remain on top of the flowing debris and not be engulfed within it. It takes only seconds for the slide to hit level ground, and within its leaden embrace you are quickly swallowed up.

Through clouds of choking dust the dark form of the Dragon settles upon the valley floor, its talons raking the dirt-mounds of the slide trying to find you. Within the smothering piles of fallen stone you lay unable to move, the life slowly being crushed from your body as the Dragon digs through the rubble. For long minutes it seeks you out but luck is with you this night for the serpent cannot find you. With a screech of frustration the great beast beats its wings and rises once again into the sky, its shadowed bulk quickly lost to the darkness. So close it had come to finding you but inadvertently it has saved your life. Caught beneath the suffocating blanket of tonnes of debris you had no chance of saving yourself. Even as you lay smothering to death the frantic search of the Rift Dragon has moved enough of the rock and earth to allow you to push your way out of its lethal embrace. In a grasping heave you force your head and one shoulder out of the debris. At least for now you are alive.

Cursing the vagaries of fortune you struggle out of the remains of the slide and try and determine where you have ended up. All about you are deep tears in the ground where the Dragon had been looking for you, and you do not realise it until you move that you are standing in the beast's footprint. Your position is easy to determine though. Your rough descent has left you within the western canyon only a short distance from its entry into the Shattereen beyond.

You brush yourself down and realise that you have suffered an injury to your side, a wide gash that spills blood down your waist and leg. (Roll one dice and deduct what you have rolled from your endurance points.) Quickly you bind the wound with strips of cloth from your leggings and determine what you should do next. Will you continue down the western canyon? If so turn to section 57. If you would rather go back and try another of the canyons turn to section 90.



3

The amphitheatre spreads as a wide semicircle of weathered platforms, each level a jagged slope of worn rock that must have once held the seating for this arena. It now stands as a desolate, crumbling structure and there seems little point in searching its worn levels. You have a feeling though that something may be found here. You need only look in the right place.

Test your Luck attribute. If you are successful turn to section 39. If you are unsuccessful then there is nothing to find here but you have two options open to you. You may read the plaque in the arena by turning to section 96, or decide that there is nothing here for you and make your way back up the canyon by turning to section 11.

4

Within this area of open ground you find little but the song of the wind blowing along the slopes at all sides, and three canyons that spread like fingers from the palm of a monstrous hand before you. One canyon opens as a huge rift in the stone at your left, a cragged defile that runs into the east and unfathomable shadow. Before you opens another canyon, its winding passages disappearing into the south, and another to your right, opening up into the west. Carefully you survey the terrain about you but there is nothing in the sands that gives any clue as to where you should go next.

It is as you consider these options that a fragment of sound wrapped within the bluster of the wind takes a hold of your attention. Crouching upon the open ground you listen intently, a feeling of foreboding growing as you wait in the darkness. There is something in the night and it is close. Without moving you give all your attention to the shadows and it is only in a moment when the bluster ebbs that you catch a rumour of movement overhead. Looking up you find your worst fears betrayed as a large, dark shadow moves against the stars.

Quietly you watch as a Rift Dragon glides silently overhead. It is a monstrous beast that hunts upon the cold nights of the northern mountains, and one that you know has no qualms at taking Oera'dim for an easy meal. But in the darkness it must find you first. You are exposed upon the plain, however these Dragons use movement and sound to detect their prey. If you are lucky and remain still the beast will pass you by, its attention to be given to prey that is unaware of its presence. At least that is your hope.

For some minutes the Dragon circles the edges of the Shattereen, the easy strokes of its wings as it searches the ground giving no hint to the ferocious and lethal nature of its hunt. Within the darkness of the valley floor you do not move, your only option to wait for the creature to move on. It is only after a careful search of the valley that the Dragon turns into the south and disappears into the night. For a further time you remain quiet, unsure as to its ability to detect your presence if you move. Only when you feel sure that the beast has made it to the peaks beyond do you rise and thank the Fates that it has gone. Such a creature is one not to be trifled with.

With sweat rolling off your back you look again to your quest. What you seek must lay within one of these three canyons and there is no time for indecision.

If you wish to search the eastern canyon turn to section 10. If you find the southern canyon a better possibility turn to section 28. If it is to the west that you believe the Temple of the Moons can be found turn to section 57.

5

Quickly you search the Ranger's body. He is clothed in a tight fitting leather uniform and a black travelling cloak but there is little else. You do find in a small pouch at his waist belt two pieces of stale Nahla bread and a small globe of steel with a curious lever on its upper surface.

If you wish to take the Nahla bread record this within the notes section of your character sheet. Each of the pieces of bread will restore two endurance points to your endurance level if you choose to eat them. The steel globe looks far more interesting. If you wish to take it, turn to section 101. If you do not wish to take the device and would rather continue on your path back to the Shattereen turn to section 63.

6

In the dark the shadowy form waits and then slowly moves towards you. You have been discovered. There can now be no further advantage to your concealment and as the Ranger's sword flashes from its sheath you bring your own weapon to hand and rise from the gloom of your cover. For a moment the vehmin pauses in his advance, as if he is judging how hard a kill you will be, and then advances again. Without a word you come together and the combat begins.

The Ranger is no easy adversary. With a combat value of 14 and endurance points of 18 it will take all the strength and skill at your disposal to best him. If you win this combat turn to section 14. If you lose turn to section 34.

7

You stand before the flames and consider what you must now do. Before you the conflagration burns brightly, but as you watch the first sliver of a doubt works its way into your thoughts. In the barren recesses of this canyon there is precious little to burn, and although the fire seems to be erupting from a wide fracture in the ground you notice that none of the earth surrounding the rift is either scorched or smoking. It grows in your mind that this may not be a fire at all, perhaps it is nothing but illusion.

Quickly you tear a small strip of cloth from your leggings and roll it into a tight ball. There is heat arising from the flames but you are not so sure that it can do you harm. With a flick of your wrist you toss the ball of cloth onto the edge of the flames and wait to see what happens. To your surprise the cloth lies unharmed, the fires raging only a finger's width from where it fell. That is good enough for you. Without any further delay you walk into the flames and stand in the midst of the conflagration. Rather than the agonies of immolation you find instead some heat but not enough to cause you harm. It is indeed an illusion, a clever one, but an illusion nonetheless.

For whatever reason these fires were placed as a barrier before you, but they will delay you no further. With the fires at your back you look down the canyon and take a deep breath. Time waits for no Jotun and you have spent enough of it here already.

Turn to section 88.

8

The Rift Dragon is a persistent beast. Such a predator hunts at night and it will not end its search until the suns of morning rise in the east. You cannot afford to waste time waiting for it to move on. From your position within the shadows of the huge boulder you watch as the beast moves along the canyon, sniffing out the wind as it searches the ground, looking for some sign of its prey. When it is out of sight you make your move.

Carefully you stand and unlimber muscles cramped by inactivity. There is no way forward so you move off at the run, making your way back up the canyon, your hope that the Dragon is now far enough away that it will not sense your presence. In the dark there is a good chance you can get away with it, but there is also the possibility that you are now doing exactly what the creature needed you to do.

Out of the black sky overhead the Rift Dragon swoops down upon you. In an instant its talons gouge their way into your back, tearing your shoulders apart. Such is the power of the blow that you do not even register the pain before you fall into oblivion. Within the claws of this beast you die, your lifeless corpse just another tasty morsel for a predator that cares nothing for your deskai.

THE END



In a fury of flashing talons and razor-sharp teeth you fight the beast, wielding your warhammer with all the power you can muster. The Rift Dragon holds no fear of you, its jaws slashing out in an attempt to deliver a quick and lethal bite. In the gloom of the canyon's interior the Dragon is a vast dark shape, blocking the width of the defile with its bulk as it advances upon you. It seems to have no doubt that you will be an easy meal.

For all its confidence it does not count on the reach of your hammer, nor the strength you can bring to bear upon it. Your first blow strikes the serpent upon the lower jaw, breaking two of its teeth and sending a shower of blood across the canyon. Startled it backs up, pawing at the injury with its talons before letting out a shriek of frustration. Like a living avalanche the beast charges once again and in its anger throws both of its arms out in sweeping arcs of exposed talon. In a flurry of wing and claw you block the blows as best you can but are swept up in the power of the charge and thrown backwards into the dirt. Quickly you get back to your feet and await the next assault.

The Dragon has been hurt more than you can at first see. Its front teeth lay shattered and it is dazed by the impact but it still has fight in it. Again it advances upon you, its claws raking the broken earth in its fury. You stand your ground, and as it is about to strike you bring all the strength you have to one great swing of your hammer. Across the elbow joint of its forearm your weapon smashes into bone and scale. In the night air you hear the joint snap and the limb go limp as the Dragon rolls to the side and away from your position. Quickly you jump out of its way as it thrashes in the dirt trying to regain its footing. For the Dragon this is enough.

Nursing its wounded limb the great beast howls at the night sky before beating its wings and rising into the air. You watch as the Rift Dragon disappears into the dark masses of the mountains in the south and then you collapse to the ground, shouting obscenities at its retreating form. But your bravado cannot disguise the fact that you have been very lucky. You wipe something from the corner of your mouth and then realise that you are covered in the blood of the Dragon. It could have been so easily your own.

Once you have taken time for rest you stand and consider the way ahead. The Dragon is gone and the canyon is once again clear. With your hammer slick with the blood of your foe you slide it back into its fastening and continue on your way through the fractured defile that is your path southwards. It is as you make your way forward that you find the canyon forking in two directions. The main canyon heads south, a smaller defile forces its way westwards.

Will you continue on down the main canyon? If this is your choice turn to section 30. If you would rather see what might be found on the narrower path turn to section 87.

10

As you approach the eastern canyon's wide entrance you are struck by the crumbled state of its high walls. Fractured and broken cliffs stretch for some distance before disappearing into the gloom, and in the feeble light the open maw before you is as dark and unfathomable as a pit. This is however, the choice you have made and you do not hesitate as you run into its dark recesses. Quickly you are swallowed up in the shadows, but from the east comes some small consolation. The moons of your world are edging the horizon, and even as you traverse the broken ground before you it is possible to see the first hints of their light illuminating the long winding defiles of the canyon ahead.

As you run you take the time to think back on the directions given by your mentor Shan'dari. It is your task to find the Temple of the Moons and drink from its well. It seems a simple task but you cannot allow yourself to believe this to be true. There has always been a sting in the old Shaman's words and you know he is not one to allow for an easy deskai. You must remain alert to the possibility that there is far more to this trial than that which he has alluded to.

The canyon reaches deep into the stone of the foothills and with the slowly rising moons the difficult nature of the ground is soon apparent. Landslides and the action of wind and rain have left the canyon broken and decrepit. Flows of debris block much of your way ahead and as you struggle over these formidable barriers it is evident that there is much that could be hidden here. Deep crevasses reach from the main canyon and within these defiles no light penetrates. It is in your mind however, that the stories you have heard of the Temple describe it as a formidable structure, one that must require considerable space. None of the defiles seem important enough to investigate and you continue on, scrambling over huge mounds of broken stone as you make your way eastwards.

Turn to section 94.

11

Without hesitating you make your way back up the canyon, your form a swift shadow as you follow the jagged defile back towards the Shattereen. As you run your thoughts linger on what remains of your quest, and you realise you have much still to do. You have not yet found the Temple of the Moons and you are mindful that the night wears on, the rotation of the heavens inexorably marching towards sunrise. In the dark it is easy to assume that danger lies behind every turn but you cannot afford caution. Quickly you pass beyond the silent form of the Reaver and move further down the ravine. At a point some two-thirds of the way back to the Shattereen you see a body on the canyon floor. From its position it looks like it has fallen from the heights above. Half hidden by a slide of desiccated earth the black-clad body sprawls awkwardly against the rock face at your left.

If you have previously fought with a Ranger of the Watch on the slopes above the Shattereen turn to section 48. If you have not yet fought with that vehmin turn to section 97.

12

With the wind blowing down the canyon and the fire brightening with every bluster you traverse the canyon wall. It is a hard climb, one that taxes your skill and one which leaves you weakened for the exertion, but it is a climb you complete safely. From within the break in the ground the fires writhe and twist in the wind, great bursts of heat rising into the air as its flames strengthen. You try at first to find a path along the canyon wall but it proves too dangerous. Instead you make for the lip of the canyon and climb out onto what proves to be a thin plateau of

ancient stone that lies at the base of series of steep foothills. In the distance the overbearing peaks of the Rift Mountains gleam in the moonlight.

From your position on the lip of the canyon you can see that your only option is to follow the line of the stone's edge for a short distance and then climb back down into its shadows. The descent proves considerably more difficult than the ascent but after some careful footwork you make it back to the floor of the canyon. The fires are now behind you, the remainder of the canyon spreads ahead as a series of jagged turns and corners. In the ruddy light of the flames you move forward.

Turn to section 88.



13

The fortress stands as an impassable barrier, one that you cannot overcome. Frustrated by such a circumstance you think quickly on what you should do. You cannot go any further but there must be an answer to this cold stone barrier. Whoever made it must have provided a way to enter, it has just been cunningly hidden and is beyond your knowledge to find. With nothing to lose you search the stone along the base of the wall but find no sign of hidden doorways or mechanisms. The canyon walls at either side give up no secret entrances and once you are done you are convinced that no answers lay here. If you are to find a way through the key must reside elsewhere. For the moment you have met a dead-end.

Quickly you retrace your steps back to the fork in the canyon and look down into the gloom of the smaller defile that runs into the west. You have not been this way yet and there is little enough time left to your quest. Perhaps you have missed something within its depths?

If you wish to make your way down this smaller defile turn to section 87. If however, you see no value in this and would like to return to the Shattereen turn to section 115.

14

The combat is a brutal contest, the Ranger a skilled adversary who does not fall until you strike him a lethal blow to the chest. This is your first combat against a vehmin and you are surprised by how difficult it was to put the man down. He fought well and you thank the Fates for the training the old Shaman had given you. In the aftermath of battle you stand over his body, breathing heavily in the darkness, your breath fogging outwards in the cold air. But you cannot remain here. The Rangers of the Watch act alone but there are many of them, and you know that your approach will bring more of them looking for you. This vehmin will not be the only one on the move this night.

For a moment you consider if you should do anything with the body. If this creature had been a Jotun he would be given a warrior's burial but you do not have the time nor the inclination for the sacred rituals. Instead you decide to return here if you survive your deskai, and make preparation for the release of his spirit to his ancestors. It is the least you can do for a fellow warrior.

It is as you consider the Ranger's torn body that a fragment of sound wrapped within the bluster of the wind takes a hold of your attention. Crouching upon the barren slope you listen intently, a feeling of foreboding growing as you wait in the darkness. There is something in the night and it is close. Without moving you give all your attention to the shadows and it is only in a moment when

the bluster ebbs that you catch a rumour of movement overhead. Looking up you find your worst fears betrayed as a large, dark shadow moves against the stars.

Quietly you watch as a Rift Dragon glides silently overhead. It is a monstrous beast that hunts upon the cold nights of the northern mountains, and one that you know has no qualms at taking Oera'dim for an easy meal. But in the darkness it must find you first. You are exposed upon the hillside, however these Dragons use movement and sound to detect their prey. If you are lucky and remain still the beast will pass you by, its attention to be given to prey that is unaware of its presence. At least that is your hope.

For some minutes the Dragon circles the edges of the Shattereen, the easy strokes of its wings as it searches the ground giving no hint to the ferocious and lethal nature of its hunt. In the shadows of the outcrop you make no sound, your only option to wait for the creature to move on. It is only after a careful search of the valley that the Dragon turns into the south and disappears into the night. For a further time you remain quiet, unsure as to its ability to detect your presence if you move. Only when you feel sure that the beast has made it to the peaks beyond do you rise and thank the Fates that it has gone. Such a creature is one not that should be confronted alone.

Quickly you pull the Ranger's body into the shadows beneath the rock outcrop and make your way back to the valley floor. The Temple resides somewhere within this barren landscape and you must start your search.

Will you make for the eastern canyon? If this is your choice turn to section 10. If you choose to take the southern canyon turn to section 28. If the canyon to the west seems the better prospect turn to section 57.

15

In the few moments of opportunity that remain you know what it is you must do. Carefully you approach the pool and look at the sword. It is the emurion'ka, the Light of the World, and for reasons you cannot fathom it has been given to you. In this dark place you need only reach for it and it will be yours.

In the back of your mind however, the words of the Oracle are clear. The emurion'ka will only remain whilst the moonlight illuminates the pool, and until the sword is grasped by its hilt and pulled into your existence it is but a reflection, one that can easily be dissipated if you disturb the waters below it. Carefully you reach for the stonewood sword but the pool is wide, the sword poised high above the still waters. It is just out of reach.

Turn to section 80a.

16

In the darkness that envelops the canyon floor you fend off the blows of the Ranger and counter-attack, throwing him backwards into the dirt. In one fluid motion the black-clad vehmin rolls back to his feet and attacks again, slashing downwards with his sword as he rushes you. You have no doubt that this is going to be a hard-fought contest but you do not have the time nor the patience for a long battle. The Ranger is a skilled opponent however you have the advantage of reach and you use it. With one sweeping blow you crush the man's knee and send him crashing to the ground. One further blow and the Ranger topples sideways, his shoulder and neck broken by a deadly stroke he cannot defend against. It is a combat that is over before he knew what hit him.

Quickly you search the body but find nothing of value to your quest. At a less pressing time you would take the time to bury the warrior's body and send him to his ancestors in a fitting manner, but now provides no opportunity. Instead you draw blood and inscribe your name across his forehead, so that if any of his brethren should find him they will know who it was who prevailed here. Let them come for you if they must. You will be glad to oblige them as well.

Once you have finished you retrieve your hammer and continue on down the defile. It is a desolate place, one that provides little comfort, and as you run it is only the rising moons that provide any light on your progress. Against the horizon they shine as silver lamps in the blackness of the night and you are grateful for their illumination. More so, in fact, when you see the unexpected sight of the ground shifting ahead of you. Upon the canyon floor the sand and dirt moves in a patch of turned earth, this slight trembling a clue to something lurking beneath.

The shifting ground lays as a wide barrier that you will need to cross. Will you carefully move to traverse the ground? If this is your choice turn to section 32. If you would rather test the ground first by throwing a stone onto its moving sands turn to section 52.

17

Your thirst is great and the water appears fresh and clear. Carefully you submerge your cupped hands into its volume and drink deeply of the cool liquid, rubbing your face clean as you do so. In an instant you feel something tingling within you, a strange energy that grows from the centre of your body and then spreads along your arms and legs. Fatigue and injury seems to fall away as the water works quickly at the core of your being. Startled by the sudden flash of power that now circles like a vortex through your body you try and back away, but find that your feet are rooted firmly to the floor of the pool. You cannot move and the power now surges through your body, anchoring you in the waters as it does its work.

There is no chance that you can escape until whatever it is that holds you chooses to let go, and it has not finished with you yet. Into your mind the energy surges, flooding your thoughts with images and voices, insinuating its way into the folds of your mind. Suddenly the world around you changes, the tree no longer a silent form in the darkness. Instead it shines brightly, throwing back the darkness and gleaming with the light of a thousand burning stars. In an attempt to cover your eyes you bring up your arm but realise that the images are in your mind, and you are captive to them until the Tree itself decides to release you. Then you hear the voice.

"Tansen'Delving," its proclaims in your mind, "Welcome to Fael'nirion, the Well of Dreams. I see it in your mind that you are here to find the Temple of the Moons and for this cause I have been awakened to help you. You look for the Temple but know not where it might be. I am here to tell you where it can be found, and offer the key that will allow you access to its gate."

The voice is loud in your thoughts, a trumpeting chorus that cannot be shut out. You try and break free of its bonds but it has you and it will not let go.

"The Temple of the Moons can only be found beyond the walls of Nem'haleen. If you are to find Rinfalen's Gate and gain entry to the Temple then you will need the key to Nem'haleen. The Powers of this world have decided that you, Tansen'Delving of Kraal Delving, are to be the instrument of their will, and in their wisdom they have decided that the key must be yours."

As the words echo in your thoughts you begin to see the Tree before you change. As ice might melt in the heat of the day the Tree dissolves away, falling into the black depths of the pool's waters. Immediately a light grows within its stillness and you begin to make out shapes and forms. The voice of the Well of Dreams continues as a parade of images pass through the water.

"Nem'haleen can be found in the south, beyond the causeway that brought you here and deep within the canyon you have previously turned from. It is known that the last of the Trell'sara died upon the walls of that fortress, and that his heart was cut from his living body as a token of the new freedom earned for the Oera'dim. That heart has been held here for millennia, the only relic of a people that have passed from all knowledge and existence. It is the Coer'danith, the Heart of the Lost that is your pass beyond the walls of Nem'haleen. It is the will of the Powers that it be given to you."

Out of the centre of the pool a red glow brightens then emerges from its waters. It is the red gem that you saw embedded in the Tree and as you watch it floats in your direction, settling carefully in the palm of your hand.

"The Coer'danith is the key that will let you pass beyond the walls that will bar your way Tansen'Delving. Guard it carefully, there will be no hope for the success of your deskai without it."

With these last words the pool grows quiet. For a short time you stand transfixed in the waters but slowly you feel the power of the Well of Dreams leave you. In your hand you hold the Heart of the Lost and this has not been the greatest boon given to you this night. You now know where the Temple of the Moons is to be found. Now you have a path to follow and no reason to delay.

You turn on your heel and leave the Well of Dreams. In your hand you hold the Coer'danith, the Heart of the Lost, and this must be recorded on your character sheet. The waters of the Well have also restored six endurance points to your character. Record this as well, but remember you cannot exceed your initial endurance level. When this has been done it is time to continue your adventure by turning to section 92.

18

Although it is curious that the piece of wood should be displayed in such a fashion you see no reason to encumber yourself with it. Ahead lies the object of your quest and you cannot delay any further. At the run you head southwards, a wide opening in the foothills ahead your objective. If Shan'dari is correct this is the valley that you must find if you are to begin your search for the Temple of the Moons. It is an unforgiving landscape that you hasten towards.

In the dark the mountains are jagged teeth, wrapped within deep shadows that harbour both danger and death. About you there is no movement, only the wind playing its eternal game with the sands of the plains. It is quiet but you are wary nonetheless. The mountains of the Great Rift are the home of the Rangers of the Watch, and within the gloom of the great peaks you know that your progress is being noted. There is only one barrier between the Jotun of the West and the vehmin of the Four Nations to the south, and it is not the cold stone of these mountains. It is the Rangers who patrol the narrow trails and passes of the Great Rift that keep the Jotun at bay, and any hordim who underestimates their tenacity is doomed to a warrior's death at the hands of a merciless enemy.

It takes a further hour for you to reach the valley opening. You find as you pass within that it is the entrance to a wide enclosed area of ground, bordered on all sides by the steep slopes of the foothills. In the dark it is impossible to tell what might rest within its wind-swept precincts, but time marches on and you must begin your search for the Temple of the Moons.

You have found the valley known as the Shattereen and its barren terrain beckons you. Will you make your way onto the open ground? If this is your choice turn to section 4. If you would rather climb the nearest slope and obtain a better view of the lay of the land turn to section 77.

19

The beast proves a powerful adversary, a mass of writhing tentacles that strikes relentlessly as it tries to overpower you. Against its many limbs you wield your hammer, deflecting its blows and crushing its tentacles but it proves impossible to escape its grasp. Pinned within a roiling mass of snaking limbs you are pulled unconscious into its lair, your doom to suffer a fate that cannot be recorded here as it is too gruesome. In this life your deskai is over.

THE END

20

The Stone Guardians rush your position, their intent obvious as they raise their swords to attack. In the darkness you stand your ground, unwilling to take a backward step no matter how large the

opponents you face. Quickly you ready yourself, taking a tighter hold upon your warhammer. In concert their weapons fall upon you and the battle is joined.

Under the power of their blows you falter, but only for a moment. The Guardians are old, but powerful opponents nonetheless. Against their assault you fall back then attack again, swinging your hammer in a wide arc as the Guardians try and force you from open ground and up against the walls of the canyon. It is a desperate struggle, the size of the Guardians an advantage that has you constantly on the defensive, using all the strength you have to deflect their enormous blades. They are not however, without weakness of their own. A single blow from your hammer has a startling effect upon the leg of one of your foes. The Guardian's limb shatters in a shower of crystal dust with the impact and it is then that the tide of the battle turns.

Quickly you take advantage of this weakness, attacking the other and smashing one of its legs as well. Both Guardians struggle for their footing as you advance upon them and it is only a matter of time before they lay as piles of rubble in the darkness. You do not stop though. The battle is only over when you are sure that they are completely destroyed, and your hammer their remains until there is little left that is recognisable. Only then do you look to the entrance beyond and consider what it is that these obsidian warriors guard so ruthlessly.

The ruins spread out before you, but it is the Temple at their centre that beckons you forward.

Turn to section 82.

21

Carefully you keep to the edges of the moving ground, your footfalls silent as you leave the shifting sand undisturbed. Quickly you move on, giving no further thought to the strange nature of the phenomena. In the darkness you run on, passing through the canyon and then out into the open spaces of the Shattereen. You have been here before and in the gloom of the early hours you take the time to rest, but only enough to regain your breath.

The words of the Oracle were clear, the Word of Aggeron could be found in the west, the Heart of the Lost in the south. Under the faint light of a starlit sky you consider what you should do next.

If you have not yet found the Word of Aggeron then the western canyon must be your next path. If this is the first time you have travelled this defile turn to section 57. If it is the second time then turn to section 116. If you already possess the Word of Aggeron then the Heart of the Lost can be found in the south and it is there that you must now go. Turn to section 28.

21a

In a rush you make the entrance to the canyon and charge back into its narrower confines. Behind you the Arachnari swarm into the gap, the constricted space no hindrance in their headlong race to bring you down. Quickly you dodge the rockfalls and scree slopes, hoping that if you can make it back to the main canyon you might leave these ravenous monsters behind. In the shadowed gloom you keep ahead of the pursuing creatures, your desperation to escape driving you as you scramble over scree slopes and around fallen stone. Behind you the Arachnari are relentless, keeping pace as you slowly begin to feel yourself tiring. Before you the defile remains clear but you know it will be only a matter of time before the swarm will catch you. You must think of something and quickly.

The answer comes as a moment of clarity in the midst of the wild chase. Just ahead you see a small trickle of grit cascading off the edges of the canyon wall and an idea forms. Taking your warhammer you slam it into the stone and earth at your side and watch as a large section of the wall begins to give way. Running along the edge of the defile you throw all the strength you have into destabilising the loose canyon edges. Behind you the Arachnari continue their pursuit but as

you pound at the rock there comes a great tremor in the ground. At your back the crumbling canyon begins to fall in on itself, a huge cloud of dust billowing into the air as the cliffs on both sides of the defile give way. Within this melee of smashing rock the Arachnari try and escape but are caught in a thundering wave of falling stone. As you look back you see all your pursuers disappearing beneath a thick wall of dust and cannot help but find satisfaction in their demise. Unfortunately you have not yet found safety from the dangers of this place.

In a crashing wave of sliding stone the canyon continues to collapse, the edges of the cliffs at both sides of the defile falling in a deafening thunder as they march towards you. Turning on your heel you run, the avalanche of stone at your back as you race for the larger canyon beyond. It is only with a heartbeat's grace that you find the exit and scramble over the boulder mounds to make your escape. In a roil of pounded grit you tumble down the other side of the mounds and come to a standstill in a pile of loose earth.

For a moment you lay still, the sounds of collapsing stone still echoing in the distance as you try and regain your breath. Looking up at the stars you thank the Fates for your deliverance and then stand, a shower of dust and pulverised stone falling away as you rise. Dusting yourself off you smile and consider for a short time just how lucky you were. There is no time for rest however. Nem'haleen must be found at the end of this larger gorge and it is where you must now go.

The canyon continues as a winding path into the south and you make your passage at the run, ever watchful for danger as your footfalls sound out in the darkness. The night is cool, the wind a constant companion as you run, and in the silvered light of the moons you search out each fracture in the ground, looking for any sign of the ancient temple that is your goal. More than once you stop to explore a break in the canyon's walls, or the possible arch of a hidden doorway, but there is nothing that proves to be an entrance to the Temple or the fortress you seek. It is only when you find your way through a hatch of ravines and gullies that you are confronted by a wide wall of stone that cuts across the entire canyon. In short order you come to a halt, your way barred by a massive stone wall that sits across the breadth of the canyon. It is an effective barrier to any further passage southwards.

For a moment you consider what confronts you. The wall is made of cut stone blocks more than twenty metres high, capped with battlements and two stone towers that reach up from the canyon wall at either end. There is no gate, window or ramp to indicate any way through, only a small plinth of white marble stands before it, unmarked and cleanly cut, with a small inset carved into its upper surface. It is a formidable fortress that bars your way, and as you study its impressive battlements you realise that this is indeed Nem'haleen, the last stronghold of the Trell'sara. All the stories of your people have not done it justice however. Before you it stands untouched by the long years that have passed since the extinction of the Fallen Masters. Its carved walls resplendent with huge representations of warrior-priests in triumphant procession. Confronted by its grandeur you have little doubt that this is that ancient sanctuary.

Cautiously you approach the wall and inspect it more closely. The cut stone affords no foothold for climbing and the canyon walls at either end have been cunningly excavated so that there is no way of circumventing the fortress. If you are to go any further southwards you will have to find a way through.

If you have the Heart of the Lost in your possession turn to section 74. If you do not have this talisman in your possession go to section 13.

In the boulder's shadow you wait quietly as the Dragon searches the canyon to the south. Over the bluster of the wind you can hear the great beast moving along the crest of the canyon walls, looking for that one movement that will tell it where you are.

For your part you cannot afford even the slightest noise so you wait, listening intently as the serpent keeps to its search. It is a stalemate that cannot last long but you have little choice. There is

no way that you can kill such a powerful foe and in the confines of this defile there is no safe way of avoiding it either. For some time you wait, listening to the rise and fall of the wind and the constant trickle of moving sand and falling stone. It is a wait that you find hard to endure but after a while you realise you can hear the Dragon no more.

Carefully you take hold of your warhammer and consider whether it is safe to move on. Your only hope has been that the Rift Dragon will tire of its search and decide that easier pickings can be found elsewhere, but these serpents are not your normal predator. They are as smart as any Voor'cat and just as persistent. Until you leave the shadows of this huge rock you cannot be sure that the beast has actually left, or if it is instead lying in wait for you.

With your hammer in hand you make ready to move. To stay hidden will mean the failure of your deskai, and an exile that you cannot endure. It is time to move on. But something tells you to stay your hand and in that moment of indecision the Dragon makes its reappearance. Like a descending cloud the beast glides in on the wind, following the canyon in a whispering rush of air that ends as it settles down upon the cliff-face directly above your position. Again you are forced to remain silent, a quiet shadow within the greater gloom of the canyon.

The Dragon looks up and down the defile, ever vigilant for a sign of movement, and as it surveys its surroundings you can hear its breath, snorting through its long nostrils as it samples the air. Somehow it does not find you. Perhaps the wind is too strong, masking both the sounds of your breathing or the sweat of your body as you lay watching the beast. The Fates are with you this day however.

From somewhere far to the east you hear another sound, this one far more familiar. It is the screeching call of a flock of Kreele on the wing, making their way towards the southern mountains. Flying reptiles not unlike the Rift Dragons they are much smaller, and a favoured prey for the beast that now rests so close to your hiding place. Instinctively the Dragon rises into the air, the sight of dozens of far more substantial prey too good to let pass unharried.

Without a sound the serpent wings its way eastwards, keeping low to the ground as it begins its hunt for a new meal. Immediately you rise from your hiding place and dust yourself off. Such good fortune cannot be squandered and with no reason to delay any further you move off southwards down the canyon, glad that there was no need to confront such a lethal predator. With hammer in hand you run into the gloom and find yourself with a new choice to make. The canyon stands before you as a fork in the road. The main canyon continues south but another defile splits off to the south-west.

If you wish to continue southwards down the main canyon turn to section 30. If you would rather take the path that leads westwards turn to section 87.



In the dark you can discern little. Within a shallow alcove in the canyon wall there stands the remains of an arched doorway, half-observed by broken stone and years of wind-borne dust and earth. Around the edges of the arch there are inscribed the worn and weathered symbols of a language you do not understand, the lettering almost indistinct against the crumbling stone. Only one symbol remains clear. Carved into the keystone is an unmistakable sigil of the Trell'sara. You have seen markings like this before. It wards you to keep out.

Carefully you pull some of the broken stone away and peer through the archway. Beyond the threshold lies a long corridor that reaches deep into the stone before disappearing into darkness. It is hard to tell but there seems to be the faint flicker of a light somewhere within its gloom.

Do you wish to investigate this light? If this is your choice turn to section 33. If you would rather leave it and move on turn to section 84.

24

There is much you do not understand about your deskai, but there is one thing that has been drummed into you since you were taken as a birthling from Gorgoroth; everything in this world has a meaning and a purpose. You take up the weathered piece of wood and check it more carefully. The string and feathers have been arranged at its end in the fashion of a Jotun healing stick, and although it seems to hold no power your intuition tells you that it is important. In the recesses of your thoughts a memory grows stronger, and with the stick in your hands you recall something about the fears of the dead, and the power of that which promotes life to ward against them. It is a vague memory but one that you find difficult to ignore. (If you wish to keep the healing stick record this item on your character sheet before you continue.)

Ahead lay the mountains of the Great Rift, a vast range of jagged peaks that act as the barrier between the hordim of the north and the lands of the vehmin to the south. In the passage of three lifetimes of the Jotun no hordim has passed into those lands and returned to give the telling of his exploits, but such a passage is not for you. It is at the foothills of these great mountains that your objective resides and with no time to spare you move forward at the run.

It is another hour before you begin to see within the gloom ahead the first inklings of an opening in the hills. This is where you must go, but it is now that you must be most vigilant. Within the high eyries of these mountains can be found many eyes, all watching the plains below, guarding against the encroachment of any hordim from the north. You have heard many tales of the Rangers of the Watch, and of their dedication to their duty defending the southlands. You have no doubt that your approach has been noted.

When you reach the opening you find it is the entrance to a wide valley, bordered on all sides by the steep slopes of the foothills that guard the larger peaks of the mountains beyond. This is indeed the Shattereen, an ancient battleground that has lain barren and lifeless for centuries. It is too dark to see what resides at the other end of this open ground but you must decide quickly what your next move will be.

Will you go straight in and see what awaits you? If this is your choice turn to section 4. If you would rather climb the nearest slope and attempt to gain a better view of the ground ahead turn to section 77.

25

In the red glare of the cauldron at your back the obsidian statues glow with an inner fire that sends a cold shudder down your spine. Translucent in the light you have no doubt that they have a malevolent intent, and given the chance they mean to do you harm. Quickly you run for the only exit from the Hall. In the midst of the awakening giants you do not stop or deviate from your path, and when you reach the passage to the outer world you keep on going. In a flurry of broken rock and crumbled earth you push your way back out beyond the archway and land heavily on the canyon floor. It cannot be said that you have made a dignified exit from the hall, but you are alive and in the dark of the enclosing canyon walls you brush yourself down and check that you have not lost anything in your escape.

To your dismay you find that you have lost one of your Nahla cakes. It is only a small loss but one that you may live to regret later. (Adjust your character sheet to reflect this loss.) After

ensuring your other possessions are secure you take hold of your warhammer and continue on, heading eastwards into the face of the rising moons.

Turn to section 47.

26

You consider the wall of flames before you and can see no way around them. In the glare of the conflagration you survey the walls of the canyon but they are too eroded, too broken by time to provide any possibility of climbing around the fires. Even from where you stand you can feel the heat against your face and you know you cannot simply run through them. With few choices available you decide to return to the main valley and try another of the canyons. Perhaps an easier path can be found within one of those defiles. Frustrated by the delay you turn on your heel and retrace your steps back to the barren floor of the Shattereen.

Turn to section 109.



27

As the stone hits the ground the earth before you erupts in an explosion of flailing tentacles and oozing fluid. From out of a deep hole in the canyon floor a creature drags itself into the moonlight, and framed within a cloud of dust and sand you see the true nature of what confronts you. The beast is a monstrosity of snakelike limbs and gelatinous ooze that advances upon you, grasping out blindly in an attempt to take hold of you. Huge tentacles swipe their way from left to right across the canyon floor and in the darkness you deftly avoid any contact with them. The creature means to have you for its next meal and will not let you pass unmolested. It seems that it will need to be taught a lesson.

This Sandlurker has a combat value of 16 and endurance points of 24. If you survive three combat rounds turn to section 62. If you succumb to the beast's writhing tentacles within these three rounds turn to section 19.

28

The southern canyon extends deep into the mountains, a cragged defile of split stone enclosed within high walls of crumbling earth and tortured spires of wind-blown rock. In the light of the rising moons you can see little within its shadows but enter it you must. This is the way you have chosen and with warhammer ready in your hands you make your way inside.

If this is the first time you have entered the southern canyon turn to section 51. If you have entered this canyon before turn to section 37.

29

You look at the stone circle and know for a certainty that this is Rinfalen's Gate. It is the entranceway to the Temple of the Moons and you have the key that will allow entry. As the

vapours swirl within the stone you begin to feel a great heat emanating from your forearm. The closer you walk towards the Gate the hotter and more insistent the feeling grows that it is the symbol burned into your arm that will allow you passage. You step through the Gate and in that instant the world as you know it disappears.

In a blinding flare of energy you feel a great power take hold of your body. In a void of swirling light you float suspended before an irresistible force grabs a hold of you and drags you back into the world. Within the echo of a single heartbeat you fall onto a solid floor of cold stone and lay still, the shock of your passage enough to sap the strength from your body. But only for a moment.

Carefully you rise from the floor, your limbs suddenly weak and leaden, but you have found your Temple. Within a wide circular space you stand and consider what you have discovered. Behind you looms a ring of stone similar to that you have just walked through. Around the walls of the chamber are spaced carved columns of pure white stone, and overhead the roof rises as a vaulted ceiling to a point some distance above. It is however, what lays at the centre of the chamber that interests you most. In the semi-darkness you can see a pool of still, dark water.

Illuminated only by a single shaft of moonlight that shines from high above, the chamber is dark and as silent as a graveyard. In the gloom you see the thin shard of moonlight tracking across the floor towards the pool. As you watch the light reaches the pool's edge and with its first contact the entire chamber comes to life.

Beneath your feet you feel the tremors of a vibration that quickly builds in the stone about you. At all sides the columns that line the chamber begin to glow, mirroring the intensifying shaft of light that now shines down upon the pool. All around you the air that had been still now begins to move, increasing in speed as it spirals within the perimeter of the Temple. With ever increasing force you can feel the chamber coming to life, the thin beam of moonlight powering the great forces that now move to bring something new into the world. It is then that you see the faintest hint of a shape forming in the air above the pool. Quickly it coalesces into the hard edges of a beautifully crafted sword, one that hangs suspended in the air as the winds in the chamber gather even greater intensity. Within the gales you remain steadfast, watching as the sword moves from some other existence into yours. Then in a final furious bluster the winds falter, fading away as the Temple once again becomes quiet. The sword remains however, and as you watch the shaft of moonlight inches its way across the surface of the pool.

Have you spoken with the Oracle at the Temple of the Two Suns? If you have turn to section 15. If you have not turn to section 41.

The canyon continues as a winding path into the south and you make your passage at the run, ever watchful for danger as your footfalls sound out in the darkness. The night is cool, the wind a constant companion as you run, and in the silvered light of the moons you search out each fracture in the ground, looking for any sign of the ancient temple that is your goal. More than once you stop to explore a break in the canyon's walls, or the possible arch of a hidden doorway, but there is nothing that proves to be an entrance to the Temple or the fortress you seek. It is only when you find your way through a hatch of ravines and gullies that you are confronted by a wide wall of stone that cuts across the entire canyon. In short order you come to a halt, your way barred by a massive stone wall that sits across the breadth of the canyon. It is an effective barrier to any further passage southwards.

For a moment you consider what confronts you. The wall is made of cut stone blocks more than twenty metres high, capped with battlements and two stone towers that reach up from the canyon wall at either end. There is no gate, window or ramp to indicate any way through, only a small plinth of white marble stands before it, unmarked and cleanly cut, with a small inset carved into its upper surface. It is a formidable fortress that bars your way, and as you study its impressive battlements you realise that this is indeed Nem'haleen, the last stronghold of the Trel'sara. All the

stories of your people have not done it justice however. Before you it stands untouched by the long years that have passed since the extinction of the Fallen Masters. Its carved walls resplendent with huge representations of warrior-priests in triumphant procession. Confronted by its grandeur you have little doubt that this is that ancient sanctuary.

Cautiously you approach the wall and inspect it more closely. The cut stone affords no foothold for climbing and the canyon walls at either end have been cunningly excavated so that there is no way of circumventing the fortress. If you are to go any further southwards you will have to find a way through.

If you have the Heart of the Lost in your possession turn to section 74. If you do not have this talisman in your possession go to section 13.

30a

Upon the canyon floor you come to a stop and have a closer look at the break in the wall to your left. Within the shadows you can just make out the indistinct lines of another path leading to the south-east, hidden by fallen stone and a jumble of large boulders that on a darker night would have gone unseen. Carefully you inspect the piles of stone and find that it is possible to take this path. It is a way you have not yet explored.

Pushing aside a few of the smaller stones you scramble over the remnants of a huge rockfall and find yourself upon the floor of another defile. Bordered by crumbling walls and long slides of collapsed stone it is still a way forward and you take it quickly. About you the world moves swiftly. At the run you follow the line of the canyon until it opens up into a large circular space and it is here that you come to a halt. It appears that you have found a dead end but there is something here nonetheless. On all sides of the broad curving valley are holes, large and ill-made but spaced about the circumference of the cliffs in three irregular tiers. Quickly you count a small portion of the shadowed caves and realise that there must be hundreds of them. You have indeed found something, though you are not quite sure exactly what it might be.

With warhammer in hand you search out the edges of the cliffs, looking for any clue of what might have made the burrows but there is nothing, until the faintest of sounds echoes out upon the winds. It is just a series of clicks, as two sticks might make when struck together, but it is enough to send you running for the canyon behind you.

From all sides large spider-like creatures disgorge themselves from their holes, huge black monsters that race across the open ground towards you. In a wave of chattering clicks and grasping limbs the Arachnari take up the pursuit, quickly forming an advancing line that leaves only one small avenue of escape. They have not yet reached the exit and it will take all the speed you have left to you to outrun them.

You have stumbled into an Arachnari Hive and there is not an Oera'dim in the world foolish enough to attempt to stand and fight. Test your Strength and Agility attributes. If you fail either of these tests turn to section 116a. If you are successful in both tests turn to section 21a.

31

You look at the piece of wood and wonder at its purpose. It looks like an old Jotun healing stick but as you hold it you can feel no magic within it. It is an innocuous thing, something you would not expect out here in the borderlands however you pick it up and place it in your belt anyway. You cannot say what might lay ahead and it may prove useful to you. (Record the piece of wood as a part of your notes) You cannot delay here any further though. Ahead you see a wide opening in the mountains of the Rift. Against the horizon the summits are dark jagged teeth, snow-capped and the domain of the vehmin of the south, but it is the opening that must be your new goal. If

Shan'dari is correct then somewhere within the canyons ahead is the Temple you seek. Quickly you break into a run and once again are swallowed up within the expanses of the wastelands.

For a further hour you run into the south, watching as the dark shadows of the mountains loom before you. It is now that you must be most vigilant. It is said that every crack in the Great Rift is home to a pair of watchful eyes, ready to bring a swift death to any Jotun that ventures too close to the lands of Men. From an early age you have heard tales of the Rangers of the Watch, hardy fighters who guard the narrow trails and mountain passes of the western Rift. For the Jotun of the West they have been a most formidable adversary, and as you run you know that somewhere within the crags and outcrops of these mountains at least one of the Rangers will be watching, recording your progress as you make for the canyons ahead.

In the darkness you reach the opening in the hills and find it is the entrance to a wide area of open ground, bordered on all sides by steep slopes. For a moment you consider the lay of the land.

You have found the broad valley known as the Shattereen, an ancient battleground that spreads into the darkness southwards. Will you move forward onto its open ground? If this is your choice turn to section 4. If you would rather climb the nearest slope and try for a better view of the surrounding terrain turn to section 77.



32

You have never seen anything like this before but you cannot afford for it to delay your progress. Not wishing to discover what might lay beneath you make your way around the borders of the shifting ground. It is a process that is slow however, the ground extending across most of the width of the canyon and leaving you with little room to find a solid footfall..

Test your Agility attribute. If you are successful turn to section 21. If you are not turn to section 55.

33

The light beckons as a sliver of hope that the Temple of the Moons may be found within. It is definitely something worth investigation, and in the darkness you carefully remove more of the stone. Broken rock covers most of the entryway and it takes you a few minutes to pull enough of it away to provide a way in. For a moment you stand in the night air and listen intently, searching for any sign that the noise of your labours might have brought unwanted attention upon you. You can hear nothing but the cawing of birds to the west and the gentle bluster of the wind as it funnels down the canyon. Reassured that you are indeed still alone you climb into the dark opening.

Beyond the threshold you find the passage cramped and strewn with debris. Standing with the cool stone close about, you look down the long corridor and wait as your eyes adjust to the gloom. As you begin to see more of the way ahead it becomes evident that this delving is ancient. The walls reach up to a pointed vault overhead and all its surfaces are covered with finely carved decorative reliefs. Such works of art are of little interest to you however, your mind is too focused on the success of your quest to notice the intricate detail woven into the carved stone. At the end of the passage the light grows ever brighter and you carefully make your way forward, following its length for some distance before emerging into a wide hall, some eighty metres in length and twenty metres in width.

For a moment you pause to take in the grandeur of your surroundings. Along the length of both walls stand huge obsidian statues, representations of cloaked and hooded warriors, each holding the rusted remains of swords and spears at the ready. Overhead the hall is ablaze with light, its vaulted ceiling awash with colour as its polished surfaces dance with the reflected brilliance of a huge cauldron of fire that burns brightly at its far end. As you stand in the hall you can see the cauldron's fire intensifying, spreading deep shadows across the walls and illuminating the statues in a wash of red and orange light. You take a few steps further into the hall and watch as the cauldron burns all the brighter on your approach.

In the cauldron's reddish glare you can see clearly that this is not the Temple of the Moons. There is no well, nor any of the motifs that would signify this hall as the Temple. If you wish to leave now turn to section 38. If the cauldron intrigues you and warrants further investigation turn to section 65. If however the statues pique your curiosity you may instead turn to section 93.

34

The combat is short, but too late you realise you are fighting at a huge disadvantage. On the unstable ground you cannot use your height or strength to proper advantage, and your adversary knows the terrain. The Ranger is too swift, too practised in the deadly art of his calling, and it is only a matter of time before he finds an opening in your defences. Staggering backwards from a mortal wound you fall down the slope, taking with you a landslide of broken stone and earth that envelops your body as you tumble limply into the shadows of the valley floor below. In the quiet of the night your blood drains into the desiccated earth, your only consolation that you have died a warrior's death, and that your spirit will now go on to reside in the halls of your ancestors. In this life your deskai is over.

THE END



35

The passage reaches deep in the stone before meeting with a wide stairway. At this point you pause for a moment and regain your breath. In the dark you can hear little except the sounds of the stone moving about you. It is not a good sign. As you have made your way along this corridor you have seen enough to know that this delving is truly ancient, made in a time long before the rising of the Oera'dim, and with the capacity to collapse in on itself at any moment. The stairway ahead seems little better, and but for the fact that you have nowhere else to go you would not be using it. But such things cannot be helped. You decide that it will be for the Fates to decide if you will die here or not.

Carefully you try the stairs and find them safe enough. The steps lead downwards, turning in a wide spiral before stopping at a landing. From this small alcove another passage leads once again eastwards, keeping only a slight incline as it searches deep into the rock. You travel along this corridor until you run up against a slab of stone and it is here that you come to a halt. There is no further way forward, the slab a solid wall that seals the end of the passage. You have come to a dead end.

Slumping against the nearest wall you think on what you should do. There is a chance that the stone can be smashed but a cursory blow with your warhammer shows it to be thick and

unyielding. It may be that you have no option but to return to the Hall and try and find another way out. It is a possibility that leaves you fuming with frustration. One final time you hit the slab and this time you vent your anger upon it, smashing the metal-edged weapon hard upon the smooth rock. Under the circumstances it is not the best thing you could have done.

From somewhere in the passage behind you a deep rumble grows, building quickly into a crashing turmoil of falling stone and choking dust. In that instant you flatten yourself against the rock slab and wait for the inevitable stroke of tonnes of stone crushing the life from your body. In a cloud of dust you open one eye to find the collapse has ended a few metres from your position. Before you lies a wall of smashed stone and no way that you can retrace your steps. With nowhere to go you squat against the stone slab and resign yourself to a long, slow death at the hands of starvation.

For a short time you remain still, but you are a Jotun of the West and while there is breath in your body there is hope. In the total dark you feel out the stone slab and begin hammering at its centre. If there is a chance that you can smash your way out, then you will do it or die trying.

The slab is thick and it will take great strength and endurance to break it. Test your strength attribute. If you are successful turn to section 54. If you fail this test turn to section 66.

36

In a starlit night the two statues stand as huge forms in the darkness, their obsidian surfaces as depthless as an abyss. Carefully you approach them, studying the exquisite detail carved into their stone and wondering at their purpose. They are carved as huge robed warriors, their faces obscured beneath hoods that cover their heads completely. It is their weapons however, that prove to be the most interesting. In black crystalline hands their swords shine as if brand new, reflecting the light of the stars as pinpoints of glimmering light. Why statues should be equipped with such fine weaponry escapes you, but as you ponder their artifice the reason becomes clear.

Ponderously the Stone Guardians begin to move, throwing off centuries of dust as they strive to fulfil the only purpose of their existence. They are here to stop any who might wish to enter, and with the passing of the millennia they have not faltered in that duty. With increasing speed the two giants step from their foundations and test the strength of their sword-arms before turning towards you. There are no words uttered from their lips, no warnings nor fell curses. Instead they charge at you, their movements as fluid as flowing water. In a rush they fall upon you.

These Stone Guardians are formidable opponents. They must be fought as separate combatants, a separate round of combat being fought for each in turn. They each have a combat value of 18 but endurance points of only 2. Millennia standing guard at the entrance to the ruins has left them brittle and easily smashed, unable to withstand the impact of your hammer. Their weapons though are serviceable and razor-sharp. A few good hits will bring them down, you need only survive their attacks long enough to destroy them. If you win this combat turn to section 20. If you lose this combat then you must turn to section 45.

37

You have been this way before and the canyon reaches out as a long jagged cut in the earth that lies eroded and crumbling at every corner. Carefully you make your way forward but this time the moons have risen much higher in the sky, their light illuminating the canyon floor and brightening the way ahead. The light is of some help but as the moons rise higher into the night sky you know the time left to you to complete your deskai grows shorter. With this thought in mind you increase your pace and take a tighter grip upon the haft of your hammer.

Turn to section 81.

38

For a moment you survey the hall. It is a remarkable find, one which the old Shaman would consider worthy of further investigation, but it is not what you seek, it is not the Temple of the Moons. Without hesitation you turn about and retrace your steps to the outside world. In a flurry of dirt and scattering stone you push your way back through the entryway and out into the dark night air. Once you have cleared the arch you pause and listen to the sounds of the canyon and the sky above. In this small part of the world you are alone, and with no time to waste you turn to your chosen path. In the face of the rising moons you continue on eastwards.

Turn to section 47.

39

There seems little that might be found here but there is something familiar about this place, even though you are sure you have never travelled this way before. Mindful of your pressing need to find the Temple you decide that any search will have to be quick. The amphitheatre proves to be an eroded jumble of fractured stone and loose footings, but half hidden by a slide of fallen rock you find the opening to a dark passage, one that reaches far into the earth beneath the arena.

If you wish to make your way inside and have spoken previously with the Oracle of the Two Suns turn to section 100. If you wish to make your way inside but have not spoken with the Oracle turn to section 111. If however you have little interest in the passage and would rather read the metal plaque turn to section 96. If you believe there is nothing here in the arena of interest you can return to the Shattereen by turning to section 11.

40

Although you are surprised by the use of your name you have nothing to lose by answering the voice. Immediately the interior of the Temple bursts into life, the raised pool of liquid shining out in ripples of light that throw long shadows out into the night. For a moment you stand your ground but when nothing happens you move inside.

Within the shrine the pool is a pulsing web of light and colour that quickly takes a hold of your senses. You do not feel as if you are in any danger but the energy in the pool grows stronger, pulling you towards it even as you struggle to break from its grasp. It is then that the voice speaks again.

"Tansen'Delving."

You respond quickly for that is indeed your name, and in answer the robed statue comes to life, stepping from its base and running its hand through the pool as it walks towards you. The form grows in size as it approaches and in the light of the temple your grab the hilt of your warhammer all the tighter. It is not the menacing form of the approaching figure that keeps you transfixed however. In the ripples of the pool caused by the spectre's passing you begin to see vague apparitions forming in the ruins outside. Light streams through finely carved latticework between the columns, sending thin beams of moving light and shade out into the darkness and in this display the plain comes to life.

Before you a great battle unfolds. Immediately you recognise the standards and armour of your own brethren the Jotun. Beside them stand the Hresh'na and the Ahmutani and all about you there is fighting and chaos. The images come in bursts of light that constantly change as you watch. You cannot say why but you know it is a battle between the Oera'dim and the Trell'sara, and it is one that your brethren are winning. In a rush the Trell'sara are surrounded and overwhelmed, their numbers cut to pieces as the Hresh'na flow over them like a tide. It is a breathtaking sight, one that

has your warrior's blood pounding in your veins. You do not realise it until the vision ends that the hooded figure is now standing at your side.

"Do you know what it is that you have just witnessed?" asks the figure, its voice a rasping whisper.

You shake your head but reply that it must be a battle from the great Insurrection that overthrew the Fallen Masters.

The figure nods its head and turns towards you.

"What you have seen is the most important battle of the war that threw down the Ancients. On this very ground the last great battle of the Insurrection took place, and it is here that the Jotuni gained possession of the emurion'ka. These ruins are all that remains of the Temple of Two Suns, the vaellim'nar'dorum, and it is here that I have awaited your coming. I am the Oracle of this place and although you do not know it you are here for a reason."

The Oracle turns again to look out into the night and again the pool bursts into brighter light. Out upon the plain a new vision erupts but this time it is a vision of catastrophe. On a vast green plain you see your brethren dying, overwhelmed themselves by the armies of the vehmin. In the distance you see the smoking remains of a small fortified settlement, but it is the carnage of the battle that holds you. Thousands of Jotun and Hresh'na fall beneath advancing lines of axemen and the mounted troops of the men of the south. Without hope of victory you see the standards of your people trampled beneath the overwhelming power of your enemies. It is a sight that sickens you, but thankfully it must be endured for only a short time.

The Oracle waves his arm and again the night is dark. He has a message for you and does not allow you to speak.

"Tansen'Delving, in this place you have seen great triumph and great defeat. On the one hand you have witnessed the circumstances of your people's acquisition of the stonewood sword known as the emurion'ka. On the other you have seen the circumstances of its taking from you by the men of the south. Do not think that your deskai is only about your right of passage as a warrior. The Powers of this world have deemed it necessary that another emurion'ka be brought into the world, and they have laid it at your feet to collect it."

You are not sure you understand exactly what the Oracle means but he does not allow you to question his words.

"Within the Temple of the Moons can be found the Well of Elanna. It will be there that you will find the emurion'ka, bathed in moonlight and available only for the taking whilst that light shines upon it. To find the Temple of the Moons you must have two things in your possession; the Word of Aggeron and the Heart of the Lost. The first can be found in the west, the other in the south. With these you can gain access to the Temple. With these you can reach for the emurion'ka and claim it as your own. To you I have only one word of warning. The Well of Elanna keeps the stonewood sword in this world. Do not disturb its waters or else all will be lost. It is your task to find it."

The Oracle's words echo within the Temple and as they are lost to the winds, so does he also fade into darkness. About you the night crowds in as the rippling light of the pool extinguishes and then winks out. You are once again alone in a world of shadows and moonlight.

In a daze you step out into the night air and descend the steps into the ruins below. It is clear that you have been given a greater task to complete than the simple exercise of your deskai. You shake your head as you realise that the old Shaman must have known. There could be no other explanation for his haste in having brought you so far south. You decide that if you survive you will find him and beat the truth out of his weathered hide.

Given what you have already experienced on your quest so far you know you must go elsewhere to find the Temple of the Moons. One of the other canyons holds that secret place. It is not here.

Record that you have spoken with the Oracle of the Two Suns and turn to section 95.

You look upon the sword in wonder but cannot recognise it for what it is. In the bright shards of moonlight that reflect from its carved surfaces you stand waiting to see what might happen next, and watch as the shaft of light that brought it into existence moves from the pool and disappears into darkness. For a moment the vision of the sword lingers but then also fades and is gone.

In the absolute darkness that remains you move over to the pool and take the drink of water that signifies the successful completion of your deskai. For all the hardship and danger that has come with your quest you cannot help but feel as if you have missed something important. But that cannot be a consideration for you now. It is time for you to return to the old Shaman and proclaim your right of passage fulfilled. All you need do is leave the Temple.

Turning, you make your way back to the stone ring that had transported you here. In the darkness you can see little, but with your hands you feel for the gate and find instead that there is no feeling of power in your forearm. The Word of Aggeron is not working. For a moment your mind races. Perhaps you have done something wrong? Perhaps you were supposed to do something with the sword? These are questions that run through your mind but there are no answers. All you have about you is the cold stone and the darkness, and neither is telling you anything.

Anxious now that you might have been led into a trap you try and remember all that you saw of the chamber when it was illuminated. There were no other exits, of this you are sure, but in a state of increasing desperation you search the entire boundary of the Temple until you must face an appalling truth. There is no way out.

Your deskai may have been completed but a far greater destiny remains unfulfilled. In the solid prison that the Temple of the Moons has now become there is no chance of escape, no chance of rescue. Within these walls you must now begin the long road that will ultimately take you to the halls of your ancestors.

THE END



The Shades are incorporeal forms that have no substance or weakness. With a stroke of your warhammer you find its heavy metalwork passing through the beings as it might pass through smoke. Before you the Shades advance but their weapons are real enough. By whatever magic that binds them, these tortured reflections hold within ethereal hands weapons of iron that will cut you down if you give them the chance. For a moment you back up, trying to find a way past them and out of the arena, but there is no way through. If you are to escape this place you will have to fight your way out. It is not going to be easy.

Your opponents must be fought as a single entity but they cannot be hurt nor disarmed. All you can do is block their attacks and hope that you can remain alive in the process. To escape the arena you must survive eight rounds of combat. If this can be done you will have fought your way across its barren floor and made it back to the canyon entrance. The Shades have a combat value of 14 and have no endurance points. They are already dead and cannot be harmed by your weapon. Conduct the combat rounds as per normal but only the Shades can cause harm. If you have the

skill to survive the eight rounds turn to section 110. If you succumb to their numbers within the eight rounds turn to section 104. Note that the Critical Hit rule does not apply in this circumstance.

43

In the shadows you wait as the dark form of the Ranger appears upon the crest of the slope above your position. As he slowly rises into view you are surprised at how small the vehmin is, how insubstantial a form he presents in the quiet of the night. You are not however, so foolhardy as to assume that such a man will be an easy kill. First you must watch and see what he will do, whether he will pass you by and move on further into the valley below, or if he is indeed looking for you.

The Ranger moves as smoke in the wind, a silent assassin who leaves no trace of his passage upon the unstable scree as he works his way down the hillside. You watch him carefully and see in his movements a warrior dedicated to his cause, with all the skill and strength necessary to fulfil his duty. It will be better that you let this one pass.

Whether he will let you go is another matter. A moment of inattention allows the haft of your warhammer to scrape softly against the stone at your back and in the dark it sounds out as a whisper within the wind. It is enough to bring the Ranger to a halt.

Test your luck. If you are lucky then turn to section 61. If you prove unlucky turn to section 6.

44

With little choice you begin the climb, moving carefully along the face of the canyon wall, picking your footholds as you attempt to navigate a way over and around the flames. In the light of the conflagration at your back it is an exertion that taxes all the skill you can bring to the task. Handhold by handhold you inch across the crumbling surface, taking what purchase you can from the unstable rock. It takes time but you find a way up the canyon wall and then along its upper reaches. It is your hope that you can move beyond the reach of the flames and then drop back to the canyon floor. Unfortunately traversing the fires will not be that easy.

At the highest point of your climb you reach for an exposed piece of stone, one large enough to hold your weight and allow you to swing across a wide area of crumbled earth. You test its ability to take your weight, and satisfied that it can, move to reach for your next purchase. In that instant your foothold falls away, and as you grab for the handhold it also pulls from the face, dropping you outwards into clear air.

If you have a flashcharge in your possession turn to section 103a. If you do not turn to section 44a.

44a

It takes only a second for you to fall back to earth. In a moment of surety that you are about to be consumed by the flames you resign yourself to your fate. And then you hit ground. With a chest crushing impact you strike earth but feel nothing but the hard caress of broken stone. Within the midst of the fires you raise yourself and await the agonies of immolation but they do not come. There is heat but the flames are an illusion, a barrier of magic rather than of reality. Quickly you step from the conflagration and try and recover your breath. The fires may have not been real but the fall was, and it has left you winded and in need of a few minutes to recover.

As you regain your breath you watch the fires more closely and shake your head in disbelief. You can feel the heat emanating from the flames but it is not enough to harm, it is only enough to reinforce the illusion. You cannot think why it might have been placed here but it was certainly

good enough to fool you. In the shadows of the night you pull your warhammer from its fastenings at your back and continue on down the canyon.

You have survived the fires but there is a cost. The fall has broken two of your ribs and injured your shoulder. Roll one dice and deduct the number rolled from your endurance points. If you currently have low endurance points, and the roll you have made will kill your character, then deduct points only to the level that leaves one endurance point remaining. The fall has only injured you, it did not kill you. After adjusting your character sheet turn to section 88.

45

The Stone Guardians advance upon you, their weapons ready to deal you a mortal blow. You are of the Jotun but they tower over you, huge forms in the darkness that move as depthless shadows. Without hesitation you charge at them, sure in the knowledge that if you are to die it will not be without cost to them as well. Before the gates to the ruined city the combat begins and in the darkness your warhammer strikes its target more than once. The Guardians are too strong though, their reach too great for you to do anything more than fend their blows and try to avoid the thrust of their swords. As mindless automatons they fight without fatigue, their assault overwhelming in its power. You can fight these monsters for only so long.

Within the dark recesses of the canyon a Guardian's sword cuts down from high above, cleaving a lethal path through your back and chest. Mortally wounded, your hammer falls to the earth as you grab at your shoulder and drop to one knee. The Stone Guardians do not wait to finish their duty. As you bleed quickly out upon the dry ground the statues return to their foundations and resume their positions, to wait for the next traveller who might wish to enter. For you however it is the end.

Under a starlit sky you take your last breath, your blood a spreading stain upon the canyon floor. Here you die, but your last thought brings solace as you realise that you have died a warrior's death, and such an end brings with it entry to the halls of your ancestors. In this life however, your deskai is over.

THE END



46

At the sound of the trigger you react immediately, throwing yourself forward as you feel the slab beneath you giving way. In a rush of plummeting stone and dirt the slab disappears, a gaping hole left in its wake as you hit the far side of the canyon floor and roll to your feet. Cautiously you approach the pit and look down into its depths. It seems impossibly deep, a dark abyss that reaches far into the earth below. You shake your head and thank the gods for the providence they have granted. If you had been swallowed in its embrace you would never have seen the light of day again.

In the shadows you dust yourself off and turn southwards, the conclusion of your quest somewhere in the winding defile ahead. At the run you move forward, following the canyon as it reaches deep into the foothills of the Great Rift. Quickly you find the canyon forking in two directions. The main canyon heads south, a smaller defile forces its way westwards.

If you have the Heart of the Lost in your possession and wish to continue on down the main canyon turn to section 30. If you do not have this talisman and wish to investigate the narrower path first, turn to section 87.

47

In the dark of the night you keep to the canyon floor and follow its torturous path eastwards. It is an ancient landscape, riven by great fractures in the ground and the ever present danger of falling stone and landslides. None of this however, can deter you from your chosen path. In the shadows you run on, determined to see the end of this interminable rift. Thankfully your persistence is rewarded.

Out of the darkness the canyon opens into a shallow valley, and in the light of the rising moons you see a vast ruin spread out before you. Most of it is no more than rubble, but at its centre there stands a stepped platform of stone and upon its upper level a Temple of perfectly preserved columns topped with a glistening green dome. In the moonlight the columns shine a milky white, beckoning you to move forward.

Surely this must be the Temple you seek. Without hesitation you move forward but stop as you notice two huge statues of hooded warriors flanking either side of the entry to the valley. There is something about them that begs caution.

If you have previously come into contact with Stone Guardians turn to section 60. If you have not turn to section 36.

48

Within the canyon's shadows you recognise the Ranger. He is the man that you killed earlier on the slopes above the Shattereen, and it would appear that even in death this Ranger of the Watch is determined to haunt you. It seems strange that you should find the body here though. You were sure that you had disposed of it sufficiently, but it would seem that somehow it has slipped down from the hills above as part of a small slide of dislodged stone. Quickly you pull the vehmin from the pile of dirt and consider if you should try and hide it away within the dark fissures of the canyon. There doesn't seem to be much point, but it occurs to you as you look down at the crumpled form that you never searched the body.

Do you wish to search the body now? If this is your choice turn to section 5. If you would rather move on, turn to section 63.

49

You are a warrior, a Jotun of the West, and you turn from no battle. Deliberately you tighten your grip on your warhammer and strike out at the first Guardian as it attempts to cut you down. To your surprise its leg shatters to dust under the force of the blow, toppling it to the ground where it erupts in a cloud of smashed obsidian. Moving forward you strike at the second Guardian and it too fractures like glass. Before you can take another step your rising confidence is subdued by the sight of the remains of the first Guardian quickly coalescing back to its full form, then reaching for its sword. If you are to get out of this hall alive you are going to have to fight your way out.

The Stone Guardians are easily destroyed but can deliver a fatal blow if allowed to strike. These obsidian warriors must be fought as a single opponent. Their combat value is 17, but they have no actual endurance points. They cannot be destroyed, all you can hope for is to survive long enough to force an opening and escape. If you survive six combat rounds turn to section 76. If you

succumb to their numbers then it will be here that your deskai will end and you will meet death as a warrior.

50

The smooth stone slab spreads across the full length of the canyon and you cannot help but be suspicious of its purpose. Your first thought is to find a way around its edges, but the rock faces at either side seem far too eroded to provide a safe footing. The other possibility is that you could try and jump over the slab. It is about eight metres wide and such a distance is not beyond your capabilities. You will have to make a decision quickly.

If you wish to try and jump the slab then you must test your agility attribute to determine if you are successful. If you pass this test turn to section 56. If you fail the test turn to section 69. If you do not wish to take the risk, and would rather try and climb around the edges of the slab, turn to section 112.

50a

The Well of Dreams lies at the end of this narrow path into the west and there is no value in returning that way. If you have the Coer'danith in your possession you must move quickly southwards for the night is not endless and time waits for no-one.

Turn to section 30.

51

It is a hard road that you must overcome as you negotiate the ruin that is the canyon's interior. Long years of exposure to wind and rain have worn down the crumbling walls, huge slides of stone filling the floor of the defile where eroded rockfaces have collapsed in on themselves. Within this landscape of broken stone you make your way forward, scrambling over piles of scree and always watching for sign of danger ahead.

For a good hour you head southwards into the shadows until you turn a bend in the canyon and are forced to a halt. Ahead of you there burns a solid wall of flame, emanating from a deep fracture in the ground, and extending across the full breadth of the defile. On both sides the canyon is bordered by high cliffs and as you stand before the conflagration you can feel the heat upon your face and forearms. It is a barrier both unexpected and difficult to overcome.

If you would like to try and climb around the flames turn to section 89. If you can see no practical way of getting around this barrier and would instead try another canyon turn to section 26. You may also test your intuition if you wish. If you pass the test turn to section 7. If you fail this test the first two options are available for your consideration.

52

The shifting sands stand as a formidable barrier to your progress forward but you have never seen anything like it. More from curiosity than anything else you pick up a piece of stone and throw it out into the centre of the moving earth. You are unprepared for what happens next.

Test your agility attribute. If you are successful turn to section 27. If you are not turn to section 98.

53

The slope is a steep incline of loose rock and dry, crumbling dirt. There is definitely something moving above you, and with the intention of finding out exactly what it is you climb upwards, using the darkness and some large outcrops of stone as your cover. It is a difficult ascent, one that has you scrambling towards a wide slab of rock where you wait within its shadows. Carefully you peer into the gloom and it is upon a rise in the ground above that you see the first sign of a Ranger moving in the darkness.

The Rangers of the Watch are formidable opponents. Will you wait until he passes by your position then attack him? If this is your choice turn to section 99. If you are curious as to what he is doing and would rather wait to see what he does turn to section 43.

54

In the dark of your accidental prison you hammer away at the stone slab before you. All about you dirt and stone fall from the roof with each blow, threatening to collapse the remainder of the passage but you cannot stop. If you are to escape and continue with your deskai you know you must throw all caution to the wind and keep up the relentless hammering.

At first the slab remains as solid as the darkness that engulfs you, but slowly the ringing impact of your warhammer against the stone changes. Chips fly from its face and cracks begin to work their way through the body of the stone. And still you hammer away, determined to break its resolve and let you pass. In the end the strength of your arms and the power of your warhammer overwhelms the solid rock. At its centre and lower edge a fracture opens, which you quickly work upon, splitting the slab down its centre. With one final impact the stone erupts, half the slab falling outwards onto a steep slope beyond. You have broken your way out.

Carefully you force your way through the opening and take one deep breath after another. The exertion has left you fatigued and in need of rest, but you know you have wasted far too much time already. Where you have emerged is more than surprising however. In the light of the moons you find yourself on the lower edge of a steep slope, facing to the south along a wide valley. At its northern edge there is the opening of a dark canyon, and you believe that it must be the same defile that you had been following before your ill-advised excursion to investigate the ancient passage. Within the valley spreads a vast ruin, the remains of what must have been a sizeable city. At the centre of the ruins you can see a Temple, but unlike the broken stone about it the structure stands tall, a shrine of pure white columns surmounted by a glistening green dome. Amongst such devastation it appears untouched, and as you focus your eyes upon it you are almost sure you can hear a voice calling you forward.

This could be the Temple you seek and you must investigate it. The completion of your deskai depends upon it.

Without hesitation you make your way down the slope and then out into the ruins. Your escape may have been successful but the exertion has taken its toll as well. Throw one dice. The number thrown is the amount of endurance points you have lost from fatigue. When you have adjusted your character sheet turn to section 82.

55

Carefully you move around the borders of the shifting sands unsure of what may lay beneath them. It is a difficult task, the disturbed ground reaching from one side of the canyon to the other, and it forces you to keep to the canyon walls, using the rock face as a purchase as you half-climb past the barrier. In the darkness you search for handholds, but whether it is the fatigue of your

journey so far, or simply a moment of inattention, you slip from your purchase and fall awkwardly onto the sands below.

One footfall upon the pulsing ground is enough, and you are ill-prepared for what happens next.

Turn to section 98.

55a

For a short time you move quickly along the defile. The night is cool, the wind a constant companion as you run and in the silvered light of the moons you search out each fracture in the ground, looking for any sign of the ancient temple that is your goal. More than once you stop to explore a break in the canyon's walls, or the possible arch of a hidden doorway, but there is nothing that proves to be an entrance to the Temple or the fortress you seek. It is only when you find your way through a hatch of ravines and gullies that you are confronted by a wide wall of stone that cuts across the entire canyon. Coming to a halt you survey the length of the wall ahead and can see beyond its battlements the spires and towers of a great complex.

For a moment you stand and consider what confronts you. The wall is made of cut stone blocks more than twenty metres high, capped with battlements and two stone towers that reach up from the canyon wall at either end. There is no gate, window or ramp to indicate any way through, only a small plinth of white marble stands before it, unmarked and cleanly cut, with a small inset carved into its upper surface. It is a formidable fortress that bars your way, and as you study its impressive battlements you realise that this is indeed Nem'haleen, the last stronghold of the Trel'sara. All the stories of your people have not done it justice however. Before you it stands untouched by the long years that have passed since the extinction of the Fallen Masters. Its carved walls resplendent with huge representations of warrior-priests in triumphant procession. Confronted by its grandeur you have little doubt that this is that ancient sanctuary. There is no further way forward here. You have found Nem'haleen.

If you have stood before the walls of Nem'haleen before but did not know how to enter turn to section 105. If this is the first time you have been here turn to section 119.



56

The slab waits quietly under a dark sky as you ready yourself for the jump. It is not a distance that is beyond you but the night has been long, and you feel fatigue in your legs and shoulders. You wish to go further southwards though, and this simple piece of stone will not deter you.

Quickly you back up the canyon and pace out a run up that will allow you a jump from the edge of the slab. When you are satisfied you strap your hammer tighter to your back and secure your waist bag. Then you sprint forward. Towards the stone you race at full speed and leap with all the strength available to you, sailing cleanly over its smooth surface but landing heavily on the other side. In a flurry of scattered earth you hit the ground, then push your weight forward as you come to an undignified stop within a cloud of dust and scattering stone.

For a moment you lay still and then get to your feet, your face and shoulders cascading with caked dirt and grit as you rise. It has indeed been a long night, one that you will be glad to see over, but the completion of your task still lies ahead. In the shadows of the canyon you take the

time to dust yourself down, and then return to your journey. The canyon extends far to the south but you have long legs and enough strength remaining to run for its end. Carefully you make your way forward, your pace giving way to caution as the defile reaches southwards, its high walls growing upwards as you delve deeper into the foothills.

Overhead the moons of Arborell rise higher, spreading their ethereal glow over the cragged terrain. It is as you make your way forward that you find the canyon forked in two directions. The main canyon heads south, a smaller defile forces its way westwards.

Will you continue on down the main canyon? If this is your choice turn to section 30. If you would rather see what might be found on the narrower path turn to section 87.

57

The canyon reaches out into the west as a long series of ragged fractures, each a great tear in the earth that cuts through the landscape in a hatch of twists and turns. Within these ravines you move quickly, running along a narrow corridor that takes you deep into the hard stone of the foothills. Within this narrow pathway you throw caution to the wind and increase your pace. The prospect of completing your deskai is a potent motivator to your haste, but you have much to think about and little enough time to do it in. As you run you consider what you know of your quest, and look to the sky for an indication of how much time has elapsed since Shan'dari sent you on your way. You have known the old Shaman long enough to know that he is no fool, and that he does nothing without purpose. You have a growing suspicion that he knows exactly what you will encounter on your deskai, but it is pointless to ponder such things. Only with the rising of the suns, and your return to the Spires, will the purposes of the old Shaman be fully revealed.

In a rush you follow the twisting canyon, past great slews of fallen rock and over deep fractures in the earth that disappear into darkness below. Against the chaotic floor of the defile your footfalls pound out noisily, and in the quiet of the night your passage westwards is noticed by another who waits quietly in the shadows for your approach. In the darkness you are taken by surprise.

Out of the gloom the beast rears up from its hiding place and flings a huge armoured pincer out, striking you in the shoulder, sending you hurtling into the dirt and broken stone. Quickly you recover your footing but damage has been done. With blood draining from your arm you grab for the haft of your warhammer and squint into the dark, looking for the beast that attacked you. It remains indistinct against the lightless walls of the canyon but you can hear it moving within the shadows ahead of you. When it does rear once again you see it better and you cannot help a moment of hesitation before acting. It is a Reaver, and it stands in your way. With no thought of retreat you charge the beast.

The Reaver is a scorpion-like monstrosity that stands between you and the completion of your deskai. Unlike some other predators of the wastelands a Reaver will not stop until it has its prey and it wants you for its next meal. You must fight this beast until it is dead. The Reaver has a combat value of 15 and endurance points of 16. Before you commence combat deduct 1 point from your endurance to account for the damage taken from the creature's ambush. If you defeat this armoured monster turn to section 118. If you lose turn to section 106.

58

There is little chance that you can survive a battle against so many giant opponents. They rush at you, their malevolent intent clear as they spread across the ground before you, cutting off any avenue of escape. You can sense their purpose as they close upon you, and with no time to spare you make for the far end of the Hall, the Stone Guardians at your heels. Quickly you survey the

chamber and the blazing cauldron at its end. You can see no other exit, and no place where you might be able to make a stand.

In desperation you run behind the cauldron, your hope that the blazing glare of its conflagration will afford you a small amount of cover. It is a small hope and one that proves quickly to be in vain. With one blow from the first Stone Guardian its huge bowl is toppled sideways onto the polished stone floor. In a coruscation of flame and glowing ash the contents of the cauldron spill across the Hall, igniting the obsidian warriors themselves and turning the entire cavern into a sea of raging flame. Your situation has just gone from bad to worse.

Thankfully the Fates have a plan for all their supplicants, and for you it is not to die within this sea of flame. Before either the fire or the Stone Guardians can reach you one last hope presents itself. Just ahead of your position a rift appears in the floor, a long break in the stone that has opened under the enormous impact of the toppled cauldron. In that instant you make the decision to save yourself and dive into its dark recesses.

For a moment you fall into space and then hit water. Above you the break in the stone is awash with flame, its scorching heat reaching down into the rift as the hall is completely consumed with fire. Within the flickering shadows you find your feet and look about.

Shaking your head you gather your senses, and determine quickly that you have found a delving far older than the chamber above. You are standing in a wide cavern, waist deep in stagnant water. A closer inspection of the nearest wall shows it to be a hand-hewn chamber, most probably an old water cistern. In the gloom you can see an archway, and a single passage leading off to the south. There is no other way out.

With the fire raging above you have no way of making it back to the Hall, and there can be no advantage in staying where you are. With your warhammer grasped tightly in your hands you wade over to the southern passage and disappear into its absolute darkness.

Turn to section 35.

59

Hand over hand you drag yourself out of the pit. Sweat drenches your body as you dig your fists into the crumbling earth, looking for any purchase that will give you another handhold as you work your way upwards. Old roots and embedded stone become your lifeline as you haul yourself skywards, and eventually you find your way back to the canyon floor.

In a grasping heave you drag yourself out of the pit and lay on your back, staring at the night sky as you attempt to catch your breath. Your muscles quiver with the exertion of the climb and for a time you rest, thankful that the pitfall was not your undoing. You cannot rest for long however. The moons rise ever higher and you cannot afford to wait for your strength to return to you. With stiff muscles and aching joints you gather up your warhammer and make your way southwards.

Turn to section 30.

60

The Guardians stand immobile in the moonlight and for a moment you hesitate. You have seen how such statues can come to life and you do not wish to confront them again, but you must move on, you cannot afford any delay. Carefully you make your way between them, alert for the first sign of movement in the stone, the first hint of danger. Nothing happens.

With a sigh of relief you run on into the complex of ruins and make for the green-domed Temple.

Turn to section 82.

61

You do not fear this vehmin, but you have other priorities on this night and you choose to remain hidden. The dark form stands for a time but can see nothing. In the gloom you are as unfathomable as the stone at your back, and satisfied that there is no danger near he moves on carefully towards the valley below. Quickly the Ranger is swallowed up by the dark, disappearing into the east and the shadows of the night. With no further time to waste you rise from your cover and consider what you should do next. You have no doubt that there will be a reckoning with the Ranger later.

It is time to move on. Will you return to the valley floor? If this is your choice turn to section 85. If you would rather keep to the slopes and follow the hillside for a time turn to section 2.

62

The beast is enormous, a groping, grasping mass of snaking limbs and gelatinous ooze that is almost impossible to fend against. It wants you as an easy meal, but a few hard hits with the iron edge of your hammer soon changes its view of your edibility. Again and again you strike at the beast, its broken and mangled tentacles flailing in the air as you advance upon it. In a thrashing retreat the creature digs itself back into its hole and disappears from sight, unwilling to continue the fight and risk further harm.

Breathing heavily you wipe its oozing fluids from your arms and face, thankful that the beast had no stomach for the battle. When you think you have removed all the stinking residue from your body you then return to your path westwards. Ahead lay the opening to the canyon and the Shattereen beyond. As you move over the now quiet sands you make a point of stamping heavily upon the ground. The only response you hear is a deep growl from somewhere beneath the canyon floor. This beast will think twice before confronting a Jotun again.

Turn to section 68.

63

You have spent enough time lingering over the body of the Ranger. Without another thought for the dead vehmin you take hold of your hammer and return to the endless shadows of the defile. Your path takes you back along the canyon's jagged course, but in short order you leave its confines and find yourself once again upon the floor of the Shattereen.

Turn to section 90.

64

To wait and see if the Rift Dragon will let you pass is a waste of time you cannot afford. If the beast is to prove a barrier to your deskai then it is better that you confront it and send it to its grave. For a short time you wait, listening for sign of its presence and considering what you know of these creatures. The Dragon is far larger than yourself but you have one advantage that you intend to make good use of. The Dragon is a predator, and like all creatures of its ilk it enjoys most the easy kill, one that does not cause itself any harm in the taking. If you can wound the beast then there is the slim chance that it may think twice about continuing its assault and leave you alone. Dragons are not cowards but they do appreciate the concept of living to fight another day.

Slowly you rise from the shadows of your hiding place and prepare yourself for the battle to come. You do not delude yourself that the Dragon will be anything other than the instrument of your death, but life is not that important to a Jotun. The completion of your deskai is all that

matters and the beast stands between you and its end. Either it will be chased away or you will die. It is that simple.

With warhammer in hand you move forward, keeping to the canyon wall as you try and determine where the beast might now linger. It does not take long to find it. In the winds of the night you hear it snuffling beyond the next turn in the canyon, and you know that it can sense you as well. It is waiting.

In the darkness you offer yourself to the vagaries of Fate and attack.

The Rift Dragon is only a juvenile but a formidable opponent nonetheless, one that is impossible to kill with the weapon you have at hand. You can however cause it harm, and if you are able to do so it will retreat to a safe distance and let you pass. The Rift Dragon has a combat value of 20 and endurance points of 60. Conduct the combat as per normal but note that the Critical Hit rule does not apply in this contest. If you can win two combat rounds the Dragon will retreat and let you pass, the difficulty will be in staying alive to do it. If you win the two rounds needed turn to section 9. If the Dragon proves too strong and kills you before you can do this turn to section 78.



The huge cauldron stands at the far end of the Hall, a bronze bowl of burning liquid as tall as yourself and as wide as your outstretched arms. In the light of its seething flames you move forward, intent on having a closer look. There is much in this magnificent hall that warrants investigation but it is the cauldron that draws you forward. It is the largest piece of metalwork you have ever seen, and in the glare of its own light it sits as a solid piece of cast bronze, woven about its surface with intricate symbols and a latticework of carved silver vines that seem almost real in their detail. When you are no more than ten metres from its fiery edge you come to a halt and stare harder at its glowing metal. There is more to this cauldron than that which first meets the eye. The vines are moving.

As you watch the vines begin to grow outwards, and then reach up over the lip of the cauldron and turn into its blazing fires. In a pulsing rush of energy the vines burst into life, both heat and light radiating down their length and then into the polished stone of the floor. You cannot know what is happening but the flagstones beneath you are shuddering with energy, the cauldron burning all the brighter as if something is about to be unleashed.

This is enough for you. Turning your back on the cauldron you make for the far exit and the passage back to the outside world, but again you are forced to a halt. On all sides of the Hall the silent statues are now coming to life, flexing limbs long static and testing weapons now rusted with time. In the light of the blazing fires they glow red with power, and in that light they all now look to you.

These Stone Guardians may, or may not, intend to do you harm. Do you wish to remain in the hall and see what happens? If this is your choice turn to section 83. If you would rather run for the outside world turn to section 25.

65a

The Temple Guardian is a magical artifice of great age and power but it is something that can be killed nonetheless. At a rush it attacks, swinging its sword with the skill of a seasoned warrior. Against the assault you fend the first of its blows then strike out yourself. As you sense the moonlight sliding across the pool you fight the Guardian, trading blows as the chance to pull the Light of the World into your world slowly slips away. At the last however, you are successful, a heavy blow across its shoulders fracturing the statue and sending it reeling backwards onto the hard stone floor. In that instant of advantage you do not hesitate, bringing your hammer down repeatedly upon its solid form. In a shower of dust and broken rock the Guardian dies, its weapon clattering across the chamber.

Sweating from the combat you give yourself no time to recover from your triumph. Quickly you turn back to the emurion'ka.

Turn to section 120.

66

In the dark of your accidental prison you hammer away at the stone slab before you, the ringing of your hammer against the stone echoing loudly in your ears. All about you dirt and stone fall from the roof with each blow, threatening to collapse the remainder of the passage but in this endeavour you cannot stop. If you are to escape and continue with your deskai you know you must throw all caution to the wind and keep up the relentless hammering.

The more you work away at the stone the greater your frustration at its stolid defiance of your efforts. The slab is thick and as your strength wanes before the exertion of the task, you come to realise that you do not have the power necessary to break such a rock. After an hour of effort you slump back upon the dirt floor of the passage and try to rest. It is an ignominious end you think, not to die at the hands of your enemy but to be overwhelmed by a piece of stone. It is a thought that lingers only for a moment. From above you hear the unmistakable sound of earth shifting under great stress. You begin to rise but do not get the chance to stand as a blanket of falling stone collapses from the roof above you and buries you within its crushing embrace.

Here you die, your deskai unfulfilled. Perhaps in another life the Fates will grant you better luck.

THE END



67

In that instant you realise that you have sprung a trap but you are too slow to respond. As if in slow motion the slab beneath you falls away revealing an impossibly deep pit. In desperation you smash your fist into the crumbling side of the abyss as you fall, and are lucky enough to snag your hand within a tangle of old roots. With a bone-jarring crunch you slam heavily against the side of the pit, dangling by one arm within a hole that descends many hundreds of metres into the earth. It is a black abyss that you are sure will be a certain death if you are to fall into it.

With sweat draining from your forehead you gain a better purchase with both hands and look upwards towards the open sky above. You have fallen more than fifteen metres but you may still be able to climb out.

Test your Strength attribute. If you pass the test turn to section 59. If you fail the test turn to section 72.

68

You leave the Sandlurker to nurse its wounds and run for the canyon opening and the Shattereen that lays beyond. The night remains dark, the moons not yet high enough in the sky to light the barren floor of the valley. To the west you can see the opening of another canyon there and to the south the dark maw of another fracture. For a moment you wait in the isolation of this wide space and consider what you should do. The night winds blow from the south, and apart from the distant calling of birds you are alone in the world.

The Oracle has given much information on your quest. If you do not currently have the Word of Aggeron you can search for it in the western canyon by turning to section 57. If this is not the first time you have been down that path turn to section 116. If it is the Heart of the Lost that you must seek then the southern canyon can be travelled by turning to section 28.

69

The slab waits quietly under a dark sky as you ready yourself for the jump. It is not a distance that is beyond you but the night has been long, and you feel fatigue in your legs and shoulders. You wish to go further southwards though, and this simple piece of stone will not be suffered as a barrier to that progress.

Quickly you back up the canyon and pace out a run up that will allow you a jump from the edge of the slab. When you are satisfied you strap your hammer tighter to your back and secure your waist bag. Then you sprint forward. Towards the stone you race at full speed and leap with all the strength available to you. There is power enough in your legs but you misstep the last stride before jumping and topple forwards onto the slab, your body sliding across its smooth surface. Even before you realise fully what has happened you hear the loud click of a mechanism sounding in the stone beneath you.

All at once the slab falls away and you hit the side of a pit that reaches far into the earth beneath you. In a tangle of flailing arms and dry roots you come to a rest, hung up on the side of the pit by the ancient remains of a desiccated tree root. It is an ungainly purchase but one that has saved your life. In the gloom below you can see an impossibly deep abyss that disappears into shadows.

Carefully you check that you are uninjured and then consider the climb that now awaits you. You have come to rest some fifteen metres from the surface. There is no choice available to you but to try and climb out.

This will be a climb that will take all the strength you possess. Test against your strength attribute. If you pass the test turn to section 59. If you fail the test turn to section 72.

70

Your thirst is great and the water appears fresh and clear, but you do not trust enough to drink it. Instead you turn to leave but find your feet anchored firmly to the floor of the pool. You cannot move, and as you struggle to free your legs you begin to see a great power building in the waters around you. With increasing speed the pool begins to swirl in a wild current that intensifies with each passing second, You can do little but watch as your body is enveloped in a strange tingling

sensation. It is an energy that holds you tight whilst needling painfully across your exposed skin. Within this vortex of energy you are transfixed.

There is no chance that you can escape until whatever holds you chooses to release you, and it has not finished with you yet. Into your mind the energy surges, flooding your thoughts with images and voices, insinuating its way into the folds of your consciousness. Suddenly the world around you changes. The tree is no longer a silent form in the darkness. Instead it shines brightly, throwing back the night and gleaming with the light of a thousand burning stars. In an attempt to covers your eyes you bring up your arm but realise that the images are in your mind, and you will be captive to them until the Tree itself decides to let you go. Then you hear the voice.

"Tansen'Delving," its proclaims in your mind, "Welcome to Fael'nirion, the Well of Dreams. I see it in your thoughts that you are here to find the Temple of the Moons and I have been awakened to help you. You look for the Temple but know not where it might be. I am here to tell you where it can be found, and offer the key that will allow you access to its gate."

The voice is loud in your thoughts, a trumpeting chorus that cannot be shut out. You try and break free of its bonds but it has you and it will not let go.

"The Temple of the Moons will only be found beyond the walls of Nem'haleen. If you are to gain entry to the Temple then you will need the key to open its walls. The powers of this world have decided that you are to be the instrument of their will, and in their wisdom they have decided that the key must be yours."

As the words echo in your thoughts you begin to see the Tree before you change. As ice might melt in the heat of the day the Tree dissolves away, falling into the black depths of the pool's waters. Immediately a light grows within its rampaging current and you begin to make out shapes and forms. The voice of the Well of Dreams continues as a parade of images pass before you.

"Nem'haleen can be found in the south, beyond the causeway that brought you here and deep within the canyon you have previously turned from. It is said that the last of the Trell'sara died upon the walls of that fortress, and that his heart was cut from his living body as a gift to the Gods of the Oera'dim. That heart has been held here for millennia, the only relic of a people that have receded from all knowledge and existence. It is the Coer'danith, the Heart of the Lost, that is your pass beyond the walls of Nem'haleen. It is the will of the powers that it be given to you."

Out of the centre of the pool a red glow brightens then emerges from its waters. It is the red gem that you saw embedded in the Tree and as you watch it floats in your direction, settling carefully in the palm of your hand.

"The Coer'danith is the key that will let you pass beyond the walls of Nem'haleen Tansen'Delving. Guard it carefully and never let it pass from your sight. There will be no hope for the success of your deskai without it."

With these last words the pool grows quiet. For a short time you stand transfixed in the waters but slowly you feel the power of the Well of Dreams leave you. In your hand you hold the Heart of the Lost and this has not been the greatest boon given to you this night. You know where the Temple of the Moons is to be found. Now you have a path to follow and no reason to delay.

You turn on your heel and leave the Well of Dreams. In your hand you hold the Coer'danith and this must be recorded on your character sheet. When this has been done continue your adventure by turning to section 92.

The Shades charge towards you, their bodies stinging vortices of sand and razor-sharp iron. For a moment you hesitate. Before the onslaught you can see no choice but to try and fight your way back to the canyon exit, and then get as far from this arena as you can. It is a fool's hope. The swirling forms of the Shades are as incorporeal as the wind itself and you have nothing with which to fight such a menace. Still, you will not go your ancestors as a willing victim to their hatred. You stand your ground, your warhammer in hand, relishing the fight to come.

In those few moments as the Shades advance you begin to feel a heat building at your side. It is insistent, drawing your attention from the enemy ahead to the old piece of wood that still hangs at your belt. In the gloom it shines brightly, a blue light that grows stronger with every step taken by the Shades towards you. Quickly you pull it from its fastenings and take it in hand. By the time you have it free you notice that the temper of the Shades has changed considerably. No longer does the advance of this nemesis continue. The malevolence of their number has vanished, and as you hold the old healing stick overhead you can feel fear beginning to wash from them as a wave of frustration and hesitation. They are keeping their distance.

With nothing to lose you move forward, holding the stick before you as you might a burning torch. The wood glares brightly in the darkness, the vestiges of its healing spell an affront to your enemy that they cannot endure. Before your advance the Shades fall back, leaving a path open that you take without waiting for an invitation. Quickly the ethereal forms separate to let you pass, and as you make your way out of the arena the Shades instead follow behind, wishing you harm still, but unable to get close. As you leave the open field you plant the stick in the mouth of the canyon and move on. Unable to pass, the Shades of Despair fall back, their forms dissolving quickly into the sands of the arena.

Without stopping you make your way back into the gloom of the ravine and consider your good luck. Such moments of providence are few in the life of a Jotun and you cannot help but think that Shan'dari may have had something to do with it. It is a presumption that you have no time to dwell upon however. The old conjuror will have many things to explain when you return to the Spires, though for the moment you must continue with your search. For now you must return to the Shattereen.

Turn to section 11.

72

Carefully you begin the climb that will take you out of this deadly trap. It is however, an ascent fraught with difficulty. The edges of the pit are a crumbling morass of desiccated earth and dried roots that pull away in your hands as you try to find a secure purchase. Sweating profusely from the exertion you make your way upwards, each small advance a feat of strength that quickly drains what energy remains to you. By the time you reach half way to the surface your strength has been spent and you can go no further.

Suspended in the darkness you know that you will not make the rest of the way to the canyon floor, but it is not in your nature to give up. Again you try and find a foothold that will support your weight, and in your desperation you jam your foot into the loose earth, but it cannot hold you. Slowly the dirt slides away from beneath your feet and before you can recover your footholds you fall outwards into the pit.

In a rush of air you plummet downwards, no way at hand to save yourself from your inevitable doom. When you hit the bottom of the shaft there is no sound, nor echo of the impact of your demise, only the trickling of dirt as it falls after you into the abyss.

In the depths of this nameless pit you die. Perhaps in a latter life you will find better luck. For now however, your deskai is over.

THE END

73

At the point where you stand the canyon can be no more than twenty metres in breadth, the smooth slab of stone covering the entire distance and extending almost eight metres wide. It is a long way to jump and at this stage of your deskai you do not feel disposed to having to find another way. You decide that you shall walk across it and take your chances.

In truth there seems to be no danger here. You did not notice the slab before, but then the conflagration that once burned here had taken up all your attention. Tentatively you place one boot upon the slab and find it a secure footing. Carefully you move forward and with your full weight on the stone begin to relax by a small measure. It is only a few metres to the other side so you quickly walk across. When you are two-thirds of the way across you see a small piece of text inscribed into the stone. Bending low you blow dust and sand away from its worn lettering and expose a short sentence. You do not know what it means, but it is in an old Oera'dim tongue that translates crudely as "Got you sucker". In that instant a mechanical release sounds as a loud click in the stone below you. You have walked into a trap.

Test your agility attribute. If you pass turn to section 46. If you fail the test turn to section 67.

74

Nem'haleen stands before you in the moonlight and you know you have the key. Carefully you take the large red gem from your waistbag and place it in the inset in the stone plinth. From overhead you feel the wind suddenly become stronger, its bluster kicking up debris that swirls about your feet as you wait for something to happen. It comes quickly.

Upon the walls the carved priests begin to move, their procession slowly moving to the centre of the wall, where they stand in line facing each other as if waiting for some unheard command. There the figures stand but only for a short time. As the moons of Arborell gather high in the sky above you see clearly the priests grab at the wall and pull it aside as if they were opening a curtain. You have found your way in.

Quickly you move inside, taking the Coer'danith from its inset as you go, and once within the precincts of a wide courtyard the entryway disappears at your back. What you find is both intriguing and somewhat disappointing. At the far end of the courtyard stands a large upright circle of stone, within which there swirls a solid mist of opaque vapour. Carefully you look about, surveying the entire yard but your eyes come back to the circle of mist. It is beckoning you forward.

Again you survey the courtyard and confirm there are no exits, no other doorways that might give you access to the Temple of the Moons. In fact you realise there is nothing here but the ring of stone. Tentatively you move towards it and search for any clues that might indicate how you should proceed. The circle is an interwoven design of carved obsidian, its smooth surfaces cleverly sculpted with a twisting motif of vines and leaves that travel around its arc before coming together upon its upper rim. You can see no words or symbols except for two small glyphs cut into its crowning leaves. You recognise them immediately, they are the glyphs of Elanna and Shabel, the moons of Arborell.

If you have had the Word of Aggeron burned into your arm previously turn to section 29. If you have not, turn to section 86.

75

Surprised by the use of your name in this place of ruination you back away from the steps, unsure as to what might be about to happen. Immediately the interior of the Temple bursts into life, ripples of light from within throwing long shadows out into the night. For a moment you stand your ground but then you feel a presence at your side, a cold hand resting at your shoulder.

"Tansen'Delving," it says softly, "There is nothing to fear in this place. All that resides in the broken stone of this city are reflections of ages long past."

You are not so sure of that. Quickly you turn on your heel and back away from the apparition that has appeared at your side. It is the hooded figure of a spectral being, only slightly shorter than yourself but without features or substance.

"What is it you want of me Shade?"

The spectre stands before you at the base of the steps and waves its hand towards the Temple.

"I want nothing from you," it replies, "but for you to watch what is about to unfold."

With the movement of its hand the Temple shines out brightly, its light forming a tracery of moving shadows that quickly take shape, ripples of energy that begin to move as vague apparitions forming in the ruins. Light streams through finely carved latticework between the columns, sending thin beams of moving light and shade out into the darkness and in this display the plain comes to life.

Around you a great battle unfolds. Immediately you recognise the standards and armour of your own brethren, the Jotuni. Beside them stand the Hresh'na and the Ahmutani and all about you there is fighting and chaos. The images come in bursts of light that constantly change as you watch. You cannot say why but you know it is a battle between the Oera'dim and the Trell'sara, and it is one that your brethren are winning. In a rush the Trell'sara are surrounded and overwhelmed, their numbers cut to pieces as the Hresh'na flow over them like a tide. It is a breathtaking sight, one that has your warrior's blood pounding in your veins. You do not realise it until the vision ends that the hooded figure is once again standing beside you.

"Do you know what it is that you have just witnessed?" asks the figure.

You shake your head but reply that it must be a battle from the Great Insurrection that overthrew the Fallen Masters.

The figure nods its head and turns towards you.

"What you have seen is the most important battle of the war that threw down those ancient tyrants. On this very ground the last great battle of the Insurrection took place, and it is here that the Jotuni learned of the existence of the emurion'ka. These ruins are all that remains of the Temple of the Two Suns, the vaellim'nar'dorum, and it is here that I have awaited your coming. I am the Oracle of this place and although you do not know it you are here for a reason."

The Oracle turns again to look out into the night and again the Temple bursts into brighter light. Out upon the plain a new vision erupts but this time it is a vision of catastrophe. On a vast green plain you see your brethren dying, overwhelmed themselves by the armies of the vehmin. In the distance you see the burning remains of a small fortified settlement, but it is the carnage of the battle that holds you. Thousands of Jotun and Hresh'na fall beneath advancing lines of axemen and the mounted troops of the Men of the South. Without hope of victory you see the standards of your people trampled beneath the overwhelming power of your enemies. It is a sight that sickens you but thankfully it is one you must endure for only a short time.

The Oracle waves his arm and again the night is dark. He has a message for you and does not allow you to speak.

"Tansen'Delving, in this place you have seen great triumph and great defeat. On the one hand you have witnessed the circumstances of your people's discovery of the stonewood sword known as the emurion'ka. On the other you have seen the circumstances of its taking from you by the Men of the South. Do not think that your deskai is only about your right of passage as a warrior. The Powers have deemed it necessary that another emurion'ka be brought into the world, and they have laid it at your feet to collect it."

You are not sure you understand exactly what the Oracle means but he does not allow you to question his words.

"Within the Temple of the Moons can be found the Well of Elanna. It will be there that you will find the emurion'ka, bathed in moonlight and available only for the taking whilst that light shines upon it. Once the moonlight has passed, so too shall pass your only chance to pull it into this world."

"To find the Temple of the Moons you must have two things in your possession, the Word of Aggeron and the Heart of the Lost. The first can be found in the west, the other in the south. With these in your possession you can gain access to the Temple. With these in your possession you can reach for the emurion'ka and claim it as your own. To you I have only one word of warning. The

Well of Elanna keeps the stonewood sword in this world. Do not disturb its waters or else all will be lost. It is your task to find it."

The Oracle's words echo against the Temple of the Two Suns, and as they are lost to the winds, so does he also fade into nothingness. About you the night crowds in as the rippling light of the Temple extinguishes and then winks out. You are once again alone in a world of shadows and broken stone.

In a daze you turn from the Temple and move towards the exit from the city. It is clear that you have been given a greater task to complete than the simple exercise of your deskai. You shake your head as you realise that the old Shaman must have known. There could be no other explanation for his haste in having brought you so far south. You decide that if you survive you will find him at the Spires and beat the truth out of his weathered hide.

With such thoughts in mind you run northwards, only one fact now clear. You must look elsewhere for the Temple of the Moons. It is not here.

Record that you have spoken with the Oracle of the Two Suns and turn to section 95.

76

In a fog of smashed obsidian you strike out at the Guardians, your warhammer swinging wildly through the miasma of crushed stone as you try and force your way to the exit. The battle is hard but it has your heart pounding in your chest as you bring the huge warriors down, their fragile bodies no match for the reach of your weapon. Suddenly through the circling forms you see an opportunity and you take it. With a single blow you throw down another of the giants and then run through the opening made by its collapse. In a heartbeat you make it to the corridor and then run at all speed for the outside world.

Behind you the Stone Guardians cry out in frustration at your escape, however you cannot be concerned for their obvious dismay. In a cloud of broken stone and desiccated earth you force your way out of the passage and fall heavily to the canyon floor. You cannot believe it but you have escaped.

For a short time you lay face down in the dirt trying to recover your breath, and then slowly rise. You have not gone unscathed from your encounter with the Stone Guardians and in the gloom you tend to the injuries you have sustained. As you work you listen for any sign of danger and as before find that you are alone, only the wind funnelling down the canyon a whispering companion to your labours. When you have recovered enough you regain your feet and move eastwards, following the canyon into the face of the rising moons.

Turn to section 47.

77

You decide it will be best to survey the ground ahead from the slopes at your right. The night is still dark but the first signs of the rising moons in the east has brought a pale glow to the horizon. If you are right Elanna and Shabel should rise within the hour and with their ascent the world will be flooded with moonlight, more than enough to allow you an easier passage on your quest.

The slope however, turns out to be a difficult climb. Formed of loose rock and scattered with huge boulders it is a precarious rise, one that you quickly lose patience with. By the time you reach a third of the way to its first crest you have had enough and instead sit in the shadows of a large shelf of rock and consider what might be your next move. You are high enough however, to get a reasonable view of the terrain below. The open ground at the bottom of the slope extends for some distance. It is a wide valley of broken stone and desiccated earth, devoid of life and which provides no clue to where you must now go. In the gloom however, you can see the dark rifts of three canyons spreading out into the foothills. One opens into the east, another follows a ragged

line to the south, the third extends beyond your view into the west. If Shan'dari is correct the Temple you seek must reside within one of these canyons.

For a moment you consider what you should do, but as you rise to begin your descent to the valley floor you hear the faint sounds of movement above. In the quiet it is the smallest of sounds, a trickling of dirt and small stones as they are dislodged from somewhere further up the slope. Carefully you lower yourself down into the shadows and wait for another sign. It comes quickly as the unmistakable noise of something moving just above your position.

Will you remain still and see what happens? If this is your choice turn to section 91. If you do not have the patience to wait around and would rather go and find the cause of the disturbance turn to section 53. If you feel you have seen enough of the Shattereen and would rather return to the valley floor turn to section 85.



78

The Dragon is indeed waiting for you, the expectation of an easy meal its only concern. In a crashing thunder of tearing claws and choking dust the Dragon falls upon you. Against its size and power you fight valiantly to put the beast down but its reach is too long, its talons too lethal a weapon to force aside. You will not die easily however. In the heat of battle you attack the great beast, striking blow after blow in an attempt to wound it and force it to retreat. It is too strong, too well protected with scales as hard as iron. On this night it is the Rift Dragon who will triumph.

One great swipe of its enormous clawed hand catches you across the mid-section and throws you hard into the canyon wall. It is a mortal wound, the last of many blows you have taken in the fight. Half covered in dirt and dislodged stone you can no longer raise yourself and instead you bleed out onto the canyon floor. Your last conscious thought as you slide into oblivion is the earnest hope that the Dragon will choke on its meal. You however are dead, your deskai over. Perhaps in another life you will find better luck.

THE END

79

The Ranger has caught you by surprise but you are a Jotun, and you are not that easy to kill. In the dark confines of the canyon floor you strike out at the vehmin, your warhammer flashing in the gloom as you try to strike him down. He however, is a Ranger of the Watch, and he also is no easy victim. With sword in hand he is a shadow wrapped in the darkness, testing your defences, needling you into anger so he might take advantage of any error you might make.

Alas, it comes all too quickly. Frustrated by your inability to bring your opponent down you move in, trying to force him against the canyon wall where you might finally crush him. In such close quarters he finds an opportunity and thrusts his sword deep into your chest. In a spasm of pain you fall backwards, dead before you hit the ground.

In this canyon, upon a death-bed of broken stone and dirt your deskai ends. As your spirit falls into the Underworld you know that it will be to your next life that you must look for better luck.

THE END

It takes time but you find your way out of the canyon and onto the open ground of the valley floor. Although you have wasted much of the night hours you decide to rest before moving on. The night remains dark, the rising moons now shrouded within clouds upon the horizon, and as you catch your breath you see movement against the silvered clouds. It is a multitude of birds, a flock of crows that wings its way in your direction. For a time you watch their approach and then follow their flight as they head west. You smile and shake your head. Your people believe that the appearance of these black birds is a portent of hard times ahead. One is usually enough but you have been confronted by an entire flock and it does not fill you with confidence. You cannot linger on such omens however. You have a task to complete and time waits for no Jotun. Again you have before you a choice to make.

If you have not already done so, will you take the canyon that winds into the east? If this is your choice turn to section 10. If you would rather take the western canyon and it is the first time you have taken this path turn to section 57. If however, this is the second time you have need to travel this way turn to section 116.

80a

The shaft of moonlight can linger only as long as the moons of Arborell remain directly above the Temple, their movement through the heavens taking it inexorably across the pool. Quickly you look about the chamber, searching for something that can help you reach the sword but there is nothing. Then from within the darkest shadows of the Temple there comes a sound of movement, furtive in its brevity but there nonetheless. Moving from the edge of the pool you search the gloom and find a figure standing alone within a narrow alcove. It appears as nothing more than a statue, a robed figure no larger than yourself, but as you watch the sound repeats itself and it is now far more defined.

To the scrape of stone upon stone the statue begins to move, its limbs flexing as it steps from the alcove and draws a long scimitar from its belt. As black as the darkest night the statue is a perfectly crafted representation of a robed warrior-priest. In the stillness of the chamber its cloak moves as if caught by some unseen breeze and about its form there glimmers a blue-tinged aura of awakening power. This is no statue.

"What is your purpose here?" you yell across the chamber.

The Temple Guardian crooks its neck and looks straight at you. Its face is blank, no more than a featureless visage without mouth or eyes, but it points to the emurion'ka and then gestures a challenge. Its meaning is clear enough. If you want the sword you must prove yourself worthy of it.

If you are to pull the emurion'ka into the world you must kill this Temple Guardian quickly. Unlike all other statues of this type that you have encountered this Guardian has been designed for only one purpose, to guard the appearance of the Light of the World and kill any who might try and take it. It has suffered none of the effects of age that have made other living statues brittle and it will take damage only on the most powerful of impacts. Any combat round won by less than four points will make no reduction in its endurance. Within the confines of the Temple of the Moons however, the Word of Aggeron burned into your arm will assist you. It is an artifice of powerful EarthMagic and in this place shall increase your overall combat value by two points whilst you remain within its borders. Adjust your combat value to include this temporary bonus. The Temple Guardian has a combat value of 18 and an endurance of 20. If you defeat this creature turn to section 65a. If you succumb to its power turn to section 98a.

Moonlight floods the canyon floor as you run southwards, and apart from the wind you are alone, your footfalls pounding into the dry earth as you move quickly along the defile's winding course. The extra light provided by the moons speeds you on your way until you are forced to a stumbling halt by a curious change in the nature of the canyon ahead. Where there had once been a wall of flame roaring from rockface to rockface you now are confronted by a smooth stone slab that lays ominously across the breadth of the canyon. In the light of the moons it is grey in colour, and set in the ground as a wide area of rectangular rock, flush with the surface of the canyon floor. It was not here before.

For more than a few moments you ponder the appearance of the slab, but you know that it can be no coincidence that it now resides where the wall of fire once burned so intensely. You can only assume that it is a test, some ancient device that you must overcome if you are to travel any further southwards.

Given that you find such delays both annoying and tiresome, you think quickly on what you should do next.

There is a chance that the slab is just what it seems, a wide piece of smooth stone placed for an ancient purpose, without malice or danger. If you will simply walk across it turn to section 73. If you do not wish to take any chances and would rather find a way around it turn to section 50. If you are curious about its appearance and wish to test if it is real by hitting it with your warhammer turn to section 108.



The ruins are a maze of fallen stonework and smashed statuary, within which you negotiate a path that takes you towards the only standing structure at its centre. Around you ruined buildings lay as mounds of rubble, and it is quickly apparent that they met their end not at the hands of time and weather but by an act of systematic, and deliberate, destruction. Within the chaos you find sign of hammer and chisel, and of a malevolent intent to destroy any word or symbol etched into its stone. When this city was destroyed the architects of its destruction did not only wish the pulling down of its buildings, but the removal of any vestige of its identity as well.

Such obvious hatred makes the survival of the Temple at its centre all the more curious. Within a plain of smashed rock and destruction it stands pristine, and in the light of the rising moons it beckons you on, drawing you closer.

When you reach the base of its steps you see immediately that it is more than just a simple temple. It is a domed pavilion, supported at all sides by immaculately cut columns of pure white stone, between which are secured finely carved panels of stone latticework. Within its shadows you can see a statue of a robed and hooded figure and what looks like a raised pool of liquid.

Quickly you take to the steps and go to move inside but you are stopped by a voice that halts you in your tracks. The voice is calling your name.

Will you respond? If this is your choice turn to section 40. If you would rather back away and consider further what you should do turn to section 75.

With increasing speed the statues come to life, their black forms radiating energy as they leave their ordered ranks and advance upon you. Too late you realise that you have made a grave error. These Stone Guardians wish you harm and more than a dozen now bar the only obvious exit from the hall. In the coruscating light blazing from the cauldron four of their number advance toward you, their weapons flashing brightly as they break into a run.

You have few options before such powerful adversaries. Will you stand your ground and fight? If this is your choice turn to section 49. If you would rather attempt to find another way out turn to section 58.

You cannot stop to investigate. The canyon reaches out ahead of you and you have no time to waste. With the night hours quickly whiling away you remain focused on finding the Temple. It must lie somewhere ahead.

Turn to section 47.



You look about the valley and realise that the slopes are too unstable, their crumbling soils too fractured by fissures to offer a safe footing. Although there is nothing to indicate where you should go next, the three canyons that spread out from the valley below must hold the hiding place of the Temple you seek. Carefully you make your way back to the valley floor and are about to stride out onto the open ground when the smallest of sounds brings you to a sudden halt.

Diving to the ground you wait as the wind blows about you. You are sure that you heard something but you can see nothing moving upon the valley floor ahead. In the dark you wait, and it is only in a pause in the wind's bluster that you hear the sound again. From high overhead comes the distinctive rush of wings as a huge beast glides across your path. It takes only a moment for you to recognise the creature. It is so huge it can only be one thing, a Rift Dragon. Although you are exposed upon open ground there is nothing that you can do except remain still. These Dragons hunt at night and it is movement that is their key attractor. As long as you remain motionless the beast may simply pass you by.

With the wind blowing in fitful gusts you lay still and watch as the dark form moves silently across the sky, blinking out the stars with its passage. You have heard it said that Rift Dragons are the descendants of the great Ell'adrim of the Ancient World, and although they have been the allies of the Oera'dim in times past they hold no favour for any Being who might find himself alone in their presence. You wait quietly for even the smallest of their number are more than a match for any Jotun. At too many campfires have you heard tales of entire Jotun cruets being attacked in the high mountains, of dozens of warriors dying after being ambushed upon lonely passes. You know that if this creature sees you it will kill you.

To your dismay the Dragon does not keep to a straight path but turns slowly in a wide arc as if it is looking for something. You cannot take the chance of moving so you resign yourself to waiting

it out, marking time as the great serpent searches the canyons and defiles of the foothills for prey. Thankfully you do not need to wait long.

With a screech that echoes through the canyons ahead the Dragon veers southwards, gaining altitude as it flies towards the brooding peaks of the Great Rift and the darkness beyond. When you are sure that it has gone you raise yourself from the ground and dust yourself down. It is time that you begin your deskai in earnest. Ahead are three canyons, each possibly the hiding place of the Temple of the Moons. You must choose one.

If you wish to take the eastern canyon, turn to section 10. If you would rather take the southern canyon turn to section 28. If you believe the western canyon may prove more fruitful turn to section 57.

86

You stand before the circle of swirling vapours and consider what you should do next. There appears to be no other way out of the courtyard yet the Well of Dreams was specific. Beyond the walls of Nem'haleen could be found the entrance to the Temple of the Moons. It seems obvious that this is the entrance, but you have never seen anything like it, and you certainly have no knowledge of how it should be used. In the end you decide that the only logical course is to walk through the vapours. If nothing happens then you have lost nothing. If it takes you where you wish to go then this will be a story worth the telling when you return to your Kraal. Tentatively you step through the stone circle.

In a blinding flash of light you feel yourself being hurled through the air, spinning out of control as some enormous force takes hold of your body. In a void of light you feel yourself being pulled first in one direction then the other, as if the forces that have you cannot decide where they must take you. Within these seconds of chaos you lose hold of your warhammer and immediately it is gone, thrown out of your grasp to disappear into nothingness. But then, just as quickly as it started the void of light dissolves away and you feel another sensation, only this time it is easy to identify. You are falling.

If this is the first time you have passed through Rinfalen's Gate without the Word of Aggeron burned upon your arm turn to section 86a. If this is the second time turn to section 118a.

86a

When you hit ground you hit hard, a shower of scree erupting as you collapse onto a steep slope and then are propelled downwards. Vainly you try and stop yourself but there is no halting your momentum as you roll and tumble down the incline. Only when you hit level ground do you finally come to a halt.

Dazed and bruised you try and stand but a vertigo takes hold and you are forced to wait as the unease settles in your head. You cannot determine where you are just yet but you are sure that you have not arrived at the Temple of the Moons. You are somewhere else.

Under a starlit sky you find yourself instead upon the outer boundaries of a large ruined city, bordered on all sides by steep hills. The mountains in the south you recognise. They are the same peaks that have been the backdrop of your quest, and their familiar orientation tells you that you have not been transported too far. You notice also that there is only one apparent exit from this valley, a small opening in the hills to the north. It appears to be a canyon not unlike those you have previously travelled. Where you are exactly though is a mystery you will need to solve quickly.

The city spreads across the entire floor of the valley, rising at some points in the south in a series of terraces that encroach upon the hills there. It is a city of the dead though, and as you survey the ruined buildings and fields of scattered rubble you see no sign or life, no hint of habitation or

activity of any kind. You have only the wind as your companion, but there is something else here, something out of place. Within the fields of ruin you see a Temple, a simple structure of white stone columns surmounted by a glistening green dome. It stands squarely at the centre of the city and shines in the moonlight, a beacon of perfection in a landscape of waste and destruction. There is no other standing structure in the entire city, and if there are answers to be found for the questions that now crowd your thoughts, it is there that you must go.

Carefully you check yourself for injury but you have survived your unforeseen arrival without any identifiable harm. Looking around you are surprised also to find your warhammer embedded in the dry earth no more than twenty metres from where you stand. Quickly you retrieve your weapon and find your way down onto the valley floor.

The ruins are a maze of fallen stonework and smashed statuary, within which you negotiate a path that takes you towards the only standing structure at its centre. Around you ruined buildings lay as mounds of rubble, and it is quickly apparent that they met their end not at the hands of time and weather but by an act of systematic, and deliberate, destruction. Within the chaos you find sign of hammer and chisel, and of a malevolent intent to destroy any word or symbol etched into its stone. When this city was destroyed the architects of its destruction did not only wish the pulling down of its buildings, but the removal of any vestige of its identity as well.

Such obvious hatred makes the survival of the temple at its centre all the more curious. Within a plain of smashed rock and destruction it stands pristine, and in the light of the rising moons it beckons you on, drawing you closer.

When you reach the base of its steps you see immediately that it is more than just a simple temple. It is a domed pavilion, supported at all sides by immaculately cut columns of pure white stone, between which are secured finely carved panels of stone latticework. Within its shadows you can see a statue of a robed and hooded figure and what looks like a raised pool of liquid.

Quickly you take to the steps and go to move inside but you are stopped by a voice that halts you in your tracks. The voice is calling your name.

Will you respond? If this is your choice turn to section 40. If you would rather back away and consider further what you should do turn to section 75.

The defile cuts deep into the mountains for some distance and as you follow its path westwards you realise quickly that it is more than just a fracture in the skin of the world. In fact it is not natural at all, but a huge causeway cut deep into the stone of the slopes. At first you do not notice the signs of an ancient handiwork, the edges of the defile too worn and desiccated to give clues to its origin, but as you move deeper into the causeway the walls grow ever taller, the evidence of a hand other than that of the natural world becoming much more obvious.

In the deep shadow of the causeway you see cleanly cut stone faces and hand-made walls that edge both sides of the defile. The floor of the canyon is different also, a cobbled walkway clearly visible beneath the piles of smashed rock that have become so familiar to you. It is the symbols crafted into the stone that are of most interest however.

For a moment you stop and take in the long lines of text that run along the walls. Much of it is sharp edged and shows little sign of wear, but in its origins it is older than the Trell'sara and most are unknown to you. A number of the glyphs are familiar though. One in particular gives you cause to rub at your throat and remind you of the thirst that you have so far chosen to ignore. It says "water", and it gives a clear indication that it can be found further down the defile.

You leave the writings behind and move on, the possibility of water ahead a strong incentive to see where this canyon leads. It is a long one though, a straight line of cut stone that disappears into the night's gloom without hint of ending. You know it must however. Such care has been taken with the building of this causeway that it must have a purpose, a reason for the effort given to its creation. In the darkest of shadows you find your answer.

Almost before you realise what is happening the causeway ends abruptly, and you find yourself stumbling out into a wide pool of knee deep water. The pool is perfectly circular and bordered on all sides by cliffs of sheer stone that rise to more than one hundred metres above you. In the perfect dark your only light is the stars framed in a wide circle overhead, and it is only as you become accustomed to the deeper gloom that you see something standing in the centre of the pool.

Carefully you move closer and see more clearly that it is a tree, or at least a sculpted representation of a tree, pure white in the darkness and covered on its branches by thousands of green crystal leaves. Set into its trunk you can also see a large red jewel, and from within its clear crystal there swirls a faint vortex of light, so dim and red that it blends indiscriminately into the darkness. At the rear of the pool is a line of eleven raised columns, each surmounted by a figure robed and hooded. In the dark it is impossible to see anything of them, they stand silent, each pointing at the tree as if daring you to approach it.

In the vast space you stand quietly and consider what you should do. At your back you can feel the wind blowing along the causeway then swirling upwards as it tries to find a way over the high cliffs. With each bluster the limbs of the tree move and thousands of small reflections of the sky above shine from the jewelled leaves. You look around and decide that there seems to be no danger in this place. The waters at your knees are still and clear, their surface a perfect reflection of the bright stars above. Then you remember your parched throat. Tentatively you bend and smell the water.

Do you wish to drink from this pool? If your thirst is in need of quenching turn to section 17. If you would rather leave this place turn to section 70.

With the rising moons creeping over the edge of the canyon at your left shoulder you run southwards. Much time has been lost in your efforts to negotiate this broken ground but as the canyon opens up into a far wider rift you find the terrain easier, falls of rock no longer blocking your way forward. It is a long winding defile that cuts deep into the foothills, and as you follow its tortured path you begin to see signs that you may not be alone.

In the many fissures in the canyon walls you find the remains of animals both large and small. Carcasses are crammed into cracks in the rock, and upon the open ground within the canyon there are wide areas of dirt, smoothed as if some huge creature has used the spaces to lay and take rest. Almost too late you realise that you have run into the lair of a predator.

The whistling rush of leathery wings overhead confirms your worst fears. Instinctively you flatten yourself within the shadows of the nearest boulder and wait for the creature to show itself. You know what it is though. In your haste you have run into the hunting grounds of the Rift Dragon you saw earlier, and now you will have to find a way out of it. For the moment you can do nothing however. You cannot see where it is, and until you do it has the advantage.

In the shadows you remain quiet, listening for the beat of its wings but there is nothing. The beast has gone to ground and you will be unable to move until it makes its presence known. It does not take long. Upon the canyon wall directly above your hiding place the sound of falling dirt alerts you to movement close at hand. You look up at the rock face and the enormous shadow of the Dragon emerges silhouetted against the stars. The beast sits upon the slopes above, its head and long neck reaching out over the canyon rim. It can sense that you are somewhere close but cannot locate you until you also make a move. For the moment you remain still.

As the Dragon searches the canyon floor you look more closely at its form and find that it is not a full grown serpent. This one is more a juvenile, probably no more than twenty-five metres in length. Its size however, is still far more than a single Jotun should confront alone. Finding no movement below the beast screeches out its frustration and moves further along the edge of the canyon. It will not give up until it has found you.

The Rift Dragon shall not leave until it has you. As it moves further down the canyon you will need to decide what you should do next. Will you run back up the canyon and attempt to leave it far behind? If this is your choice turn to section 8. If you would rather hide and try and elude its search turn to section 22. If you have no time for delays and would rather confront the serpent on open ground turn to section 64. If you are in possession of a flash-charge and wish to use it against the Dragon turn to section 107.

89

In the glare of the conflagration you search the walls of the canyon for a possible path over and around the fire. The eastern wall is too fractured to consider but the western wall rises to its crest in a series of steep layers. There is a chance that you will find enough of a purchase there to climb either to the top of the canyon wall, or at least high enough to safely traverse the fire without harm. With your decision made you slide your warhammer into its fittings at your back and begin the climb.

To climb around the fire will require some skill. The wall of the canyon is steep and the fire burns hot at your back. Test your agility. If you pass this test turn to section 12. If you fail the test turn to section 44.

90

The Shattereem remains as you had previously left it, a broad area of broken ground bordered on all sides by steep slopes. From your position you see the dark openings of the southern and eastern canyons in the gloom ahead. Quickly you move further onto the desiccated earth of the valley floor and consider what you should do next.

If you have not already done so and you now wish to take the eastern canyon turn to section 10. If you believe the southern canyon should be your choice turn to section 28.

91

For a time you hear nothing further but there is something out there, you can sense it, and in the darkness you wait for it to reveal itself. When it comes you grip the handle of your warhammer all the tighter. It is a Ranger, a vehmin of the south, clothed in black and moving down the slope some ten metres above your hiding place. Under a moonless sky he is as dark as the night itself, nothing but a shadow moving silently down into the valley below. All your muscles tense as you realise that before you moves an enemy. It is one that you can choose to let pass, or kill.

It is your choice. If you feel compelled to attack the Ranger turn to section 99. If you have a cooler head and wish to see what he is doing first turn to section 43.

92

With the Coer'danith in hand you retrace your steps, moving eastwards down the long causeway as you head back to the canyon. The night is cool and silent but your mind is a chaos of thoughts and conflict. Your deskai is far more complex than the old Shaman had alluded to, and there is obviously more going on here than you could possibly understand. It is a situation you do not relish, and one that you are determined to control if you can.

The Fael'nirion however, was most unexpected. The Well of Dreams has always been a popular folk-tale amongst the Oera'dim, but never could you have thought it might be so real, nor for that matter as insistent as it was in giving you its message. In this dark canyon your only concern

though is the completion of your deskai. Regardless of anything else the finding of the Temple is your only real concern. If there are other forces at work then they will have to stand and wait their turn.

Quickly you make the entrance to the causeway and look out onto the ground beyond. According to the Well of Dreams the Temple of the Moons can be found in the south. As far as you can tell from the directions given Nem'haleen must be at the end of this canyon. It is the only certain direction you have been given so far and you take it with both hands.

Turning right you run out onto the floor of the canyon and continue southwards. At this point the canyon is wide and without landslide or rift to provide any barrier. At the run you follow its jagged path, warhammer strapped at your back and the Heart of the Lost gripped tightly in your left hand. It is as you advance that you find an unexpected choice arise before you. In the brighter moonlight you see ahead the canyon taking two separate paths, one to the left, hidden by debris and not easily noticed in the darkness, the other to the right, open and a continuation of the canyon itself.

If you wish to explore the hidden path turn to section 30a. If the main canyon is your choice instead turn to section 55a.

93

In the light of the blazing cauldron you move closer to inspect one of the huge statues. Made of pure obsidian they are as black as the night and carved in such fine detail that they almost seem alive. You cannot make out exactly what they represent but you have little doubt that they are Trell'sara, probably priests or warriors of the ancient wars between their brethren and the Forgotten Ones. The weapons leave no question as to their nature however. Each is posed differently, with either sword or spear in their possession, and each have their faces hooded, their long bodies draped in cloaks that flow like dark water over their forms.

For a moment you consider the exquisite carving and the huge size of the stone giants as the cauldron blazes into an even greater conflagration. You step back and it is then that you see the statue before you move. Slowly it flexes its sword-arm before turning at the waist, and as you look down the line of warriors you see them all moving, stretching limbs long held still. In the red glow of the cauldron the statues are tinged in fire, their rusted weapons flickering with reflected light as they are swung in great arcs before them.

The Stone Guardians of the Trell'sara are coming to life. If you do not wish to wait around to see what their intentions might be turn to section 25. If you are unsure as to their purpose and wish to wait and see what will happen turn to section 83.

94

The canyon reaches deep into the foothills of the Great Rift, and with no time to spare you move quickly along its course, your hope that the Temple lies somewhere ahead. In the dark you can see little, the moons' rise against the horizon not yet enough to illuminate the floor of this deep rift. In the shadows you run with purpose, the canyon reaching eastwards before veering south and into an ever deeper gloom. With no illumination of your own you stumble on the uneven ground, unsure as to how much further you must travel before you will need to turn back. It is as you consider this possibility that you see the faintest glimmer of a light coming from a small hole in the canyon wall at your left.

Will you stop and have a closer look. If this is your will turn to section 23. If you do not have time for such distractions and wish to continue further along the canyon turn to section 84.

With the Oracle's words still echoing in your thoughts you leave the Temple of the Two Suns and make for the canyon ahead, your only option to follow its cragged defile westwards. After the open space of the ruins the canyon is devoid of illumination and even the slowly rising moons bring little light to its interior. You however, have no other path available to you, and with no time to spare run into the all-encompassing gloom. You move forward quickly but your thoughts are a melee of conflicting ideas and memories. The emurion'ka held a special place in the mythology of your people, but that was until it was captured at Kal Murda and made a trophy of the vehmin. Now the Powers of the world had deemed that another should be placed into the hands of the Jotun. The honour of its collection has been given to you but in truth you cannot see why. In the back of your mind you know that Shan'dari has these answers, but you will have to survive your quest to ask them.

Suddenly your thoughts are interrupted by a noise ahead. From a turn in the path you can hear the fall of dislodged dirt and stone. Instinctively you grab for your hammer and it is only by luck that you keep a firm hold of it. From the canyon wall above a dark shadow drops down upon you, kicking hard into your side. Winded, you hit the opposing canyon wall, causing a deluge of loose dirt to cascade from the rock face. Such an insult cannot be left unanswered, and as you regain your feet the assailant comes at you with his sword aimed squarely at your throat. It is a Ranger of the Watch and he wishes you dead.

This Ranger of the Watch will not stop until you are dead, or you have sent his spirit to the halls of his ancestors. He has a combat value of 15 and endurance points of 14. If you win this combat turn to section 16. If you lose turn to section 79.

In the gloom you approach the plaque and confirm that it must have once been an impressive piece of metalwork. Standing almost twice your own height and as wide as your outstretched arms, it appears to be a simple, if somewhat long, poem. Most of its text has long since been worn down by rust and weather but the last stanza remains legible. It is written in the common tongue of the Oera'dim though an old archaic dialect. For a moment you study it, trying to make sense of its ancient syntax. When you believe that you understand you whisper its meaning under your breath.

*"Between dark and light, at shadow's edge,
can be found the truth of this warrior's pledge,
Mark these words and meet thy fate,
here burns the key to Rinfalen's Gate."*

As you mouth the last of the words your body is suddenly gripped within a bright beam of light that emanates from somewhere within the ruined levels of the amphitheatre. Within its grasp you cannot move a muscle, and quickly you find yourself being dragged closer towards the plaque. Desperately you struggle against the power that now entwines your body but it is inexorable, and slowly you feel your arm rising to touch the metal slab. Before you can take another breath a thin sliver of light bursts out from the crystal embedded in its right corner, the light burning a line slowly into your arm. The pain is intense but you can do nothing about it. As you watch you see a complicated glyph being scorched into your forearm, and as the pain intensifies you know that this is a tattoo that will not diminish with age. You are being marked for life.

The air is cold but you sweat with the effort of your resistance. Pain is nothing to a Jotun, just an absolute that no warrior can avoid, but this enforced marking is an affront to the tattoos you wear as symbols of your ancestry. You resist but it proves futile. Above all you are a creature of

EarthMagic and in its grasp you have no control. When the thin shaft of light has done its job you are released, your body falling heavily to the ground. Tentatively you rub at your arm and find that the glyph is indeed permanent.

In a fit of rage you jump to your feet and strike at the metal slab with your warhammer, cursing its existence, making sure it appreciates the gravity of what it has done to you. In response the slab remains silent, its job complete. Frustrated by its indifference you turn your back on it and consider what you should do. This is not the Temple of the Moons, and for whatever reason you have been marked and there is little you can do about it. In the cold night air you think on whether you should just return to the Shattereen and continue with your deskai. Such are your thoughts but they are cut short by the uncomfortable feeling that there is something else here, something that does not want you to leave.

On the breath of the wind you sense a great malevolence approaching. You cannot be sure but within the folds of the bluster you can feel a portent of anger, and of a malicious hate that builds quickly as you stand alone on the arena floor. It takes little time to manifest itself before you.

Within the wide grounds of the arena you feel the wind begin to blow all the harder, a cold stinging gale that swirls in great eddies across the flat ground. As you watch the eddies tighten, forming dozens of smaller whirlwinds that track across the sandy field towards you. At first their shapes are indistinct, but as the whirlwinds become tighter and more energetic you begin to see shapes moving within them. With the wind now a constant gale you brace yourself and reach for your hammer. These Beings of wind and sand hold weapons and you can feel a hatred emanating from them that leaves you with little doubt as to their purpose. They mean to kill you.

These are the Shades of Despair, the spectral remains of warriors who died in this arena long ago. They are drawn to you because of their mindless hatred of all things living, and because of the power of the Word of Aggeron that has been burned into your flesh. They have no form nor intellect, they are just reflections of the suffering inflicted on them many years before by masters who cared nothing for their pain. The Shades may have no form but they do have weapons every bit as real as your own, and they intend to use them. This will be a fight that will take more than just skill and strength to survive. If you have previously obtained a long piece of wood with three feathers bound to it, turn to section 71. If you do not have this artefact turn to section 42.

97

The body is indeed that of a Ranger of the Watch and it would seem that the vehmin has only recently met with a violent death. It strikes you as you stand over his lifeless form that he does seem very small, but that is the nature of these creatures. Still, in these mountains the Rangers rule the passes and secret paths that cross the Great Rift. You can only be glad that it was not you who had to send him to the halls of his ancestors.

Out of curiosity you pull the body from the dirt pile and consider the ramifications of your find. The Ranger is only newly dead and this does not bode well. Where you can find one Ranger it is said, you will find many, and if there has been combat here then his brethren cannot be far away.

Before you move on do you wish to search the body? If this is your choice turn to section 113. If you would rather not risk the chance of being spotted by any other Rangers turn to section 63.

98

In a storm of exploding sand and flailing tentacles a great slithering beast rises from the canyon floor beneath you. Startled by the violence of its appearance you stagger backwards and are hit by the full force of a huge writhing tentacle as the creature searches eagerly for an easy meal. It is a blow that throws you on your back, knocking the breath from your lungs and leaving a wide but superficial gash across your chest. The beast is a monster unknown to you, and as it lumbers out of

its hiding place you can see it is a mass of slithering limbs covered in slime and wet sand. At the rear of the creature you can make out a bloated body that extends back into the hole from whence it came. It is not going to let you pass, and that is unacceptable to the completion of your deskai. A Jotun does not shirk a blow once it is taken, and the beast needs a lesson in picking its meals more carefully. You take a firm hold on your warhammer and attack.

The Sandlurker has a combat value of 16 and endurance points of 24. (Deduct one point from your endurance to account for the Sandlurker's first blow before continuing) If you survive four combat rounds with the beast turn to section 62. If the beast kills you within these four rounds turn to section 19.

98a

The Temple Guardian is a magical artifice of great age and one that proves a formidable opponent. It attacks relentlessly, sweeping blows and thrusts forcing you away from the pool and further from the hanging sword. In desperation you redouble your own attack, trying to strike a blow that will send it into dust before the emurion'ka disappears from the world forever. It is a task that is beyond you.

With a speed that leaves you unable to defend yourself the Guardian strikes at your shoulder, cutting deep into muscle and toppling you backwards onto the cold stone floor of the Temple. In that instant the statue jumps upon you, a second blow arcing down towards your exposed neck. It is a wound that you cannot survive. In this ancient chamber you die, your lifeblood ebbing away, the object of your quest fading from view as you draw your last breath. It enters your thoughts as you watch the sword vanish from the world that you were very close to finishing your deskai, but it must now wait for another lifetime before success shall indeed be yours.

THE END



99

In a flurry of broken stone you break from your cover and charge down the slope towards him. Your heart pounds as you bring up your warhammer to strike the vehmin down, but he will not be that easy to kill. Before you can bring him within reach there is a flash of bright steel in the night and he stands his ground ready to fight. This man does not fear you, his duty is clear.

The combat begins. The Ranger has a combat value of 14 and endurance points of 18. If you win the fight turn to section 14. If you lose turn to section 34.

100

There is a chance you think, that within this dilapidated passageway you might find one of the items spoken of by the Oracle. If indeed the Word of Aggeron, or the Heart of the Lost is to be found then this is as good a place as any to search for them. Carefully you pull away enough of the stone from the entrance and then move inside. The first thing you notice is that the corridor was not made for the use of Jotun. The way ahead is cramped and you must crouch low to make any headway. This passage is however, not without interest.

Along its length you can see little, only the barest of light from the entrance behind you providing any illumination at all. What you can see is curious to say the least. The arched walls and floor are all made of obsidian, a slick, black crystalline rock that forms a seamless passageway deep into the cliff-face behind the amphitheatre. Within these smooth walls you can see the indistinct forms of warriors and priests, all embedded in the stone, entombed as if participating in some strange procession that follows you as you move deeper into the rock. Some eighty metres into the passage you find a small rectangular room with a wide spiral staircase descending downwards into darkness at its far end.

For a moment you consider whether you should continue on. The staircase seems solid but there is little enough light. Even the eyes of a Jotun, created for work in the deep mines of the world, cannot see in total darkness.

"If only there was more light here." You say to yourself, and in response the feeblest of glows emerges around you. Startled by the response you wait for some sign of danger but none comes. You look around and see that the light is emanating faintly from the stone itself. It is a red-tinged glimmering that flows through the obsidian walls, like a pulse that originates far below. Considering what has happened you try something else.

"A bit more light would be helpful." You declare, half in jest. In response the glow brightens, illuminating the passage behind and the deep recesses of the stairwell beneath you. It reaches far below and in the quiet you are sure you can hear a low hum rising up the steps.

Do you wish to continue? If this is your choice turn to section 117. If you do not see any advantage to progressing any further down the stairwell you can retrace your steps back to the arena floor by turning to section 114.

101

Quickly you recognise the device for what it is. In the tales of your people there are mentions of small globes such as this, used by the Rangers of the Watch to blind adversaries in battles that they might not otherwise hope to win. It is a flash-charge, a small explosive device that when triggered explodes in a ball of blinding light. Such a device could prove useful, but you have heard also that they can be temperamental allies. Depressing the trigger mechanism by accident can lead to its detonation and certain death to anyone in close contact. It is something you should consider carefully before taking it with you.

If you wish to take the flash-charge record this on your character sheet. If you think it might be too dangerous to take, then you can drop it back onto the ground and leave it behind. Either way you must now move on. Turn to section 63.

102

The Reaver attacks you in a smothering cloud of dust and scattering rock. Against its power you stand little chance of survival but you are a Jotun and you do not succumb to anything without exacting a cost of your own. Time and again it attacks, lashing out with its huge pincers, stabbing at you with its long stinger-tipped tail as you dodge and weave. More than once you blunt its assault with your hammer, but the creature is huge and only a miracle can save you from its jaws. That miracle does not come.

Alerted by the vicious battle the other two Reavers come to investigate the commotion, and immediately join in the fight. It can end only one way. From somewhere at your back one of the Reavers strikes out with its tail, driving its stinger straight through your body. With your life quickly draining away, you feel yourself being lifted into the air and then flung bodily into the wall of the canyon. With your last breath you open your eyes and see the three Reavers fighting

each other for your body, your last conscious thought that you hope they choke on it. In this life your deskai is over.

THE END



The stairwell is deep but with light now flooding its interior you move cautiously downwards. Unlike the passage above the stairway has no embedded denizens peering from its slick walls, but it is a remarkable delving nonetheless. Although you look carefully at the walls of the stairwell as you descend you can see no evidence of joins or seams of any kind. It is as if the entire spiralling set of stairs had been carved from a single block of obsidian and somehow placed in this desolate place. You can see no artifice that might explain its construction but you are impressed, and you make a mental note to let Shan'dari know of its existence. Such things are important to your people and the Shaman will need to see it for himself.

It takes some time to reach the base of the stairs and when you do, you find an archway that opens into a wide cavern. The chamber is hand-made and stands as a shallow dome-shaped space that reaches only fifteen metres at its highest point. Surfaced in the same black obsidian it is completely featureless except for a small marble plinth that stands at its centre. Against its black surroundings the white marble commands curiosity and attention. You move towards it and it is then that you see the sphere.

Upon a small cushion of red cloth the sphere sits atop the marble column, a perfect globe of infinitely black crystal. In the glowing light of the chamber's walls it reflects an azure tinge but the sphere's interior is a deep well of darkness from which no light emanates. You approach the plinth carefully, unsure as to the nature of the sphere, its purpose unknown to you. In the instant that you decide that it might be best to not get too close the sphere awakens, its dark surface turning into a swirling pattern of deep blue and silvered lights that spin violently within its form. The sphere itself does not move. Upon its mounting it remains still whilst the coloured lights swirl all the faster.

It is a truth that you have never understood EarthMagic, nor for that matter the ways of those who wield it. It has been your earnest ambition to live your life with a reliance on the strength of your arm and the common-sense given to you by your father, but there are times when these are not enough. The swirling sphere stands before you as something unknown, and before you can decide what to do the sphere decides for you.

"Is it to be my fate that I must wait all day for you to say something?" The voice booms in the confines of the chamber as a roll of echoes that end like thunder on the tundra. Quickly you look around but there is no-one else in sight. It is the sphere, and it wishes to talk.

"I am sorry," you say to the air about you, "but I was unaware that there was any need for me to say anything."

The sphere remains silent for a moment, but in the pause you get the impression that it is somewhat miffed by your silence.

"State your name and lineage." The sphere demands. It appears a straightforward request so you answer.

"I am Tansen'Delving, first son of Agror'Delving, Chieftain of Kraal Delving and Consul of the Jotun of the West; who in his turn is son of Tallen'Delving, son of Achell'Delving, a Brother-Chief to Chavel'Oldemai. This is my name and lineage. What is yours?"

The sphere pauses again for a moment and answers also.

"I have no name but of my kind I am known as a Scrystone, placed here by the Hammer, Qirion'Delving himself to serve as a signpost for travellers who do not know their way. I know of you Tansen'Delving, of your lineage, and of the task that has been laid before you. In the matter of the Temple of the Moons I can provide assistance. You need only ask."

Such a boon seems too good to be true, but it is said that you cannot let Providence pass unnoticed as it will not return quickly. You ask the question.

"Where can I find the Temple of the Moons?"

The Scrystone's answer is immediate.

"The Temple of the Moons can be found in the south, beyond the barren ground of the Shattereen. It resides within an ancient fortress known to the Trell'sara as Nem'haleen. A traveller in search of the Temple will find it there. Take heed of these words for it is all that can be given to you. On this matter I can say no more."

The Scrystone's words fade, and as they recede so does the swirling energy within the sphere. As the sphere's power declines the illumination in the chamber also weakens. Quickly you run for the stairs and discover that the light is fading there, the entire delving returning to absolute dark. With no time to waste you begin your ascent, bounding up the steps in an effort to beat the darkness but you are not fast enough, the remaining half of your climb reduced to a slow process of feeling your way forward.

When you reach the upper passage you find the light of the open entranceway sufficient to make your way back to the surface of the arena. The gloom of night proves a considerable improvement on the hole you have just emerged from, and you stand in the cool air for a moment, getting your bearings and considering what should be your next move.

The Scrystone has given you clues as to where the Temple of the Moons can be found, but has not been specific. The arena stands before you and only the metal plaque beckons any interest. Will you read what is on the metal slab? If this is your choice turn to section 96. If you think the words of the Scrystone need to be acted upon immediately, and you would much rather leave this place turn to section 11.

103a

It takes only a second to fall back to earth but it is a fall you will not survive. In that moment of suspense you know you will be consumed by the flames, however this is not to be your fate. Instead you fall heavily upon your waistbag, triggering the flashcharge. In a detonation of light and power the charge explodes, the full force of the concussion device focused upon your spine and midriff. Instantly your back is broken, your flesh torn and seared by the blast. As you lay helpless and bleeding it is only then that you realise you have fallen into the flames, and that they are no more than an illusion. Desperately you try and stem the bleeding but your wounds are too severe. As you fall into unconsciousness you consider how disappointed Shan'dari will be, but this is your fate and you accept it as a warrior should. In this desolate canyon you die, your deskai over. Perhaps in another life you will find better luck.

THE END



The Shades fall upon you as vortices of stinging sand and razor-sharp iron. In the midst of their number you fight desperately, fending their blows and trying to force a passage to the canyon exit in the east. It is a difficult combat, their bodies no more than swirling clouds of icy wind, but it is one that leaves you cut and bleeding with every unriposted strike. With no help, and no chance of harming your adversaries, they slowly wear you down, sapping what strength you have left in a continuous assault of jabs, cuts and lunges. It is a battle you cannot hope to win.

From the shadows at your back the huge form of a giant warrior rises from the sands, a great scimitar in its hands. Before you can turn to fend the blow it cuts downwards, cleaving a mortal tear through your shoulder and chest. Such is the power of the strike that you have no chance. With the scimitar still protruding from your body you topple sideways into the sand of the arena, dead before you hit the ground. Like many that have entered this place you now join the ranks of the shaded undead, cursed to wait in the half-light of a tortured existence for your next victim. In this world however, your deskai is over. It will be in another life that you must now seek better fortune.

THE END



The walls of Nem'haleen stand as you have previously found them but this time you have what you need to gain entry. Carefully you walk forward and place the Coer'danith in the small cutaway in the stone plinth. Immediately the gem begins to glow, a swirling vortex of light shining briefly from its centre. It is all that is needed.

Without sound or action the surface of the great wall falls away, a perfect arch of stone appearing at the left side of the plinth. For a moment you wait, unsure as to whether there is danger here but nothing happens, the arch simply an opening into a wide courtyard beyond, plain and efficient in design. At the far end of the courtyard stands a large upright circle of stone, within which there swirls a solid mist of opaque vapour. Carefully you look about, surveying the entire yard but your eyes come back to the circle of mist. It is beckoning you forward.

Again you survey the yard but there are no exits, no other doorways that might give you access to the Temple of the Moons. In fact you realise there is nothing here but the ring of stone. Carefully you take the Heart of the Lost from the plinth and then move forward into the enclosed courtyard to search for any clues that might indicate how you should proceed. The circle is an interwoven design of carved obsidian, its smooth surfaces cleverly cut with a twisting motif of vines and leaves that trail about its arc before coming together upon its upper rim. You can see no words or symbols except for two small glyphs cut into its crowning leaves. You recognise them immediately, they are the glyphs of Elanna and Shabel, the moons of Arborell.

If you have found the Word of Aggeron previously turn to section 29. If you have not turn to section 86.

The Reaver is a beast that fights with a primal instinct for survival. Within the confines of the narrow canyon its great pincers spread out as huge armoured weapons that grab and slice at you in an attempt to bring you down. Against the beast it is only your agility and strength that keep you from its tearing claws, and in the shadows you pound away at its thick plating in an attempt to smash its limbs. The Reaver does not know how to take a backward step however, and in a fury of choking dust and razor-sharp pincers it is only a matter of time before it has you.

Blow for blow the battle rages, each strike of the monster's huge claws returned in kind with the hard edge of your hammer. More than once you cause the Reaver to falter, the sound of metal upon its hard skin a harsh thud in the gloom at you fight. It is all to no avail though. Weary from the fight you make the mistake of halting your attack to catch your breath, and in that moment of inaction the Reaver lunges forward using its enormous weight to push itself on top of you. Before you can push it aside the beast drives down with both its claws, cutting deep into your chest. It is an attack you cannot survive. Within this defile you die and your deskai ends. It will be to another life that you must now look for better luck.

THE END

Quickly you grab the flash-charge from your waist-bag and run from your cover into the centre of the canyon. There is no point in trying to draw its attention, the Dragon will sense you soon enough and with the vehmin device in hand you move steadily down the defile, watching the edges of the cliff-walls for any sign of the beast. It comes soon enough. In a rush of beating wings the serpent appears out of the night sky before you, its eyes glaring with all the malevolence of a predator about to make its kill.

You have little time to respond to its sudden appearance but you know what you must do. For the charge to be sufficient to blind the beast it must be close, and in the confines of the canyon that will mean letting it advance upon you. With the serpent settling to earth you draw your warhammer from its fastenings and beginning yelling curses at it. Dragons are not stupid and it knows what you are saying. As you shout your oaths it claws at the ground, ready to pounce upon you.

In a heartbeat of scattering stone and thundering earth the Dragon attacks, its razor-sharp talons scything through the air towards you. In that same instant you trigger the flash-charge and throw it at the beast. In a blinding detonation of pure light the charge explodes, turning the shadows of night into a white actinic burst of unbearable brilliance. Luckily you remember to turn aside but the Rift Dragon is unprepared, the charge erupting before its focused glare. It has the desired effect.

With a shriek of surprise and anger the Dragon crashes to the ground, its front legs pawing at eyes that have lost the will to see. You know the effects will only be temporary and you are not going to wait around to see what happens next. The Dragon flails in the dirt, striking out at the ground about it, trying to bring down whatever has hurt it so. Great claws tear at the canyon walls and huge pieces of the rock face fall, but the Dragon cannot see and in its desperation tries to gain a footing against the western face of the canyon. This is an opportunity you take gladly. Quickly you pass beyond the thrashing beast and run with all haste down the canyon. Before it has a chance to regain its feet you are gone.

In the cool of the night you run onwards, following the canyon as it opens into the south. Behind you the air is filled with the anger of the beast as it vents its frustration, but as you run it diminishes and before long you are once again alone with the night. After a short time you find yourself at a fork in the way. The main canyon continues on to the south. A smaller defile runs westwards.

Will you continue on down the main canyon? If this is your choice turn to section 30. If you would rather see what might be found on the narrower path turn to section 87.

108

As you ponder the slab a memory comes to you of something Shan'dari had said some years before. You had been on a hunting expedition into the far reaches of the Shael Plains and on one particularly cold night the old Shaman had recounted a story, one that had originated in the distant histories of the Oera'dim. In truth you cannot remember much of it, something about a traveller and a beast that would lay out food to draw in the unwary to its den, but it was his final words that stayed with you. "In a world ruled by magic," he had said, "nothing may be as it seems."

As you look at the smooth surface of the stone you cannot help but be suspicious. Before you do anything you will test it for yourself. Taking your warhammer in hand you tap the slab lightly at its corner. Nothing happens. It has the sound of stone but there is a hollow ring to it, not the dull vibration one might expect of a solid piece of rock laying across a firm foundation. With both hands you hit the stone harder and in the quiet night air a great booming sound echoes off the canyon walls, spreading up and down the defile in waves of unwelcome noise.

Quickly you step back and wait for the ruckus you have caused to die down. Standing silently in the dark you shake your head and smirk at your clumsiness. If you had wanted to let every Ranger within earshot know of your position then that was the way to do it. With no further time to spend however, you consider again what you should do.

You must go forward and the slab covers the floor of the canyon ahead. You have ascertained it is real but its hollow sound does not give you reason to trust its purpose. If you wish to try and jump the slab then you must test your agility attribute to determine if you are successful. If you pass this test turn to section 56. If you fail the test turn to section 69. If you do not wish to take the risk and would rather try and climb around the edges of the slab turn to section 112. The full story of "The Unwary Traveller and the Maiden of Despair" mentioned above can be found in this book's appendices.

109

Quickly you emerge back into the open valley of the Shattereen and look carefully to the west and east. The other canyons open out as dark fractures in the surrounding slopes and in the dark of night you consider what you should do next. Exposed upon the open ground you think on what might be your next move, but in this matter the Fates have chosen for you.

High overhead another set of eyes has noticed your dark form against the shadows of the night. Against the stark wasteland of the valley floor your movement has drawn attention to you, and it is an interest that you can well do without. On leathery wings the creature banks from its westerly path and begins a wide spiral towards the Shattereen, its attention focused on your position. Within the light bluster of the winds it moves silently, a predator enveloped within the stars of the night sky, unnoticed as it descends upon you.

The first hint of danger comes only as a rush of air in the darkness. Too late you realise that you have become this creature's prey, and without hope of avoiding its deadly talons you are struck a lethal blow, its claws digging into your shoulders, crushing the life from you in a blood-spattered heartbeat.

Upon the dry earth of the Shattereen you die, your deskai over. Such are the dangers of the Great Rift, but as you descend to the halls of your ancestors you realise that the story you will tell of your death will be a short one. In the dark of night you do not even know what hit you.

THE END

110

These long dead warriors descend upon you, weapons held ready as they try to surround your position. You know that you cannot harm them so you have little alternative but to deflect their blows and try and force a path across the arena floor. As the Shades approach the air becomes cold and humid, the whirling vortices that make up their forms exuding a palpable malevolence that reaches out for you as if to strip you of your life-force. You are not going to oblige them. The first attacks and you deflect its blows into the sandy ground. The next tries to stab at your midriff but you side step the blow. Immediately the warriors crowd in about you, but you will not allow yourself to be cornered. With your hammer drawing great arcs through the air you decide on the path you wish to take and attack the Shades that stand between you and the canyon exit. It is a battle that continues as a grinding clash of arms that forces the Shades into a circling pattern of attacks, their purpose to keep you in the arena as you use all the strength you have to force a path out of it. In this endeavour you are successful.

In a series of running combats you win through to the canyon exit and run unhindered into its dark interior. Behind you the Shades screech in frustration but then dissolve into the sands as you disappear from sight. Providence has granted you success and you do not look back as you run into the shadows.

Turn to section 11.

111

Carefully you pull away enough of the stone from the entrance to make an entry and then move inside. The first thing you notice is that the corridor was not made for the use of Jotun. The way ahead is cramped and you must crouch low to make any headway. This passage is however, not without interest.

Along its length you can see little, only the barest of light from the entrance behind you providing any illumination at all. What you can see is curious to say the least. The arched walls and floor are all made of obsidian, a slick, black crystalline rock that forms a seamless passageway deep into the cliff-face behind the amphitheatre. Within these smooth walls you can see the indistinct forms of warriors and priests, all embedded in the stone, entombed as if participating in some strange procession that follows you as you move deeper into the rock. Some eighty metres into the passage you find a small rectangular room with a wide spiral staircase descending downwards into darkness at its far end.

For a moment you consider whether you should continue on. The staircase seems solid but there is little enough light. Even the eyes of a Jotun, created for work in the deep mines of the world, cannot see in total darkness.

"If only there was more light here." You whisper to yourself, and in response the feeblest of glows emerges around you. Startled by the response you wait for some sign of danger but none comes. You look around and see that the light is emanating faintly from the stone itself. It is a blue-tinged glimmering that flows through the obsidian walls, like a pulse that originates far below. Considering what has happened you try something else.

"A bit more light would be helpful." You declare, half in jest. In response the glow brightens, illuminating the passage behind and the deep recesses of the stairwell beneath you. It reaches far below, and in the quiet you are sure you can hear a low hum rising up the steps.

Do you wish to continue down the stairwell? If this is your choice turn to section 103. If you do not see any advantage to progressing any further you can retrace your steps back to the arena floor by turning to section 114.

The walls of the canyon are a weathered strata of fractured rock. You carefully survey what you can see in the gloom and it does not seem to hold any possibility of providing a safe purchase, but you appear to have little choice. If you are to climb around this brooding stone you will have to find a way.

Of the two sides of the canyon it is the eastern wall that seems to be the strongest and quickly you begin, finding the footholds you need to make a speedy traverse around the slab. The rock face proves to be as unstable as you expected, but you have the reach to find the handholds needed and quickly you make your way across.

It is only as you are reaching for your last handhold upon the canyon wall that your luck fails you. The stone you have chosen to hold your weight pulls away from the rock face and you fall heavily to the ground, your body landing half upon the dry earth of the canyon floor and half across the far edge of the slab. In that instant the stone falls away beneath you, revealing a deep pit which draws your weight into it as you struggle to stop yourself from falling in. In a move of desperation you force your hands into the dirt and come to a halt, your legs dangling over the edge of the abyss.

Quickly you pull yourself out, and then slide around to look into the depths of the pit. It is a fathomless hole that reaches deep into the earth, and it is one that would have taken you to an anonymous grave if you had let it. For a moment you lay still and then get to your feet, your face and shoulders cascading with caked dirt and grit as you rise. It has indeed been a long night, one that you will be glad to see over, but the completion of your task still lies ahead. In the shadows of the canyon you take the time to dust yourself down, and then return to your journey. The canyon extends far to the south but you have long legs and enough strength remaining to run for its end. Carefully you make your way forward, your pace giving way to caution as the defile widens, its high walls growing upwards as you delve deeper into the foothills.

Overhead the moons of Arborell rise higher, spreading their ethereal glow into the crumbling fissure. It is as you make your way forward that you find the canyon forking in two directions. The main canyon heads south, a smaller defile forces its way westwards.

Will you continue on down the main canyon? If this is your choice turn to section 30. If you would rather see what might be found on the narrower path turn to section 87. If in your travels you have previously found the Coer'danith turn to section 50a.

Quickly you search the Ranger's body. He is clothed in a tight fitting leather uniform and a black travelling cloak but there is little else. You do find in a small pouch at his waist belt two pieces of stale Nahla bread.

If you wish to take the Nahla bread record this within the notes section of your character sheet. Each of the pieces of bread will restore two endurance points to your endurance level if you choose to eat them. There is nothing else of value to your quest here. Before you move off you take the time to hide the body in a wide crack in the wall of the canyon and then continue on to the Shattereen.

Turn to section 63.



114

You can see little value in continuing any further. Quickly you turn about and make your way back to the half-observed entranceway. In a cloud of dirt and broken stone you push your way out of the cramped confines of the passage and stand once again upon the floor of the arena.

If you wish you may read the metal plaque by turning to section 96. If you would rather leave this place and return to the Shattereen turn to section 11.

115

There seems little choice but to return back to the Shattereen and try and find some further clue to the whereabouts of the Temple of the Moons. Within this desolate landscape you can see no sign of anything but the crumbling rock of the canyon and a burning sky of stars above. It seems that you must try one of the other canyons. Perhaps there you will have better luck.

At the run you race northwards, following the line of the fracture, and aware that time runs just as quickly in the late hours of the night. Your thoughts are filled with the possibilities of what might happen if you do not complete your deskai, but you are a Jotun and failure is not an option. In this endeavour you will either succeed, or die in the attempt.

It is with this possibility crowding your thoughts that you stumble into the dustmire. Indistinguishable from the floor of the canyon the dustmire is a deep depression in the ground that has filled over the years with tonnes of wind-blown dust and brittle vegetable matter. Dry and lightly packed it sits for all intents as a stable part of the ground before you, but it cannot hold your weight and you fall forward into its desiccated embrace. In a cloud of smothering dust you find yourself sinking quickly into its depths, and there is no escape from its clutches. Frantically you try and force your way out, but every movement speeds your descent, and the realisation comes quickly that you are going to die.

Within the canyon all is quiet. The cloud of debris thrown up by your fall into the dustmire settles quickly, and as the hours pass the suns of morning rise against the eastern horizon. It is a wondrous display of colour and light framed within the dark masses of the Great Rift, but it is a display you will never see. Within the dustmire you have long since smothered to death. Your deskai is over.

THE END

116

It is the western path you must take and it frustrates you that you must once again enter this cragged defile. There is something within its dark recesses that you have missed, and with the night quickly moving towards sunrise you have little time to waste.

In a rush you charge into the gloom and find yourself on familiar ground. The canyon spreads as a jagged rift of crumbling stone that holds a deep secret, one that you must find if you are to complete your deskai. In this endeavour you cannot afford to fail. With the wind blowing swiftly down the barren floor of the canyon you make your way, until an unusual sound brings you to a halt.

Within the bluster of the wind you hear the sound of tearing, and a strange clicking sound that echoes quietly upon the canyon walls about you. Carefully you approach the next turn in the stone cliff-face at your left, and there in the shadows you see a sight that leaves you cold.

Upon the canyon floor you see the body of the Reaver you killed previously, and about its lifeless form two more of its brethren eating the carcass. The scorpion-like monsters are deep in their feast, rending huge chunks of flesh from the beast's thorax, and they do not notice your presence. From your vantage in the darkness you search for any way around but the canyon is too

narrow at this point. If you are to pass beyond these monsters you will have to wait until they are finished. It could take days.

Cursing your luck you turn from the gruesome scene and consider what you should do. You could go back but that would be a failure on your part. A Jotun does not try anything, he either succeeds or he fails, and he never allows anything to stand in his way. But you cannot go on either. The beasts crowd the only way through and it leaves you with few options. You consider attacking the Reavers and fight your way through but that would be suicide. One was enough of a challenge, two would be impossible. Instead you look to the walls of the canyon and the possibility of climbing into the hills to the north, then finding the canyon further to the west. It is a possibility, but one you do not get the chance to put into action.

Out of the darkness at your back you hear the faintest of rasping sounds, and then a quick movement of scurrying legs. In that instant you turn on your heel and find a third Reaver bearing down upon you, its great claws ready to strike.

You are trapped between this beast and the two further down the canyon. You must fight if you are to survive. The Reaver is a huge creature, far larger than the one you bested previously. It has a combat value of 19 and endurance points of 35. If you can complete four combat rounds without falling to this monster turn to section 102. If the Reaver kills you within this period then it will be here that your deskai ends. In another life you will then have to look for greater providence.

116a

In a rush you make the entrance to the canyon and charge back into its narrower confines. Behind you the Arachnari swarm into the gap, the constricted space no hindrance in their headlong race to bring you down. Quickly you dodge the rockfalls and scree slopes, hoping that if you can make it back to the main canyon you might leave these ravenous monsters behind. It is a hope that sustains you as you run, but then the Arachnari lunge forward.

From out of the swarming creatures one larger than the rest bounds towards you, its limbs swiping at your back as you try and stay ahead. Before you a slope of loose stone covers the ground, small boulders and fine grit piled in a drift that you scramble over to get away. It is here that you lose your race for survival. Whether it be due to fatigue, or a misjudged step, you trip upon the loose ground and fall heavily, a cloud of dust roiling into the air as you try and regain your feet. It is an opportunity the Arachnari do not let pass.

Before you can rise a heavy armoured foot slams down upon your chest, pinning you to the stone beneath you. The Arachnari holds you in place whilst dozens of its brethren mill about, all waiting for the command to start tearing you apart. It comes quickly. In this desolate canyon you die, an easy meal for creatures that care nothing for your deskai. Perhaps in a latter life you will find better luck.

THE END

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The stairwell is deep but with the light now flooding its interior you move cautiously downwards. Unlike the passage above, the stairway has no embedded denizens peering from its slick walls, but it is a remarkable delving nonetheless. Although you look carefully at the walls of the stairwell as you descend you can see no evidence of joins or seams of any kind. It is as if the entire spiralling set of stairs had been carved from a single block of obsidian and somehow placed in this desolate place. You can see no artifice that might explain its construction but you are impressed, and you make a mental note to let Shan'dari know of its existence. Such things are important to your people and the Shaman will need to see it for himself.

It takes some time to reach the base of the stairs and when you do, you find an archway that opens into a wide cavern. The chamber is hand-made and stands as a shallow dome-shaped space that reaches only fifteen metres at its highest point. Surfaced in the same black obsidian, it is completely featureless except for a small marble plinth that stands at its centre. Against its black surroundings the white marble commands curiosity and attention. You move towards it and it is then you see the sphere.

Upon a small cushion of red cloth the sphere sits atop the marble column, a perfect globe of infinitely black crystal. In the glowing light of the chamber's walls it reflects a russet tinge, but the sphere's interior is a deep well of darkness from which no light emanates. You approach the plinth carefully, unsure as to the nature of the sphere, its purpose unknown to you. In the instant that you decide that it might be best to not get too close the sphere awakens, its dark surface turning into a swirling pattern of deep red and orange vapours that spin violently within its form. The sphere itself does not move. Upon its mounting it remains still while the coloured lights swirl all the faster.

It is a truth that you have never understood EarthMagic, nor for that matter the ways of those who wield it. It has been your earnest ambition to live your life with a reliance on the strength of your arm, and the common-sense given to you by your father, but there are times when these are not enough. The swirling sphere stands before you as something unknown, and before you can decide what to do the sphere decides for you.

"Is it to be my fate that I must wait all day for you to say something?" The voice booms in the confines of the chamber as a roll of echoes that end like thunder on the tundra. Quickly you look around but there is no-one else in sight. It is the sphere, and it wishes to talk.

"I am sorry," you say to the air about you, "but I was unaware that there was any need for me to say anything."

The sphere remains silent for a moment, but in the pause you get the impression that it is somewhat miffed by your silence.

"State your name and lineage." The sphere demands. It appears a straightforward request so you answer.

"I am Tansen'Delving, first son of Agror'Delving, Chieftain of the Delving Kraal and Consul of the Jotun of the West; who in his turn is son of Tallen'Delving, son of Achell'Delving, adopted son of Chavel'Oldemai. This is my name and lineage. What is yours?"

The sphere pauses again for a moment and answers also.

"I have no name but of my kind I am known as a Scystone, placed here by Aggeron the Elder himself to serve as a signpost for travellers who do not know their way. I know of you Tansen'Delving, of your lineage, and of the task that has been laid before you. In the matter of the Temple of the Moons I can provide assistance. You need only ask."

Such a boon seems too good to be true, but it is said that you cannot let Providence pass unnoticed as it will not return quickly. You ask the question.

"Where can I find the Temple of the Moons?"

The Scystone's answer is immediate.

"The Temple of the Moons can be found in the south. That is all you need know, but the Temple is unattainable unless you are in possession of the Word of Aggeron and the Heart of the Lost. The Word can be found close by, you need only look to the arena for that gift. The Heart can be found in the south, residing within a pool of dark water. Both of these things must be had or the Temple cannot open to you. Find them both and the Temple will give you what you seek. Take heed of these words for it is all that can be given to you. On this matter I can say no more."

The Scystone's words fade, and as they do so does the swirling energy within the sphere. As the sphere's power declines the illumination in the chamber also weakens. Quickly you run for the stairs and find also that the light is fading there, the entire delving returning to absolute dark. With no time to waste you begin your ascent, bounding up the steps in an effort to beat the darkness but you are not fast enough, the remaining half of your climb reduced to a slow process of feeling your way forward.

When you reach the upper passage you find the light of the open entranceway enough to make your way back to the surface of the arena. The gloom of night proves a considerable improvement on the hole you have just emerged from, and you stand in the cool air for a moment, getting your bearings and considering what should be your next move.

The Scystone has given you clues as to where the Temple of the Moons can be found, but has not been specific. The Word of Aggeron is apparently close, but all you can see is the metal plaque fixed to the wall of the amphitheatre. Will you read what is on the metal slab? If this is your choice turn to section 96. If you think the words of the Scystone are not to be trusted and you would much rather leave this place turn to section 11.

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In the shadows of the defile you attack the Reaver, striking out at its pincers in an attempt to drive it back into its lair. The armoured monster only has one weakness and that is the eyes and antennae that sit squarely between its huge front limbs. With all the power that you can bring to bear you hammer away at the beast, forcing it to protect its vulnerable sensors whilst moving ever closer. More than once the beast strikes out at you and more than once it makes contact, tearing at your clothing and cutting through flesh but you cannot stop. Any moment of hesitation and the beast will overwhelm you. On this night the Fates decide in your favour.

Restricted by the close quarters within the canyon the Reaver tries to stab out at you with its pincers. Deftly you avoid the blows and within the extended reach of its limbs you see an opening. With one stroke you crush its eye sockets and snap its antennae from their holdings. In a tide of pain and frustration the beast lunges blindly forward, but you are quick enough to back up and watch as it flails in the dirt, trying to recover its damaged sight. You do not give it the chance to strike again. One further blow upon the upper edge of its carapace smashes its armoured shell and crushes the creature's brain within. In a spasm of pain it rears one last time and then topples sideways, dead before it hits the ground.

Breathing heavily you back away for a moment and consider the beast. It is indeed a monster but it made the mistake of confronting a Jotun, and had paid the price for that misjudgement. You cannot however, stay and enjoy the fruits of your victory. Such beasts have fine flesh, well worth the time needed to prepare and roast. But you have no such opportunity and grudgingly leave its carcass to the scavengers. Ahead lies your deskai, and that is all that matters.

With warhammer at the ready you continue westwards along the jagged ravine. Under the light of the stars you run onwards as the canyon continues to the west and then veers more southwards. As it changes direction it opens up into a much wider path and before long you find yourself in a wide valley that spreads between two steep ranges of hills. At the end of this valley you come to a halt and survey what you have found.

Before you stands a wide cliff face roughly semicircular in shape. Upon its weathered stone has been built huge stands of seating, something like the stepped layers of an amphitheatre. As you turn to look about you realise that the wide valley is in fact the floor of a vast arena, the purpose of which has long been lost to time and history. In this place the wind blows cold, and as you stand in the midst of the empty amphitheatre you feel a strong sensation of being watched. It is a feeling that you shrug from your thoughts and instead survey your surroundings. Apart from the dilapidated seating there is only one point of interest here. At the centre of the amphitheatre there has been affixed to a solid wall of stone a large metal plaque, as ancient as the stone workings around it, and most of it lost to rust and weathering. There is a small crystal embedded in its right hand upper corner, and the faintest of writing etched upon its surface. Some parts of its text remain legible.

This is not the Temple of the Moons but the arena holds some interest. Do you wish to read the metal plate? If you do turn to section 96. If you would instead carry out a quick search of the

amphitheatre turn to section 3. If you would rather leave this place and return quickly to the Shattereen turn to section 11.

118a

When you hit ground it is with a bone-jarring impact that crushes the air out of your lungs as you roll in a flailing tumble onto a slab of cold stone. In the darkness you lay still, uncertain as to where you are but sure that it is nowhere near the courtyard of Nem'haleen. In the grip of an icy gale you look around and realise that you are upon the shoulder of a great mountain, a large ring of stone suspended in the air above your head.

Raising yourself upon one elbow you search out your surroundings and find that you have not found your way to the Temple of the Moons. Instead you lay upon a narrow platform of cut stone, its foundations rooted upon the crest of a high mountain somewhere within the vast expanses of the Western Ranges. As you look about you find a steep line of steps at the end of the platform, their descent a torturous set of inclines leading down into a patchwork of misted valleys far below. The ring is quiet, the world about you a vista of snow-capped summits and blustering winds. If you are right it will take weeks to return to the lands of the Jotun. Lying back upon the cold stone you ponder if there is any point in trying. You have failed. Your deskai is over.

THE END



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Before you stands a wide fortress of finely artificed stone. Across the face of the canyon it stands some fifteen metres high and is a solid barrier to any further movement southwards. At each end of the wall, built into the canyon's solid stone stand two towers that reach up some twenty-five metres above the wall itself. Across its surface proceed the carved figures of dozen of warrior-priests, all with hands raised in prayer. There is nothing before you that looks like an entrance, or any other way inside, except for a small stone plinth. It stands at waist height and has a single depression cut into its upper surface. You recognise immediately that the Heart of the Lost will fit there. Cautiously you walk forward and place the Coer'danith into the small cutaway. Immediately the gem begins to glow, a swirling vortex of light shining briefly from its centre. It is all that is needed.

To the sound of grinding stone the surface of the great wall begins to move, the central priests grabbing at the solid rock and drawing the wall back as you might a wide curtain. For a moment you stand amazed, but also unsure as to whether there is danger here. In the cold night you wait but nothing happens, the wind and the distant sounds of birds your only companions in the darkness. Tentatively you move forward, scanning what lies beyond the formidable walls of Nem'haleen.

The arch proves to be an opening into a wide courtyard, plain and efficient in design, a large complex of towers and other buildings standing beyond its high walls. At the far end of the courtyard there resides a large upright circle of stone, within which there swirls a solid mist of opaque vapour. Carefully you look about, surveying the entire yard but your eyes come back to the circle of mist. In the midst of your thoughts you can feel it beckoning you forward.

Before moving forward however, you take the Heart of the Lost from the plinth and return it to your waist-bag. It is in your thoughts that this may not be the only time you will need the gem, and only once it is secure do you move within the walls of Nem'haleen. Again you survey the yard but there are no exits, no other doorways that might give you access to the Temple of the Moons. In fact you realise there is nothing here but the circle of stone. Carefully you move towards it and search for any clues that might indicate how you should proceed. The circle is an interwoven design of carved stone, its surfaces cleverly cut with a twisting motif of vines and leaves that travel around its arc before coming together upon its upper rim. You can see no words or symbols except for two small glyphs sculpted into its crowning leaves. You recognise them immediately, they are the glyphs of Elanna and Shabel, the moons of Arborell.

If you have had the Word of Aggeron burned into your arm turn to section 29. If you have not turn to section 86.

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For a moment you stand at the edge of the pool and steady your thoughts. The sword stands just out of reach but you will not give up. Carefully you reposition yourself on the edge of the pool, allowing yourself to balance on one leg as you reach out towards the emurion'ka. In your other hand you hold the haft of your warhammer, using its considerable weight to counterbalance your body as you stretch upwards towards the sword. Your first attempt is not successful, but after re-adjusting your footing you reach out again and gain a purchase on the sword's hilt. In the quiet dark you find yourself suspended over the pool, your body finely balanced on the edge of the waters as you close your hand more firmly around the intricately carved handle of the talisman.

It is then that you realise that the emurion'ka will not be brought into your world easily. Suspended above the pool it is bathed in moonlight, a glittering object that vibrates with power, beckoning you to take it, but it is firmly fixed in place. Your first attempt at dragging the sword from its position fails, but you are a Jotun and strength is something you own in abundance. Using the unmoving sword as a balancing point you reposition your feet and drop your hammer to the ground. It clatters upon the stone floor as you focus all the strength and leverage you have to pull the emurion'ka from its entrapment. With a sound like breaking stone the sword comes into the world and it is yours.

In that moment the chamber again comes to life, but this time you find yourself captured within the sword's power. From the centre of the chamber a vision emerges before you, a seemingly endless parade of images that flash through your mind. Without knowing how or why the emurion'ka is trying to tell you something, and slowly you find yourself being able to focus on specific images, on events that explain exactly why you are here.

From somewhere within the recesses of the talisman's power you find yourself watching as the ancient Trell'sara betray the Silvan Tree, tearing it down and sundering its Lordship of the world. You watch as the first Light of the World is forged high in the mountains of the west, and then as the creatures of the Oera'dim are brought into existence. In one flash of intuition you realise that the Fallen Masters used the power of the emurion'ka to create your people, and that the power of the sword to create and destroy had not changed. In your hands you hold the ability to destroy the Oera'dim or to create new life. It is your choice. The sword however, has more to say.

You watch again as the original emurion'ka is used by the Mutan to gain control of the Oera'dim. You see them in the cold depths of the Clavern'sigh resurrecting the Word of Command and once again binding all your brethren to their will. In the jumble of images you see also the first emurion'ka being lost to the vehmin and leaving the knowledge of your kind forever, but the message is clear. With the return of the stonewood sword to the hands of the Jotun the Word of Command can be broken, once again your brethren can be free.

Such is the boon that has been granted to you. With the emurion'ka in your possession there is nothing crafted with the powers of EarthMagic that cannot be changed or undone, nothing within

the realms of Arborell that cannot be built or thrown down by the power harnessed by the sword. You need only determine how it must be done.

For a short time you try and fathom the depths of what has been given. In the quiet chamber you bend for your hammer and strap it to its fastenings at your back. With the stonewood sword in hand you ask for light and it is granted, then with the fatigue of your quest now weighing heavily upon you make your way back to the stone circle. As you approach the gate it bursts into life but you hesitate. There is something you have forgotten to do. Quickly you make your way back to the pool and drink from its cool waters. For a moment you wait, half expecting the water to have some magical impact. You smile as you realise that it is just water. Now you can go home. Your deskai is complete and the fate of the Jotun of the West has changed forever. As you step through the vapours you cannot help but think that the old Shaman will be pleased.

THE END



Appendices

Here can be found four appendices, containing additional information on the Oera'dim and the nature of the Jotun of the West. The first appendix recounts a short history of the Hordim, as told by the Tak Mah Horan. The second is an oration given at the dawn of the Battle of Kal Murda in the year 736, and encompasses the hatred felt by the Jotun for the Men of the South. The third is an account of the history of the emurion'ka, a most important talisman and the subject of this adventure. The fourth is a retelling of an old Jotun folktale, included here purely because it is mentioned in the text and seemed to be a good idea at the time.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HORDE (OERA'DIM)

Condensed from a lecture given by the Tak Mah Horan in the year of settlement 931 to the Combined Assemblies of the Synod of the LoreMages' Guild of Kalborea.
Hordim translations of certain words are given in brackets.

It is said that the creatures of the Horde were created out of darkness, moulded in the depths of the Earth and given life with the power of EarthMagic. Long are the tales that describe the rising of the Hordim from the Earth, and of their subjugation by ancient Beings known to them as the Trel'sara, and to Men as simply the Trel. Such is the antiquity of these events that there is little that remains of any factual records. Of the stories and sagas of the Hordim (Oera'dim) there is much that is unclear but the history of the Horde is long, and it cannot be disputed that they are our greatest nemesis. Only through an understanding of this enemy can we ever hope to defeat them.

From those records that still remain it is certain that the first of the Hordim were created by the Trel many thousands of years prior to the arrival of Men in the world. At that time the Trel were engaged in a vicious struggle with another race known only as the Forgotten Ones. There is nothing in this world that describes who they were, or how such a conflict arose, but it is sure that the Trel were losing, and in their desperation to turn the tide of the war created the first of the Hordim. These creatures we know today as the Hresh (Hresh'na). Although it is unknown how the Trel were able to harness the powers of EarthMagic to create the Hresh, it is a matter of Hordim legend that they turned the war. Designed as disciplined weapons of warfare the Hresh were totally loyal to their masters, and with the strength of these creatures at their beckoning destroyed the Forgotten Ones and took dominion of Arborell.

The Hresh had proved themselves as potent warriors, but with the fighting done the Trel turned their creatures to new tasks. In their arrogance they put their slave-warriors to work, tending fields, creating the goods needed by their civilisation, and building the great cities and temples whose ruins can be found spread throughout our world. It can be said that in these endeavours the Hresh could not satisfy their masters. They had been created as warriors and that could be their only true calling. The Trel looked instead to new creatures to fulfil their needs and it was then that they created the Morg (Ah'marg).

Used purely as farm workers and manual labourers the Morg were hardy slaves, resistant to all extremes of weather and like their Hresh brethren, completely loyal to their masters. It is believed that a Word of Command held all the Hordim in bondage, and until it was broken by the Jotun (Jotuni) the Trel lived their lives at ease, sure in the knowledge that they were supreme in the world.

There came a time however, when even the need to control their slaves was given over to a new creature of their devising. The Mutan (Ahmutani) were created as slave-masters, controlling all the work done by the Hordim, ensuring the efficient running of all aspects of Trel society. More and more power was concentrated in these creature's hands until eventually it was only the Word of Command that separated the Mutan from their masters. Whilst held in bondage by this most powerful of spells the Trel could not be challenged, and for thousands of years such was the manner of their lives.

It came to pass that in this time two new creatures were created to further the decadence and excesses of the Trel. The first were known as the Vardem (Vardemi). These were the personal household servants of the Trel. All other creatures had proven inadequate to their ever-increasing indolence and it was so that the Vardem served their most basic of needs. It is unknown as to what they looked like, or where they might now be, but of all the Hordim they are the least known, and the most mysterious. The second creatures created in this Golden Age of Excess were the Jotun, and with them the Trel made a fatal error.

Designed as engineers and miners of the deep earth they were given intelligence and strength. Unlike the other Hordim the Jotun were powerful beings, imbued with the knowledge and intellect to serve without need of supervision. What the Trel did not realise was that some of the Jotun were immune to the power of the Word of Command, and as their brethren took their place beside the other Hordim, they worked secretly to bring down their Masters.

It is one of the greatest mysteries of the Jotun as to how they broke the Word of Command, but with its fall came violence and death as the now unrestrained slaves of the Trel rose against their masters and obliterated them from the world. In this time of destruction the Vardem disappeared; some legends say they fled to the east, but by the end of their insurrection the Jotun had control of the world. Arborell was now under the dominion of the Horde.

All should have ended in that manner, except that the Mutan coveted power for themselves. Apart from the Vardem the Mutan had been closest to their old masters, and knew much of their ways. They used this knowledge to harness the powers of the Earth for themselves, and revived the Word of Command to bring all the Hordim under their thrall. To this time it has remained so, the Mutan in command of the Horde, the Hordim once again subjugated to the powers of those who can harness EarthMagic.

There is a question that must be raised however. What happened to the Jotun who were immune to the Word of Command? There is no further mention of them in the sagas of the Horde, and no indication that they have attempted to wrest power from the Mutan as well. If ever there was a possible ally to be found amongst the Hordim it would be these Jotun, but the question remains. Where are they?

The ORATION of Aggamem the Elder

This oration is taken from the records of the Jotuni Bruhaj. Given in the year of settlement 736 prior to the disappearance of Aggamem at the battle for Kal Murda.

"Hear me brothers. The darkness gathers to us, and as we wait about our embered fires for the dawn we know what is to come. I stand before you in the quiet of the night, ready for the rising of the suns, and the battle that must be fought this coming day. I stand before you as Chieftain of the Jotuni but my name is unimportant. Where I have come from is of no consequence. How it is that we stand here together is irrelevant. All that matters is why we are here. On this wind-swept plain I stand before you not as a Chief, but as a warrior amongst warriors, bonded by blood and with a heavy task set before us. In the coming dawn we must meet the vehmin of the south, and on this day we must send them to their ancestors. It is a day long in the coming.

Hear me brothers. Can we forget the injustices that have been measured against us? Do we turn our backs on our ancestors, leaving this place without drawing the blood that must be taken? Must we stand another day without taking the revenge that is duly ours to take? I say to you brothers that we breathe, and with every exhalation the doom of our enemies draws nearer. They stand before us, shouting curses and insults in defiance of our honour, and who can deny that we shall not be rid of them until each and everyone lies buried in the ground.

And who amongst us brothers, can say that we are not equal to the task? Was it not we who overcame the slavery and torment of the Fallen Masters? Was it not the blood of the Oera'dim that ran as a tide in the wars of the Forgotten Ones? Was it not the Jotun my brethren, that rose against our masters of old in insurrection and cast them from the world, sending their vile works into ruin?

Alas, such has been our fate and our burden. In bloodshed we found freedom and then had our lands torn from us by the vehmin. Can we forget how they arrived upon our shores and asked for nothing more than a sheltered harbour and the right to hunt? In pity and condolence did we not give it, and were we not then betrayed? Great wars we have fought to take back that which is ours. Generations of our kind have fallen beneath the steel of our nemesis and yet we do not falter. Are we not made of the same essence as the grass of the plains and the stone of the cold mountains? Are we not as strong?

Hear me brothers. Since the first gleaming of our creation we have lived in hardship, tempered by the travail of lives spent in battle and torment. At the first whimpering of our Birthlings do we not mark them with the three tears of our mourning, an eternal reminder of what we have lost? Can we stand another day staring into the reflection of such truth? We are warriors, Jotuni of the Oera'dim, our lives nothing but leaves before the storm until we have purged our lands of these trespassers. Let us rise up against this plague that has taken all that is ours, and colour the ground red with their blood. We are Jotun, and before the strength of our number there is no nemesis that will not falter..."

The Emurion'ka, A journey into the Light of the World

Taken from an excerpt of the personal records of Shamaryl, First Dominus
of the Clavern'sigh and Utterer of the Word of Command.

It is written in the scrolls of our forebears that there was a time in the world when neither beast nor Oera'dim roamed the plains. In this distant age there dwelt in the depths of the southern forests of the Malleron a great Power, a tree of immense size that held dominion over all things that spread leaves as its subjects. It is told that everything that took root or placed seed upon the winds stood within its thrall, and for millennia it lived, taking what it needed from the suns and earth and giving life to the world in return.

Such was the size of this Great Tree that there dawned a day when its roots came into contact with the Shan'duil, the River of Life that holds the power and essence of all Creation. Touched by this power the tree turned instantly to stone, becoming in that moment of change both Sentient and Immortal, a new Power to preside over all that lived in the world. In Arborell the Silvan Tree ruled as both Lord and Mistress, Creator of Life and Guardian of everything precious. In Arborell it was the Great Tree, a conduit of EarthMagic and the Second Power of our World.

In this world of bough and leaf the Silvan Tree gave all its energy and fealty to the River of Life, its focus to the balance of the seasons, and to the welfare of the vast forests that spread within its domain. Beneath the canopy of the forests the world was silent however, its music no more than the rustle of the wind and the creak of swaying boughs. In this First Age of the world it was the trees themselves that held sway, their number uncountable in their multitudes but mute nonetheless, and in that state they remained until the coming of the Forgotten Ones.

Into this time of serene quiet there came new voices and new sounds that broke the silence of the forest. From a place beyond the borders of this existence something new came into the world, and with these Beings, that we know only as the Forgotten Ones, there travelled the first beasts of the plains and birds of the air. It was not long before the Forgotten Ones found the Silvan Tree, and realising its power subjugated themselves to its will. From the Tree the Forgotten Ones gained protection and power. In return they taught the Tree the nature of their being, and an appreciation of the life of those that live to run the wild plains. In time it changed the essence of the world, the Silvan Tree discovering that there was more to existence than earth and wind. In time the Silvan Tree began to create new life of its own.

Soon there was not a corner of the world that did not tremor to the footfalls of beasts in their multitude, or grow dark beneath the melee of birds upon the wing. For the Silvan Tree this new life was a revelation, the voices of the Forgotten Ones a music that resounded from every corner of the world, and it was with the language of this lost people that the Tree found its greatest favour.

In the voices of the Forgotten Ones the Silvan Tree uncovered a voice of its own. In language it gained the power to express EarthMagic in words, and in doing so bound that language to the world as tightly as the mountains are founded to their roots. With the language of Haer'al the Silvan Tree harnessed the life essence of Creation and rather than acting as a conduit for its power became able to use it at will. Life burgeoned within the forests of the world and for an age of time such was the way of existence.

It is said that even the Powers of the world can fall into folly and that such hubris can change the course of time itself. For the Great Tree the world had entered a Golden Age and in its gratitude it wished to give the Forgotten Ones a great boon. It was in a moment of supreme confidence that the Silvan Tree created its most ambitious work, a race of sentient Beings not unlike the Forgotten Ones that it called Trell'sara, or Guardians.

The Trell'sara however, were not as they seemed nor as they had been created. In a world of absolute plenty they could not be satisfied, and in the dark recesses of their minds they plotted and schemed, for it was their intention to take everything for themselves. Too late the Silvan Tree recognised the malevolent nature of their creation, and when they were ready the Trell'sara tore the Great Tree down and severed its power from the world.

What followed was a dark time. By degrees the life of the world diminished, and in the grey of a twilight that could only end in despair the Trell'sara went to war against the Forgotten Ones. In the violence of these times the Forgotten Ones overwhelmed their attackers and forced them into strongholds founded in the high mountains of the west, but without the essence of the Silvan Tree to nurture it the world ebbed into dissolution, its forests failing, its grasslands drying to dust. It could only be a matter of time before the folly of the Trell'sara would take all into oblivion.

But the Silvan Tree was not dead. With its tearing down the Trell'sara wished to remove it from the world and such was the desecration of their act that they could not bear any evidence of the Great Tree to remain. In a fit of malice and shame the broken pieces of the Tree were taken to the edges of the world and thrown into the unfathomable depths of an abyss. For them the Silvan Tree had been removed from their existence, but the Silvan Tree was not dead.

In the depths of the world the Tree found new strength and slowly it began to grow, the life force of the deep earth now its sustenance. As the War of Tree and Leaf raged in the world above its roots tapped the strength of the stone, and through the rifts and crevasses slowly spread its dominion once again.

What it found was a land in disarray. Quickly it re-established order, bringing balance back to the seasons and infusing life back into the earth. Arborell had been saved from the folly of the Trell'sara but the Guardians had not yet finished with their machinations. In the embrace of the earth the Silvan Tree had changed, its essence now more of stone than wood. And in that change the Trell'sara had found a way to access the great power of the Tree. Shards and splinters from the breaking down of the Tree had been collected and stored by the Guardians, and in their transformation to stonewood now provided a connection to the powers of the Tree which we know in these modern times as EarthMagic.

It was not beyond their intellect to discover that possession of the shards of stonewood gave access to the powers of the Tree itself, and in their arrogance and folly they took such powers to themselves, even though the Silvan Tree resisted. It is recorded that many of the Trell'sara died in their battles for mastery of EarthMagic but eventually they overcame the barriers placed before them. The Silvan Tree retreated to its depthless bastion and resigned itself to its role as caretaker of the health of the world. For the Trell'sara it was the beginning of their dominion of Arborell.

With the power of creation at their fingertips it was not long before it was exercised. In a symbolic act a piece of the Silvan Tree was fashioned into the stonewood sword known as the emurion'ka, the Light of the World. With this the Hresh'na were created to defeat the Forgotten Ones, and the remainder of our brethren arose from the need of the Trell'sara for slaves. Such would have been the eternal state of our world if not for the arising of the Jotun and the Great Insurrection that followed their breaking of the Word of Command.

Even as the last of the Trell'sara lay dying at the gates of Nem'haleen did they still have the will to hide their knowledge from their slaves, unwilling to give others the power they had once wielded with such abandon. It is recorded that it was their personal slaves, the Vardem, that betrayed their trust and retrieved the talismans, giving them over to the Jotun for safekeeping. In this manner did the emurion'ka come into the possession of the Oera'dim.

It is a bitter taste that comes with the knowledge that we no longer hold the emurion'ka. Lost at the battle for Kal Murda, this greatest of all talismans has been beyond our reach for too many years. It is the belief of the Clavern'sigh that the vehmin do not understand what they have, and it serves our purposes best that we do not attempt to recover it. In this matter it is deemed that we do nothing to alert these Men of the South to the importance of the sword of stonewood. One day it will be ours again.

The Parable of the Unwary Traveller and the Maiden of Despair

A folktale from the lands of the Oldemai Jotun. As told to the author.

Long before the coming of Men there lived in the far south of the world a great Chieftain, known to his people as Braga, or Arm of the Gods. In his way he was a Jotun of great renown, a strong leader and a mighty warrior, a Being whose power grew to encompass all the lands of the Oldemai Jotun. To his people he was a leader, a firm foundation upon which the communities of the Jotun flourished, but in his own home life was in uproar.

Braga ruled his lands but he did not rule his home. Within his Kraal he had eleven sons, all but one of whom would grow in their time to be great warriors. The youngest however, had no ambitions for leadership or the honour that could be found in combat. For him, life was an exercise in indulgence, one where the advice and remonstrations of his father held little weight. He was a Jotun, but he carried himself with the same lack of care or discipline as any of the Fallen Masters. Within the Kraal of his father he was despised by all.

For Braga there was little that could be done. Without discipline and honour a Jotun was nothing but a brute, a creature of the Trell'sara fit for nothing more than digging in the pits of their ancient masters. The Chief knew that he needed to teach his youngest a lesson and after much indecision issued an isdari against his son. For the Oldemai it was the worst of punishments. Banished to the roads and wastelands the youngest son of Braga became a being without name or honour, to be shunned by all for might meet him. His fate that of a traveller without home or heritage, to be given no comfort or succour in the long years that the edict would remain in force. In Braga's mind his youngest would need to learn self-reliance and discipline in the hardest way possible. And so it was that the Jotun that now had no name was thrust out into a harsh world, there to learn for himself the meaning of hardship and discipline.

In this way the years passed, and the Jotun, who became known to latter generations as the Unwary Traveller, walked the long paths of the wastelands, finding food where he could and harbouring a deep hatred for his father and the honour of his ancestors. Such would have been the way of his life but for a chance meeting upon the open road. It would be his doom that on a bitterly cold night he would cross paths with the Maiden of Despair.



Within the blustering winds of an encroaching winter the Unwary Traveller heard the soft sounds of sobbing. In the vast spaces of the grasslands it came to him as a mournful, plaintive call wafting upon the breeze, drawing him to an outcrop of rock and then into a small enclave of stone within. There he found wrapped in moonlight a Maiden, crouching upon the ground beside a small withered tree. Her sobs came as rivers of tears that flowed onto the enclave floor and settled around the dying roots of the plant.

Such was the travail in her eyes that the Unwary Traveller could not resist. He asked her what was wrong and she answered him.

"Sire, I have been banished from my home and find myself here in the dark recesses of this outcrop, without friend or family. How can I live in such a barren place? What is to become of me?"

The Unwary Traveller took pity on the Maiden and gave her the last of his food and water. In gratitude she hugged him and ran from the outcrop into the dark of night. The Jotun followed but found her gone, disappeared into the shadows of the evening. With a shrug he turned back to the enclave and decided that if he was to be hungry he might as well use the shelter of the outcrop to sleep away the night. The Maiden would need it no longer.

With the sounds of a storm growing upon the horizon the Unwary Traveller made himself comfortable to sleep. Outside the storm grew and then overtook the Jotun's shelter. It was a great tempest that lashed the lands around him, but within the protection of the enclave he was safe. For the first time in many months he slept well, sure in the knowledge that the solid walls of the outcrop would protect him.

In the morning he awoke to find a most wondrous boon before him. During the night the withered tree had grown strong and tall, its branches reaching to cover the roof of his shelter. As he stood he noticed also the tree was heavy with fruit, and within the confines of the outcrop it gave off a heady sweet smell that was irresistible. Hungry and without the means to obtain food it was a boon that the Jotun could not ignore. He took one of the fruit and bit hard into its soft flesh. Then he took another and another. Such a feast he had never experienced. Each fruit gave off a different taste and soon his mouth was full of the flavours of meat, cake and more fruits than he had thought existed in the world.

The privations of his life, and the lessons he had learned on the road, were forgotten as the fruits took a hold of him. It was a spell that they weaved, one that kept him within the enclave, feasting on the tree's bounty for many days. The bone and sinew of his hard existence disappeared beneath the effects of his gluttony. Too long deprived of the indolence he so greatly craved he fell back into sloth, eating from the tree and relaxing beneath its spreading branches. The tree was all too happy to provide, but never once did the Jotun think on what was happening. In his mind life owed him an existence and this, he thought, was his repayment for the hardships of his banishment. All too soon he would find that everything has its cost.

The day came when the Unwary Traveller had eaten his fill and could eat no more. Satiated to a point that even the spell woven by the tree could not force him to eat another piece of fruit, he lay

upon the ground of the enclave and pondered his good fortune. Today however, would be the day that he would pay the price for his indulgence.

In the darkening hours there came from outside the soft voice of the Maiden. In the lilting tones of her approach the Jotun heard the sorrow and despair that she still felt, and called her to come inside and eat from the fruits of the Tree. For indeed it was in his thoughts that such a feast would make even her black mood falter. But it was not the Maiden that entered the dark enclave. In her place passed the malevolent form of a *dweo'gorga*, a shape-shifter of the ancient days, its body formed as a Reaver and its appetite one to match. "Do not worry," it said in the same soft voice as the Maiden, "I shall indeed feed upon the bounty of the Tree."

In those morning hours the screams of the Jotun echoed across the plains but there was no-one to hear. The *dweo'gorga* took its time. It had been waiting for its prey to take its fill of the tree, and now it would enjoy the fruits of its patience. In those hours the son of Braga paid the cost of his gluttony, and was never heard of again.

It is said that for the Jotun this is a cautionary tale, one that reinforces the idea that it is only discipline and honour that keeps a Jotun alive in a harsh world. The son of Braga had chosen to ignore the one rule that governs the lives of the *Oera'dim* in Arborell, and had paid a high price for that oversight. In a world ruled by magic anything is possible, and it is only discipline and sacrifice that ensures survival. In Arborell you can take nothing for granted.



Aftermath - A Murder of Crows

Tansen'Delving has completed his right of passage, and with the emurion'ka in his possession returns to life as a warrior of the Delving Kraal. But life cannot be simple for the son of a chief. In the years that follow the completion of his deskai his father, Agror'Delving, grows ill and in the seventy-second year of his reign is about to find peace in his End of Days. As most favoured son the title of Chieftain and Consul of the Jotun of the West must fall to the young Tansen, but it is an honour that will not come without bloodshed and betrayal. In the harsh existence of the Jotun there is no room for uncertainty, no remedy for dispute but violence and death.

With the emurion'ka a closely guarded secret the young warrior must root out those who would wish him dead, and consolidate his authority as undisputed leader of his Kraal. In the second book in this series, A Murder of Crows, Tansen'Delving finds himself a target for assassination, and in dealing with that threat uncovers a mystery that will send him to the Horns of Gorgoroth, and an encounter with an unforeseen destiny.

Shards of Moonlight

CHARACTER SHEET

FIRST IN THE JOTUN OF THE WEST INTERACTIVE GAMEBOOK SERIES

CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES (50 POINTS MAXIMUM)

STRENGTH (5 - 11)	<input type="text"/>	}	}	+	<input type="text"/>	=	<input type="text"/>	COMBAT VALUE
AGILITY (1 - 5)	<input type="text"/>							
ENDURANCE (15 - 35)	<input type="text"/>							
LUCK (1 - 5)	<input type="text"/>							
INTUITION (1 - 5)	<input type="text"/>							

SUB-TOTAL SKILL/TALENT BONUS

50 character points must be spread within these five attributes. Strength plus Agility, combined with any Talent Bonuses, will determine your character's Combat Value.

ENDURANCE POINTS

Note: Your initial Endurance level cannot be exceeded during the course of your adventure

NOTES

3 Nahla Cakes in your waistbag
Warhammer

JOTUN TO ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

deskai	-	a rite of passage
vehmin	-	Men of the South
oera'dim	-	the Hordim
trell'sara	-	the Fallen Masters
emurion'ka	-	a talisman of power
shan'dari	-	Shaman of the Jotun
kraal	-	Hordim community

CHOSEN TALENTS

1)

2)

COMBAT RESOLUTION RECORD

C.V. <input type="text"/> E.P. <input type="text"/>				
C.V. <input type="text"/> E.P. <input type="text"/>				



Shards of Moonlight

Under the cover of night, a Jotun warrior and his Mentor make for the barren lands of the Shattereen. For Tansen Delving it is to be his deskai, the proving of his right to be called warrior, and the initiation that shall see him named as favoured son to the Chieftainship of Kraal Delving, and leadership of the Jotun of the West.

What lays in wait for the young Jotun is an unexpected destiny, and a journey into the bloody past of the Oera'dim, one that he shall be lucky to survive.



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