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Presents a Fighting Fantasy amateur adventure

Venom of Vortan

By

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Venom of Vortan

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This adventure is intended as a gentle tribute to very linear, item-heavy, old school-style dungeon trawls. The style of, and approach to, the design of this short subject is intentional and hopefully familiar to fans of early Fighting Fantasy gamebooks.

For Darren - a good man whose Stamina and Luck failed him far too soon.

Two dice, a pencil and an eraser are all you need to embark on this adventure, which comes complete with its own elaborate combat system and a score sheet to record your progress. It is up to YOU to decide which routes to follow, which dangers to risk and which foes to fight.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
ADVENTURE SHEET	8
BACKGROUND	9

INTRODUCTION

You are about to take the lead role in an adventure that will make you into a living legend, renowned and respected throughout the world. Before you take part in this quest, you must first determine your own strengths and weaknesses. You use dice to work out your initial SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK scores. On page 8 is an *Adventure Sheet*, which you may use to record details of your adventure. On it, you will find boxes for recording your SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK scores. Write your scores on the *Adventure Sheet* in pencil so you can erase previous scores when you start again. You may make photocopies of the sheet for use in future adventures. Full details governing rules can be found in any of the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks as well as on the Official website: www.fightingfantasy.com.

SKILL, STAMINA, LUCK

To determine your *Initial* SKILL, STAMINA, and LUCK scores:

- ❖ SKILL Roll one die. Add 6 to the number and enter this total in the SKILL box.
- ❖ STAMINA Roll two dice. Add 12 to the number and enter this total in the STAMINA box.
- ❖ LUCK Roll one die. Add 6 to the number and enter this total in the LUCK box.

For reasons that will be explained below, all your scores will change constantly during the adventure. You must keep an accurate record of these scores, and for this reason, you are advised to write small in the boxes or to keep an eraser handy. However, never rub out your *Initial* scores, except on those very rare occasions when the text specifically tells you so.

Although you may be rewarded additional SKILL, STAMINA and LUCK points, these totals may never exceed your *Initial* scores, except on very rare occasions, when you will be instructed on a particular page. SKILL reflects your general expertise in fighting and combat; the higher the better. STAMINA score reflects your general constitution, your overall will to survive, your determination and overall fitness; the higher your STAMINA score, the longer you will be able to survive. LUCK score indicates how naturally lucky a person you are. Luck – and Magic – are facts of life in the fantasy world you are about to explore.

BATTLES

During your adventure, you will often come across pages in the book which instruct you to fight a creature of some sort. An option to flee may be given, but if not – or if you choose to attack the creature anyway – you must resolve the battle as described below.

First, record the opponent's SKILL and STAMINA scores in the first empty Encounter Box on your *Adventure Sheet*. The scores for each opponent or creature are given in the

book each time you have an encounter. You should also make a note of any special abilities or instructions, which are unique to that particular opponent.

The sequence of combat is then:

1. Roll two dice for your opponent. Add its SKILL score. This total is the opponent's Attack Strength.
2. Roll two dice for yourself. Add the number rolled to your current SKILL score. This total is your Attack Strength.
3. If your Attack Strength is higher than your opponent's, you have wounded it. Proceed to step 4. If your opponent's Attack Strength is higher than yours, it has wounded you. Proceed to step 5. If both Attack Strength totals are the same, you have avoided each other's blows – start the next Attack Round from step 1 above.
4. You have wounded your opponent. Subtract 2 points from its STAMINA score. You may use LUCK here to do additional damage (see below). Proceed to step 6.
5. Your opponent has wounded you. Subtract 2 points from your STAMINA score. You may use LUCK to reduce the loss of STAMINA (see below). Proceed to step 6.
6. Make the appropriate adjustments to either your opponent's or your own STAMINA scores (and your LUCK score if you used LUCK – see over).
7. Begin the next Attack Round, starting again at step 1 with your current SKILL score. This sequence continues until the STAMINA score of either you or your opponent reaches zero (death). If your opponent dies, you are free to continue with your adventure. If you die, your adventure ends and you must start all over again by creating a new character.

ESCAPING FROM BATTLES

You may never *Escape* from a live combat situation.

LUCK

At various times during your adventure, either in battles, or when you come across other situations in which you could either be Lucky or Unlucky (details of these are given in the relevant pages themselves), you may use LUCK to make the outcome more favourable to you. However, beware! Using LUCK is a risky business and, if you are *unlucky*, the results could be disastrous.

The procedure for *Testing Your Luck* is as follows: roll two dice. If the number rolled is less than or equal to your current LUCK score, you have been Lucky and the outcome will be in your favour. If the number rolled is higher than your current LUCK score, you have been Unlucky and you will be penalised.

Each time you *Test Your Luck*, you must subtract 1 point from your current LUCK score. Thus, you will soon realise that, the more you rely on your LUCK, the more risky this procedure will become.

USING LUCK IN BATTLES

In battles, you always have the option of using your LUCK either to score a more serious wound on an opponent you have just wounded or to minimise the effects of a wound you have just received.

If you have just wounded an opponent: you may *Test Your Luck* as described above. If you are Lucky, you have inflicted a severe wound; deduct an extra 2 points from your opponent's STAMINA score. However, if you are Unlucky, your blow only scratches your opponent, and you deduct only 1 point from your opponent's STAMINA (instead of scoring the normal 2 points of damage, you now only score 1).

If the opponent has wounded you: you may *Test Your Luck* to try to minimise the wound. If you are Lucky, your opponent's blow only grazes you; deduct only 1 point from your STAMINA. If you are Unlucky, your wound is a serious one and you must deduct 1 extra STAMINA point (i.e. a total of 3 points from your own STAMINA). Remember: you must subtract 1 point from your LUCK score each time you *Test Your Luck*.

Skill

Your SKILL score will not change much during the course of your adventure. Occasionally a paragraph may give you instructions to increase or decrease your SKILL score, but it may not exceed its *Initial* value unless you are specifically instructed to the contrary.

Drinking the Potion of SKILL (see later) will restore your SKILL to its *Initial* level at any time; except when engaged in a battle.

Luck

Additions to your LUCK score may be awarded in the adventure when you have been particularly lucky or created your own luck by some other action. Details are given, where appropriate, in the paragraphs of the book. Remember that, as with SKILL and STAMINA, your LUCK score may never exceed its *Initial* value unless specifically instructed on a page. Drinking the Potion of Fortune (see later) will restore your LUCK to its *Initial* level at any time, and increase your *Initial* LUCK by 1 point.

Provisions

Everyone knows that food is vital as a form of sustenance. Any time you eat a meal, you may restore 4 lost STAMINA points, except during combat or when performing any other similar action. You begin this adventure with 5 Provisions.

EQUIPMENT AND POTIONS

You will start your adventure with a bare minimum of equipment, but you may find or buy other items during your travels. You have a backpack to hold your Provisions and any other items you may come across.

In addition, you may take one bottle of a magical potion, which will aid you on your mission. You may choose to take a bottle of any of the following:

A Potion of Skill restores SKILL points.

A Potion of Strength restores STAMINA points.

A Potion of Fortune restores LUCK points and adds 1 to *Initial* LUCK.

These potions may be taken at any time during your adventure (except when engaged in a battle). Taking a measure of potion will restore SKILL, STAMINA or LUCK scores to their *Initial* level (and the Potion of Fortune will add 1 point to your *Initial* LUCK score before LUCK is restored).

Each bottle of potion contains enough for *one* measure i.e. the characteristic may be restored once during an adventure. Make a note on your *Adventure Sheet* when you have used up your potion.

ADVENTURE SHEET

MONSTER ENCOUNTER BOXES

<p>SKILL Initial Skill=</p>	<p>STAMINA Initial Stamina=</p>	<p>LUCK Initial Luck=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	
<p>EQUIPMENT LIST</p>			<p>GOLD</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>
<p>JEWELS</p>			<p>POTIONS</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>
<p>PROVISIONS REMAINING</p>			<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	<p>Skill= Stamina=</p>	

BACKGROUND

Vortan, The Snake Lord. The name alone is enough to strike fear into all but the most daring (or suicidal) of adventurers. Rarely is he seen, but his foul Vipermen offspring, having reached their adolescent stage, emerge annually from deep within the sands of the Desert of Skulls to pillage and plunder the few pockets of civilisation that they can find dotted about the huge desert expanse. Primary amongst their targets are the numerous trains of traders' caravans that pass through the region, unwittingly providing food and precious plunder with which to line the Vipermen's hidden sandy nests that they retreat to at sundown before the sands grow bitterly cold and the lethal nightly dust storms begin to rage.

A year ago, a victim of one of these random attacks was none other than your own father and you have vowed to avenge his death by tracking down the Snake Lord and destroying him, thus ending his blight once and for all. You have spent the past year gathering the scant evidence that you can find to indicate the location of the Snake Lord's hidden domain based largely on the route taken by the Vipermen as they head south spreading their menace. Having assembled all the intelligence possible, you have finally identified the likely site of Vortan's lair.

Brushing aside large quantities of sand you find a wooden trapdoor with an iron chainloop set into it. Traces of shed snakeskin can clearly be seen attached to the rough wooden edges of the trapdoor and you know that this must be the exit used by the Vipermen. Hope and trepidation take you as you have the door open. Foul air flows from inside and the intense desert sun casts across the void revealing a set of stone steps carved into solid rock beneath the sand. You take what might be one final look at the outside world before heading cautiously down the steps. You reach the foot of the steps safely and find yourself at the start of a short corridor with rock walls lit by burning torches.

NOW TURN OVER

1

You turn and take one final glance at the shaft of sunlight that extends only slightly beyond the foot of the staircase. With a gulp of contemplation but also a feeling of elation at finally being able to avenge your father's death you press on along the corridor which is liberally strewn with the shed skins of the Vipermen that must have made their way to the exit and outwards to strike menace into any desert traveller who may have had the misfortune of crossing their path.

Soon the passage ends at a t-junction. Looking left and right you see the torchlit corridor heading away in both directions. As you consider which route to take to begin your search for the Snake Lord you catch sight of a small sign on the wall immediately in front of you.

Will you head left (turn to 197), go right (turn to 105), or will you first read the sign to see if it sheds any light on which direction you should choose (turn to 42)?

2

The huge bulk of the dying Snake Queen falls to the floor with a crash, crushing several egg-sacks as she lands and sending a dozen or so others scattering in every direction. However, this small amount of foetal killing will mean little given the sheer number of egg-sacks that are developing in this chamber.

Do you wish to use a torch from the wall to set the egg-chamber alight (turn to 206) or will you just make haste for the far side where you can see an exit tunnel (turn to 108)?

3

The door opens onto a room with a black-and-red chequerboard floor made from marble flagstones. On the far wall is a wooden urn mounted on a red sandstone pedestal.

If you wish to attempt to cross the room to investigate the urn, turn to 134

Or to leave this room and press on up the corridor, turn to 84

4

You place the winged helmet carefully on your head and immediately you feel yourself jerked upwards. You rise some distance before you feel your feet making contact with a level floor again. You put one hand down to check around you and you are indeed back on the ground of the corridor, although you are still in total darkness. Add 1 Luck point for finding the winged helmet, which you may continue to wear if you wish. Turn to 81

5

You uncork the vial and gulp down the clear liquid. As you do so, Vortan laughs with pleasure and smirks at you, saying:

'Fool, did you really think that stealing from your only ally would result in anything other than retribution?'

Unfortunately, you have consumed a Potion of Cowardice that the Shieldmaiden intentionally carried with her to get one final revenge on any foe that should kill her! Frozen to the spot in terror, and literally quaking in your boots, you can only stand and watch as Vortan's head snaps down over your throat. Your decapitated body crumples to the floor as you die in abject failure having come so close to your goal.

6

Realising that it would be wise not to try to resist this mysterious force, you allow yourself to be guided into the centre of the room. The door slams shut and you stand transfixed as the voice booms out around the room:

‘You have done well to reach my secondary chambers. You impress me, revenge-seeker, so I am going to give you the chance to progress further. Assuming you will indulge me, that is.’

What will you do?

If you try to run for the door, turn to 129

If you agree to the commanding voice’s terms, turn to 185

7

You realise that Vortan is trying to protect his tail which contains a barbed stinger but, as you swing the axe, he manages to coil his tail back under his bulky body and the axe cuts harmlessly through his cushioned bed, sending feathers flying into the air. Turn to 218

8

The handle turns awkwardly in your hand, but turn it does, and you force the ancient door open and onto a scene from your worst nightmares. Inside the room is a huge dusty web spun in an unusually thick silk from all four corners of the room. As you enter, the webbing is agitated (presumably due to some of it being attached to the back of the door itself) and you see a hideous form make its way from the dark depths of the back of the room and across the webbing towards you. It stops dead a metre from your face and the light from the corridor torches casts onto the hideous form of a grinning part-arachnid part-simian monstrosity – a Spider-Monkey.

You must think fast: you may well have time to slam the door and head off up the corridor (turn to 142 to do this) or alternatively you can attack the now salivating creature (turn to 162)

9

Do you possess a yellow jewel?

If so, turn to 87

If not, turn to 38

10

The sound of heavy footsteps resounds along the passageway and you are soon confronted by a massive Cave Troll. It throws its huge head back and lets off a loud grunting war cry before raising a large stone club above its head and preparing to bring it down on your skull!

Prepare to fight for your life:

CAVE TROLL SKILL 10 STAMINA 11

If you win, turn to 157

11

You take a moment to get your breath back and gather your thoughts before examining the Ogre's body. Around its neck it wears a bone charm which has a gold scale mounted into it. You prise the gold scale from the charm and, on turning it over, you see the number "7" etched into the back. You may take this if you want to. There is nothing else of interest in the room so you leave and continue along the small passageway. Turn to 188

12

You climb the stairs carefully and soon arrive at a short landing, which has a curious glow.

Will you investigate the glow? Turn to 124

Or does this seem perilous and you would rather go back down the stairs and take the left fork instead? Turn to 171

13

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, you are able to quickly explore the room without waking the sleeping creature. Turn to 83

If you are Unlucky your foot rustles against a particularly dense pile of skin sheddings and the Viperman's eye flick open. Turn to 65

14

You open the door and step into a much smaller, very cramped corridor that, whilst still lit with a few burning torches, has a noticeably pungent stale odour of mildew about it. As you make your way along this new passage, you begin to hear a dripping sound and can see droplets of clear liquid falling from the ceiling.

Are you wearing a winged helmet?

If so, turn to 119

Otherwise, turn to 175

15

You walk for a further ten metres before the northerly passage swings sharply to the right, but you also see a door set into the corner of the corridor.

To investigate this door, turn to 190

Or to continue round to the right, turn to 26

16

You carefully place your foot on a red flagstone and you are immediately consumed by a jet of flame which shoots up from the flagstone itself. Your adventure ends here.

17

You tell the woman that you both need to fight your own individual demons and that endangering one-another would reduce the likelihood of one of you succeeding in destroying Vortan for the general good of your people. She thinks about this for a moment and then nods glumly in agreement, wishing you luck as you leave the room alone. Turn to 214

18

You put the old parchment in your backpack (Make a note of this on your *Adventure Sheet*) before returning to the corridor. Turn to 39

19

The corridor continues for about two hundred metres before coming to a t-junction. To head west turn to 130. To head east turn to 74

20

You step close to the largest formation and notice that it is formed from a slightly lighter material than the rest of the cavern.

Will you reach out and touch this large rock formation? Turn to 217

Or will you look about the cavern for a possible alternative exit that will lead you onwards? Turn to 149

21

You open the door into a large room, the floor of which is strewn with various bones, broken weapons, and straw. As you survey the scene in the room, a huge Ogre emerges from behind the door (where it must have been hiding to entrap you as you entered) and slams the door shut. It raises a large stone club aloft and you realise that you must prepare to defend yourself:

OGRE SKILL 9 STAMINA 9

If you defeat the Ogre, turn to 11

22

The Genie blinks and disappears into thin air. You feel your muscles expanding and your strength increasing considerably. From now on, any wounds you receive in combat will only do you 1 rather than 2 points of Stamina damage. If you Test Your Luck after being wounded, a successful roll will reduce the damage you take to zero, whilst a failed roll will still only do the usual 2 points of damage. Conversely, any wounds you inflict on an opponent in combat will do 3 rather than 2 points of Stamina damage, increasing to 4 on a successful Luck roll. In addition, you may increase your current and *Initial* Stamina by 1 point.

Feeling very pleased with such good fortune so early in your quest, you leave the room and set off up the corridor with renewed confidence. Turn to 99

23

Gripping the taut rope with your hands, you slowly haul yourself upwards. Eventually you feel a right-angled bend in the rope and, reaching a hand forwards of the bend, you touch the floor of the corridor from which you fell into the pit. You clamber out and are oddly relieved to be back in the dark passage, but you must leave the now seemingly solid snake-charmer's rope behind in the pit as it refuses to be coiled back up. Now turn to 81

24

Realising just how rapidly the blaze is spreading, you make a dash for the far wall and luckily are able to reach the exit before the flames have fully taken hold. Turn to 51

25

You reach out to attempt to grab the vague shape and you feel a warm minute form in your hand as your grip closes around it.

To your surprise, the shimmering outline grows solid. Turn to 224

26

You follow the passage and, after walking only a few metres, you reach a four-way junction. Looking south and east you assume these corridors will eventually return you to a place you have already been, and surmise that your goal lies to the north so you head in that direction. Turn to 215

27

In the nick of time and without a second to spare you see four vicious spikes swing down from the roof. Ducking quickly, you feel the spikes glance over your scalp, missing your skull by millimetres, as they come to rest in a vertical position suspended from the ceiling. You crouch under the spikes and make your way further along the corridor. Gain 1 Luck point for avoiding Vortan's Spike Trap, designed to prevent any unwanted trespassers from accessing his domain. Turn to 213

28

You look into the alcove and can see a jar of a golden-coloured substance standing at the back. Do you wish to open it and examine the contents (turn to 85) or will you ignore it and either take the new corridor to the west (turn to 91) or continue straight ahead in your present direction (turn to 123)?

29

You put the mouth of the bottle to your lips and invert it. As you do, you feel the liquid mist make its way down your throat and you are convinced that you can hear a vague sound of shrill laughter coming from within your body. Before you have time to realise your mistake, you feel your stomach bloat and expand before your ribcage bursts apart from the inside as the six-foot Genie that you unwittingly consumed bursts from within your body. The last thing you hear is the word "fool" coming from a grinning manic visage before you collapse down dead. Your adventure ends at the first hurdle.

30

Slithering deftly towards you comes a large adult Viperman, his black and red striped scaled body shining in the torchlight. On seeing you, he raises a short sword that hangs from a belt around what passes for his “waist” and hisses menacingly at you. You must defend yourself against Vortan’s foul progeny:

VIPERMAN SKILL 7 STAMINA 6

If you win, turn to 106

31

With your eyes now fully accustomed to the half-light in the room, you can see the bones and tattered clothing of a previous visitor to this room who must have been less fortunate than yourself when they encountered the now-destroyed Zombie. A search of this corpse produces nothing of use, although you do see something that could either be a flap of yellowed skin or a piece of discoloured paper peeping out of one of its boots.

Will you try to pull this out? Turn to 204

Or has this room disgusted you enough already and you wish to return to the corridor?
Turn to 39

32

The Spider-Monkey finally collapses into its own web and you breathe a sigh of relief at killing it. Do you wish to examine the body (turn to 174) or will you immediately leave this disgusting room and head further along the corridor (turn to 68)?

33

Turning along the eastbound corridor, you walk only a few metres before the torches that lit your way suddenly go out as if simultaneously extinguished by an unseen force. You are plunged into pitch darkness.

Will you continue onwards? Turn to 176

Or will you retrace your steps carefully back to where the passage divided by feeling your way along the wall? Turn to 202

34

You follow the passage and, after walking only a few metres, you reach a four-way junction. Looking south and west you assume these corridors will eventually return you to a place you have already been, and surmise that your goal lies to the north so you head in that direction. Turn to 215

35

As it writhes and uncoils itself to full height, you see that the serpentine beast has two rows of tiny parallel dots running the length of its upper underbelly – a female. Its head has large glassy eyes that seem strangely beguiling, an image at odds with its forked yellow tongue which flicks rapidly in and out of its small pursed mouth. You guess that her skin scaling must be a dull green to aid camouflage.

You are standing in the presence of Vortan's Queen, the mother of the foul Vipermen that have caused you such grief, and this is her egg-chamber. You realise that, by destroying her, you will go some distance towards extinguishing Vortan's menace. You draw your sword and charge at the Snake Queen. As this is a rare female Viperman, intended primarily for procreation and not for combat or pillage, she can fight only with her two short clawed arms and, whilst she is physically immense and strong, she is not accustomed to needing to defend herself:

SNAKE QUEEN SKILL 8 STAMINA 13

If you defeat Vortan's Queen, turn to 2

36

Nehemina moves to stand next to you in an *en garde* position. She is remarkably fast and is skilful with a blade making her able to easily fight two Vipermen at the same time, leaving you to deal with the third yourself:

VIPERMAN SKILL 6 STAMINA 9

If you defeat your lone opponent, turn to 201

37

The door opens into a familiar-looking corridor. Turn to 212

38

Unable to avoid the inevitable combat with this monumental adversary, you draw your sword and prepare for battle:

GEODEMON SKILL 12 STAMINA 14

If you somehow win this fight, turn to 66

39

Continuing up the corridor you notice that the quantity of shed skin strewn about this part of the passage is rather lower than that immediately beforehand and the dust is becoming noticeably less apparent, as if this area has seen rather more use.

Soon the floor becomes almost totally clear of debris as the corridor splits two ways. If you wish to continue north, turn to 15, or to try a new corridor that heads directly east, turn to 165

40

With no apparent way of escaping the pit and trapped in total darkness, you quickly become very despondent. After several hours of hopelessly sitting in the dark, you hear a slithering sound coming from two different angles. Your last memory is of four vicious fangs puncturing the flesh of your legs before venom rapidly paralyses your body. You have fallen foul of Vortan's offspring and you will provide a good meal for the two young Vipermen who have trapped you. Your adventure ends here.

41

You recall the pattern that safely got you to the urn and carefully work your way back to the door on the same sequence of coloured flagstones.
Relieved to reach the door safely, you leave the room and return to the corridor. Turn to 84

42

You move closer to the sign, which appears to be made of a piece of lead fastened to the wall by a large iron bolt. In white chalk letters a jagged script reads:

TRESPASSERS WILL BE EATEN. V

This sends a shiver of trepidation down your spine at the thought of this potentially being the fate that awaits you. Lose 1 Luck point for the scare before you quickly try to cast this thought from your mind and press on.

Will you go along the left corridor (turn to 197) or the right (turn to 105)?

43

No sooner have you produced the jar of honey from your backpack and offered it to the creature, it reaches for the jar, snatching it from you. It quickly unscrews the lid, allowing it to spin to the floor, and begins to gorge itself noisily on the honey inside the jar. Once it has emptied the entire contents down its throat, it belches violently and smiles at you: 'Thank you, friend. We Brownlings are especially partial to honey and I offer you the gift of knowledge in return for your kindness. Further along this corridor you will see a small door on the right – do not go through it, it will only bring misery. Follow this passage around to the left instead.'

With that, the tiny Brownling leaps from your hand and promptly vanishes. You watch its familiar shimmering outline disappear down the corridor in the direction from which you came.

Thinking about what the creature told you, you make haste along the passageway. Turn to 144

44

As you tumble endlessly, the wings on your helmet suddenly come to life and you feel yourself being borne upwards.

Gain 1 Luck point for cheating death as you are gently placed back in a corridor. Turn to 34

45

‘Brave words for one so obviously inferior to myself. Your arrogance amuses me. I will let you fight me. The battle will be short but your pathetic attempts at vanquishing me will provide me with brief entertainment.’

Do you have a battle axe?

If so, turn to 60

Otherwise, turn to 218

46

You sit despondently in the blackness of the pit for some time before you somehow manage to motivate yourself to crawl about the floor in search of the walls of the pit. Eventually your hand touches a smooth vertical rockface and you determine that you have found the perimeter of the pit.

Do you have a coil of rope? If so, turn to 147. Otherwise, turn to 40

47

‘Well, you really are worthy, aren’t you? For that you have earned the right to live, albeit only as long as Vortan wills it.’

With that, you feel yourself raised up from the ground and then all is darkness before you find yourself back outside the white metal door in the ancient corridor.

Gain 1 Luck point for surviving this ordeal and you quickly make your way further up the corridor. Turn to 103

48

On closer investigation, the dangling object is a small red leather pouch hanging by a drawstring. If you wish to open the pouch turn to 122. Otherwise, you leave this room which is of no further interest (turn to 212)

49

Without his tail, Vortan is rendered slightly weaker as he has lost the advantage of being able to swing it viciously towards a foe. However, Vortan is still a lethal opponent and, as he slithers painfully towards you with green blood trailing behind him from his severed tail, he poises to strike with his long fangs.

Before you fight Vortan, if you have a vial of clear liquid which you took from the body of a dead Shieldmaiden and wish to try drinking it, turn to 5.

Otherwise, if you do not have this, or do not wish to drink it, this is the moment you have lived for:

VORTAN SKILL 11 STAMINA 15

After each Attack Round that Vortan wins, roll one dice. If you roll a 1 you are poisoned by his envenomed fangs for an additional 1 point of Stamina loss.

If you somehow defeat the Snake-Lord, turn to 110

50

You remember the words of the message you read on the mirrored plaque and, as you are going back over the words in your head, you notice a small door in the right-hand wall, made from the same reflective metal as if to disguise its presence from all but the most attentive of passers-by. If you wish to step through this door turn to 37. Or to ignore it and press on turn to 74

51

You walk a short distance before reaching a large door, which has a complex mechanism fitted to its frame linked to four small oval-shaped receptacles. Over the door, in large red letters, are written the words “A FATHER PROTECTS WITH HIS OWN SKIN”.

Do you have four gold scales?

If so, turn to 189

If you have three or less, turn to 115

52

You immediately feel yourself falling head-first into a bottomless pit.

Do you have a winged helmet?

If so, turn to 44

If not, turn to 151

53

You uncork the bottle and the same blue liquid mist you saw the first time you opened the bottle emerges once again and rapidly coalesces into a humanoid form. It takes one look at the flying furniture whirlwind and calmly speaks:

‘Calm yourself brother Poltergeist. Your pain will soon be over. Join me, friend.’

With that, the furniture comes to rest gently on the floor as the cold wind mingles with the Genie and both retreat into the bottle. You replace the stopper and briefly see the words “OUR CONTRACT IS DONE” before the bottle literally vanishes into thin air. Remove the Genie and bottle from your Equipment List.

Now that the furniture and your breath are no longer obscuring your view, you are able to see another door in the far wall of this room.

To leave the room by this new door, turn to 14

To explore the room, turn to 88

Or to leave through the door you entered by, turn to 95

54

The Genie hesitates for a moment and then retreats back into the bottle as the stopper takes flight of its own accord and re-inserts itself into the top of the bottle. Just as you are about to become annoyed at being duped, silver letters form on the side of the glass:

OPEN ME TO DISPEL THAT WHICH IS OTHERWISE UNPASSABLE

You commit the message to memory, put the bottle in your backpack and take your leave of this curious room. Turn to 99

55

The door opens onto a small simple dining room with a wooden table in its centre and three crude wooden chairs set around it. There is no food of any kind on the table, which is not laid for dinner. However, rather more startling is the presence of a completely immobile Viperman sat in one of the chairs. He shows no signs of reacting to your intrusion and seems almost as if in suspended animation. On the far side of the room you can see two further wooden doors, one marked "PANTRY", the other marked "PATROL".

To try to shake the Viperman into responding, turn to 143

To run the inert Viperman through quickly with your sword, turn to 73

To carefully step around the table and go through the door labelled "PANTRY", turn to 223

To carefully make your way to the door marked "PATROL" and go through this exit instead, turn to 107

56

You start to imagine yourself rising up out of this small room and, as you do, the wings of the helmet start to flap and you feel yourself being raised upwards. You ascend a considerable distance before coming to land on a ledge. You look onward and see a large elaborate room in front of you. You enter the room. Turn to 72

57

You hail the woman and tell her you mean her no harm.

'I can handle a blade, don't you worry,' she replies, still smiling to herself.

Will you now attack her, suspecting her confidence may signal that she is potentially dangerous (turn to 101) or will you explain why you are in Vortan's domain (turn to 164)?

58

You find yourself in a huge round cavern hewn into solid rock. Stalactites hang in tendrils from the high ceiling and calcified formations make disturbing shapes about the floor. As you take in your unexpected surroundings, your eyes fall on a particularly large formation rising from the ground just to the left of an entrance. Turn to 20

59

The last Skeleton shatters in a cloud of bone dust and you take a moment to gather your thoughts. As they lie in the dust, the Skeleton's rapiers begin to rust and quickly disintegrate into corruption. You continue along the corridor, wondering what other perils this place has in store for you. Turn to 125

60

On seeing you produce the axe, Vortan shifts uncomfortably on his cushioned bed, trying to coil the tips of his tail back under his body.

Roll two dice and compare the total rolled to your current Skill score.

If the roll is less than or equal to your current Skill, turn to 169

If the roll is greater than your current Skill, turn to 7

61

You cup your hands together and scoop up some of the red liquid. You draw it up to your lips and, with some hesitation, take a sip. The liquid does not only have the appearance of blood, but it also tastes similar to it, but it is in fact simply ironated water which is rich in nutrients and very refreshing. You may regain up to 5 points of lost Stamina for drinking the water. Now you press on north. Turn to 139

62

In spite of charging the door with as much force as you can muster, you are simply too physically weak to have any effect on the solid door, but you do succeed in shattering your shoulder blade. Lose 4 Stamina points. If you are still alive, you have no option but to press on down the passage. Turn to 34

63

You carefully place your foot on the first red flagstone and are relieved when nothing happens.

To continue on red squares only, turn to 94

To change to black only, turn to 219

Or to now alternate between the colours, starting with another red square, turn to 167

Or to alternate between the colours, starting with black, turn to 199

64

You reach for the axe and pluck it from the air. The large weapon is surprisingly light in your hand given its size and is beautifully made. The axe will increase your Skill by 1 point whenever you use it in combat should you choose to take it with you. Pleased with your find, you decide it is time you continued with your quest and so you return to the corridor. Turn to 39

65

The Viperman rises up from the bunk and as his coiled tail unfolds you see that he stands less than four feet tall, not yet mature enough to leave the nest and wreak havoc on innocent traders such as was your father's fate. His forked tongue whips in and out of his pursed mouth and his yellow and black serpentine eyes burn with obvious hatred. He is, however, unarmed, so must fight you using his fists that flail at you as his muscular arms ripple and flex, extending in a short reach from his black and red diamond-patterned scaly body. This fight to the death is your first direct contact with Vortan's hated species:

VIPERMAN SKILL 8 STAMINA 9

If you survive this combat, turn to 193

66

The massive beast shatters and crumbles into small piles of rock as your deathblow strikes it.

Exhausted from your ordeal, you sit and rest for thirty minutes. Regain 3 Stamina points. Once you have built up the mental strength to continue, you head for the door in the far wall which opens with relative ease as you make contact with it. The door swings shut behind you and you are free from the nightmare of the Geodemon's cavern. Turn to 163

67

You walk on for a further thirty metres before the passage ends at a door which appears to be carved out of the stone of a rock wall.

Will you open the door (turn to 208) or would you prefer to return to the junction and take the right-hand passage instead (turn to 141)?

68

A little further up the corridor you see a branch in the passage that leads west as well as a small alcove in the wall to your right. To investigate the alcove, turn to 28. To turn left and head west along the new branch turn to 91. Or to continue straight ahead turn to 123

69

You grip the handle and the door opens easily inwards onto a small room, the floor of which is covered by a lush and very beautifully woven brightly-coloured carpet. The room is otherwise empty, save for a mahogany table which stands in the exact centre. The legs of the table catch your eye as they are delicately carved with reliefs of desert scenes that are familiar to you: trains of caravans wind and snake their way up each leg, led by extremely lifelike carvings of camels. If it were not for the deep red of the wood you could be forgiven for thinking these were miniature versions of the real thing. On the tabletop, standing dead centre is a single conically-shaped bottle made from a dark blue glass, a large cork stopper sealing it shut.

Will you try to open the bottle? Turn to 173

Or will you leave this neat but odd room and head on up the corridor? Turn to 99

70

You take hold of the vial and the liquid immediately stops glowing, allowing you to make out the letters "U" and "P" engraved into the glass. If you wish to take this strange vial of liquid, you can.

You may now either continue in this direction (turn to 133) or go back down the staircase and take the left fork (turn to 171)

71

You wipe the Boggard's green blood from your weapon but, as you do, you notice it changing to a red hue. As this happens, the Boggard's body shrinks and becomes less bloated as it changes back into its Brownling form. The corpse of the cantankerous but essentially friendly Brownling looks pathetic lying crumpled on the passageway floor and you cannot help but feel sympathy for it. Lose 2 Luck points for killing the poor creature. Now turn to 144

72

The room you step into is square in shape and decadent in layout. Huge red and black silk drapes hang around all four walls and, at the far side, a short set of pure white marble steps lead up to a mountain of plush red, black, and green cushions, on top of which sits a huge Viperman with a wider head than you have seen on any image of the species. Protruding from its neck are two rows of sharp bony spikes and down its back runs a thick mass of black fur-like hair. The creature looks at you with its milky yellow serpentine eyes and opens its mouth to speak in a hissing tone:

'Who dares disturb my throne room?'

Will you reply that you come to pay tribute to the Snake-Lord's greatness? Turn to 118
Or do you tell it you come seeking vengeance for the deaths of countless innocent humans at his hand? Turn to 45

73

You draw your sword and drive it deep into the immobile Viperman's body. As you do so, the body explodes in a cloud which makes you cough and wretch terribly. Struggling to breathe, you fall to the floor, grasping at your throat to stop the pain. Thousands of microbial toxic spores quickly burn into your throat and lungs and you pass out. Your adventure ends here, dying in agony, having fallen foul of another of Vortan's defence mechanisms.

74

The corridor now begins to loop around in a large circle before heading straight onwards again. Turn to 154

75

The fire is spreading rapidly and you are unable to reach the far wall before a curtain of flame bars your way onwards. The heat is so intense that you soon feel light-headed. In a state of panic and now surrounded by searing flames, you are overcome and die in agony. His Queen and offspring may be destroyed, but Vortan himself still rules his underworld domain.

76

Vortan regards the jewel and throws its large head back in laughter:

‘I am no dumb Geodemon, you idiotic fleshling. You insult me with your insinuation. Prepare to die. The battle will be short but your pathetic attempts at vanquishing me will provide me with brief entertainment.’

Do you have a battle axe?

If so, turn to 60

Otherwise, turn to 218

77

After several minutes of clearing away dusty cobwebs and large strands of snakeskin, you finally reveal a gnarled wooden door made from a dark wood, possibly mahogany. The door seems surprisingly sturdy for its age, although the thick concealing webs and other general filth have probably saved it from contact with the unpleasant air in this passage. The handle is in excellent condition and looks likely to turn easily. To turn the handle, turn to 186, or to abandon this door and press on, turn to 39

78

The noises grow louder and suddenly four vicious spikes swing down from the roof. Luckily for you, but tragically for Nehemina, she was walking ahead of you and takes the full force of all four spikes plunging deep into her chest. Impaled and gasping for breath, all you can do is hold her head as she dies on the Spike Trap set by the Vipermen to prevent any unwanted trespassers from accessing Vortan’s domain. You say a prayer in her honour and pull her body from the spikes as they rise back into the ceiling. You return her body to her room and then make your way back here where you are relieved to see the trap does not trigger this second time. Turn to 213

79

Roll three dice:

If the number rolled is less than your current Stamina, turn to 220

If the number rolled is greater than or equal to your current Stamina, turn to 62

80

You must fight all three Vipermen at once. Each Attack Round you must choose which one you will attack and roll to see who wins as normal. However, for as long as any of the other two Vipermen are still alive they will also attack you. Roll for their Attack Strength too; if yours is higher than either of theirs you have merely deflected their blows, but if either or both has a higher Attack Strength you have been wounded by that or those opponents too and must take an additional 2 Stamina points damage for each Viperman that strikes you:

FIRST VIPERMAN SKILL 7 STAMINA 6
SECOND VIPERMAN SKILL 6 STAMINA 9
THIRD VIPERMAN SKILL 8 STAMINA 8

If you defeat all three, turn to 177

81

You edge along the wall and, after another ten metres of slow nervous progress, a single torch ignites on the wall a little way in front of you. You blink to allow your eyes to adjust to the small amount of light the torch affords, before the corridor is progressively re-lit again as a series of torches ignites in front of you one-by-one. Looking back you can still only see darkness so you quickly continue along the now illuminated corridor. Turn to 90

82

You turn the door handle (made from the same black obsidian as the snake design on the door) and the door opens into an intense orange light. You are about to decide your next move when you feel yourself being sucked into the swirling orange void. Unbeknownst to you, this is a teleportation room.

Roll one dice:

- if the result is 1, turn to 196
- if the result is 2, turn to 58
- if the result is 3, turn to 184
- if the result is 4, turn to 113
- if the result is 5, turn to 128
- if the result is 6, turn to 52

83

You search amongst the straw and skins but can find nothing, although a coil of rope hangs on the inside of the door, which you can take if you wish. You are about to give up and leave when your eye falls on an object hanging down from the underside framing of one of the upper bunks. If you wish to examine this closer turn to 48, otherwise you leave the bedchamber and press on (turn to 212)

84

The corridor now forks in two directions.

To take the left-hand fork which appears to shortly end at a door, turn to 171

To take the right-hand fork which leads up a set of stone steps, turn to 12

85

You unscrew the lid of the jar and a wonderful sweet smell emanates from within. You realise that the jar contains honey. If you eat the honey it will restore 3 Stamina points, or you can take the full jar with you in case it proves useful. Conversely, should you eat the honey at any point further in your adventure you can then restore 3 Stamina points.

Will you now turn west (turn to 91) or continue north (turn to 123)?

86

The cheese is a little stale, but is surprisingly tasty. Restore 2 Stamina points for eating this welcome morsel. Now you leave the pantry by its only door. Turn to 153

87

You produce the jewel from your pack and a beam of light emits from it, which causes the Geodemon to instantly retreat back to where it originally stood. As it begins to change back to its calcified form, you take the opportunity to run at the far door which opens with relative ease as you make contact with it. The door swings shut behind you and you take a breath of relief at having avoided a very tough encounter. Gain 1 Luck point and turn to 163

88

You take the opportunity to examine the recently-mobile furniture, but there is nothing of interest here at all. The Poltergeist that occupied this room may have been in torment, but it was certainly not protecting any possessions of any kind. You can now either leave via the new door in the far wall (turn to 14) or by the door you entered from (turn to 95)

89

You find yourself in a small and very chaotic bedchamber. Two makeshift wooden bunks stand to either side of the room whilst the floor is strewn with straw and what appear to be glistening semi-transparent coils of shed skin. Although you try your best to minimise the sound of the door, a particularly loud grating sound suddenly emanates from the joints in the frame and, before you have the chance to take in the scene fully, a Viperman is emerging from one of the bunks. Turn to 65

90

Eventually you reach a three-way junction. The corridor heads away straight onwards in an easterly direction, which you can see soon turns southwards, so you decide against this route as it appears to eventually lead back towards the entrance. Instead, you opt for a left turn which heads north and deeper into the bowels of Vortan's underground complex. However, before you set off in this direction you see a small alcove in the wall with a natural bowl eroded into the stone itself containing a red blood-like liquid. Would you like to try drinking some? If so, turn to 61
Or if you would prefer to dip your finger in it turn to 102
Alternatively, you can just press on without any further ado (turn to 139)

91

You make your way along the new westerly branch of the passageway and are immediately aware that this section of the complex looks older than the earlier part. The floor is strewn with dust and mud and there are far less torches mounted on the much rougher-hewn walls. There is still enough light for you to see the way ahead, but far less light is afforded than in the previous corridors that you have explored so far. After some distance, you reach a door in the right-hand wall. To try this door turn to 198, or to press on turn to 95

92

Turn to 199

93

‘Your first answer will be taken as absolute, so reflect carefully before you utter a single word: Who is Nehemina Fleetfoot?’

Do you answer: the Shieldmaiden of the North? Turn to 47

Vortan’s Queen? Turn 160

the only daughter of Malthus Dire? Turn to 182

94

Turn to 16

95

As you head further along this dank corridor, the dust particles that hang in the air begin to affect your breathing and make you feel slightly queasy. To press on further turn to 178, or if you prefer, you can return to the junction where you turned left and go north instead (turn to 123)

96

All you can find on the Shieldmaiden’s body is a glass vial hanging by a thong at her waist, which has somehow not been shattered in the fray. You lift the vial up and see that it contains a clear liquid. Will you drink some (turn to 195) or will you leave the room (taking the vial of clear liquid with you if you wish) (turn to 214)?

97

You make your way across the chamber, but once you have reached halfway you hear a rending of rock and, turning around, you see the lighter-coloured formation twist and extend until it literally stands up on thick rocky legs. Eyes and a mouth crack and open in its upper section and it thunders towards you, the cavern floor quaking as it moves.

Will you try to make a dash for the far exit? Turn to 9

Or will you stand and fight this monstrosity? Turn to 158

98

In spite of the strange sensation in your feet, you press on, but it is not long before the tingling turns to an intense burning as you begin to notice several pools of liquid on the floor. Your boots are smouldering and you realise that the burning is coming from the liquid – the floor is covered with acid and it burns you. Lose 4 Stamina points and 1 Skill point. You realise that you need to run to minimise the impact of the acid on your blistered and painful feet.

You run for twenty metres, the acid splashing up the sides of your legs and burning through your breaches – lose another 2 Stamina points – before you see that the floor ahead is no longer covered in the liquid. You turn north with the corridor to be faced with a bizarre creature, part-beetle, part-lizard with a huge pair of pincers protruding from its mouth and a long reptilian tail. The beast is an Acid Crawler and its recent excretion is the source of the trail of acid that you have just been forced to negotiate. It spies you and winds towards you. You must fight this predator:

ACID CRAWLER SKILL 8 STAMINA 9

Every time the creature wins an Attack Round, you must roll one dice as it spits acid at you from its twisted mouth. A roll of 5 or 6 means the acid spittle hits you for 1 additional Stamina point of damage.

If you win this combat, turn to 109

99

Heading further along the corridor you soon see another door, this time in the right-hand wall. A loud sound comes from within that resembles a man's snore, but punctuated with a faint hissing sound.

Will you try this door? Turn to 114

Or ignore it and press on further? Turn to 212

100

Turn to 199

101

Before she has time to utter another word, you draw your sword and charge at her with a semi-convincing battle cry. With alarming swiftness, she rises from the floor, and with an incredibly slick action, produces a short sword from within her breeches and prepares to defend herself. You are now committed to fighting her. The Shieldmaiden is remarkably fast:

SHIELDMAIDEN SKILL 11 STAMINA 8

If you defeat her, turn to 140

102

You dip your finger in the liquid to find that it is surprisingly cold. Withdrawing your finger you see that it is slightly reddened but appears to be unharmed. Will you now try drinking some of the liquid (turn to 61) or will you just press on instead (turn to 139)?

103

After walking thirty more metres, you see the outline of a door which is heavily shrouded in dust and cobwebs. Shed snakeskins hang amongst the thick filthy webbing and it is unlikely that this door has been opened for several hundred years, given the density of the detritus that conceals it.

If you wish to clear the covering matter and try to access the door, turn to 77. Otherwise, you may continue north (turn to 39)

104

You pull the object from the loincloth and see that it shines in the torchlight. It is a tiny solid gold scale with the number "21" embossed on the front in black wax. You may take this with you if you wish. Pleased with your find you press on up the passage. Turn to 125

105

After a short walk you see a door in the right-hand wall. Carved into the wood of the door is the shape of a shield with a smiling face in its centre. Scratched crudely into the wood immediately under the carved shield motif are the letters "N" and "F".

Will you try this door (turn to 183) or do you prefer to carry on down the passage (turn to 214)?

106

With your final sword swing you cleave the Viperman clean in two and its body falls to the ground. The tail half briefly twitches in its death throes but the head is already dead before it hits the corridor floor.

Do you wish to search the body (turn to 131) or would you prefer to make haste away from here in case more Vipermen are nearby (turn to 125)?

107

The door opens into another torch lit corridor, which you follow for a considerable distance before arriving at a junction. Looking right, you see that the ceiling has fallen in and the way is barred by broken timbers and rubble so you have no choice but to turn left and head west. Turn to 194

108

You tread carefully around the sea of egg-sacks and make your way to the far tunnel, the ceiling of which is considerably higher than those in previous parts of the complex. You walk a short distance before reaching a large door, which has a complex mechanism fitted to its frame linked to four small oval-shaped receptacles. Over the door, in large red letters, are written the words "A FATHER PROTECTS WITH HIS OWN SKIN".

Do you have four gold scales?

If so, turn to 189

If you have three or less, turn to 115

109

You kick the carcass of the dead Acid Crawler aside and make haste up the corridor, which soon arrives at a crossroads. Looking west and east you assume these corridors will eventually return you to a place you have already been, and surmise that your goal lies to the north so you head in that direction. Turn to 215

110

The Snake-Lord lies dead at your feet, viscose green blood gushing out of his multiple wounds. You have avenged your father as well as every other poor victim of his foul pestilence.

However, did you burn the egg-chamber?

If so, turn to 225

If not, turn to 179

111

‘Your first answer will be taken as absolute, so reflect carefully before you utter a single word: What is the fate of those who trespass in the domain of Vortan?’

Do you answer: they will die a thousand agonising deaths? Turn to 160

they will be devoured by the Vipermen? Turn 47

they will never see the sun rise again? Turn to 182

112

You feel your right foot suddenly slip away from under you, but you somehow manage to retain your balance as you edge along the wall. After another ten metres of slow nervous progress a single torch ignites on the wall a little way in front of you. You blink to allow your eyes to adjust to the small amount of light the torch affords, before the corridor is progressively re-lit again as a series of torches ignites in front of you one-by-one.

Looking back you can still only see darkness so you quickly continue along the now illuminated corridor. Turn to 90

113

You find yourself in a very small cupboard of some sort that is just large enough for you to move around in. Arranged along two shelves are various foul-looking organic substances that must be a source of nourishment for the Vipermen. In amongst them all, however, you find a piece of cheese which seems edible.

To eat the cheese, turn to 86

Or to leave this cupboard by its only door, turn to 153

114

The door opens with an audible creak as you turn the handle and push it inwards.

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, turn to 170

If you are Unlucky, turn to 89

115

You realise that the four spaces in the door mechanism are intended to have four scales from Vortan's father's golden skin inserted into them to release the complex lock. With no hope of accessing Vortan's intentionally well-protected inner sanctum you sit on the floor in despair. You may be able to retrace your steps and exit the complex alive, but your mission has failed nonetheless.

116

The woman agrees that travelling as a pair would be safer and introduces herself as Nehemina Fleetfoot, a highly trained Shieldmaiden from Northern Allansia. After exchanging pleasantries and agreeing to her somewhat gung-ho determination to lead the way, you leave the room together and press on up the passageway. Turn to 214

117

You enter the foul-smelling chamber, which is in almost total darkness. As you try to adjust your eyes, you see two points of light appear in the gloom and grow larger as they make their way towards you. As the lights get closer and move into the torchlight now flowing in from the corridor, you become aware of a lumbering human figure making its way towards you awkwardly. Two semi-rotted arms extend their bony deformed hands in your direction as the Zombie tries to grab at your throat. You must fight for your life:

ZOMBIE SKILL 8 STAMINA 7

If you defeat the foul mockery of life, turn to 31

118

The Snake-Lord eyes you suspiciously:

'What could an irrelevant fleshling such as you possibly offer me that would do justice to my omnipotence?' it mocks.

Will you offer it: a yellow jewel? Turn to 76

a winged helmet? Turn to 222

some honey? Turn to 135

a well-worked battle axe? Turn to 60

119

As the droplets hit your helmet, they make a loud fizzing sound and you realise that it is acid that is raining from the ceiling! Thankfully, the gold in your helmet protects you from harm and you make your way safely a short distance before the corridor swings sharply to the right and you see a door in the left-hand wall.

To try this door, turn to 21

To press on further, turn to 188

120

You have only taken a few steps along this corridor when you catch sight of a shimmering outline making its way along the bottom edge of the left-hand wall. Roll two dice and compare the result with your current Skill score. If the result is less than or equal to your current Skill, turn to 25. If the result is greater than your current Skill, turn to 168.

121

You grasp the handle and turn it but the door will not budge. Do you wish to charge the door with your shoulder? Turn to 79. Or will you ignore it and press on? Turn to 34.

122

You pull open the pouch and out falls a small single scale made from pure gold. Turning it over in your palm you see it has the number "40" etched into both sides. You carefully pocket the gold scale. You now leave the bedchamber and press on. Turn to 212.

123

The corridor continues ahead for a short distance before you see another new passage off to the right. To take this new passage, turn to 141. Or to continue north turn to 67.

124

On closer examination, the glow is emanating from a glass vial that literally floats in mid-air at roughly chest height to a human. The source of the glowing is an amber-coloured liquid inside the vial. Will you try to grab the vial? Turn to 70. Or will you ignore it and walk around it? Turn to 133.

125

You take a few more steps before you hear a loud rumbling followed by a terrible crash as the roof collapses in behind you. At least that should prevent any foes from tracking you. You walk on a short distance before the corridor meets a passage coming from the south. You are certain that you must be close to your goal, so you ignore this seemingly retrograde route and continue straight ahead. Turn to 194.

126

Looking up, you are horrified to see four vicious spikes swing down from the roof and, a split second later, you taste blood in your mouth. Looking down you see that you are impaled on the spikes and, struggle as you might, the pain becomes too much to bear as you lose consciousness. You will eventually bleed to death but you will never be aware of this. Your adventure ends here.

127

You open the small door which opens onto another corridor, still lit by torches, but this corridor is only just high enough for you to walk upright along it. If you would rather not enter this low-ceilinged corridor you can continue up the original passageway by turning to 138. Or if you wish to explore this new route, turn to 207

128

You find yourself in a small simple dining room with a wooden table in its centre and three crude wooden chairs set around it. There is no food of any kind on the table, which is not laid for dinner. However, rather more startling is the presence of a completely immobile Viperman sat in one of the chairs. He shows no signs of reacting to your intrusion and seems almost as if in suspended animation. On the far side of the room you can see two further wooden doors, one marked "PANTRY", the other marked "PATROL".

To try to shake the Viperman into responding, turn to 143

To run the inert Viperman through quickly with your sword, turn to 73

To carefully step around the table and go through the door labelled "PANTRY", turn to 223

To carefully make your way to the door marked "PATROL" and go through this exit instead, turn to 107

129

As you turn to run from the doorway, you feel the light becoming warm and your limbs suddenly start to grow heavy. With alarming speed, your arms and legs seize up and a terrifying feeling of inevitability overcomes you. You are quickly paralysed and all you can do is stare fixedly with horror as the light beam incinerates your body from the feet up. Thankfully, you die of shock before the invisible flame consumes your entire body. Your adventure ends here.

130

The corridor continues onwards relentlessly before swinging to the right. Turn to 154

131

A quick search of the Viperman's scaly body produces nothing of use and his short sword is inferior in workmanship to your own, so you decide not to swap weapons. You continue along the corridor, wondering what other perils this place has in store for you. Turn to 125

132

The cheese is a little stale, but is surprisingly tasty. Restore 2 Stamina points for eating this welcome morsel. Now you leave the pantry and take the door beside it marked "PATROL". Turn to 107

133

The landing soon ends at another stone staircase which leads back down again. You follow the steps and find yourself in another well-lit corridor. Turn to 155

134

Will you cross by stepping on only the red flagstones (turn to 63), only the black flagstones (turn to 199), by alternating colours beginning with black (turn to 92), or by alternating colours beginning with red (turn to 16)?

135

‘So you found my pet’s food. How wonderfully worthy of you. And how hilariously pointless you are to think I would be impressed by theft. Prepare to die. The battle will be short but your pathetic attempts at vanquishing me will provide me with brief entertainment.’

Do you have a battle axe?

If so, turn to 60

Otherwise, turn to 218

136

You enter the room and are amazed to see furniture flying around in every direction whilst an evil laughter whistles around your head. The room is bitterly cold and you can see your breath before you as the furniture continues to hurtle dangerously about the room.

Do you have a Genie in a bottle?

If so, turn to 211

If not, turn to 146

137

You invert the bottle and carefully agitate it to dislodge the contents. The blue liquid mist slowly emerges from the vessel and you are surprised to see it forming into a large blue humanoid shape which grows and expands until it stands a full six feet in height. You have released a Genie.

‘Free after so long’, it gleefully says in an oddly shrill voice that belies its size. It looks directly at you and, smiling sweetly, it continues:

‘Tradition has it that I must show gratitude to my liberator and be bound to grant you one wish. I can bestow upon you any one of power, fortune, or protection. Choose wisely as I am free to depart once this contract is fulfilled.’

What will you choose: power? Turn to 22

fortune? Turn to 191

protection? Turn to 54

138

Shortly after the doorway, the passage swings to the left and leads off north. You soon see another door set into the left-hand wall. An image of a puzzle box is carved into the wood. If you wish to enter this room, turn to 3. To press on, turn to 84

139

The passage northwards continues for only a few more metres before you see an old-looking door in greyed wood with a rusted handle that suggests it has not seen any use (or care) for quite some time. If you wish to attempt to turn the handle turn to 8. Or if you do not want to risk facing whatever has probably been left there this long for a reason, turn to 68 to press on up the corridor.

140

You are relieved when you finally deal the deathblow to the unsettlingly skilful Shieldmaiden, but you cannot help feeling that she probably meant you no harm. Still, it is never easy to know who to trust in unfamiliar surroundings and you convince yourself that you have acted appropriately.

Will you now search the body (turn to 96) or leave the otherwise empty room (turn to 214)?

141

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, turn to 120

If you are Unlucky, turn to 221

142

Without a second thought, you retreat from the room and pull the ancient door shut. Thankfully, it closes rather more easily than it opened. You listen to see if there are any signs that the Spider-Monkey may be attempting to open the door from the inside, but there are none and you can safely continue up the corridor having avoided potentially falling foul of the hideous creature. Turn to 68

143

You take hold of the Viperman, and are surprised at how rough and dry its scaly skin feels. You shake it vigorously, but there is no response at all. This Viperman is evidently stuffed, possibly left here as a deterrent to prevent unwanted visitors to this part of the complex.

Not wishing to waste any more time on this simplistic decoy, will you now go through the door labelled "PANTRY" (turn to 223) or the door labelled "PATROL" (turn to 107)?

144

You press on further along the corridor and soon notice a small door in the right-hand wall, which is just big enough for you to try to pass through should you wish to open it.

If you want to try opening the small door, turn to 127

Or to press on further, turn to 138

145

You rummage through the furry loincloth worn by the Troll and your hand touches something small and solid. To withdraw the object and examine it, turn to 104. Or to ignore it and simply press on, turn to 125

146

The ferocity of the cold wind that whips the furniture about grows considerably and you are struck hard in the chest by a flailing wooden chair leg: lose 3 Stamina points. Realising that it would be unsafe to stay in the room any longer, you back out into the corridor and close the door quickly. Listening at the door you hear the sound of smashing wood and realise that you may have escaped just in time. Turn to 95

147

You feel about in your backpack for the rope, which you unravel and blindly throw an end of it upwards into the darkness. To your surprise, the rope stops in mid-air and stiffens. You yank it a couple of times to test its integrity and it appears to be solid enough to attempt to climb up, as if it were a snake-charmer's mysterious rope. Will you climb the rope? Turn to 23
Or do you not wish to risk this? Turn to 40

148

The paper is brittle with age but you manage to unfold it carefully. It appears to contain a spell of some sort and is signed-off with the letter "N". Will you try reading the words aloud? Turn to 210
Will you fold it up and put it in your pack? Turn to 18
Or will you discard it and leave the room? Turn to 39

149

A recce around the chamber shows up another outline of a rock doorway in the far wall. Will you head for this exit? Turn to 97
Or will you instead try touching the rock formation? Turn to 217

150

You gulp down the contents of the vial and you feel yourself being raised upwards. You ascend a considerable distance before coming to land on a ledge. You look onward and see a large elaborate room in front of you. You enter the room. Turn to 72

151

With no hope of arresting your fall, you tumble endlessly through the void. You have failed in your quest and Vortan's penultimate defence mechanism has claimed another victim.

152

You feel your right foot suddenly slip away from under you and you are unable to react quick enough to arrest your fall as you tumble downwards. However, your fall is suddenly broken as you hit a hard stone floor, spraining your ankle in the process. Lose 3 Stamina points and 1 Skill point for falling into a Pitfall Trap. Roll two dice and compare the result to your current Skill score: If the result is less than or equal to your current Skill, turn to 209. If the result is greater than your current Skill, turn to 46

153

The door opens onto a small simple dining room with a wooden table in its centre and three crude wooden chairs set around it. There is no food of any kind on the table, which is not laid for dinner. However, rather more startling is the presence of a completely immobile Viperman sat in one of the chairs. He shows no signs of reacting to your intrusion and seems almost as if in suspended animation. On the far side of the room you can see two further wooden doors, one marked "PANTRY", the other marked "PATROL". You have evidently just emerged from the pantry.

To try to shake the Viperman into responding, turn to 143

To run the inert Viperman through quickly with your sword, turn to 73

To carefully make your way to the door marked "PATROL" and go through this exit instead, turn to 107

154

You walk for a considerable distance before the corridor takes a sharp turn left. Turn to 19

155

The corridor continues another twenty metres before swinging sharply to the left. You clearly hear something headed in your direction and you stand *en garde* in wait to see what or who it is that approaches.

Roll one dice:

if you roll 1 or 2, turn to 30

if you roll 3 or 4, turn to 10

if you roll 5 or 6, turn to 205

156

You seize the opportunity to land a blow on the sleeping Viperman whose eyes flick open as he winces with pain. You must fight the Viperman, but reduce his starting Stamina by 3 points for the initial wound you have inflicted on him. Turn to 65

157

With a loud thud, the Troll collapses onto its knees with your final stinging blow. His torso and head loll forward and blood streams from his mouth onto the floor. You kick him with your boot to make sure he is quite dead and are pleased to see there is no further movement from him.

To search his body, turn to 145

Otherwise, to make haste along the corridor, turn to 125

158

The huge creature is a Geodemon, the product of an ancient experiment to fuse the power of the Underworld with the physical strength of rock itself.

Do you have a yellow jewel?

If so, turn to 87

Otherwise, turn to 38

159

The door mechanism begins to move into life. A sound of joints that have remained motionless for decades grinds and scrapes as the mechanism shifts and slides in convoluted directions. You begin to worry that perhaps the door will never open when it suddenly frees itself from its frame and, with one final grinding noise, swings inwards revealing a tiny chamber. Looking around you can see no apparent exit, although the ceiling appears to extend endlessly upwards.

You come to the conclusion that the only way forward must be upwards, but an examination of the walls shows them to be completely smooth and sheer, giving no scope for hand or footholds for climbing.

Do you possess a winged helmet?

If so, turn to 56

Alternatively, do you have a vial of liquid with the word "UP" engraved on it?

If so, turn to 150

If you have neither of these items, turn to 216

160

'Fool,' booms the voice, and you realise with horror that you have given the wrong answer. You feel the light becoming warm and your limbs suddenly start to grow heavy. With alarming speed, your arms and legs seize up and a terrifying feeling of inevitability overcomes you. You are quickly paralysed and all you can do is stare fixedly with horror as the light beam incinerates your body from the feet up. Mercifully, you die of shock before the invisible flame consumes your entire body. Your adventure ends here.

161

You retrieve the object from the dust that surrounds it and see that it is a small golden scale. You clean the dust from both sides and notice the number "91" stamped on one face. You may take this with you if you wish.

You must now return to the far side of the room to reach the door.

To return to the door by retracing your path across the flagstones in reverse order to how you arrived, turn to 100

Or to return to the door by retracing your path using the same order of colours as before, turn to 41

162

The vile Spider-Monkey is almost three metres across, its body being that of a Giant Spider, but covered with dense black-brown fur. Its head, however, is that of a particularly ugly Monkey with large fangs, insanely staring eyes, and droplets of drool dripping down the sides of its mouth – it is clearly very hungry! You must fight to avoid becoming the meal it has waited a long time for:

SPIDER-MONKEY SKILL 10 STAMINA 8

The first time the Spider-Monkey wins an Attack Round, you must roll one dice. If you roll 1-5 continue the combat as normal, but if you roll a 6 you are becoming entwined in the sticky silken web and must fight the remaining combat with a -1 penalty to your Skill. Every subsequent Attack Round that the Spider-Monkey wins, you must roll one dice again – should you roll another 6 you become irretrievably tangled in the webbing, can no longer move, and will eventually become the creature's next meal (your adventure ends here.)

If you defeat the Spider-Monkey, turn to 32

163

You step into another new corridor which is well-lit by burning torches mounted on the wall. After a short walk, you reach a t-junction. Looking right, you see that the ceiling has fallen in and the way is barred by broken timbers and rubble so you have no choice but to turn left and head west. Turn to 194

164

You tell the woman about your past and relate what has brought you to be searching these corridors. To your pleasant surprise she replies that she is here for exactly the same purpose, but that she has only explored the very earliest section of the underground complex so far, not wishing to penetrate any deeper without first resting to recoup some lost strength from the desert trek and to focus her mind for the task ahead.

Will you suggest that she travel with you? Turn to 116

Or say that you must be pressing on alone immediately? Turn to 17

165

You follow the new passage to the right and are pleased to see that the volume of light has increased again as there are far more torches mounted along the walls of this section. This comforts you a little as you begin to feel you may be going in the correct direction. However, you quickly begin to feel a tingling sensation in your feet. Do you wish to press on (turn to 98) or would you rather return to the northerly passage (turn to 15)?

166

'No sweets? Then you are no friend to me and must be my enemy,' it cries and a bizarre transformation takes place before your eyes. The creature's body grows damp and shiny as it slides from your hand and falls to the floor. Within a matter of seconds, it has expanded and grown to three times its size and its skin has become green and postulated. Huge fangs appear from within its mouth and its eyes burn a fierce red colour.

It is not wise to offend a Brownling as they struggle to control their rage which, once unleashed, causes them to assume the form of the evil side of their personalities: the vile and vicious Boggards!

You prepare to defend yourself as the enraged Boggard slashes at you with its long talons:

BOGGARD SKILL 9 STAMINA 5

If you win, turn to 71

167

You very sheepishly step from one flagstone to another, taking care to alternate between the two colours.

After traversing a further six flagstones ending in a black stone, you are relieved to safely reach the far end of the room where the mounted wooden urn stands before you. Looking inside the urn, you can see a tiny shining object at the bottom amongst some dust.

To reach in and take the shiny object, turn to 161

Or to return to the door by retracing your path across the flagstones in reverse order to how you arrived, turn to 100

Or to return to the door by retracing your path using the same order of colours as before, turn to 41

168

You reach out to attempt to grab the vague shape and you feel a sharp pain in your left forefinger. As you withdraw your hand, you see three tiny pricks in your skin and a small amount of blood has been drawn. Lose 1 Stamina point as the shimmering outline now in your grip begins to grow solid. Turn to 224

169

You realise that Vortan is trying to protect his tail which contains a barbed stinger and, with a deft blow of the axe, you manage to sever the appendage. Vortan recoils in pain and then prepares to strike with an agonised rage. Turn to 49

170

In spite of the creaking of the door, whatever is making the snoring sound does not appear to be roused and you find yourself in a small and very chaotic bedchamber. Two makeshift wooden bunks stand to either side of the room whilst the floor is strewn with straw and what appear to be glistening semi-transparent coils of shed skin. In one of the bunks a Viperman lies sleeping, one of Vortan's foul offspring no doubt.

Will you carefully back out of the room, closing the door silently behind you? Turn to 212

Will you try to search the room without waking the Viperman? Turn to 13

Or will you attack the prostrate Viperman? Turn to 156

171

You reach a door, which has the word "VITTELS" burned into the wood of the frame.

If you wish to open the door, turn to 55

Or if you prefer to head back to the junction and take the right-hand fork and head up the stairs, turn to 12

172

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, turn to 27

If you are Unlucky, turn to 126

173

With a sharp twist the stopper comes free from the bottle and, looking inside, you see a swirling blue liquid mist. No scent at all comes from the curious contents.

Will you drink the contents? Turn to 29

Or will you try to pour a small amount of it onto the table first as a precautionary measure? Turn to 137

174

As unpleasant an experience as it is, you prod and poke the dead creature and are surprised to see that it wears a yellow jewel on a thin chain around its neck. You can take this if you wish before leaving this room and pressing on up the corridor. Turn to 68

175

As the droplets hit your head, they make a loud fizzing sound and you feel your scalp burning - it is acid that is raining from the ceiling! Lose 2 Stamina points for the pain. In spite of the danger, you make your way a short distance before the acid downpour ceases as the corridor swings sharply to the right and you see a door in the left-hand wall.

To try this door, turn to 21

To press on further, turn to 188

176

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, turn to 112

If you are Unlucky, turn to 152

177

A search of the room proves unpleasant as you rifle through layers of shed Viperman skin and arcs of splattered green serpentine blood from your combat. Your search ultimately proves fruitless, but you have at least dispensed with three of Vortan's foul brood. You leave the room. Turn to 181

178

The dust is starting to affect you adversely. Lose 2 Stamina points and 1 Skill for the disorienting effects of the ages-old dust in the air. Eventually the corridor swings right and heads north. After a short distance you reach another door, this time in the left-hand wall. The door is a shimmering white metal colour and seems so new that it appears at odds with the otherwise antique nature of this corridor.

Will you try this door? Turn to 200

Or would you rather press on? Turn to 103

179

Vortan and his Queen may be dead, but you suddenly realise that his vile progeny are still living. You hear a terrifyingly loud slithering sound and, turning around, you are faced with an innumerable horde of tiny Viperman hatchlings. They bare sharp fangs and approach you en masse. You might be able to despatch a few, but it will not be long before they overcome you due to sheer weight of numbers. You came so far, but you have not ended Vortan's foul legacy by any stretch of the imagination. Perhaps one day another may come along who will have the foresight to destroy the spawning chamber of the Vipermen, something which you have failed to do!

180

The plaque is so highly polished that you can almost see your own reflection in its surface. Despite the distracting nature of the mirrored metal you can clearly see, in black lettering, the following words:

5 TIMES 10 TO COME BACK AGAIN

You memorise the cryptic message before pressing on. Turn to 130

181

You walk further along the passage and you are suddenly alarmed by a creaking and grinding of what sounds like gears.

Is Nehemina the Shieldmaiden with you?

If so, turn to 78

If not, turn to 172

182

'Fool,' booms the voice, and you realise with horror that you have given the wrong answer. You feel the light becoming warm and your limbs suddenly start to grow heavy. With alarming speed, your arms and legs seize up and a terrifying feeling of inevitability overcomes you. You are quickly paralysed and all you can do is stare fixedly with horror as the light beam incinerates your body from the feet up. Mercifully, you die of shock before the invisible flame consumes your entire body. Your adventure ends here.

183

You grip the door's steel handle and it turns with a small amount of force. Inside the room a female figure dressed in the same leather armour that you wear sits cross-legged on the floor in a meditative pose. As you enter, she looks up and smiles slyly at you: 'Well, well, company,' she says.

If you wish to charge at her with your sword drawn, turn to 101

Or to speak to her, turn to 57

Otherwise, to leave this room, turn to 214

184

You find yourself in a room with a black-and-red chequerboard floor made from marble flagstones. On the far wall is a wooden urn mounted on a red sandstone pedestal.

If you wish to attempt to cross the room to investigate the urn, turn to 134

Or to leave this room by a door just behind you, turn to 84

185

'You are most prudent, but your ability must be put to the test. Answer my question correctly and win the right to leave this room. Fail this test and you will prove that you are not worthy of having even got this far.'

Roll one dice:

If you roll 1 or 2, turn to 93

If you roll 3 or 4, turn to 111

If you roll 5 or 6, turn to 192

186

You grip the handle and it does indeed turn very smoothly with a satisfying clicking sound. The door opens a crack and a repugnant foetid odour hits your nostrils. You struggle not to vomit and compose yourself as the door opens and the foul internal air mingles with the comparatively bearable dusty air of the corridor.

Will you enter the room? Turn to 117

Or do you think better of this course of action and would rather continue up the passage?

Turn to 39

187

It is not long before you see a small shiny metal plaque fitted to the left side of the wall at head height. To investigate this turn to 180. To ignore it and keep walking turn to 130

188

After a short distance, the corridor reaches a crossroads. Looking south you can see a path that you left earlier, so you decide that your options are either north (turn to 67) or straight on in an easterly direction (turn to 141)

189

You carefully take the four gold scales from your backpack and insert them into the four empty sections of the door mechanism.

Add the four numbers marked on the scales together and turn to the corresponding paragraph now.

If the section you reach makes no sense you have no hope of accessing Vortan's intentionally well-protected inner sanctum and you sit on the floor in despair. You may be able to retrace your steps and exit the complex alive, but your mission has failed nonetheless.

190

You approach the angled door, which has a strange circular symbol emblazoned on it in bronze. Wrapped around a circle is a metal snake motif in black obsidian. In the centre of the symbol is a question mark applied in red paint.

Will you try the door? Turn to 82

Or will you ignore it and follow the corridor onwards? Turn to 26

191

The Genie blinks and disappears into thin air. An overall feeling of good cheer courses through your body and you suddenly begin to think that nothing could possibly go wrong for you on your quest. From now on, whenever you are asked to *Test Your Luck* you may reduce the number rolled by 2. In addition, you can increase your current and *Initial Luck* by 1 point.

Feeling very pleased with such good fortune so early in your quest, you leave the room and set off up the corridor with renewed confidence. Turn to 99

192

'Your first answer will be taken as absolute, so reflect carefully before you utter a single word: What decodes the mechanism to enter the innermost sanctum of Vortan?'

Do you answer: a key forged from Dwarven iron? Turn to 182

the patterned skin of Vortan's firstborn? Turn 160

the four golden scales shed by Vortan's father? Turn to 47

193

The Viperman drops to the floor in a dishevelled heap of coils. You kick the body to one side and it tumbles into what may be its own previously shed skin. Saying to yourself that you have struck the first blow against Vortan's menace you smile with satisfaction.

You may now either search the room (turn to 83) or leave it (turn to 212)

194

You sense that you are close to finding Vortan's inner lair and you walk briskly along the corridor. Shortly, you see a door in the right-hand wall made from a very solid piece of oak.

Will you try the door (turn to 121) or walk on down the passage (turn to 34)?

195

You take a long slug of the liquid and nothing happens so you pour the entire contents of the vial down your throat. You feel no sensations of any kind other than a minor disgust at the spilled blood on the floor caused by your combat.

Unfortunately, you have consumed a Potion of Cowardice that the Shieldmaiden intentionally carried with her to get one final revenge on any foe that should kill her. Lose 2 Skill points permanently (ie deduct 2 from your current and *Initial* Skill scores) and deduct 1 point from your current Luck for killing a good person who was a potential ally. You now leave the room by turning to 214

196

You find yourself in a large room, the floor of which is strewn with various bones, broken weapons, and straw. As you survey the scene in the room, a huge Ogre emerges from behind an open door and slams the door shut, barring your escape. It raises a large stone club aloft and you realise that you must prepare to defend yourself:

OGRE SKILL 9 STAMINA 9

If you defeat the Ogre, turn to 11

197

The corridor continues for some fifty metres before swinging sharply to the right in a northerly direction. After a short distance you reach a wooden door in the left-hand wall. Listening at the door you hear nothing.

Will you open the door (turn to 69) or press on (turn to 99)?

198

As you open the door an eerie chill wind whispers against your face and ears. Are you sure you wish to enter this room? If so, turn to 136. Or to close the door and press on, turn to 95

199

You carefully place your foot on a black flagstone and you are immediately consumed by a jet of flame which shoots up from the flagstone itself. Your adventure ends here.

200

As you open the door, you are aware of a bright white shaft of light which forms around you, and you feel yourself being guided into the room. A powerful booming voice echoes in your head:

‘Do not try to resist me. Only the foolhardy would defy my all-pervading power.’
Will you try to free yourself from the light and run on up the corridor (turn to 129) or will you allow yourself to be led into the room by this mysterious influence (turn to 6)?

201

Nehemina fells the second of her two foes just as you deal the death blow to yours. You glance at each other, nodding in mutual acknowledgement of your collective swordsmanship. Turn to 177

202

You make your way slowly back to the north-south corridor and are surprised to see the wall-mounted torches spontaneously re-ignited. You blink to try to shield your eyes, but the sudden brightness has permanently damaged your vision. Lose 2 Skill points and 1 Luck point. Now turn to 212

203

The door opens into a large room with a low table and four cushions in its centre. Glistening fronds of shed skin lie about the floor and various rusting weapons are mounted around the walls. As you enter, three visages turn to face you with forked tongues whipping in and out of their mouths violently. The three Vipermen have enough time to grab the nearest swords from the wall before their red and black striped scaly bodies uncoil from where they sit and they glide rapidly towards you.

If you are alone, turn to 80

If Nehemina the Shieldmaiden is with you, turn to 36

204

You tug at the yellowed object and it comes free from the old leather boot with ease. As you draw it towards you, you see that it is a rolled-up parchment.

Do you wish to unfold the parchment? Turn to 148

Or will you simply put it in your pocket? Turn to 18

Or do you discard it and return to the corridor? Turn to 39

205

A curious clinking sound echoes around the walls of the corridor as two Skeletons come into view making their animated way towards you. Their bones are a bleached white as if freshly cleaned and their jaws open and close as if they are somehow smiling at having found fresh prey. You have no choice but to fight these undead, which are armed with surprisingly new-looking rapiers. The corridor is relatively narrow at this point meaning you may fight the Skeletons one at a time:

FIRST SKELETON SKILL 7 STAMINA 5
SECOND SKELETON SKILL 6 STAMINA 6

If you destroy these mindless forms, turn to 59

206

You remove a burning torch from its wall mounting and throw it amongst the egg-sacks which quickly begin to burn.

Test Your Luck

If you are Lucky, turn to 24

If you are Unlucky, turn to 75

207

You step into the restrictive corridor and become suddenly aware that it seems to curve gently around to the left in a large arc. You walk some considerable distance before a distinct feeling of gloom overcomes you and you get the impression that this corridor may have been installed specifically to keep you from finding something important. In fact, your unhappy condition is caused by your having just walked directly through the spectral form of a Despair Wraith that has subliminally told you that you have taken a wrong turning simply to allow it to feed off your mental woe. Lose 1 Skill and 2 Luck from both your current and *Initial* scores as few can ever fully recuperate from a Despair Wraith's demoralising effects.

Eventually the curving passage ends at a door, which opens onto the familiar sight of the original corridor you left to take this miserable detour. Turn to 84

208

With some effort you push the rock door inwards and are surprised to see a huge round cavern hewn into solid rock of the same type as the door. Stalactites hang in tendrils from the high ceiling and calcified formations make disturbing shapes about the floor. As you take in your unexpected surroundings, your eyes fall on a particularly large formation rising from the ground just to the left of the entrance.

To investigate the formation further, turn to 20, or to leave the rock chamber and return to the junction and head east instead, turn to 141

209

As luck would have it, your hand brushes over a solid object, which you grasp and pull towards you. You run your hands over the object, which has the shape of a helmet with two protuberances sticking out of its top. Will you try putting the helmet on (turn to 4) or will you discard it (turn to 46)?

210

As you read the words aloud you are amazed to see a large and very well-worked battle axe appear and hang suspended in the air in front of you. The Spell of Revelation that you have just read out has made it manifest itself to you.

To reach for the axe, turn to 64

Otherwise there is nothing else this room can offer, so you leave by turning to 39

211

Remembering the cryptic message on the Genie's bottle, you produce the object from your backpack and notice that the lettering on the glass has changed to one word:

FREEDOM!

Will you open the bottle? Turn to 53

Or will you try to think of another course of action? Turn to 146

212

The corridor now branches in two directions. To continue north turn to 187, or to take a side passage to the east turn to 33

213

Looking warily about you as you step away beyond the position where the Spike Trap swung from the ceiling, you follow the corridor around to the left and eventually come to a t-junction. The corridor heads away straight onwards in a westerly direction, which you can see soon turns southwards, so you decide against this route as it appears to eventually lead back towards the entrance. Instead, you opt for a right turn which heads north and deeper into the bowels of Vortan's underground complex. However, before you set off in this direction you see a small alcove in the wall with a natural bowl eroded into the stone itself containing a red blood-like liquid.

Would you like to try drinking some? If so, turn to 61

Or if you would prefer to dip your finger in it turn to 102

Alternatively, you can just press on without any further ado (Turn to 139)

214

You continue along the corridor until it eventually swings hard to the left in a northerly direction and, after some ten or so metres, you reach another door in the right-hand wall which has the word "GUARDROOM" scrawled on it in white chalk.

If you wish to enter this room, turn to 203

Otherwise, you continue further up the corridor (turn to 181)

215

You head along a short corridor which grows gradually wider until it eventually opens out onto a vast octagonal chamber, the roof of which is lined with glowing pods which take their light from torches arranged neatly around the walls. Positioned along the floor in neat rows are hundreds of egg sacks, each containing the outline of a tiny Viperman foetus. Coiled around the sacks is the massive shape of a snake, its wide body a dull green in colour. The creature begins to rise in front of you. Turn to 35

216

With no hope of accessing Vortan's intentionally well-protected inner sanctum you sit on the floor in despair. You may be able to retrace your steps and exit the complex alive, but your mission has failed nonetheless.

217

The moment your hand touches the lighter rock, you feel a jolt shoot up your arm and into your neck, which leaves you stunned for a moment. But, that moment is all that is needed for the calcifying material of the Geodemon you have touched to take possession of your body. In a blink of an eye, your entire body is turned to stone, the same light stone as the large formation that you touched. You are now a fused part of the monstrous Geodemon and are damned to remain so forever. Your adventure ends here.

218

Vortan slithers towards you and poises to strike with his long vicious fangs. Before you fight Vortan, if you have a vial of clear liquid which you took from the body of a dead Shieldmaiden and wish to try drinking it, turn to 5. Otherwise, if you do not have this, or do not wish to drink it, this is the moment you have lived for:

VORTAN SKILL 13 STAMINA 25

After each Attack Round that Vortan wins, roll one dice. If you roll a 1 you are poisoned by his envenomed fangs for an additional 1 point of Stamina loss. If you roll a 6 he succeeds in striking you with the barbed stinger in the tip of his swinging tail for an additional 2 points of Stamina damage.

If you somehow defeat the Snake-Lord, turn to 110

219

Turn to 199

220

The door splinters as your shoulder makes contact with it and you fall head-first into a bottomless pit.

Do you have a winged helmet?

If so, turn to 44

If not, turn to 151

221

You have only taken a few steps along this corridor when you feel your legs suddenly pulled away from under you by an unseen force and you fall to the floor face-first. Lose 2 Stamina points. To add insult to injury, whatever it was that tripped you has slipped a tiny hand into your backpack and stolen an item from you. If you have any of the following, choose one of them to remove from your *Adventure Sheet*: a gold scale, a jar of honey, a bottle labelled “UP”, a Genie in a bottle, a piece of parchment. If you do not have any of these items, lose an additional 1 Stamina point as the invisible villain stabs you in the thigh with a tiny but sharp blade in frustration at not being able to find anything that is small enough for it to carry.

You stand and brush yourself down. You grasp about to see if you can find the culprit but all you touch is a few cobwebs along the lower edge of the wall. Lose 1 Luck point. Disappointed, you press on along the passage. Turn to 144

222

‘An interesting if worthless trinket. You insult me by suggesting I can be bought so basely. Prepare to die. The battle will be short but your pathetic attempts at vanquishing me will provide me with brief entertainment.’

Do you have a battle axe?

If so, turn to 60

Otherwise, turn to 218

223

The pantry is very small, but just large enough for you to step into. Arranged along two shelves are various foul-looking organic substances that must be a source of nourishment for the Vipermen. In amongst them all, however, you find a piece of cheese which seems edible.

To eat the cheese, turn to 132

To leave the pantry and try the other door marked “PATROL”, turn to 107

224

A tiny humanoid with an oversized head is now struggling to free itself from your grip. It looks at you quizzically, appears to settle down as if it realises you are not whatever foe it is normally accustomed to defending itself against, and says, in a comedically high-pitched voice:

‘Sweets for friend?’

If you have any honey, you can offer it to the tiny creature (turn to 43)

Otherwise, if you do not have any honey, or do not wish to offer the tiny creature this item, turn to 166

225

With Vortan, his Queen, and his fresh progeny all dead there is no further danger of Vortan’s reign of terror over your people continuing. His vile brood is destroyed and any Vipermen still living in the desert will soon perish as the final few are hunted down and slaughtered without further fear of retribution. Your mission ends in glorious victory.