

PRICE
£1.50

QUAD

ISSUE 39
(1999/2)



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EDITORIAL

Doh! Failed! Didn't get QUAD out when I said I would. Oh well things can only get better.

Some of you might notice a strange and unusual write up in this issue of QUAD, its from a monster, which shows the depths of depravity that this Editor will go to get stuff into each issue.

And so that I can get all the lovely inputs from all of you I have gone and got a new PC at home and what's more got connected. Times must be really bad. The address is in the next column so send your inputs there, and do it now or I'll send the Hordelings round.

**Regards
Paul**

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1999 Adventure Prices

Heroquest usually run the following length adventures with the relevant prices -

Adventure length	Payment 8 Days in Advance	Payment Not in Advance
8 hour	£20	£25
Theme	£40	£50
36 hour	£60	£75

Other adventures are priced individually, such as Heroquests etc
Membership for 1999 is 30 pounds and expires on 31-12-1999

Note the above price is only applicable to members, non-members pay an additional 20% on top of these prices.

The charge for cancellation is 50 % if cancelling within 7 days of the event

Youth Hostels - there is a £7.50 a night charge where youth hostels are used, from October - March. From April - September this charge will increase as hostels, etc, cost more to rent. SFB to confirm at each adventure.

Monstering

The following credits are available (cumulative) for Monstering

8 hour	£4
36 hour	£10
72 hour	£20

Themes - you can monster the Saturday daytime of a theme and play in the evenings for half the normal price and your character will get half the points for the theme (15)

CONTRIBUTIONS

AKA HOW TO GET SOMETHING
PRINTED IN QUAD

The best and only way to get your submissions printed in QUAD is to send them to me in the first place. If the material is suitable then it will be used, so send me anything and everything that you can. **I want write-ups of quests, notices, adverts, letters and plenty of scandal.**

Please send all material to

**QUAD
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or QUADeditor@aol.com

The policy of awarding articles of any substance with a five gest reward will continue, whether the article is published or not. I will endeavour to make these payments as speedy as possible. An SAE guarantees a swift response and the return of any valued material where appropriate.

QUAD should be published for each of the Theme Weekends in 1998 and the deadline for material to be included is therefore 7 days before the start of the theme. Obviously material on floppy disk is preferred as I am not a good typist and the QUAD will be processed more quickly.

RIGHT TO REPLY

If there is anything that you would like to take issue with in this edition of QUAD then please write to the above address. I want any comments, criticisms, queries, questions and suggestions.

The Free Towers Pact Meeting

We had been asked to help host a meeting of the Free Towers' Pact, to determine if the pact should continue now that the Dymwan threat had been removed. After the initial meeting it was agreed that the representatives would reconvene the following evening, and we were assigned various tasks to keep us occupied for the intervening day.

Our patrol was assigned to seek out another pathfinder, stationed a few miles from the tower, and receive further orders from him. The patrol was formed from the following: A pathfinder, a yellow wizard, a Seer, a Michelinier, a healer, and six warriors. We met the pathfinder, and he told us that there was a problem with a large group of bandits in the area that had been attacking FTP representatives. We should seek them out and "deter" them. So we set out on a sweep of the area they were known to frequent.

We met a group of four bandits, including a mage, but they were quickly despatched. Clearly these were not the tough group we were looking for, so we moved on. We found a hidden path, and, suspecting it might lead to their camp, we followed it. It actually cut through some woods that would have otherwise taken a long time to circumvent. As such we guessed it was used by the bandits to move from their hunting grounds to their base area, which would normally have been considered too far away.

We met some bandit guards, who challenged and then attacked us. They proved quite tough and it was to be a hard fight before we emerged victorious. During the fight, our warrior line (including the Michelinier) stood firm, supported by the healer, and it looked like a long battle. The turning point came when their front line broke after a couple of well placed Terrors and Shocking Grasps, and the pathfinder managed to drop the opposing healer at the back of their group. The last guards were quickly hunted down.

One of the warriors needed elixiring, and the Michelinier needed to meditate. So we rested whilst the healer cast a Total Heal, and the meditate was performed. The rest of us discussed the mission. We decided that this was just a guard detail, and the main force, which was therefore presumably even tougher, was still to be found. We also decided it could not be far away, as the guards were stationed here. We agreed to press on after preparing. The seer invoked her Sphere and the wizard cast a Radial Static Field to protect us in case there was another mage with the main group, and we set off.

We caught the bandits, lounging about and apparently unprepared. Despite this they seemed remarkably able to defend themselves. Multiple vocal length high level spells and ritual invocations were targeted upon us, and without the Static Field and the fast actions of both the Healer in Powergifting and the Michelinier in removing the Mass Curse, there would have been a lot of deaths.

As it was we struggled through the fight, needing only a couple of elixirs at the end. Worse than this though, by far, was another cost: the Michelinier, who had been casting throughout the fight in an attempt to stem the torrent of evil invocations being hurled at us, had dramatically overspent his power. The Good Sphere had sustained him throughout the fight, but his Talisman, which had tried to cope with channelling the power being drawn directly from the Sphere, was shattered. I doubt our word will count for much, but if his superiors in the sect read this, we hold the actions of Zilvan in the highest regard and hope that you will consider supporting him in the replacement of his Talisman.

Having dealt with the bandits, we rested and prepared to return to the meeting. On our return we encountered a few of stragglers from the bandit group, but they soon ran when we killed one of their number. The return to the meeting after that proved uneventful.

Anon.

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SHITTY'S BIT

Welcome to Quad 39.

thanks again to Paul Evans and all the contributors - keep the articles rolling in.

All articles of 1 page or longer will receive 5 gests payment.

Any article less than a page will receive 1 - 4 gests, determined by the editor.

Most of the weekends for the rest of 1999 are now being booked, but if you wish to book others do not hesitate to contact me. We are particularly looking for monsters for the low level 5 day in May and the 4 adventures in a row in June .

Mark Roberts (SFB)

Heroquest is run primarily by Mark Roberts and any questions bookings letters etc should be sent to

**Heroquest
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Gloucester
GL4 3JJ**

Please remember to include a stamped addressed envelope with all letters, this will ensure a prompt reply. I can also be reached on the **phone 01452 546871**.

Office hours are:

Monday		5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Tuesday	12 p.m. - 2 p.m.	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Wednesday	12 p.m. - 2 p.m.	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Thursday	12 p.m. - 2 p.m.	5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Quad - Back Issues

We still have copies of quad 18 -39 inclusive. These are available at £1.00 each, bartering is accepted (I need potion and treasure phys reps as always). Any members from 1998 who do not have any quads 32 - 37, send me an A4 sae and I will send the relevant issues.

T-shirts

We also have some long sleeve and short sleeve Heroquest shirts for sale in various colours, price £10.00 and £7.50 respectively. Also available in white for only £2.50.

SHABBI TAT

*Now selling leather belt pouches, leather potion pouches
(complete with potion bottles),
cloth drawstring pouches etc.*

Basic costuming also undertaken - tunics, cloaks etc.

Contact shabbitat@ogre.demon.co.uk (01761 233207)

To Save A Soul On The Plane Of Sleepless Dead

After arriving on Orin Rakatha, about a year ago I have sought and found the Sorcerer and Arch Mage, Quicksilver, proclaimed king of the surviving Ice Elves. In recent months Quicksilver had professed a desire to find more of his race and unite the ice Elven nations, in order to fulfil what he believed was his fathers dying wish. To this end he informed me he would search for the spirits of the shattered race upon the realm of sleepless dead and requested that I accompanied him.

When I arrived at the designated area I met with the others that had agreed to meet with Quicksilver to perform this task. This group comprised of a large contingent of half orcs (large referring to their size and strength as opposed to numbers) namely Scud, Slimey Git, Barf , High Priest Onyx of the Micheliners and a strange female half orc claiming to be a boot cleaner who used a remarkable amount of magic, Matilda (who was far less burly than the others). Also present were Quicksilver, Myrkel, Feynar, Quai, Merlin and the ever smiling Sister Mary. When our guide, a white retreat Alchemist named Darien, arrived I noticed a problem amongst the group. It appeared that the others believed that we would be searching for the spirit of the recently departed High Priest of the Humacti sect Johann, this did not correlate with the information Quicksilver had given me. With Merlin spending a great deal of time and effort placing large, long duration blesses on all of us we were ready to enter the Plane of Sleepless Dead.

Upon entering the plane Quicksilver told me to search for a sign, that would be sent by Lord Mian of Wolfhold, to direct us to his goal. This tormented me as it seemed wrong that Quicksilver should condone the use of necromancy, a thing he has fought against with body, soul and mind, it was the first sign of Quicksilver's growing obsession with reuniting his race. Before we had travelled far we were assailed by seven undead spirits, a mixed bunch of warrior-ghouls and warrior-zombies. These we defeated easily despite Myrkels continual attempts to drown Sister Mary by being repeatedly paralysed in a swollen bog by the only undead that could affect.

After healing up we proceeded to a stile where we were challenged by a rank 8 Undead Warrior, who asked to speak with Quicksilver alone. Barf and Scud however refused to allow Quicksilver to get away from them, despite his resolve. By the time I passed the stile this Undead Warrior had delivered its message and was attempting to kill Quicksilver. Barf and Scud were quickly supported by the other warriors and it was soon destroyed. The message was "the spirits you seek are to be found in the lodge," followed by a series of directions. Quicksilver once again began to raise suspicions by refusing to tell the others the source of the message. Onyx particularly grew angry, at being left in the dark, coupled with the fact that I had a connection to the Evil Sphere and I had been introduced as Quicksilver's advisor. Onyx and others felt that a member of The Order Of King Michael was wrong in openly being supported and advised by a user of the evil sphere despite our shared race.

Continuing down the gully we were directed to we heard a soft cry from the bushes. A female form, that discerned as an Unranked Wendigo, was calling for help to our group below. Quicksilver stated that "even though it is undead does that mean it does not deserve our aid?". We followed Quicksilver's lead and proceeded up the slope. Upon approaching it Tree Charmed Onyx, causing our eager warriors to dive in. This Wendigo was a powerful opponent, Tree Charming many of our number, attacking with spells and invocations such as Ice Javelins and Cause Mortals without the need of vocals and coupled with fearsome blows from her hands. Initially all of our blows seemed to be affecting her however after the destruction of her physical form only power would affect her.

Further along the path we found a large group barring the path. What was discerned as an Unranked Blood Knight, accompanied by a Blood Squire and retinue of White Guards, also unranked, challenged us, demanding we leave the area of his master the Kyromancer (we later learned this was a master of bones). In short order we were attacked by these beings, the White Guards unleashing cones of cold upon us, while the Blood Knight mauled Scud before the other warriors could reach him, fortunately both Sister Mary and Merlin were able to keep Scud alive by pouring Cure after Cure upon him. The fight began to get disorganised, the party scattered by the torrent of cones of colds, then the Blood Knight channelling

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the power of sus-an through his sword, felled Myrkel twice who was first saved by a good spirit from Onyx and second by the quick action of Sister Mary. As White Guards began to be slain, Quai, felling one of the retinue opened a path which allowed the warriors to fall fully upon the Blood Knight who soon fell to their combined might, this left only one of the retinue and the Blood Squire.

Whilst healing those injured by the Blood Knight and his retinue, Myrkel and Feynar scouted the surrounding area. Returning they told us that they had found the lodge we were seeking and that it was guarded by a number of spirits. Quicksilver suggested that he use an arcane white magic spell to allow himself to determine the contents of the lodge without fear of injury. It was decided however that the time required for such an effort would be dangerous upon the plane of sleepless dead where our blood was such a beacon for the foul spirits dwelling there. So we proceeded up the path toward the lodge, pausing a mere forty yards away, hidden by a tight bend, in order to cast and invoke. Rounding the bend a discern revealed the undead to be a number of restless spirits and two rested spirits. As the fight began it seemed obvious that the rested spirits were unaffected by anything we could do to them, everything seemed to flow across their forms without an effect. The restless spirits however seemed vulnerable a variety of attacks, the effectiveness of the attack depended on which spirit it was targeted against (the only exception being Myrkel's Shield of Steel that had no effect on their claws what so ever, not unusual you would think, but he must have thought it so, since he scouted these beings and felt the need for such a shield.) The restless spirits were vanquished, but the rested spirits still guarded the door. We had no way of destroying these.

Then a rather peculiar thing happened. A female ice elf appeared at the door of the lodge glanced at Quicksilver and then ran down to embrace him, crying "My son". Upon finishing the embrace Quicksilver turned to us and said that he would like to introduce us to his mother! His mother then ordered the rested spirits to find "the master" and took us all into the lodge. From what Quicksilver had told me, and what I have visioned from his library catalyst, all of the ice elves, his mother included, had been destroyed when his father, to end the war against the Drow, had wielded awesome magic to collapse the palace, after sealing Quicksilver in a block of Ice. With this in mind a discern undead was discreetly aimed at his mother. It was revealed that she was indeed dead and the uncorrupted spirit of Quicksilver's mother. Taking seats and refreshment, Quicksilver began talking with his mother about the possibility of his restoring the Ice Elven race. Before the argument concerning the validity and methods of Quicksilver's goal could really begin, I saw the approach of a number of fearsome looking spirits. With the immortal cry of "incoming" I dove back through the door into the well ordered preparation of our group. Somehow in the confusion Merlin and Myself were separated from the main group by the spirits. From our vantage point in the corner we saw another Ice elf enter. He proceeded to push everyone around and then ordered our destruction. With Merlin defending me I proceeded to cast Cause Mortals upon the spirit attacking us. After being on the receiving end of these a couple of times the spirit seemed to lose interest and we were left alone, still separated from the group though now behind Quicksilver's Mother and the other Ice elf. From here I could see our group in perfect battle order. The Half orc front line supported by Sister Mary held off the spirits while Quicksilver and Myrkel proceeded to hurl bolt after bolt upon the spirits. First Merlin, and then Myself dived through the melee, much to the surprise of the spirits and the Ice elves to join our companions. In short order, we had felled these spirits leaving only us, Quicksilver's Mother and the other Ice elf standing.

The Ice elf challenged Quicksilver, while his mother tried to defend him. Quicksilver was then asked to identify the ice elf before him. He answered to this elf saying "You are Tar-Maneldar, my father". Seating ourselves again, Quicksilver entered into deep conversation with his parents, his father vocal in admonishing Quicksilver's lack of knowledge of the true nature of kingship and the reasons behind Quicksilver's survival of the shattering of the Ice Elven Nation. Again and again Quicksilver stated his desire to return his parents and reunite the nations, even after Tar-Maneldar stated that he had destroyed the palace to take out both Drow and Ice elf. Quicksilver had believed the Ice Elves were destroyed by the Law Lords because of the taint of chaos within them, however Quicksilver's father stated that his intention in destroying the palace was to destroy the taint of chaos and that the encompassing of the Drow was "a fortunate coincidence". His father professed that he had no desire to be raised as an undead (the resolve of Quicksilver in this matter was obsessive and unlike him) however would leave the decision to Quicksilver

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and his mother, with this both parents left to see their master, but not before Tar-Maneldar had stated that if his master desired it he would destroy us but would take Quicksilver's head first. The party were obviously outraged at Quicksilver's true motives behind this mission, Onyx particularly was annoyed, partly due to the lying and partly due to a member of the Order of King Michael was considering the use of Necromancy.

While this conversation raged it appeared we had not guarded the door. Two dark figures, one silent and carrying a spear, entered our building and sought to speak with Quicksilver. Protesting he stated that the entire group must hear as too much had been hidden already. The second figure spoke to us saying he was a member of the Court of All Time who recorded all history across the planes. He wished to enlist our help in stopping the actions of a Knight of the Hammer named Valmir de Sissudura. Apparently this Knight dwelt upon the home plane of the Court of All Time (who appear to be organised into clans) and felt that his honour was besmirched by their not including some of his actions specifically, during the record of a great battle. Apparently few individuals are specifically mentioned in the records of this Court (this representative did know Onyx however). As a revenge this Knight travels across the planes to raise an army with which to threaten the court into mentioning his deeds. The Court however will not accede to the threats of this man and wishes any Valley members who meet him to pass on this message. It must be said that this, Sissudura is extremely powerful and another Valley group, myself included, have met this Knight. He appears to be an honourable man but as he said himself is driven to roam the planes on his quest. The Court representative told us tales of Sissudura and prepared to leave, whereupon the previously silent guard turned toward me saying "I have seen a darkness in your future so harrowing that you shall no longer be able to hold a weapon in your hands". Needless to say this shook me but as yet have felt no effect of this prophecy but remain in fear of it's coming. Merlin took Quicksilver aside to warn him of the dangers necromancy posed.

Having set a guard at the door Quicksilver and I retired to speak upon his desire to raise his parents. We were soon joined by Crion another Ice elf who dwells upon the plane of Orin Rakatha. He related the histories as he knew them, he being one of the few Ice elves who escaped the home plane via portals. Both Crion and Myself sought to dissuade Quicksilver from the use of Necromancy. With chaos already infecting our race we did not need the effects of Necromancy also. Crion also recoiled at my own use of the evil sphere stating it was unnatural for our race. Through convincing Quicksilver not to take the easy path, I saw in myself that I had already succumb to the temptation of ease. My use of the evil sphere remains from my stay with the seers who offered me rapid growth in knowledge I felt I required to find my race. To this end Quicksilver made a joint announcement to the party, that he would not use the Necromantic Sphere to raise his parents and that I had decided that I must renounce the evil sphere in order to purify the race. With a drink to celebrate we felt overly safe and when a ghastly voice screamed that in ten minutes they would purge this place, we scrambled to be ready for this conflict. Members of the group who could invoked or cast did when these were done, Quicksilver and Myrkel proceeded to cast skins upon those needing it and enforcing the group with strength and endurance. Merlin also granted us greater dexterity.

Advancing out of the lodge we were faced with a horde of undead including a spirit of wounding and a spirit of death. The fight initially went well, forcing the undead back from the lodge and with Merlin blasting a ghost again and again with power hammers until it fell before the deluge. Then however one of the spirits struck removing the good spirit from Merlin, his body then taken over by a ghoul, Onyx followed this being inhabited by a zombie. Scud then was hit by a remove spiritual protection and a skeleton took over his body. Meeting with this new assault we began to fall, Myrkel, Sister Mary, Feynar, Quicksilver and Myself all fell to the paralysing claws of Merlin. Darien then controlled Onyx and removed the undead spirit from him, he proceeded to free us from the paralysis, and the undead from our allies. As the fight went on Touch of Deaths began to assault us Scud felled by one, his strength of spirit fortunately meaning he was but sus-aned. Then Quai fell to the deadly touch of a spirit, Myrkel declared him dead but Sister Mary later found this was not so and healed his body. With the spirits beginning to fall before us we re-grouped for a final push. Leading bravely forward Crion, barely a trainee amongst such mighty warriors, was felled by several blows. Leaping forward I was able to apply an elixir to Crion before his spirit fled the body, Quicksilver then provided a Cure Mortal and I myself cured the remaining

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injuries. By this time the final spirit was being felled, our warriors more than a match for such beings. When our victory was sealed we returned to the Lodge where we rested being served by a number of seemingly friendly undead spirits, one of which appeared to have an urge to massage feet.

We spoke of the possibility of the Masters attack tomorrow, Quicksilver needing confirmation that the spirits of his parents would pass on to the undying lands if defeated here on the plane of sleepless dead. It was theorised that they would. The night then passed with us preparing for the battle tomorrow with much wine and food being provided by the spirit servants.

The next morning Tar-Maneldar appeared before us and told us a tale that we could scarcely believe. It appears that Quicksilver's mother was the reason for the taint of chaos amongst the Ice Elves. Before Quicksilver had been entombed in ice she had lain a geas upon him to seek the Ice Elves and reunite them. It was this geas that was responsible for his hatred of Drow and the continuation of the effect from the spear of hate toward elemental as well as his driving obsession to raise his parents. Only the removal of his spirits plane would remove this effect and only then if Quicksilver performed it himself. Tar-Maneldar then left us to prepare to fight us with the masters minions.

Invoking and casting we once again steeled ourselves for combat. Advancing from the Lodge we were once again faced by a large group of undead spirits. Lead by a Skeletal-Lord they were a fearsome group. During the height of the battle Tar-Maneldar entered the fray and seemed intent on the destruction of Quicksilver and even myself. Mighty magic's flowed from his blade striking all those before him. Not only this but with a few words he could banish living beings from the plane. Onyx, Myrkel and Scud were all banished from the plane and we were forced to regroup, although several of the undead had fallen. Assailed again I was struck by many undead and fell to the fall my spirit leaving me, the next thing I know I am staring up at Merlin with an elixir on my chest and good power flowing into me, I would like to take this moment to thank him for his swift action in saving my life. Taking my position in line once again we took the fight to the undead. Slimey and myself managed to separate the Skeletal Lord from the others and with Slimey protecting me I struck it again and again with my staff, pausing only briefly to heal myself and Slimey when necessary. Then we were approached by Tar-Maneldar. Merlin ran up to assist us assailing Tar-Maneldar with powerhammers as we backed up to the rest of the group. Seeing that the Skeletal Lord was in danger from my staff (it required blunt empowered weapons to affect it, something we were short of at that side of the battle field), Tar-Maneldar pointed at me with the word Banish at his lips.....

I recovered back on Orin Rakatha with Onyx, Scud and Myrkel and so can only recount the remainder of the battle second hand. The undead were eventually felled, Feynars bow providing covering fire for the remaining warriors. The culmination of the fight occurred when Quicksilver was forced to wield the magic's at his command to destroy his father with a torrent of Shocking Grasps. His mother who had until then wandered the battle field aimlessly approached and embraced both. Tearfully Quicksilver sat down to cast. With his final good-byes, Quicksilver performed the act he most feared. With a mighty bolt of fire he sent his mothers spirit on to the undying lands with the ring of chaos clutched in her hand a final gift from her son. With that the remainder of the group returned to Orin Rakatha.

As a result of this mission Quicksilver has suffered a great deal but he has been cured of the affliction of chaos, the root of a number of spiritual problems and now may hopefully rest the memories of his, and my, races destruction. I hope his soul is now at peace. On a more personal note I would like to thank Merlin, Onyx, the White retreat, and particularly Quicksilver in making me realise that my use of the evil sphere was wrong, and in assisting me to leave it behind and embrace the good, the true sphere of my race. While remaining within the Grey Wardens I appreciate the White Paths teaching and sponsorship.

Shard, Priest of the Grey Wardens, Valley Alliance.

The One That Got Away

My name is Steffan. I live and work in the rough country along the Kalid border. I have recently had to change bands due to my previous group being dismembered by a small adventuring party.

It was an overcast, slightly drizzly morning and I was lounging around my watch area with two companions. Life had been fairly easy for us over the previous few months with a new, dynamic chief and ranks swelled by a number of disaffected Kalid. Towards the end of my shift, my boss, Mad Mark, turned up unexpectedly with news of a strange group approaching and told me to shift myself and find them. I had only gone about fifty yards when I saw a man dressed all in black who waved at me from a distance. I went back and informed Mad Mark who left to meet the stranger. He returned a few minutes later, told me no-one was there, pointed out if I wasted his time again I'd be missing an ear, and slung me back out to find them again. This time I had to walk several hundred yards before I saw half a dozen people milling around on the edge of our territory.

Nearest to me was the man I had seen before so I hailed him and complained that his disappearance had irritated my boss. His name was Renown and had been scouting for the group now arrayed behind him. We had a brief, genial, chat before a grouchy dwarf called Amethyst insisted curtly that, as party leader, I talked only to her. I introduced myself and arranged a meeting with Mad Mark. The party seemed a little odd as they didn't appear to be wishing to travel through our territory, and were carrying no large goods, but were also dressed and armed rather to well to be potential bandit recruits. I returned to the watch post and Mad Mark went out to meet the strangers.

Some ten minutes later we were "summoned" by Mad Mark yelling for us. Never a man to expend any energy when shouting at a subordinate would do he was well practised in the art of long distance expression of will. The three of us wandered out and Mad Mark quietly placed some protective skins on us. He then informed the strangers if they wished to prove themselves they could kill us, and told us, loudly, that anyone coming past him would get a dark bolt for their pains. Amethyst seemed unwilling to enter into a fight at all, but several of her party engaged us anyway. They seemed edgy and were not making any real advance on the three of us when suddenly one of them pointed her finger at me and transformed into a foetid, slavering creature. Everyone else began to pale, quite literally, into the background, and all I could hear was "You will die at my touch" again and again in my head. There are not many things more frightening than Mad Mark, but this was one of them. I backed away slowly, fighting the urge to run. I turned to Mad Mark who was mouthing something less than savoury at me, but all I could hear was the creature's monotonous threat. The vile being then appeared to take a rapid step towards me, and I was off like a rabbit with the cold words still ringing in my ears. Something hit me in the back and I stumbled into the undergrowth, but carried on running until my legs gave way.

Eventually, after I had recovered my breath and a grip on reality, I weighed up my choices. I either go back, try and find Mad Mark and risk his unpredictable wrath, or find another band to join. The latter, despite the risk of accidentally walking into a haunting in an area of the forest I was unfamiliar with, seemed to be preferable, so I set off. About thirty minutes later I heard the sound of orders being given in a dwarfish accent. I peered through the undergrowth and saw the same party I had run away from circling cautiously round a single figure in faded white. This lasted a while as every time they approached the figure would point and one of the party would run off. Eventually they destroyed the figure and moved on up a steep path. As they moved forward a chill wind howled down from above and lifted leaves and dirt around them. A booming voice commanded "Leave ... leave now." and I spotted another, faceless, figure on the path.

Renown and another man moved forward and attacked quite vigorously, but without any obvious effect. The rest of the party shuffled up a discreet distance behind them and I decided to follow. I really wanted to exact revenge on the caster from earlier, but it also occurred to me that it might be possible to acquire some useful equipment from anyone foolish enough to stray from their companions. A second faceless creature stood nearby, motionless. Finally, the two fighters ran over and attacked the second figure, but,

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again, achieved little more than a couple of strained groans. Meanwhile the first figure had launched itself at the rest of the group and was being beaten off by Amethyst and a man in leather carrying a long spear. The party split into two groups across a steep divide in the natural terrain and began attempting to outflank the situation, but the mobile creature was scurrying over to the second group every time Renown and the other fighter, Daz, physically stopped hitting it. By now just about everyone was shouting at each other and there was a good deal of confusion.

After regrouping the party continued the vicious attack on the faceless creature. The groups' complete arsenal of weapons was passed forward piece by piece for the fighters to hit the undead with in a vain attempt to inflict damage. Having worked their way through every weapon available they then spent about fifteen minutes trying to simply bludgeon the poor thing to pieces. The arrival of a couple more undead caused a brief scuffle that ended with the group scattered and Amethyst flat on the floor. I wonder now if this was an unusual, but effective, leadership ploy as her followers clearly began acting as a team. Grey Cloud tended to his fallen leader, while the rest avoided the original creature in ones and twos.

The stalemate lasted for a further twenty minutes or so, with the undead making occasional forays towards the weaker members of the party. Once it looked like the undead had gone, but it returned with its companion, still insisting hollowly, that the party left. Renown, Daz and Grey Cloud continued to thwart the repeated attacks by intercepting the creature as it ran, or by distracting it with energetic sessions of shield banging. There were also some interesting flashes as the casters began to work through their repertoire; but still the undead stood firm and the toe to toe combat continued. One of the fighters suggested they should belt the other creature again, just in case, but was gruffly told to keep to the task in hand.

Nearly forty minutes had passed in the clearing, and the party were stretched about half a mile from end to end with a small melee towards the middle. Amethyst was on her feet again, shouting orders, the casters were looking confused as one by one their spells crackled and dispersed off the creatures body (I think I even heard a disintegrate at one point), and the fighters were tiring fast. Daz pointed out to Amethyst that they were going to have to do something as they were suffering fatigue, but the undead was as fresh as at the start of the fight. The undead, as much as anything without a face can, glared at him and launched a fresh flurry of blows. Suddenly, the creature smacked his companion in the head with a wild backswing and the second creature clutched at its skull and moaned. As it staggered away the fighters held a brief discussion, then raced after it and attacked it with renewed vigour. Ten seconds later the creature bellowed its final pain and faded rapidly from view. When I looked back, the first undead had also disappeared. The party then regrouped and rested.

Further along the trail were two more undead sentries, a clear sign to me that we were approaching a haunting. These were dispatched after a short skirmish by Amethyst's power. Shortly after that the party encountered two very strange creatures. They appeared to be undead, although no-one was able to discern quite what; but they were extremely vocal. I moved to a ledge some fifteen feet from the cautious fight, if you can call it a fight, as it was more of an energetic squabble. The creatures were fairly human in form, and apologised profusely for the inconvenience they were causing the party every time they struck them. Having learned their lesson from before, both creatures were carefully tested for weaknesses, but none were found. Eventually, after taking some extremely civilised punishment the party skirted round the problem and headed onwards.

Soon the party found a recess in the cliffs and began searching for something. On the edge of the path the ground shook slightly and began rapidly spewing upwards into three heavily built figures. Within seconds most of the party found themselves rooted to the ground. I felt that it was rather unfortunate that they were all on their feet at the time and moved in to see if I could obtain anything from a victim unable to chase me. However, as the three creatures waded through the party landing slow but painful blows, I felt that moving into their line of sight at all would be, at best, rash. I listened with interest as a bearded man called Charcoal, dressed head to toe in red (an excellent target in against the dull trees) goaded the creatures, shouting "Ooh, that bind did a lot of good. I was welded already!". I'm not sure if this was brave or foolhardy, but it did seem to attract the attention of two of the creatures. The party stood their ground well,

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which is, I guess, fairly easy when you can't move your feet at all. The fight didn't last long, although it was protracted slightly by one of the creatures wandering off briefly to beat the healer to the floor. After the three creatures had leaked back into the soil the hunt continued and something was discovered.

While the party was recovering Mad Mark showed up. He had obviously been following the party's progress, which worried me as I hadn't noticed him up until now. He held a conversation with Amethyst, who then gave the order to move on. The party gathered up their belongings and followed Mad Mark, some of them noticeably lacking enthusiasm. I tagged along discreetly for a mile or so until I saw one of the Chief's personal bodyguards step out to block their passage. He exchanged words with Mad Mark and then led the party further along a thin track strewn with the rotting, moss covered trunks of fallen trees. I began to work my way round the area, knowing that Chief Osgood would have crossbows posted close to her with orders to shoot anyone who approached without one of her bodyguards. I could just about hear voices as I sneaked through the undergrowth, but the only words that had any clarity were when Amethyst shouted irritably at one of her companions called Virana. It seems, from the one side of the conversation available to me, that Virana spoke without asking Amethysts permission and was being publicly berated for it. It seemed, to me, a petty thing to be making such a fuss about, but it turned out that Virana was the caster that had used her power against me earlier, so it cheers me up when I remember the dwarven voice snapping at her.

Emerging on a chewed up track of varying consistency I saw the party a good way ahead of me squaring up to a small group in blue. Virana was stuffing a small golden object out of sight and Charcoal was adopting a defensive stance and appeared to be checking possible escape routes. Amethyst was shouting at people again and seemed to be suggesting that a fight wasn't necessary. This was an effort wasted on the other group, and on most of her own who were forming a shield wall of sorts as she tried to negotiate. When it finally happened the fight was brief as the group in blue had even less cohesion as a unit than Amethysts party. By now the light was fading fast and I realised. I would have to find somewhere to spend the night. I saw smoke rising from the trees about a mile away decided to head roughly towards that. I began to climb as the party continued down the hill and from my increased elevation I spotted another small group dressed in blue arriving at a junction, only a hundred yards ahead.

After the two groups had assessed each other there was a short, shouted conversation. Amethyst again just demanded passage but the leader of the other group, a dashing figure silhouetted in the last rays of the setting sun, was obsessed with them being a band of deserters. The resulting combat was much harder than before as the small group held the path for some time with the two casters harrying Amethysts party, and the two fighters kept hacking away without sustaining much damage themselves. I almost felt sorry for Grey Cloud, who spent more time held by the enemy casters power than actually able to do anything. After about five minutes the enemy leader decided to rush the party, sadly without any support from his companions, and was cut down in the damp bracken on the side of the path. With one man missing from the line the remaining fighters were quickly outflanked, most notably by Charcoal who raced off down the path on his own, and the fight looked to be over when a corpse rolled over and staggered to its feet.

Away from the eyes of the party, except possibly the healer who was stood right next to the transformation, the enemy leader clutched at his head for a moment. When he removed his hands I could see, even from my distance, that his head now had distinctly lupine features. The creature now stood about a foot behind Virana, and it was all I could do not to shout encouragement. Still the healer was silent. Finally the wolf-thing stood upright and sunk its claws into Virana's back. Soon there was a violent scrum going on with Virana and the healer trying to get out of the way, Daz and Grey Cloud trying to get close enough to strike a blow, and the creature frenziedly trying to rend apart anything that moved. Eventually Grey Cloud managed to wind the wolf-thing and the four of them took the opportunity to rejoin the rest of their party who had been too busy slaughtering the enemy mage to come and help. The wolf-thing loped after them and continued to attack, but this time the party had weapons that actually hurt the beast. It did manage to land a few more vicious looking blows before falling in the centre of the party and being skewered like a grotesque, bloody pincushion.

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At this point I left the party behind and headed for the fire. It did turn out to be another band, with a more humane boss than Mad Mark. We returned to the haunting at daylight the following day and picked up a few bits and pieces before Osgoods men arrived. I am now in favour with my new boss, and we pick on well armed groups, carrying high quality goods that have either bribed or beaten their way past the puny border outposts like those I used to serve. With hindsight it is possible to consider my enforced flight as a good career move, and for that I would like to think that whichever force guides Virana smiled upon me that day. However, it is the only time in my life that I have been unable to stand and fight for myself, and as a result of caster trickery.

Unlikely though it is that such a bunch would be able to find their way far enough into my territory, I still want my revenge should I ever meet the party again.

Steffan

Potion Price List - Alliance Tower (Prices are in Gest)

Miscellaneous Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strength (15 mins max)	10									
Double Strength*(15 mins max)	20									
damage on expiry of *	40									
Dexterity	4	8	12	16	20	28	36	44	52	60
Elixir of Life	6	12	18	24	30	40	50	60	70	80
Beneficial Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cure Disease	5									
Remove Pain	5									
Stop Bleeding	5									
Cure 10 Locational	5									
Cure 10 Total Life	5									
Harmful Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blade Venom	8	16	24	32	40					
Character Life damage inflicted	6	12	20	30	48					
Monster Hits inflicted	3	5	10	15	25					
Alchemical Blanks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Away Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Neutral Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Good / Evil Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Cost of Buying Ink	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ink for single-use scrolls	5	10	15	20	25	30	35			
Ink for reusable scrolls	5	7.5	10	12.5	15	17.5	20	22.5	25	27.5

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Potion Price List - White Retreat (Prices are in Gest)

Beneficial Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cure Disease	4			8			16			32
Remove Pain		4								
Stop Bleeding			4							
Cure 10 Locational		4								
Cure 10 Total Life		4								
Venom Antidote	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20
<i>Damage Negated</i>	5	10	15	20	25	30	40	50	60	70
Miscellaneous Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strength (15 mins max)	15									
Double Strength*(15 mins max)					30		40			
<i>damage on expiry of *</i>					40		20			
Dexterity	5	10	15	20	25	35	45			
Elixir of Life	6	12	18	24	30	40	50	60	70	80
Alchemical Blanks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Away Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Good Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Neutral Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Cost of Buying Ink	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ink for single-use scrolls	5	10	15	20	25	30	35			
Ink for reusable scrolls	5	7.5	10	12.5	15	17.5	20	22.5	25	27.5

Potion Price List - Wolfhold (Prices are in Gest)

Harmful Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Insinuating Venom										
Blade Venom	6	12	18	24	30	40	50			
<i>Character Life damage inflicted</i>	6	12	20	30	48	70	100			
<i>Monster Hits inflicted</i>	3	5	10	15	25	35	50			
Sleep			10	20	30	40	50			
Slow							50			
Ingestive Venom										
Sleep					20					
Slow						30				
Paralysis							40			
Miscellaneous Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strength (15 mins max)	15									
Double Strength*(15 mins max)					30		40			
<i>damage on expiry of *</i>					40		20			
Dexterity	5	10	15	20	25	35	45			
Elixir of Life	6	12	18	24	30	40	50	60	70	80
Beneficial Potions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cure Disease	6			12			24			
Cure 10 Locational		6								
Cure 10 Total Life		6								
Alchemical Blanks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Away Magical Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Evil Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	20	25	30			
Neutral Power Blanks	7.5	10	12.5	15	25	30	35			
Cost of Buying Ink	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ink for single-use scrolls	5	10	15	20	25	30	35			
Ink for reusable scrolls	5	7.5	10	12.5	15	17.5	20	22.5	25	27.5

Beginners Luck

It was the middle of a damp, clear winters night when my bodyguard, Nice Guy Eddie the half orc, and myself approached our target. The frost was already clinging to the leaves that littered the path and our breath hung heavily (and rancidly in Eddie's case) in the air around us. I was on a mission to find out quite what was going on in a renowned gambling establishment about to stage its annual "Big Game". Eddie was with me partly as someone had paid him to look after me, but mainly on the basis that there would be exotic dancing girls later in the evening (I had acquired a poor quality copy of a print from the latest copy of Playorc and assured him it was a wizardly image from the gambling den). I clutched the hundred gests supplied by my employer to pay the fifty gest entrance fee and support my cover for the rest of the weekend.

Outside a small group of strangely assorted individuals stood waiting to gain entrance. I didn't realise it at the time but I was not the only one trying to discover if something strange was afoot here, and many of those outside had been sent by the same group as I had. I met Farmer John the cabbage farmer who was drinking from a small flask (distilled extract of cabbage as far as I was able to make out) and a friendly human in Lincoln(ish) green called Razzoo. As we filtered into the building we were greeted by an overpoweringly gracious doorman who insisted that all weapons larger than a shortsword were handed over to him at that point then searched for, and deprived of, anything of conceivable use by an overpoweringly overpowering man named Antonio who I was to see a good deal more of.

Once inside the atmosphere was relaxed and jovial as the patrons went about the important business of gradually watching their cash reserves disappear behind the various house tables. There were a number of card tables offering several different card games, a backgammon board, a roulette table and a strange game with glass counters where the house was sucking in money faster than a hungry vampire with the key to the vestal virgin dormitory. There seemed nothing amiss at this point so I set out to flash some gests at the roulette wheel. I spent some happy time at the table meeting other people pretending to be something they weren't, including two orcs claiming to be the brave orcatiers Porkos and Assos and a troll claiming to be Glitter the sprite in "sprightly robes that just look a lot like chainmail". In the end I gave up betting on black and red as I couldn't see which was which anyway due to the dim flickery candlelight (mainly due to the fact the entire table was serviced by two tea-light candles). However, I did finish 15 gests up as the croupier, Sylvester, accidentally paid out twice for bets I didn't win.

And on to the other card tables, the pool table, the roulette again where I recouped my losses on the pool (substantial) and all the time supping the beer which Eddie was dutifully bringing me as he didn't understand the dots on the cards and couldn't count very well. Eddie's cover was a simple one, he dressed in his normal outfit, put on some pinkish face paint and pretended to be human .. simple but useless. All this said we moved to the pontoon table together, and even he won at that. To say the dealer was performing abysmally would be rather charitable, she was not only managing to deal good hands to just about everyone but herself but also showing a compulsive "twist on nineteen" tendency and busting nearly every hand. I followed the form of the husband and wife team of Spats and Spats Capone, and managed to increase the contents of my cash pouch. We managed to stop Fingers calling for a replacement by generously tipping every disaster, but eventually Antonio spotted what was going on and spoiled the fun by stepping in himself. As the torrent of money began to ebb slowly back to the house the players drifted away and the evening drew to a gradual close.

The following morning after a hearty breakfast and some hair of the dog I was called aside by one of the house employees, who turned out to be a Valley spy. He instructed Razzoo and myself to collect five hundred gests from the remaining Valley plants, in order to bribe Antonio to be somewhere else when a deal went down. An interesting proposition as I wouldn't recognise a Valley member who wasn't disguised. Soon a lot of money was changing hands through a more senior (I think) man called Jemima in a ridiculous hat. My name was given to Antonio as the contact for his cash, a move I was to deeply regret later. We also smuggled some weapons into the grounds of the house under cover of daylight. It was an excellent ruse as we were only observed by the Valley spy and the Don in charge. We managed to get

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away with this as the Don thought Jemima and I were having an assignation in the bushes, and the spy had nothing better to do with fifteen minutes and subtly made sure that no-one else came to the window.

Suddenly two groups of serious people turned up. One was a rival Don and his entourage and the other was a tribunal to pass judgement on an adventuring party led by someone called Amethyst. These events pretty much passed me by as Eddie and I gambled what money we had left at pontoon and pool. Jemima also told me that Antonio no longer needed his payment, so that was a heavy weight off my shoulders.

Towards the end of the afternoon some enthusiastic bandits entered the house waving large amounts of money around and being generally abusive. They were all dressed in this years most fashionable shade of grey, offered to lay large bets on anything that moved, manhandled some of the dealers, and yelled at anyone that would listen in a strange accent that spoke of large moustaches and nights drinking Tequila beneath the stars. Finally, having tired of other pursuits they shoved a few guests and staff. The doorman kept the peace admirably by appealing to everyone's better nature ... then they shoved Eddie. All of a sudden the strangers had a variety of large and sharp weapons in their hands and were heading in my general direction. I dived for cover but ended up being backed down a dead end corridor with two of the house dealers and Raven, a young man in colourful robes. Fighting two men with long swords is not easy when all you have is one dagger and some robes that billow well in a crisis. Luckily, as the bandits had the attention span of a goldfish, they soon got bored with poking at the whimpering mass the four of us presented them with. As they returned to hit Eddie some more I made a dash for it. I was almost safe behind a large table (in order to fully assess the situation of course) when Sylvester grabbed me shouting "don't leave him in there on his own" and pointing at a melee of bodies bouncing round Eddie.

Filled with a heroic resolve to protect my bodyguard, and a firm shove between the shoulder blades in that general direction, I headed into the fray. As I dragged my dagger across the throat of one of the strangers some of the other guests suddenly rushed past me and attacked the rest with the weapons they had been hurriedly gathering from their rooms. After making sure my first victim stayed on the floor I blocked a sword blow coming at Eddie's back and headed off leaving the assailant expressing his regrets to a pair of irritated orc fists. I spotted another of the bandits looming menacingly over someone. As his back was towards me he seemed an excellent target. I crept up behind him and, as he raised his sword to strike, I managed to stand on tiptoe (he was a good deal taller than me) and slit his throat too.

By now, particularly as this was the first time I had ever had to use my dagger in anger, my blood was up and I hurdled a couple of people fighting on the floor and headed for the only remaining person in grey. Any semblance of stealth had gone in my blood lust and, as I clattered up behind him, he turned round with his weapon raised. Then, for some reason, he turned away again so I raced forwards and reached round his neck. Oddly enough, he seemed to object to this and flung me backwards. As I hit the floor it began to dawn on me that I was very small, armed with a dagger and already bleeding quite a lot. In addition to this he was averagely large, armed with a sword (and competent with it), and there were a lot of other fighters about anyway who could have done the job properly. I regained my feet in time to be chased and beaten twenty feet into a doorway on the other corner of the room, and from there into the floor. Just as I lost consciousness I also realised that he was actually on my side.

My good fortune manifested itself again at this point in the form of a handy healer to stop the bleeding and bring me round. After apologising to the magnificent and powerful gentleman (he may see this one day) that I so foolishly attacked in haste, and it has to be said very poor light conditions, I continued with the poker school. This was not so much a group of gamblers as a group of individuals learning how to gamble and included myself, Fingers the appalling dealer from the previous night and Jock McF McSporran, a madman in a kilt who kept offering to subdue people for a fee. While we finished this an exciting game of pool started. As virtually nobody had any money left Antonio was offering 50 gests of house money against a limb of his choice from any challenger. It was a short game that the challenger lost by a very long way. Those of us that had watched the challengers optimism gradually slip through desperation into despair now dutifully filed outside to see the debt paid. It was bone chillingly cold and nearly dark, but it was easy to appreciate the masterful amputation that followed. Antonio took his time lining up his sword stroke then took a swing that started from just above his shoulders. It took three attempts to sever the leg,

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although I felt that he could easily have done it in less had he not been enjoying himself so much. The crunch of bone yielding to metal was heard across all the gambling tables, but to give the victim his due he only started screaming when he rolled over and bumped into his own rapidly cooling limb. As none of us could heal we went back into the warm. It was at this point that I discovered that Antonio still wanted his money.

I had a brief visit from the Valley spy asking why Antonio was still waiting and suggesting that I might like to pay him if I valued my health. I hastily got hold of Jemima who told me that he had given the money away again to be gambled with. I was rather shocked by this, and fairly concerned as I had seen how much money had been lost to the house during the afternoon. This revelation was followed by a friendly visit from Antonio who reminded me just how keen he was to receive what he had been promised with a vice like arm round my shoulders and fingers digging into my upper arm like thumbscrews. Jemima was having little luck raising the money again and I soon had a less genial visit from the increasingly impatient bouncer. I tried drinking some more beer with my eyes shut to see if the situation would go away, but over dinner I had yet another meeting with the now unpleasant Antonio. I'm still not sure if he would have removed my internal organs with his bare hands, but he certainly looked like he was capable of it at that moment. Finally he gave up and explained cordially that he would have his money or he would break one leg in five minutes, the other in ten minutes, and suggested that I didn't consider what he would do if he was still waiting in fifteen.

Jemima had managed to raise nearly four hundred gests, and my pathetic appearance collected another sixty or so. After he had been round once more and we were still twenty gests short with about a minute to go he introduced me to a reliable healer. The gambler who had lost his leg earlier suggested that I should just resign myself and face the pain like a man (which I felt I was already doing in an unusual blubbering and cowering sort of way). Antonio turned up promptly and was just swinging his large (about two thirds of my height anyway) club in a determined way when suddenly the troll I had been playing pontoon with produced the missing amount. I don't know if it was his, or if he had just been winding me up for the previous half hour, and I don't really care as it saved at least one leg. Antonio was a gentleman to the end and accepted the money after carefully counting it, although he did suggest I might like to let him break my leg anyway as a token for his inconvenience.

Soon after my narrow escape the big game started. We were split onto tables of four or five people each presided over by a member of the Dons' immediate family. I shared a table with one of the Dons' sons, Raven, Razzoo, and Seamus, a tall man with a broad accent, a generous outlook on life, and a complete lack of luck at cards. Each contestant had five lives, with the worst hand losing one life. The winner of each table went on to the grand table to play the same system for fifteen hundred gests. We were in a room with two tables and one crib sheet showing what hand beat what. Seamus buckled under the strain of never being dealt anything better than a pair of threes and soon departed having questioned the parentage of everyone else on the table a number of times. Raven followed after a bad run, and all the while the crib sheet was passing back and forth between the tables like a hyperactive stag in the rutting season. Soon the Dons' son had three lives left and Razzoo and myself had one and we were offered ten gests each to step out. Having declined Razzoo then lost, and the Dons' son offered me fifty gests to give up. There were half a dozen people watching from other tables that had finished playing and there was a general wave of encouragement to take the money at that point. For some reason, when I went to take the offer, I found my mouth insisting I was going to play on. Two hands later we were at one life each and it didn't seem such a bad mistake. I dealt the final hand. As the light was murky at best both of us were squinting at the cards on the table but it didn't take long to work out that my hand was going nowhere and I also noticed that the Dons' son had a smirk the size of a longbow struggling to stay hidden. I called a halt to the agony and declared a pair of fours and my opponent grinned and placed one, two, three, four and five of something red (the light was very poor and my enthusiasm was ebbing rapidly away) on the table. He went to shake my hand, but something wasn't quite right. Jemima was stood on the edge of my vision bobbing up and down like a red and yellow monkey with nits. He had obviously seen something so I stared at the cards for I moment. Then it hit me - we were playing aces high only, and the running flush on the table disintegrated delightfully into a hand of ace high. I also noticed that I had suddenly acquired a number of tentative friends.

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Clutching the crib sheet and my tankard I approached the immaculate big table with its delicately smoothed baize and an “independent” house dealer. Around the table were Farmer John (the only other person who appeared to be still drinking), one of the Dons’ other sons who knew what ace high meant, Antonio and Sylvester. The game started well as Antonio collapsed to the accompaniment of some vicious catcalling from the members of his first table (brave considering his passion for snapping arms and the fact he was now grinning like a skeleton). Then supper was served ... at least it was to everyone in the room except me, a fact made obvious when I noticed that not only the other players were munching away, but the entire rank of spectators opposite me as well. I complained about this and refused to start the next hand until I had been served. The dealer pointed out that this was fine but I would default the game and dealt anyway. Fortunately, now I had an 80% chance of landing the prize I had several offers from the crowd and eventually Woggle (or Lady Woggle or Mad McWoggle depending on which hat she was wearing) went and fetched the food for me. When she came back she commented loudly that I didn’t have many dots on my cards, which went in my favour as I did have two aces and two queens. Farmer John was the next to fall, leaving myself and Sylvester with three lives each and the Dons’ son with four. I felt I could see the way that this one was going.

There followed the most unfortunate run of hands I had ever witnessed. The only time the Dons’ son managed to scrape together two pairs Sylvester and I each had threes, and I was left with only Sylvester for company. Eddie chose this moment to give me a “relaxing massage” which nearly dislocated my shoulders. He was sat right behind me, watching my back with all the other individuals I felt I could trust (luckily I only have a small back). The Don went and stood behind Sylvester, which was quite disturbing, but caused him to lose the next two lives. I tried to bluff my way through the next hand, but with Woggle and Glitter sniggering at my cards I failed miserably to convince anyone in the room I had anything worthwhile. Finally, the dealer dealt me a pair of sixes and another on the table. I waited while Sylvester swithered for an epoch over which card to take, and finally picked a different card. I snatched the six from the table and knocked. Sylvester looked sadly at his cards and admitted he couldn’t even muster a pair to go out on. The Don led the applause and suddenly I found I had a number of friends who were noticeably less tentative than they had been before.

Over the next twenty minutes I was offered advice and favours from most of the people in the house (some fairly exotic ones until the Don stepped in and reminded some of his staff that he still had hundreds of times what I had just won). I was also approached by members of two Towers suggesting I might like to pay them a visit, Antonio wanting to know when I was leaving and the man I had tried to throat slit earlier warning me that he had heard a lot of talk about giving me a beating when I left (I found out later that the talk had been coming from his own lips - talk about harbouring a grudge, I’d only attempted to kill him by accident). I took some advice from Jock McSporran that there had been a lot of forgeries around and checked the money that the Don gave me. I then made sure I knew who had given their own money to save my legs earlier in the evening (and more importantly who had refused point blank to pay out to help a squitty little unknown in an awkward predicament), and hung round Eddie and Glitter until it was time to leave the establishment.

As far as what was going on there, I’m still none too sure about that. All I know conclusively is that my sponsors were happier that a new Don was installed following the big game, that someone was willing to go to a lot of trouble to “rescue” Fingers, that I now had a roll of gests so big that I could beat goblins to death with it, and that there was a whole new world of opportunity was opening up in front of me. Not bad for my first journey into the murky world of gambling and adventure. And a fine time was had by all. Other individuals may disagree with this and with some of the finer points above ... but I don’t care, as that was how I saw it.

Big Al

FORTHCOMING ADVENTURES

**Below is a list of adventures already confirmed for 1999.
Feel free to book any other weekend for an adventure and if
you cannot raise a full party we will fill it for you.**

July	
23 - 25	36 hour (Amethyst pre Heroquest) - Dimmingsdale
August	
7 - 12	Heroquest X
20 - 22	Low Level Time of Reckoning theme weekend - Kinver
September	
8 - 12	Thranduil 5 day adventure
24 - 26	36 hour - Shining Cliff
October	
8 - 10	36 hour - Llandeusant
22 - 24	Halloween Theme
November	
4 - 7	72 hour
18 - 21	72 hour - Dimmingsdale
December	
3 - 5	Xmas Theme
17 - 19	TBD
January 2000	
6 - 19	The millennium project 11 day adventure !
February	
4 - 6	Celebration Theme - St Briavels
18 - 20	36 hour - Shining Cliff
March	
3 - 5	36 hour - Quantock Hills
17 - 19	36 hour - Clun Mill
31 - 2 April	36 hour - Dimmingsdale
April	
14 - 16	Theme - Crowcombe