

Might and Magic III

A
*Passage
Through
The
Isles*

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Might and Magic[®] III

A Passage Through the Isles

The Journal of Corak the Mysterious

I am Corak, called the Mysterious, and these are my scribblings as I journeyed across the Isles of Terra in search of forgotten lore. Take them as aid in the adventure before you, for these isles are not all they seem to be, and behind the shroud of legend, truth is often seen.

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First Edition

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Might & Magic III, Isles of Terra

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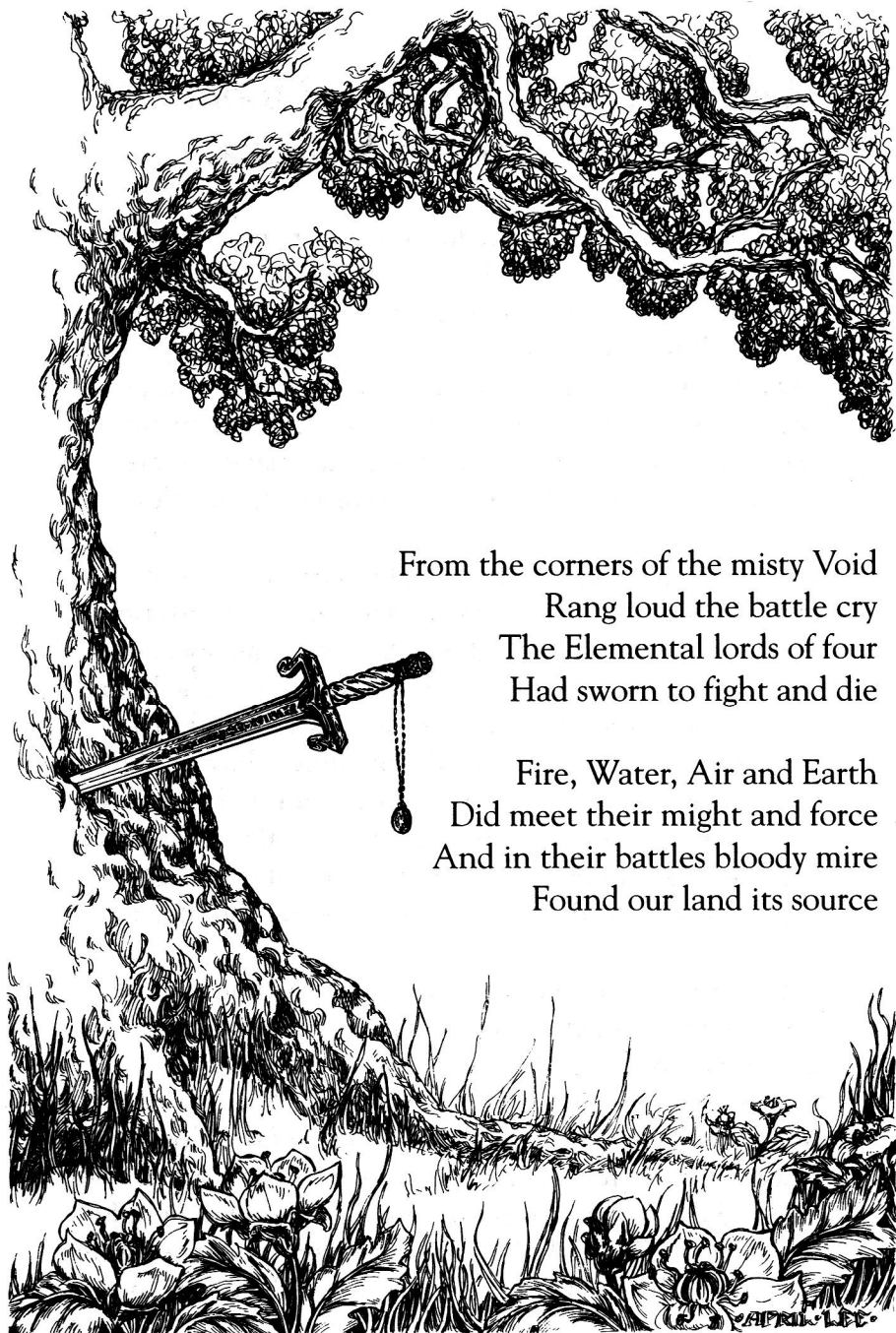
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Might & Magic III



From the corners of the misty Void
Rang loud the battle cry
The Elemental lords of four
Had sworn to fight and die

Fire, Water, Air and Earth
Did meet their might and force
And in their battles bloody mire
Found our land its source

Second Day of the New Moon, 491

In the Town of Wildabar

It has been four years since last I set out to explore a new land and discover the hidden lore and fables surrounding its towns and castles. The swelling of spirit brought about by the telling of these stories of heroism and bravery beyond hope is the thread of magic woven in the minds and hearts of all who long to answer the call of adventure, and it is for this purpose, to preserve that magical spark, that I have devoted my efforts to recording these tales.

From the rumors and murmuring I have heard passing through Wildabar these isles are rich with such histories. While talking to a town elder he told me of an ancient rhyme once read before festivals that contained the legend of the mysterious conception of the isles, a legend that today circulates across the land, but altered through the years since the original scroll's disappearance. He read to me a portion he recorded before the original vanished and told me what he could remember of the rest of the tale. Other parts, he said, may be recorded across the islands.

The epic was written in three parts and the fragment he gave me was from the first, in which is contained an account of the birth of the isles out of a great battle between powerful lords of the four elements who used fierce storms to fight for supreme control of the Void, a place where there was no land or sky or ocean. Water and Fire and Air and Earth met in this empty Void to fight for the right to fill it with their presence, but so matched were they in this battle that none could defeat the others, nor

could any stop fighting lest the balance be upset and he be overrun by the others. They had become locked in an eternal war none could turn away from. And as the war raged on through the decades, in the midst of the Void where the fallout of the mighty storms gathered and settled, a rich land began to develop. From where, no one knows, but beasts appeared to graze the fields of the new land and take refuge in its forests and caverns. Little notice did the Elemental lords pay to these dumb beasts for there was little threat in their roamings. They were seen as nothing more than the flies that gather around a fallen animal. So the war raged on with intensifying storms that added to the richness of the budding land.

But then a new creature mysteriously appeared in the Void, not dumb like the beasts, but clever in ways of cultivating the raw loam of the battlefield further into a rich provider of food and shelter. Difficult and costly though it was in the midst of the furious storms of battle, a continent was forged in the misty Void.



In the forests and valleys settled spry creatures of great intelligence. Thin and strong, the Elves were quite at home among the trees and fields of green. Though weaker in endurance than some, they were possessed of a high aptitude for the magical arts and resistance to its power and energy.



And in the snowy areas of bitter cold found the Gnomes their home. Like the Elves, they were strong of mind, not body, and a little more prone to the ways of magic. But unlike the brooding Elf, the Gnome was very jolly and quick to make friends. Because of the harshness of the snowy land their countenance was toughened to the elements, and even more so to magic.



Sojourned then in the desert sun the Dwarf. Small but mighty they survived in the turmoil of the stormy war for little of the elemental realm could do them great harm. After all, it would take a strong creature to find a thriving life in the lands of sand. With little power over magic, Dwarves found their strength in solitude among the dunes.

And in the swamps and bogs settled a tribal people of great strength and endurance. So strong were they that fire, electric and cold could hardly harm them. Because they lacked the greatness of mind for magic they had to rely on their ability to fight to survive, and that ability was developed to great heights, for the Half - Orc lived for battle and saw the opposing of men as the greatest of endeavors.



But scattered across the many diversities of the new found land Humans wandered and made places for themselves among all others. Able to resist all the elements and magics, and learned in the ways of the mystical arts, they were well equipped to settle where they wished. Soon they thrived across the land and with the others began to tame the beasts and cultivate the fields.





With the arrival of these conquerors of land the Elemental lords realized that while they fought among themselves the very prize for which they were slain was being taken away from them by little mortal beings who in their eyes were no better than the dumb beasts. Each would try to vanquish the mortals with a great storm, but because they could not remove too much of their force from the war the mortals were able to withstand them. In fact, the storms of the Elementals were less severe than the effects of the war itself, so the Elementals had to find another way to purge the Void of these intruders. So an agreement was made to halt the fighting for one day and devote all their powers to create one great tempest of such destructive power that none could withstand it for even an hour.

Air gathered together the strongest of its winds to blow the sands of Earth with such force as to tear away the flesh from mortal bone. And Water prepared a flood to wash the fallen mortals to the center of the Void where Fire would then bake the mire into solid stone. Even combined in total unity the mortals could not survive a day of such torrent. So little hope was there that in the darkest hours before the great destruction all merely stayed in their doomed homes and the helplessness in their hearts made the greatest cry for mercy any world has ever known.

Fourth Day of the New Moon, 491

The Quest Begins

After searching for the right opportunity I have finally found a group to set across the isles with in search of the lost parts of the legend. A band of four fighters and a healer have enlisted me as their mage, not knowing the fullness of my power. We are to travel to Swamp Town and receive a scroll which we will then deliver to Fountain Head. The leader of the party, Asa Milchima, has agreed to take a circular course to allow me a wider search for the lost pieces. We will be travelling across most of the islands, skipping only the smaller ones. I will be receiving a smaller share of the reward for delivering the scroll, but it is the search and hopeful discovery of forgotten lore that calls me to this adventure, not the promises of wealth.

Assuming all to be in order we will set out tomorrow for the Isles of Illusion where I will search the two castles said to be laid out in ruins upon the sand. From there we will travel to Buzzard Bluff where we will camp for the night. The next day we will journey through the Evermoors and north to Swamp Town, find the scroll and most likely spend a pleasant night in a local inn.

From there I will lead the expedition to Serpent's Wood, the original settling place of the Dwarves, and on through the Frozen Isles where we will camp a second night. Then we go to Leper Canyon and straight to Fountain Head. Four days they plan, but it will likely extend to double.



Fifth Day, 491 Setting Off

Today, after much preparation we started our journey across the Isles of Terra. This group I've joined is far more powerful than I had earlier believed. Rather than renting a boat as I had thought we would, the healer, Rapha, stood at the water's edge where earth meets ocean and stretched her arms wide. All was still for a moment, then a strange wind blew the corners of her robe and there seemed to be a disturbance in the waters. Fog rolled in, thick and choking, and in the midst of it appeared a ghostly galleon riding on the swelling waves. It was truly a most impressive sight, and a little unnerving too. The ghost ship took us across the waters to the closest of the Isles of Illusion where we are now resting before entering the castle ruins, but I still don't know from where it came or to where it returned, for as soon as we stood upon the shore it drifted away in the silence of the fog.

It is a poor omen when the first battle of an adventure ends in death. While searching the ruins of Castle Greywind we came upon a powerful phantom magic user that had made his home in the rubble. He attacked at once without warning and engulfed Rapha in a pink glow of energy, draining all life out of her. Asa Milchima responded quickly by letting fly a bolt from the crossbow at his side, but it only passed through the apparition. While the others advanced, the ghostly figure summoned a huge and beastly bear and vanished in a flash of light. Asa Milchima and Supha, the Ninja, were only hurt a little in the battle with the beast, but Rapha had been our healer. I did what I could for the others without revealing the full extent of my powers, but the loss of Rapha is most unfortunate. The loyalty of this group is strong for they plan to spend their part of the reward to have her healed at the temple in Swamp Town.



Sixth Day of the New Moon, 491

Camping at Buzzard Bluff

Then descended on the land
The Forces of the Dome
To lend into the mortal hand
Power before unknown

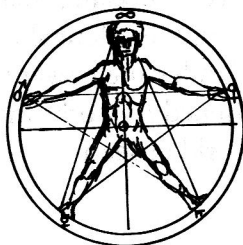
Five Forces, they of might and magic
Two champions forged by each
Ten heroes made the tale most tragic
For the Elemental beasts

There is a dark mood hanging over the camp tonight, darker than the clouds that cloak the moon, darker than the thick limbs of trees that hide untold creatures peering from outside the circle of fire light. It has been raining since the middle of day and the falling drops have beaten down the spirits of even our steeds who stand nervously stamping. The fight of yesterday still weighs upon the minds of all, myself included, made heavier by the legend of the Winged Death said to prey on travelers of the Forsaken Sands. I must admit even I will feel relief when this night is nothing more than a memory. It seems a fitting enough setting to muse upon the piece of the legend I found in the ruins of Castle Greywind. It tells of the intercession of the Forces of the Dome, the five Forces that gave men the power to overcome the attack of the Elementals.

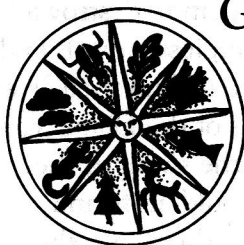
Cosmonium was that force which guided the elements and other forms of energy from place to place. Air, water, fire, earth, and the electrical energies were commanded and controlled.



Esoterica was the power of the inner self, the energy of life and the forms of life, with command of the mind and the ability for healing and inflicting.



Gaia commanded the order of life in the forest and in the skies, of the trees and the clouds. The manner and temperament of nature and the wills of the beasts bowed to its influence.





Bellum, which was the essence of war and violence which manifested itself in the darker moods of beasts and violent turns of weather, like this storm tonight.

And Lurkane, that invisible, silent sheet of clandestine power that slipped its works into the world unseen.



These were the Forces that silently watched from their perch above the clouds as the Elementals did battle. According to the legend they never joined the fight, but when they discovered the Elemental's plan to destroy all men and beasts they had pity on the helpless mortals and gave them the secrets of their powers to defend their lives. Other tellings of the tale say the Forces of the Dome feared the Elementals would be so amazed at the strength they possessed when joined together they would unify and attack them in their lofty home, pulling them into the never ending battle. For whatever reason, the Forces taught we mortals of their power, two to each Force, and made ten champions to drive back the Elementals before they could pull their ranks together.

To an Elf, Cosmonium opened the secrets of how the elements move through the Void, giving total control over fire, cold, energy, and electricity. In padded armor and armed with a staff, the first great hero set about mastering his control over the elements and created many powerful incantations for the coming battle. He was called a Sorcerer. I remember the thrill of discovering the power and beauty of lightning, my personal favorite. In my youth, camping on a rainy night with a band of adventurers like this dark evening, I would sometimes fire a bolt at a nearby tree just to startle my companions. An act I'm sure our fallen comrade would strongly disapprove of.



And to another of the Elfin kin Cosmonium showed the way to make a shaft of wood travel straight and true to its mark. This was named the Archer and gird in armor of chain she was the second of the heroes to emerge. Due to their common origin she was able to use the spells created by the Sorcerer, but only to a limited degree. Most of her energy was spent in the study of the bow.



Next, Esoterica took a Gnome and trained her in the healing ways, revealing the secrets of the mind and body, unlocking the power to make good or render bad one's constitution. A most powerful hero was this, called the Cleric, in her splint mail, helm and shield. To heal the fallen comrade and destroy the weakened foe was her pledge.

Another Gnome was taken thus, and taught the healing ways, but much emphasis was also given to the use of weapon and armor. A most noble champion called Paladin was he, and a frightful foe to face. Clad in the strongest of armor and wielding the weapons of truth and right, he was to become one of the greatest of the legendary figures inspiring much lore and many followers.



Then Gaia made its choice in the Dwarf to champion its cause. Many languages were revealed, empathy with plants and beasts and the patterns of seasons and stars. Secrets of the living land endowed in a smallish figure to command the forces of nature to do her bidding, commanding great storms and flurries and swarms to do battle, but also calling upon the natural healing of nature to help the fallen. As devoted to the land as the Cleric to the body, this new one called the Druid would sacrifice her being to maintain the orders of nature. In leather the Druid travelled with barely a sword to swing. A storm such as tonight's would hardly be worthy the talents of such a champion.



When the force Gaia gave empathy with the forest to the Dwarf champion it called Ranger, a dark and mysterious one was indeed created. At home in the denseness of the trees, contented with the thicket of vines and clattering of bushes, the Ranger was as diverse in mood as the forest was diverse in creatures. Like the first hero Ranger, our own Asa is prone to sudden changes in temper from jovial and impish to condemning and stern.

Bellum then chose the Half-Orc to be a champion of the sword. Gird in the finest of armor, helm and shield, and with the mightiest of weapons



trained he in the arts of war, melee, and valor. Called the Knight he became the strongest of the champions with the greatest desire to march across the battlefield.

While the Paladin would seek peace through battle and find victory in the quick end of a war, the Knight longed for the brotherhood of battle and felt a kinship to all combatants.

And the second champion made Bellum to be called Barbarian, for it was not brotherhood she sought in battle but the lust of blood. With the greatest endurance of the heroes the Barbarian sought the thrill of rushing into battle. Clad only in scale armor she wielded her shield and great hammer against the armies of her foes. In all the statues and tapestries I have seen dedicated to the likeness of this champion she stands high upon a mountain of fallen warriors, a helm of horns upon her head.



Lurkane then, the last and most mysterious of the forces, took two humans to its cause. The first was taught to move in the invisible folds between the places of here and there and travel unseen and unheard. Known as the Robber, he was able to work the mechanisms of locks and traps, hide in the faintest of shadows, and advance upon his foes to deliver a fatal thrust of dagger in the back. In mail of chain with shield and dagger, a crossbow hanging at his side, he moved in the leaves like a feather.



And the tenth champion, made for battle, was strong in all attributes of fitness and mind. Called the Ninja, a most powerful warrior was she with special weapons created especially for her mastery of arms, a mastery not even equalled by the mighty Knight. Bound to a life of solitude, alone even among the other champions, her discipline of body and mind consumed every moment. She was called the silent warrior for she possessed the stealth of the Robber, even in her chain mail, and was never known to speak.





These ten were the champions of the war against the Elementals, where mortal man was taught the arts of magic and ways of war by the five Forces of the Dome, Cosmonium, Esoterica, Gaia, Bellum and Lurkane, the Forces that are above the clouds, above the stars, that indeed guide the stars through their journey across the night. Now my time at watch is done and Supha comes to relieve me. Tonight I must rest well for tomorrow we journey across the Evermoors, and that is no place to be when weary.

Seventh Day of the New Moon, 491 In Swamp Town

Today we arrived in Swamp Town after a surprisingly easy journey through the Evermoors. There were only a few small battles along the way as we came across wandering animals and insects. Although the danger was small it was a good workout, for any small mistake could cost dearly.

After entering the west gate of Swamp Town and finding the giver of the scroll we are to take to Fountain Head, Rapha was taken to Temple Moonshadow. It was by luck alone that the others had barely enough to pay for the services of the monks, as the boat we rented to carry us from the Forsaken Sands to the Evermoors dug deep into our party's pouch. The reward for delivering the scroll will hardly do more than recoup the fee of Rapha's resurrection.

With Rapha's return, a room was then taken at the inn where I now sit writing these notes. The others are relaxing, as it were, in the tavern where they are telling Rapha of all that has happened in the past two days.

My hopes of finding more of the legend are failing after talking to others I have met around town. While visiting the guild there was one who had just returned from the Frozen Isles where he had been searching for the rhyme himself. He told me there was no part of it to be found in the northern regions and was very happy to see the fragment I returned from the ruins of Castle Greywind. I told him the tale the elder of Wildabar spoke to me.



After the battle was over and the champions had used the powers the Forces of the Dome gave them to drive the Elemental lords to the corners of the Void, the five Forces picked up the land that had been the battlefield and moved it through the heavens, from the gates of the Ancients to the gates of Terra, where the land was set in the midst of water and broken into isles. While the Forces were carrying the isles through the stars the ten heroes built towns to protect the people from the monsters and beasts that roamed the land, and they trained others in the disciplines they were given by the Forces starting a long tradition of skills that has carried over to present times.

Great walled towns were built to provide shelter and protection from the outside wilderness and be a place of haven for those adventurers who travelled across the new land and tried to tame and conquer its growing life. They were exciting times of adventure and bravery, but there was a need for places of healing and trading and training, so in the towns were raised dwellings where all the services an adventurer needed could be received. There were places of weaponry, houses of ale and feasts, five houses of healing where the mysterious monks who tended them paid homage to the Forces for saving them from the Elementals, grounds for training in battle skills, mystical schools for heightening one's magical prowess, and places where the weary could rest in safety and store their goods and find others to replace a fallen companion. It is in these foundations that our town dwellings of today find their source.



In the blacksmith's shoppe workers of steel and iron forged new weapons of destruction and repaired the broken implements of warriors. There was a lucrative trade of wares from many places abroad and all the needs of dungeon lurking, such as rope and torch, could be found. It was also a place to find the finest in armor and protective wares, and unknown mechanisms or weapons could be identified and their uses and value revealed. Of course the excess in a traveller's pack would bring a decent enough price to pay for a good time in the houses of ale.



The inn was a place where the weary could rest behind a locked door and under a roof to protect from the falling rain. But the inn was created as more than just a place to take a much needed halt in travelling, for young adventurers seeking the thrill of battle and discovery of untold wealth could sign in the registry and wait for a party in need of help to enlist his services. Often times, when enlisting the aid of those you meet roaming the forests and caves and ruins, he will bid you meet him at the inn where he had registered last before joining you on your quest.



Taverns were built where the ale flowed as profusely as the rumors off the loosened lips of explorers and warriors who came to these rowdy bars for a healing that could not be found in the temple. It was a place where gold put in the hand of the barkeep might reveal the clue to find unspeakable treasure and fortune. And when the adventurer's pack ran low of food it could be filled with the specialty of the house. After all, when one's strength runs low resting is to little avail when there is no meal to replenish the flesh.

 And for the fallen and injured warriors temples of healing were erected to the Forces of the Dome. Five Forces gave mortals the power to subvert the deluge and five temples were constructed to honor their powers and help those who fell in their service. Warriors with any affliction could find cure from the mysterious monks that tended these sacred shrines. Flesh would be restored and curses lifted. And it was believed that special blessings awaited those who donated a portion of their booty to these shrines.

 But those portions of gold and treasure that were not donated to the sacred monks were under constant threat of becoming another's booty, so the builders of the towns made a sturdy and secure cage and commissioned strong golems to guard it. The bank was needed to keep one's wealth in safety because there were, even in those exciting days following the victory over the Elementals, those who would feed on the weaker but more fortunate of their fellow man. Though fallibly secure from theft, the bank was safer than the skin tents of the adventurer's camp.



To train others in the ways shown to them by the Forces of the Dome, the ten champions also made great training grounds with tracks and arenas and all manner of devices for improving strength and stamina. For a price, any adventurer who had come from a long quest or journey could seek the help of specialists in all the arts of battle to advance in the skills of swordplay, archery, and all other methods of melee. A person's stamina and endurance in battle could also be enhanced by the techniques of the masters of the grounds.



And for those who studied the magical arts, mysterious guilds were built to train the magic user to control the forces. Through intense study deeper control of one's chosen way could be gained and new incantations purchased to expand the mage's abilities and arsenal of spells. These were places of great secrets and none but members of each guild could enter. Legends of the surrounding area were written in the history of each guild to provide helpful hints and warnings to the wise.

Eighth Day of the New Moon, 491

The Frozen Isles

Tonight we are camping in the chilly environs of the Frozen Isles. As I suspected after talking to my fellow searcher in Swamp Town, there is no sign of any part of the legend around these frozen woods. We searched the snowy wild for many hours but there was little more than ice to be found gleaming in the sun.

After being denied entrance to Castle Dragontooth on account of prior dealings with our healer Rapha, we decided to camp in the frozen woods of these isles and keep fire watch, which is what I do as I write this. I've had more comfortable nights but there are no hard feelings toward Rapha. It is, after all, much easier crossing the ocean with the use of her ghostly ship.

I will miss this group when we part ways in Fountain Head, but there are other things that call me. This has been but a tour for me, the real search is not for legends and lore but my nemesis Sheltem. From the very beginning he has seen these isles and all that lives upon them as his enemy, and twice he has planned their extinction. Now that these isles have rested in the gates of Terra I'm sure he has not given up his crusade to destroy them. I know not what plan he has set in motion but I see his work in all that is chaotic.

I have been making these notes as a record to leave behind for any who will join me in my search for Sheltem and his evil plot. I believe the ancient pyramids play into his schemes and that is where I will begin my search when I

set out again. This time I will go alone, but to any who follow I will leave clues to give the benefit of new information I uncover.

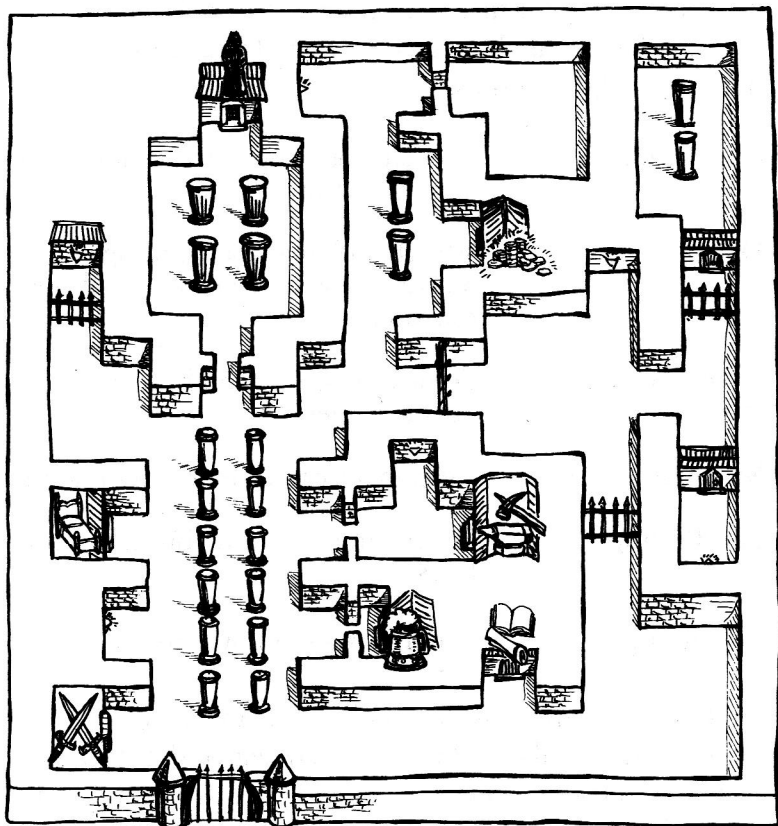
I have not told the others of this but in the ruins of Castle Blackwind, back on the Isles of Illusion, I found a message among the rubble that may shed light on the mystery of Sheltem's scheme. It seemed to place much importance on the three manners of men we have come to call alignment; Good, Neutral, and Evil. For many years there has been peace among these different attitudes, but it has not always been so. There once were many wars fought over the differences of these three alignments and perhaps it is Sheltem's plan to rekindle this ancient rivalry. I'm still working on what may be the meaning of this message in the rubble. In the land today the question of Good and Evil is resolved in the response to certain situations, and there are certain enchanted areas where one or the other may not be welcome, but there is little chance of a war fueled by these differences being started in these times of enlightenment. Nevertheless, I am sure the subtle differences of these three, Good, Neutral, and Evil, play into the schemes of Sheltem.

I will stop writing for tonight, Asa will soon come to relieve me of my watch. It has been a pleasant trek across the isles with this group, pleasant save for the death of Rapha. Thank the Forces the monks of the temples can lift the conditions of ill that inevitably befall the adventurer. Be you cursed, paralyzed, or even eradicated, there is always a remedy, and a price, to be found in the temples.

With the coming of the morning light we will start our final journey to Fountain Head, and from there I will once again set out alone. My feelings are echoed in the cries of the wolves I hear floating across the moon-lit sky.

Ninth Day of the New Moon, 491

Fountain Head Reached



After passing through Leper Canyon we reached Fountain Head late into the day. I parted company with my group at the inn where they immediately found another young adventurer anxious to join them on their next excursion, of course... after they spend some time in the tavern to recuperate.

Before I start my search for Sheltem there are a few final pieces of advice I would like to offer to those who follow me into this mystery. There are skills that will be very helpful if not completely necessary in your travels across the isles. You must find their masters to teach them to you, and be prepared to pay the price. Here are some of the more helpful of these skills...

Cartography	To help you keep better maps of the areas you visit.
Danger Sense	Which will give you warning of monsters you may not see until it is too late.
Detect Secret Passages	So not to miss out on hidden opportunities.
Mountaineering	To gain access to the higher regions.
Pathfinding	For cutting your way through dense forests.
Swimming	For crossing shallow waters.

And always keep a full spellbook. When you have mastered the spells you know to such degree that you are prepared to learn others, gain membership to a guild and learn what you can. Seek the wandering mages who sell these memberships, the price is small to pay to have the right incantation when needed. And if you gain a spell from an enchanted pool or buy it from a traveling teacher and have no explanation of its use, go to one of the guilds for its description.

Remember to keep a good supply of gems as some spells require the power locked inside their crystals. These are the spells available to the novice in the ways of magic...

Awaken	Pulls all sleeping adventurers from their slumber.
Detect Magic	If there is a magical item in the pack of the caster this will make it known, and reveal the number of its limited use. Use this to discover the nature of a chest of treasure.
Elemental Arrow	Unleashes the power of the elements upon a single enemy. Expel a bolt of flame, electricity, acid, or ice upon your foe to rob him of a little well-being.
First Aid	An adventurer's minor wounds of battle can quickly be healed with this anointing incantation.
Flying Fist	Summons an enchanted gauntlet to deliver a stinging punch to a single foe.
Light	Provides a magical light to illuminate the darker areas.

All spells were forged through the mysteries of Cosmonium, Esoterica and Gaiam, and only those classes devoted to their study can cast them. More powerful spells await as you advance in your abilities.

It will also be necessary to gain protection from the six forms of damage that are delivered through the use of weapons and spells. These forms are fire, electricity, cold, poison, energy, and magic. Each race has a natural strength against some of these and further protection can be gained through spells and enchanted items.

As you travel from town to town there will be many occasions to enlist your services to others in need of help. It would be wise to accept their challenges for there may be great rewards in their completion that will help in future dealings.

And when all hope is gone, be it in the face of a great dragon or surrounded by too many orcs to dispatch, you may call upon the benevolent hand of Mister Wizard to carry you back to safety. He will always answer the call for help, but be warned that he will also extract a toll of experience from those he rescues. A mighty warrior can soon be rendered weak if he calls for the help of the Wizard too often. It is best to resolve a situation without his help if any solution exists. But new adventurers find favor in the heart of Mister Wizard, and those he will help without fee.

Now I must prepare for my search for Sheltem. Take these notes and use them as you can to discover his schemes, and together we may be able to thwart his plot. Search for the clues I will leave behind, and good luck to you on your journey. May the powers of Might and Magic be always at your side.