

# The Trial



**Robert Jenkin**

# The Trial

**Robert Jenkin**

May 2016

Based on a game of Hero Quest

shared with Nathaneal and Joel

at Rainbow Valley



The stairs led down into an empty room. A single door led south and that was closed. Gandalf the wizard hesitated before opening it. His sole companion, Legolas, motioned him back.

‘We don’t know what’s behind it, said the elf. ‘Let me go first.’ – ‘You’re right’, said Gandalf. ‘Your sword is swifter than my spells, as Mentor taught us, and it’s possible that some of Verag’s minions wait behind that door.’

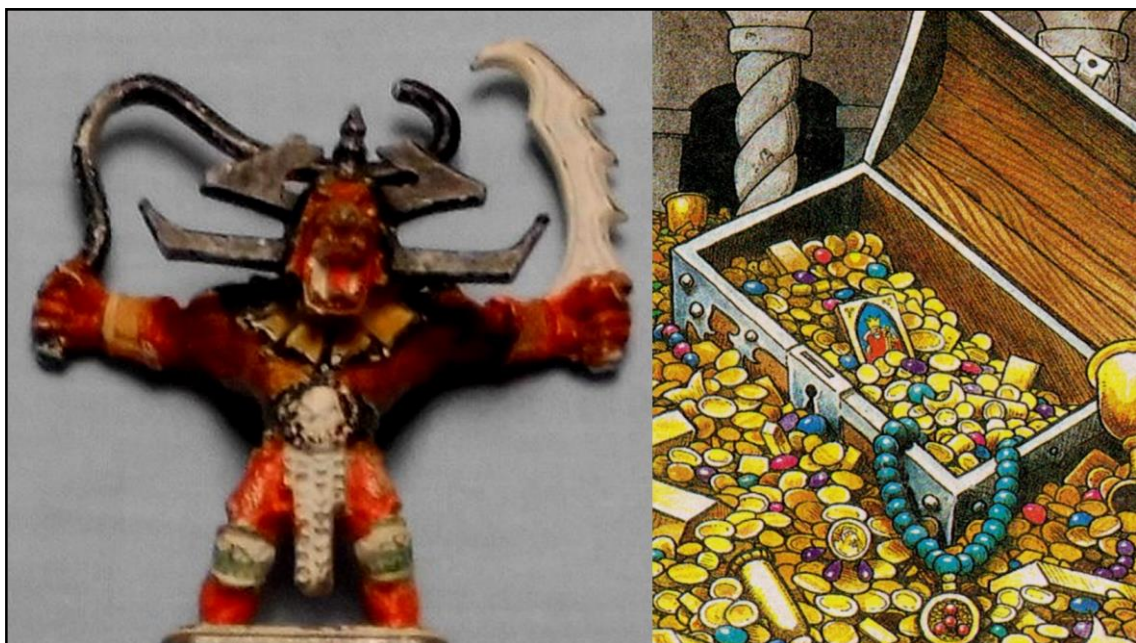


Legolas lifted the latch and tried the door, which opened inward. Beyond was a narrow passage which he looked along, first right, then left. But for the were-light on the wizards staff these catacombs were altogether dark, but infravision showed the elf that to the west the passage turned a corner, heading north, while some way to the east, beyond another door he saw a furtive movement which his sharp eyes quickly identified: it was a goblin lurking by a further corner where the eastward passage also headed north.



The creature saw him too. Snarling, it raced to the attack with its short sword but proved no match for Legolas, whose broadsword took its head off with a single blow. ‘Expertly done’, Gandalf congratulated him. ‘A noisier battle might have warned the rest that we are here’. Just then another goblin burst around the nearby corner to the west wielding a scimitar. The waiting elvish broadsword found its heart, and when the sword jerked back the goblin fell face-forward on the hard stone floor. Legolas wiped its black blood off onto its grimy tunic-back fastidiously. “They’re ugly little brutes” he mused “and very fast. I wouldn’t like, my chances against three or more at once!”

‘Which way now, brother?’ Gandalf asked. Legolas nodded to the west and led the way around that corner to the further passage leading north. Just a short way along it, on its eastern wall they found another door and paused beside it. Gandalf, with human eyes, could only see about ten feet, but Legolas’s elvish infravision showed that thirty feet beyond the door there was an opening leading east, while past that was what looked like a dead end. ‘So far so good, were safely in,’ announced the elf. ‘But what’s our plan from here?’ – ‘As Mentor said,’ the wizard answered him, ‘we’re here to find and finish off Verag the gargoyle; also to deal to as many of his monsters as we can. If possible we should find Felmarg’s tomb, destroying any monsters that may be defiling it. We get to keep whatever treasure we can find. This is as good a place to start as any, I suppose.’ – ‘Righto,’ said Legolas, ‘let’s not waste time’. Softly he turned the catch and pushed open the solid oaken door.



It was a horrid sight. A wooden rack filled much of the stone cell before them. A startled goblin and a barrel chested orcish torturer who had been sitting on a bench beside a brazier grilling raw meat, sprang up at once to face the two adventurers. Both rack and cell were smeared and spattered with the crusted blood of former-victims of the torturer. The goblin, wearing little but a bloodstained leather apron, snatched a heavy cleaver from a wooden bench. The orc was more than twice as big. Its bare green chest was hugely muscled and its piggy eyes and snout were twisted to a mask of hate. It seized a double-handed headsman's axe that stood beside the rack and brandished it. Legolas sighed. This wasn't getting any easier, and as the only fighter it was always going to be up to him. He waited in the doorway, sword in hand. That way he'd only have to fight one at a time.

Within two minutes orc and goblin were both dead and Legolas was seated with his back against a wall binding a linen bandage round a wounded leg. His broadsword, far too light a weapon to confront that axe, had failed to block one smashing blow and now his upper thigh was deeply gashed. Gritting his teeth he drew the bandage tight.

"Leggy, I've found you something", Gandalf softly said, placing a leather flask beside the demi-human as he sat. 'What is it?' – 'It's a healing potion which I found



concealed in a pile of old rags – just what you need.’ – ‘Thank you. I will be glad of it, although not yet. This linen band has staunched my wound, at least for now, and’ (getting to his feet) ‘I’ll wait to use it till I need it even more. There will be much more fighting yet, I fear. We need to make our magic last.’ – ‘You’re right’, said Gandalf, ‘but I feel useless standing by while you do all the work.’ – ‘Your time will come. Without your spells the two of us would hardly have a chance. I have some magic too, and hope to use it by the end, but I have only fire spells, of little use in healing anyone. I may well need this potion *and* your healing spells, before we’re done. You need to keep out of harm’s way as much as possible – dead wizards cast no spells.’ ‘I will. And I have other elemental spells than healing spells with which to aid and strengthen you at need.’



The torture chamber had no other exits so they went north along the corridor and took the turning to the east. Here they found two more doors on the north wall and beyond those a T junction where branching corridors led north and south. They tried the first door and it led into a chamber where a single goblin stood on guard beside a book of lore between two magic candles on a table made of carven stone. After the goblin died defending it, Gandalf examined it. 'Look, but don't touch', he said at last. 'This book is cursed and there is nothing to be gained by reading it. I take it to be Felmarg's handiwork, and that suggests we may be drawing closer to his tomb'.



Who was this Felmarg?' asked the elf. 'Until this quest I hadn't even heard of him.' - 'He was a human cleric, and at first a paladin, a great defender of the Empire.' – 'And what became of him?' – 'He somehow came into possession of a magic sword which then corrupted him



and drove him mad. He picked a quarrel with his former friend, the champion Aradel. They fought. Felmarg defeated Aradel and slew him, though he called for mercy; then he took his treasure hoard. Then vanished, so as not to have to face the justice of the Empire.’ – ‘And Mentor says his tomb is in these catacombs?’ – ‘So Loretome has revealed. Perhaps some of his stolen treasure is still here as well’.



Mummies and skeletons and Zombies blocked their way, but in an hour of hard fighting the companions reached the tomb, finding much treasure and some magic items on the way. Twice while he searched for

treasure Gandalf was attacked by wandering monsters and on one of these occasions was so badly wounded by a Chaos Warrior that he was forced to cast his spell of *Healing Waters* on himself. Two other spells he cast on Legolas: *Rock Skin*, a kind of magic armour, helped protect the elf, as did *Heal Body* when again the elf was badly wounded and the healing potion from the torture chamber had been drained. So now, in Felmarg's funeral chamber, both adventurers were whole and well again.



Felmarg was carved lying atop his tomb, holding a carven image of a double handed sword. 'What if we opened up the tomb? Would it contain the real sword?' wondered the elf. 'If we should take it one of us would likely come to the same end as him – the sword is cursed. It is enough to have reclaimed some of the stolen gold.' – 'What now then?' – 'Well, we need to find the door to Verag's chamber, but we may not need to enter it. He will be strongly guarded, probably by other Chaos Warriors, and it was hard enough for us to deal

with just one of them. And now we have no healing spells or healing potions left.’ ‘What then?’ pondered the elf. ‘Must we return to Mentor with our quest still unfulfilled?’



‘I did not say so. Look’: and Gandalf drew out from a pocket of his robe a little lantern made of polished brass. The elf examined it and slowly shook his head: ‘What use is that?’ – ‘What spells remain to you?’ – ‘I have used *Courage* but I still have *Ball of Flame* and *Fire of Wrath*.’ – ‘And that is what we need. First we must find the door to Verag’s hall. You said that it would be beyond that T junction, and I agree, because the corridors in that direction show most sign of use. This lantern is the prison of a genie who must do my bidding one more time to win his freedom and I think our best chance of destroying Verag is to use him now. The two of us, with no more healing magic, might not triumph against him and his remaining minions by ourselves. But

*Fire of Wrath* could take him out. My genie only needs to give us certainty about the room in which he can be found.’ – ‘Yet once the door into that room is open, might not Verag’s guards come after us once he was dead?’ – ‘That is the beauty of my plan. Once we have found the door we need not even open it. Rather we’ll free the genie at the door and then return to where the stairs lead out of here. Meanwhile the genie will get in under the door in gaseous form, invisible to all within. If it does not find Verag it will tell me so and then depart back to its elemental plane of air. I will have lost a genie, but not lost my life. If it does find him, it will tell me that, and then your *Fire of Wrath* can seek him out, and probably destroy him, since it can target any creature if you know that creature’s whereabouts. Is this plan good? The time has come to work together and combine our magic to complete our quest.’



They found a door. Firelight flickered out from under it into the corridor and harsh chaotic voices sounded from inside. They left the genie and went back to wait beside the safety of the stairs. The genie soon returned confirming that behind the door there was a Gargoyle. Then Legolas unleashed his fire of wrath and after casting it perceived in his minds eye his fireball as it consumed their common enemy. 'We've done it, Gandalf', he observed with satisfaction. 'This trial is over' said the wizard and together they went up the stairs into the light.

