

Gem Runner by Simon Chapman

Gem Runner

REVISED EDITION

An Entry in the 2011 Windhammer Prize for Short Gamebook Fiction
by Simon Christopher Chapman
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RULES

You are a Level 2 crystal construct on the gem planet D'Karr. Grown from a basic form of crystal, you have been raised to be part of a passive society dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. This, however, will change during your adventure in the Learning Prism.

Once the Rules have been read, proceed to the Background. Then read the first paragraph, marked **1**. From there, you may make choices as to how the adventure will proceed by choosing numbered options. The goal is to finish the adventure successfully at entry **100**.

Traits

Whilst in the Learning Prism, you will on occasion be forced to defend yourself and as such must rely on two important personal traits. These are SPEED and DURABILITY respectively.

SPEED is determined at the beginning of *every Attack Round* by rolling **2D6** and adding the result together. This trait determines whether or not you were able to use a Gem against a foe before they attacked you.

DURABILITY is determined by rolling **5D6** and adding the result, with this reflecting your overall endurance. This determines how much damage your form can sustain before being *shattered*, which results in instant death.

Combat

During the course of the adventure, you may find Gems scattered throughout the Learning Prism. While these Gems may be used in combat, this is hazardous as you are not trained in their use. As such, *every time* you use a Gem you must roll **1D6** to determine the effect:

1 The effect has recoiled and damaged *you*. If the intended effect reduces your DURABILITY to zero or is indicated to be an outright kill, the adventure is over.

2 – 5 Normal damage to opponent

6 *Double* the indicated damage to opponent

It is permissible to use a *different* Gem on each Attack Round without penalty, but the roll to determine the effect *still* applies.

Note that certain Gems will inflict a *Status Effect* as opposed to actual damage. Once again, a roll of a **1D6** is necessary:

1 Status Effect imposed on *yourself*

2 – 6 Status Effect imposed on *opponent*

Gem types

Being a novice, your understanding of Gems is very limited. As such, when you find a Gem and then choose to use it in combat, you must first roll **1D6** as per the Combat instructions and then turn to the relevant page to determine what the effect is. Also note that each Gem will only have a limited charge, and given your status you will be unable to recharge Gems. Therefore, if an entry states a Gem only has three charges, then it may only be used three times during the course of the adventure.

NOTE! If you have expended *all* charges on *all* Gems in your possession, and have *no* means to fight an opponent, then the adventure is over. Learning how to ration Gem charges and use the *correct* Gem against an opponent is the key to success.

Combat Example

1. You encounter a GRIFFIN, which attacks you. Commence the Attack Round by rolling **2D6** for SPEED. If your SPEED is *higher* than the GRIFFIN, go to 2. If the GRIFFIN's SPEED is *higher*, go to 3. If your rolls are *equal*, then both attacks were successfully blocked and you must commence another Attack Round.
2. You reacted first and may use a Gem. You opt for a SILVER GEM, and roll **1D6** to determine if you have used the Gem correctly. A roll of 4 determines that the Gem will affect the GRIFFIN.
3. You then turn to the appropriate entry for a description of the effect, which in this case is a SONIC WAVE that inflicts 6 points of damage on the GRIFFIN, reducing its DURABILITY by the same amount. Now go to 4.
4. The GRIFFIN reacted first and attacks with its claws, inflicting 8 points of damage and reduces your DURABILITY by the same amount. Now go to 4.
5. The Attack Round is over and another roll for SPEED is necessary. Combat continues until the DURABILITY of either yourself or your opponent reaches 0. Due to the often confining nature of the Learning Prism, escape from combat is *not* possible.
6. Remember that each Gem used in combat will only have a limited number of charges, and that lost DURABILITY is not restored until you discover a way to heal yourself.

SAMPLE COMBAT SHEET

MAXIMUM DURABILITY:

CURRENT:

GEMS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

NOTES:

BACKGROUND

Guided by the Elders, the leaders of your society on D’Karr, your people have gathered and stored in the Wall of Knowledge all that has been learnt about your world and what is simply referred to as “the space beyond”. As a Level 2 construct, you have yet to be allowed even limited access to the Wall, being instructed for now to simply gather more crystals for use in information storage. While your fellow constructs are content with their role and alternate between work and hibernation, you are not.

What to do? This has never happened before in a thousand generations of constructs. Insurrection is unthinkable – the Wardens would seize you, your memory crystals would be wiped and you would be reprogrammed into an obedient, unquestioning drone. You suddenly decide on a plan: if you could enter one of the Learning Prisms undetected, you might be able to reach the Wall of Knowledge. Once there, you may be able to find answers about yourself and the source of your discontent. A dangerous plan, but the only plan you have.

The question now is how? During your routine trips past the closest Learning Prism, you noticed a slight gap near the apex of the structure. It might be possible to climb up the side of the crystals, and then slide down into the Prism itself. At the thought of this plan you are filled with a strange sensation, which seems to drive you on. At the commencement of the next hibernation cycle, you quietly slip away and make your way to the Learning Prism. Your plan works perfectly, as you are able to ascend to the apex of the Prism and slide down into a soft pile of crystal dust. Suddenly there is a sound off to the side. A *Warden!*

This massively built being is a Level 4 construct, and three times your size. Each Warden is also equipped with a large crystal lance...which is now levelled at you! More strange sensations flood over you as another Warden enters the chamber from another doorway. This Warden holds an object you have only even seen as a hologram in tutorials – a *Dimension Gem!*

Realizing you are now caught between the two Wardens, you duck as the first fires a beam of invisible force from its lance. Your entire form shakes as the beam passes over you and strikes the other Warden, knocking it off its feet and shattering the Dimension Gem. A sudden flood of energy explodes outward and for a moment everything turns white...

When your vision clears, you find yourself alone, in what is now a very different room. The walls, floor, ceiling and even doors have changed. There is no sign of the Wardens. The last thing you saw was the Dimension Gem shatter, and deduce the energies released have altered the very structure of the Learning Prism. What now?

NOW TURN OVER TO PLAY GEM RUNNER

1

Deciding you cannot remain in this room for fear of discovery, you move towards the only two doorways now available. Which will you choose?

West? Go to **24**
East? Go to **88**

2

Note: this chamber will be empty if you have been here before, and you may go to the next entry.

You follow the tunnel down for a time, and it then slopes up at a steep gradient until you finally come out on a small outcropping of crystal that overlooks a large cavern filled with water (*Water? How did you know to call it that?*). You study the water for a moment, watching as it gently laps against the crystal walls. It is almost hypnotic...then you notice something on the far side of the cavern. Was that a small island? It seems to be gone now. You notice the water begins to move in small waves, and then froth and churn. A large, dark shape appears to be moving through the water, and before you can step back, a huge marine creature suddenly surges up at you. A giant pincer knocks you into the water – deduct 3 from your DURABILITY. If you are still alive, you slowly stand – now waist deep in water – and prepare to battle the advancing creature.

GIANT CRAYFISH

SPEED 2D6

DURABILITY 18

Damage inflicted per attack – 6 points.

If you win, go to **59**.

3

You are knocked from the block by the flying creature before you can even react. You fall for hundreds of feet into the chasm before your form is shattered on the rocks below. Your adventure is over.

4

You materialize in a small chamber with a warped, sloping ceiling. Otherwise, there is nothing notable here.

West? Go to **55**
East? Go to **32**
South? Go to **21**

5

You press the square. Almost immediately coils of dark energy leap out of the square and bind you in a pitch-dark cocoon. You have obviously pressed the wrong square and are now a prisoner. You can now only await the arrival of the WARDENS. Your adventure is over.

6

Despite your best efforts, the Tablet suddenly snaps in half as you wrench at it and dissolves into crystal dust. Cursing (*cursing?*) your bad luck, you continue to inspect the cavern and eventually find a very large path that again appears as if it has been blasted out of the stone at the rear of the cavern. With no other choice, you follow the path up. Go to **19**.

7

You race quickly over the damaged floor and snatch up the Gem, and retreat from the chamber just as the entire floor collapses. You study your prize and discover it is in fact a PURPLE GEM (Turn to 12 when wishing to use). On the Gem itself the words "For those of the Earth" are etched.

Return to 63.

8

As you stand on the podium, you again hear the familiar crackling sound and experience disorientation as you are teleported away...go to 100.

9

You decide to go east. The corridor becomes more tunnel-like and branches off to the left and right. Which way?

Left? Go to 93

Right? Go to 77

10

Roll for SPEED and deduct 1. If you roll 1 – 6, turn to 97. If you roll 7 -11, turn to 82.

11

You enter the pyramid, and note the door silently shuts behind you. The structure itself appears to be hollow, and is dominated by eight huge crystal pillars that jut from the floor at various intervals. You know from experience these are Power Nodes, which the Elders use to maintain the systems on D'Karr. They can be programmed to perform virtually any function.

Each is inset with a hand plate, which is the means of using the Access Port. You, however, are painfully (*painfully?*) aware of the fact that you are not trained in their use and that any attempt to do so could be hazardous.

With no obvious way to exit the pyramid, you realize you once again have no choice but to proceed. Which Access Port will you touch first?

White? Go to 95

Yellow? Go to 76

Orange? Go to 87

Red? Go to 68

Purple? Go to 51

Blue? Go to 34

Green? Go to 15

Black? Go to 65

12

PURPLE GEM

Heal: Restores 12 to DURABILITY. May only be used **twice** before needing to be recharged. Note that a PURPLE Gem can be used at any time, including during combat. This is permissible *only* if you have won the Attack Round. Using a Gem defensively during combat means that as your opponent was not attacked, they are *not harmed* on that Attack Round.

13

You materialize and suddenly discover you cannot move. You examine your surroundings and realize you have materialized within a crystal spire! Now helpless, you hope you are eventually discovered by the Wardens, as opposed to being trapped forever. Neither option is favorable. Your adventure is over.

14

Having defeated the strange creature, you decide to carefully inspect its pouch. Inside you find a long, slender rod with small indentations - an Elder Key! If at any time you think you may have found a use for the key, add 61 to the current reference and turn to the new entry. If you have chosen correctly, the new entry will make sense. Go to 25.

15

You touch the Green Power Node and wait. For a moment, nothing happens. Then there is a grinding sound and you notice the Access Port sliding into the floor. In fact, *all* the Access Ports are retreating into the ground. You also notice the walls of the pyramid seem to be closer...the pyramid is contracting! Realising you have accidentally activated a defence procedure, you can do nothing but wait to be crushed as the pyramid slowly contracts and retreats into the floor...

16

You press the square and wait. A rain of freezing, razor-sharp icicles suddenly pelts you mercilessly. Deduct 4 STAMINA Points. Staggering to your feet you realize you obviously pressed the wrong square and must choose again. Return to 80.

17

You materialize and find yourself floating in space. You suddenly realize you have been teleported into orbit above D'Karr! Although immune to the rigors of space, you now appear to be doomed to float in orbit around your home world...forever. You are contemplating this grim fate when you are caught in another dimensional flux and teleported once again. Go to 98.

18

You decide to examine your foe and find a small pouch with several items of no value to you: a jar of some kind of liquid, objects that appear to be sustenance and sharp metal objects that may be weapons. The last item, however, immediately captures your attention - it is a BLACK GEM, the rarest of all Gems (Turn to 99 when wishing to use in combat). As you store the Gem, you look down at your fallen foe and feel that this is familiar...almost as if you have been in this situation before. With no immediate answer, and no choice but to exit, you now climb down and return to the main passage (63).

19

You emerge into a huge cavern that seems to stretch for miles. Small ponds of water (*water?*) dot the cavern floor as it disappears into the gloom. Your attention, however, goes to a large shape that lies lifelessly off you left. It appears to be a large scaled reptile, some sixty feet long. You note that one side of its mottled blue hide is charred and ruined, with smoke still wafting from the blackened skin. The head rests at an awkward angle, with a blue-black tongue lolling from a slightly open mouth, in which you glimpse sharp teeth as long as your body. You deduce this creature must have materialized and been the cause of the disturbances in the lower cavern, and somehow forced its way up here. You also note the massive talons and wonder what could have slain such a beast.

As if on cue, an old man suddenly appears in front of you. You study his humanoid form: the pale fleshy complexion, fragile build and long flowing robes and although you have never seen another being like him are somehow accepting. He smiles at you and nods at the dead creature. "A Blue Dragon. And not a very happy one at that. Obviously caught a dimensional rift like myself. It didn't want to listen to reason so I was forced to defend myself." The old man pauses to study you. "Now that I have seen you my friend, I know where I am. Although I am curious as to why I am here. But first, let me introduce myself. My name is Yaz--"

He suddenly peers closely at you and frowns. "Why, of all the things. You somehow remind me of someone else. Quite a famous fellow where I come from. Now why is that?" Before you can speak that familiar crackling sound begins and the old man speaks once more. "Ah, this would be my way home. Before I go, please take this. It may be of help as this is your adventure, not mine. I think I will have the answer to this riddle soon enough. But until then, allow me to bid you good luck once again. As I have done so many times before." With that, the old man smiles and dematerializes.

Strange. The old man, despite not being of D'Karr, was very familiar, and seemed to know you in turn. If only there had been more time! You look down at the object the old man gave you and see it is a WHITE GEM (turn to 27 when wishing to use in combat). You clench the Gem tightly and promise yourself you will find the answers you are seeking.

For now, however, there is the question of how to proceed. After walking for almost an hour through the cavern, you eventually see it end in a rounded, craggy wall. There is a small rift appearing and disappearing off to the west. You may enter this (56) or take a small pathway off the east (91).

20

Return to 63 and choose again if you have been here before.

The door opens easily enough and you see a long, dark corridor stretching out before you. You may proceed (33) or return to 63 and make another choice.

21

You materialize...and instantly de-materialize! The dimensional accident is obviously still warping reality in the Learning Prism. Go to 1.

22

Although the crystals splinter, the crevice takes your weight and you are able to pull yourself up. You look up and notice that there is small entrance to what appears to be a crystal cave far above you. Although steep, you might be able to climb up and investigate. What will you do?

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| Investigate? | Go to 48. |
| Climb safely back to the floor and out of the chamber? | Go to 63. |

23

You pass through the doors, which quickly shut behind you – once again, you are being driven forward. You walk down a small set of stairs and down a long corridor, which eventually opens out into a very large cavern. You now stand on a long ledge at the edge of a chasm and look across the darkness at what appears to be another ledge on the far side, some several hundred feet away. Floating above the chasm and level with the ledge, are five crystal blocks of various sizes, arranged in a row of five:

X X X X X

Each looks as though it could support your weight, although you are unsure as to how the blocks can float in mid-air, much less transport you across the chasm. You also notice a small column of stone that rises off to the right and by the edge of the chasm. It is topped by a small, raised crystal face with a circular indentation in the middle. You stare at this for a moment, but without the correct object to insert it is pointless.

Returning your attention the blocks, you note you could easily step onto any of the first five blocks, but the question is which one?

- The first block? Go to **35**
- The second block? Go to **64**
- The third block? Go to **75**
- The fourth block? Go to **78**
- The fifth block? Go to **96**

24

As you pass warily through the archway, there is a faint crackling sound and a moment of disorientation. You then find yourself in the middle of a circular room with four doorways. The doorway you just entered teleported you to a different room!

Realizing that reaching the Wall of Knowledge could now be next to impossible – let alone escape from the Learning Prism – you decide to keep moving.

Which doorway will you choose?

- North Go to **46**
- West? Go to **71**
- East? Go to **32**
- South? Go to **49**

25

You spy a doorway at the top of the stairs, and after a final glance back at the chamber, pass through. You instantly dematerialize and reappear a moment later before the four crystal doors once again. Go to **63**.

26

You materialize in a tiny chamber and are met by a grim sight. A WARDEN's arm protrudes from the wall off to your right, the hand reaching out as if seeking escape. You deduce that the WARDEN must have been caught in the dimensional shift and materialized in the wall, or vice versa. You turn away and note there is only one exit to the north, and without a backward glance pass through the portal. Go to **32**.

27

WHITE GEM

Supernova: Creates the event for two seconds and instantly vaporizes any opponent. Note that this also applies to multiple opponents, irrespective of their number. May only be used once before needing to be recharged.

28

You pass through the now harmless door and stand in a long, rectangular chamber. You recognize this as a Hall of the Elders. You must be near your goal. You walk cautiously towards the double doors at the far end of the hall.

As you do so, a SKELETON WARRIOR materializes in front of you! It raises a large hand axe and serrated sword menacingly, but suddenly fades away. Perplexed, you continue. You have only walked a few more steps when a GIANT CYCLOPS materializes off to your right. It immediately spies you with its giant, yellow eye and bellows mightily while raising a gigantic spiked mace. You take a step back and are relieved to see the creature fade away, like the Skeleton Warrior before it. Obviously, the dimensional accident is still warping reality in this room.

You carefully move forward, and just as you are mere feet from the door, a STONE GOLEM materializes. Ten feet tall, the creature has been created in the image of a demon from the Orient. It has three eyes, a fanged mouth frozen in a perpetual snarl, four arms and wears barbed armor. The Golem wields a massive stone weapon in each hand – a scimitar, a wavy dagger, a trident and a club. Although you retreat and wait for the Golem to fade away, it does not occur. This time, you must fight.

As you reach for a Gem, *you wonder how you knew what each of these creatures were...*

STONE GOLEM

SPEED 2D6 – 2 (moves slowly)

DURABILITY 36

Damage inflicted per attack – Instant Kill: any blow will shatter your form.

The GOLEM is a magical being and cannot be blinded and is immune to fire (including a supernova); ice, poison and most physical harm (force and pain).

Do you have another Gem? If so, turn to the relevant reference. If not, you are defenceless and the GOLEM shatters your form with the first blow. Your adventure is over.

If you have the correct Gem and win, go to **81**.

29

Although painstaking, you eventually free the Tablet and are able to inspect it. It is in fact a guide to the Power Nodes, which the Elders use to operate Learning Prisms and many other features on D’Karr.

The guide explains that Blue and Yellow when charged power the Learning Prisms, Black is for access, Orange and Red are used to store offensive Gems, Purple is for healing, White is for defense and summons the Wardens and Green hides the Power Nodes and surrounding receptacle, but to be used safely also requires a sonic note known only to the Elders. This is valuable information, and may assist you in the future.

You continue to inspect the cavern and eventually find a very large path that again appears as if it has been blasted out of the stone at the rear of the cavern. With no other choice, you follow the path up. Go to **19**.

30

You study the shattered form of your opponent and realize that there is truly no going back – the penalty for destroying a Warden would be unthinkable. You also note the Warden’s lance has dissolved into crystal dust, and curse (*curse?*) your bad luck (*luck?*) as it would have been a valuable weapon.

You turn and move to examine the pyramid, a massive structure that appears to be completely smooth and devoid of any markings except for strange symbols lining the entire base. You notice that a stone is missing from the base, but other than this cannot find anything of note.

In fact, after inspecting the room you discover there is now no way to exit. With no way to access the pyramid or even leave the room, you are trapped, and must wait for the Wardens to discover you. At best, you will be reprogrammed, and at worst...

Your adventure is over.

31

You emerge in a large room capped by a multi-colored crystal dome. The only other noticeable feature is a hexagonal door set into the wall on the far side of the chamber. With no other options, you gently push the door open. As you do so there is a sudden flash of blue current and a brittle, crackling sound. You quickly step back but seem to be unharmed. Looking down, however, you realize that the effect has neutralized *two* of your Gems, which are now dull and grey! The door must have contained a deadening field! You may choose *which* two Gems to discard, but must not check what their purpose is first. After making your choice, go to 28.

32

Note: this chamber will be empty if you have been here before, and you may go to the next entry.

You materialize in a large chamber. Although immune to temperature extremes, you notice the air is freezing and have difficulty moving as ice begins to form on your body.

You then observe a large armored form with its back to you. The armor appears to be totally empty – there is no helmet or even head, and yet despite this it is moving slightly as it examines its surroundings. You move slightly and the armor instantly whirls, which you now notice is holding a huge serrated blade covered in ice. It appears that the armor's blade is the source of the intense cold. Without hesitation, it raises the blade and advances towards you.

This opponent is immune to cold. Do you have a Gem that can actually inflict harm (not just a Status effect)? If not, your adventure is over.

If you do, you may battle the ICE WARRRIOR.

ICE WARRIOR

SPEED 2D6

DURABILITY 12

Damage inflicted per attack – 6 points.

If you win, turn to 61.

33

The corridor eventually opens up into a small cavern with a very high ceiling. As you gaze up at the crystals jutting from the walls, you notice something moving. It takes a moment to pinpoint the source of the movement as it appears to be a clear, thick liquid that is now running down the side of the wall. You watch with fascination as the liquid reaches the floor and pools together to form a large, heaving blob. The blob trembles as it undulates and rolls slowly towards you...

Do you have a Blue Gem? If so, you can turn to the relevant reference for instructions, and then return to 63.

If you do not possess a Blue Gem, your adventure is over as you have no way of neutralizing the GIANT AMOEBA, which now oozes over your form and slowly dissolves your body...

34

You touch the Blue Power Node and are immediately electrocuted by diverted current running through faulty crystals! Deduct 6 points from your DURABILITY. If you are still alive, return to 11.

35

You jump onto the block, which immediately plummets into the chasm. You fall for hundreds of feet before your form is shattered on the rocks below. Your adventure is over.

36

Return to 63 and choose again if you have been here before.

You open the door and move immediately into a large, hexagonal chamber. As you study the room you hear a crack and look down to see the floor sags dangerously and is on the verge of collapsing. You are about to turn back when you notice several Gems scattered on the floor on the far side of the room. On closer examination you notice three Gems that are almost close enough to reach and are not too near the damaged floor. Each is covered in dust and obscured by crystals so it is difficult to ascertain what properties they may possess.

Which gem will you try for?

The first? Go to **44**

The second? Go to **60**

The third? Go to **7**

Decide to leave? Go to **63**

37

You press the square. Almost immediately coils of solid light leap out of the square and bind you in a cocoon of blinding white light. You have obviously pressed the wrong square and are now a prisoner. You can now only await the arrival of the WARDENS. Your adventure is over.

38

ORANGE GEM

Fire: causes 6 points of damage. May only be used three times before needing to be recharged.

39

You materialize in a room lit by hundreds of multi-colored crystals. After taking a moment to admire the display, you examine the three possible exits.

North? Go to **13**

West? Go to **24**

South? Go to **17**

40

Despite your best efforts, you cannot stop your fall and plunge hundreds of feet into an underground river. The river sweeps you with tremendous force into a rocky outcropping, shattering your crystal form. Your adventure is over.

41

Your warily proceed along the northern path, which widens and becomes very even. The rough walls become a perfectly shaped corridor, lit by dozens of multi-colored crystals. This is obviously a section of the Learning Prism that was not warped by the dimensional accident. You exit the corridor and enter a huge room, with a large crystal pyramid occupying the very centre. Before you can approach the pyramid, however, your attention is drawn to movement off to your left - you see a WARDEN standing over the remains of a strange creature. It resembles a large serpent with wings and was obviously yet another of the creatures brought to the Learning Prism by the dimensional accident.

The WARDEN suddenly looks up and becomes aware of your presence! It immediately raises its lance and releases a wave of force at you. Anticipating this, you are able to dive to the side, although the blast has struck the entrance to the room and caused tons of rubble to fall and block your only exit.

You have no choice but to fight:

WARDEN

SPEED 2D6

DURABILITY 12

Damage inflicted per attack – 8 points.

If you win, go to **30**.

42

You realize the ceiling is about to cave-in and react quickly. On instinct you dive to the left and find a wall and touch the edge of a doorway. You dive through and dematerialize just as thousands of tons of crystal plunge down.

How many traps have I managed to avoid across the three continents? Enough to keep in any storyteller in business for years! You suddenly wonder why you thought this. Go to **71**.

43

You press the square and wait. After a moment, the doors silently swing open to admit you. Go to **23**.

44

You race quickly over the damaged floor and snatch up the Gem, and retreat from the chamber just as the entire floor collapses. You study your prize and discover it is in fact an empty Gem casing – it has yet to be instilled with a function and charged. You discard the Gem casing and move on. Go to **63**.

45

You leave the chamber behind, having survived once again. You pass down a small corridor of crystal until arriving at a large crystal door. You cautiously enter. Go to **31**.

46

You materialize in a perfectly square chamber.

Disregard if you have been here before: Your attention is drawn to a faint blue glow in the northern wall. On closer inspection it appears the glow is emanating from a BLUE GEM, which you carefully pry from the crystal wall (Turn to **83** when wishing to use in combat).

There are three exits:

North? Go to **55**

West? Go to **24**

East? Go to **4**

47

The tunnel twists and turns and eventually ends in a small grotto. As you scan the area, you notice a block of finely crafted crystal protruding from the floor. It is marked with several symbols, which you recognize as the language of the Elders, a tongue they only speak amongst themselves. Although the meaning is incomprehensible, you decide to commit the symbols to memory in case they prove useful at a later time.

If at any time you think you have found a use for the symbols, add **32** to the entry and go to the new entry. If you have chosen correctly the new entry will make sense.

Suddenly the familiar crackling sound occurs and you begin to fade away, finding yourself once again in the chamber with the four doors.

Four? Not now: you notice that the southern door you previously entered is now blocked by a solid wall of crystal, undoubtedly caused by further dimensional warping.

Return to **24**, and note that **49** is no longer an option.

48

You climb up cautiously but still sustain some minor injuries from several sharp outcroppings. Deduct 1 DURABILITY POINT. Pulling yourself up, you discover a very high tunnel of crystal that slopes down. You follow the tunnel and note the ceilings and walls are perfectly smooth, and glow in gentle purple hues. The tunnel suddenly dips and opens into a large, circular room. This was obviously a storage chamber for Gems as you note the empty, obsidian racks that occupy the centre of the chamber. You are about to move forward and investigate when you notice a strange humanoid figure crouched by the racks. The figure is clothed entirely in black robes, which also covers its face with the exception of the eyes. Sensing you have discovered it, the figure immediately pulls two swords (*swords?*) of differing lengths from scabbards on its back and circles you warily. You attempt to communicate but the figure disregards this and attacks. You must now defend yourself.

NINJA

SPEED 2D6 + 2 (**moves very quickly**)

DURABILITY 6

Damage inflicted per attack – 4 points.

If you win, go to 18.

49

You materialize in a small cavern with a large number of crystal columns protruding at odd angles from the walls. As such, it is difficult to move. You suddenly take note of three small tunnels – little more than crawl spaces – set into the back wall of the cavern.

You move forward to examine the tunnels, but once again hear the familiar crackling sound and begin to fade away...before suddenly reappearing! Perhaps the crystal columns are interfering with the teleportation?

With no other way to leave the cavern and no guarantee that the teleportation effect caused by the dimensional accident will occur again, you are forced to explore the small tunnels. Which will you choose?

The first tunnel? Go to 70

The second tunnel? Go to 86

The third tunnel? Go to 47

50

You cautiously slide through the opening, and find yourself in a narrow tunnel no more than two feet wide.

You slowly inch through the tunnel, which slopes down and east and eventually opens up into a medium-sized cavern. The cavern is curious in that the crystal ceiling is translucent, and you are able to see what appears to be another cavern filled with water (*Water? How did you know to call it that?*) above you. There also appears to be a dark, odd shape moving in the water.

Disregard if you have been here before: As you move closer to study this, your foot strikes an object. Looking down, you see a GREEN GEM buried in the mud (Turn to 66 when wishing to use in combat). After retrieving the Gem, you look up to see that the shape has moved away. Seeing no other exit, you return to the narrow tunnel and slowly make your way back to the main passage. Which way?

Back to the left passage? Go to 93

Continue down the passage? Go to 2

51

You touch the Purple Power Node and are immediately calmed. Regain 6 DURABILITY POINTS. The Power Node now loses its purple hue and turns clear. Return to 11.

52

The cavern is large but cluttered with stalagmites. You note many of the stalagmites have been crushed or partially destroyed, and appear as if something heavy struck them. The cause, however, does not appear to be evident. As you carefully search the area you suddenly discover an Elder Tablet partially stuck in a large stalagmite! This could prove invaluable as Elder Tablets explain the workings of Learning Prisms. The information contained in the Tablet might be the key to understanding your current dilemma. You must be careful, however, not to damage the Tablet in trying to pry it free of the stalagmite.

You grip the Tablet and feel it move slightly. Will you attempt to carefully swivel it from its current position and then try and wrench it free (6) or use a small broken stalactite lying nearby and try to chisel around the surrounding stone (29)?

53

You cautiously walk down the dark passage, feeling your wall along the wall. After moving forward about twenty feet, there is a familiar crackling sound and moment of disorientation. You have been teleported! You suddenly find yourself in familiar surroundings – you are in your hibernation cubicle in your designated Level 2 area! Although you have survived, the adventure is over. The Wardens will report the occurrence to the Elders, with the dimensional accident corrected and the Learning Prism no doubt sealed. Perhaps another opportunity will present itself in the future. For now, your adventure is over.

54

You press the square and wait. A circle of white fire immediately springs up around you, and unlike normal fire, it sears as you attempt to cross it. Deduct 4 STAMINA Points. The flames suddenly subside as quickly as they appeared. You obviously pressed the wrong square and must choose again. Return to 80.

55

You materialize in a small chamber with almost no light. You are about to search for a wall when you hear a loud grating sound from above. Roll for SPEED. If your roll is 1 -6, turn to 94. If your roll is 7 - 12, turn to 42.

56

You materialize inside a small booth, and realize this is a Learning Hive for newly initiated Elders. There is a bank of colored crystals on the wall to the side of the Hive, and you marvel at what knowledge must be stored within. You randomly select a crystal and gently pull it from the wall slot. The crystal describes the various wards the Elders have placed on doors to their inner sanctum, and warns of the dangers of light and darkness. Before you can read further, you hear the familiar crackling sound and dematerialize. You reappear on a pathway. Go to 91.

57

YELLOW GEM

Light: opponent blinded for two rounds. Deduct 4 from opponent's roll for SPEED for these two rounds. May only be used once before needing to be recharged.

58

You stand on the podium, which shoots with pile driving force into the ceiling before slowly descending once again. Your form is of course completely shattered by this lethal safeguard. Your adventure is over.

59

The creature's carcass slowly sinks back into the water, and you decide to leave the cavern.

Roll **1D6**. On a roll of **5-6**, turn to **90**.

Walking back up the main tunnel, you notice that there has been a slight cave-in – probably caused by the battle – that has blocked the small opening in the wall. Returning to the fork, you can now take the left passage (**93**) or return to the crossroads and go either north (**41**) or west (**63**).

60

You quickly race over the damaged floor and snatch up the Gem...and turn just as the floor finally collapses, plunging you down hundreds of feet onto solid stone, where your crystal form shatters. Your adventure is over.

61

With the creature's defeat, the temperature is rising once again. You stand over the remains of your opponent and study the now ruined armor and blade. It was obviously not indigenous to D'Karr, and must have been drawn here by the Dimension Gem. If true, then it is also possible that *other* creatures were drawn here...

Pondering this grim thought, you exit via a sole portal to the north, and materialize at the top of a set of stairs. At last! It appears you are free of the maze and finally able to travel in a linear direction. Buoyed once more by strange sensations, you cautiously make your way down the stairs, which end in a corridor of crystal that turns north and becomes a crossroads. Which way?

North? Go to **41**
West? Go to **63**
East? Go to **9**

62

The missing crystal block...you realize you have seen such a block before, covered with the same symbols. It must have been wrenched from the pyramid by the dimensional accident.

Suddenly inspired, you pick up a sharp piece of crystal and etch the symbols you previously saw into the crystal behind the gap the missing block should occupy. The symbols around the entire base of the pyramid flare for a moment as a hidden door silently slides open in the middle of the structure. With no other option, you cautiously enter. Go to **11**.

63

You travel west for several hundred feet, before arriving in an open area with four large crystal doors against the far west wall. You may try to open a door:

First door? Go to **20**
Second door? Go to **36**
Third door? Go to **69**
Fourth door? Go to **85**

or alternatively return to the crossroads and travel north (**41**) or east (**9**).

64

You jump onto the block, which immediately plummets into the chasm. You fall for hundreds of feet before your form is shattered on the rocks below. Your adventure is over.

65

You touch the Black Power Node and a panel opens in the floor in the very centre of the pyramid. You peer into the gap in the floor and see a set of stairs leading down. You may use this exit now (80) or first examine the other Power Nodes (11).

66

GREEN GEM

Poison: causes 6 points of damage for 3 rounds of combat. May only be used *twice* before needing to be recharged.

Note that opponents may *still* attack even if poisoned and that this is the one Gem that will *not* affect you, as you are a being of living crystal. Also note that the same rule applies to WARDENS. If you were unaware of this and have inadvertently used the Gem against a WARDEN, then that counts as your Attack Round and the Gem is now useless.

67

The creature plunges silently into the chasm, leaving you to complete your journey. The block stops gently before the ledge, and you cautiously step onto it.

Before you is a sheer wall of stone, so what now? In crossing the chasm have you simply marooned yourself on the other side? You study the rock wall before you as you ponder this question and suddenly realize it has depth...

Looking at the wall from another angle, you realize there is in fact a cleverly camouflaged opening into a rocky passage in front of the platform, which you cautiously step into. The passage is long and steep and eventually winds up onto level ground. Go to 96.

68

You touch the Red Power Node and a small panel in the pillar opens to reveal a RED GEM (Turn to 92 when wishing to use in combat) with ONE charge. Now return to 11.

69

Return to 63 and choose again if you have been here before.

You open the door and study what appears to be a small empty room. You about to turn and leave when you suddenly notice a large jagged hole, about ten feet in diameter, blasted into the western wall. You suddenly feel a slight tremor and hear a very faint sound, which almost sounded like a hiss. You may try to run up the wall and grab the edge and climb up (10) or return to the main passage (63).

70

The tunnel is small, but you are able to crawl through for at least twenty feet until reaching a dead end. You are about to awkwardly crawl back when you notice a small amber crystal protruding from a wall near the floor. It appears to be a Memory Crystal: a device used by the Elders to teach novices about their past. You cautiously touch the Crystal which is warm to the touch. Almost immediately images, seen from your perspective, gently waft across the Crystal: a large red gem being held before a striking man in robes; a war hammer being assembled from two halves; a dwelling underneath a bridge on a rain-swept river and finally someone emerging from a tunnel and being cheered by an excited crowd. Odd.

Although not your memories, you are very accepting of what you have just witnessed. As the Crystal cannot be removed the wall and there is no exit, you must crawl back (49) and choose again.

71

You arrive in a small chamber full of broken crystals.

Disregard if you have been here before: Glancing at the rubble, you notice something glimmering faintly and almost covered by gem dust.

Bending to inspect the item, you discover it is in fact a RED GEM (Turn to 92 when wishing to use in combat), one of the rare artifacts used by the Elders and forbidden to constructs such as yourself. You take the Gem and slip it into a crevice in your right arm where it fits perfectly.

Which way to exit?

North? Go to 55 (*Now blocked if you have visited here*)

South? Go to 39

72

You press the square and wait. You suddenly find yourself being lifted at least twenty feet into the air and are suddenly dashed into the floor. Deduct 4 STAMINA Points. You obviously pressed the wrong square and must choose again. Return to 80.

73

The crevice takes your weight, and you are able to climb up and out of the chamber. Return to 63.

74

You follow the passage around until it ends in a small cavern, with further access blocked by a collapsed wall. It appears as though the wall materialized *in* the cavern during the dimensional accident. You can also hear the sound of water (*Water? How did you know to call it that?*) lapping gently against rock from behind and below the wall.

You are about to turn back when you see something glittering in the rubble at the base of the wall. Another Gem? You stoop to examine the source and discover it is simply glazed volcanic rock. As you discard the rock and turn however, you hear a familiar crackling sound and experience a moment of disorientation. You have been teleported!

Go to 71.

75

You jump onto the block, which holds your weight. You also notice something half buried in the top of the block, which is surprisingly brittle. On prying the object out you discover it is a YELLOW GEM (Turn to 57 when wishing to use in combat). Then something happens...the block begins to rise and drift! What now? You notice the block is slowly passing over the chasm towards the far side. You tremble with anticipation (*tremble with anticipation?*) as you near your goal.

Suddenly there is a loud, piercing cry and a huge flying creature swoops down towards you. Roll for SPEED. If you roll 1 – 6, turn to 3. If you roll 7 – 12, turn to 89.

76

You touch the Yellow Power Node but nothing happens. Return to 11 and choose again.

77

You take the right passage, which slopes down and around to the north. You suddenly notice a small opening in the wall on the left. It is just large enough to fit through. Will you explore it (50) or continue (2)?

78

You jump onto the block, which immediately plummets into the chasm. You fall for hundreds of feet before your form is shattered on the rocks below. Your adventure is over.

79

You successfully broke your fall! Catching yourself on an outcropping of rock, you swing precariously for a moment before spying two possible hand holds on the wall that might provide access back up, where you can just inch back around to the door. You can only swing and leap for one - which will you choose?

The first crevice? Go to **22**

The second crevice? Go to **73**

80

You descend the stairs, and note with no surprise that the panel in the floor slowly shuts behind you.

The stairs continue down for several hundred feet and eventually end at the start of a long corridor. You make your way down the corridor and eventually come to a set of large gilded doors. Inscribed above the doors is the word "Truth". To the right side of the doors are six medium-sized squares, each marked with a symbol, representing *Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Darkness* and *Light*. You ponder the inscription and the symbols and then decide to press one of the squares. Which one will you choose?

Air? Go to **72**

Earth? Go to **43**

Fire? Go to **54**

Water? Go to **16**

Darkness? Go to **5**

Light? Go to **37**

81

Victory! You somehow know that was your last opponent, and race through the double doors. You are now in a small room, devoid of any features except two crystal podiums. With no other exits, the podiums must be the key. Which will you stand on?

Left Go to **58**

Right Go to **8**

82

Success! You are able to run up the wall and firmly grab the rim of the hole. You carefully pull yourself up and study a very jagged corridor of stone that has been blasted out of the wall by some unknown event. You follow the path, on occasion ducking and weaving to avoid protruding fragments of stone, and eventually arrive just above a large, dim cavern. The path has sloped just enough for you to carefully slip down without harm. Turn to **52**.

83

BLUE GEM

Ice: opponent frozen solid for two rounds. May only be used *once* before needing to be recharged.

During the time an opponent is frozen time you may attack *twice* without needing a SPEED check (although a roll of a **1D6** is still necessary for the use of other Gems) or alternatively *escape*. Escape is only possible *once* with the use of this Gem.

84

You remember the Elder Key you took from the strange creature, and try it in the depression in the crystal face. It proves to be a perfect fit and on turning it to the right, the third crystal block glows brightly. This is obviously a way to bypass what is probably a deadly trap. Return to **23** and choose the third block (**75**).

85

Return to 63 and choose again if you have been here before.

You open the door and enter a large rectangular room. As soon as you step into the room the floor partially collapses! You now slide down part of the floor into a chasm. Roll **2D6** and test SPEED. If the roll was **2 – 6**, turn to **40**. If the roll was **7 – 12**, turn to **79**.

86

The second tunnel continues on for hundreds of feet before opening into a damp, dark cavern. You are contemplating exploring the cavern when there is a sudden flash of light and you note a sudden rise in temperature.

A large red horse (*how did you know what this creature was?*) wreathed in flames materializes before you, and as it rears up on its back legs defiantly, it fades away just as quickly. Where did such a creature come from? You reason the dimensional accident has obviously effected more than the simple structure of the Learning Prism.

Suddenly the familiar crackling sound occurs and you begin to fade away, finding yourself once again in the chamber with the four doors. Four? Not now: you notice that the southern door you previously entered is now blocked by a solid wall of crystal, undoubtedly caused by further dimensional warping.

Return to **24**, and note that **49** is no longer an option.

87

You touch the Orange Power Node and a small panel in the pillar opens to reveal an ORANGE GEM (Turn to **38** when wishing to use in combat) with ONE charge. Now return to **11**.

88

As you pass warily through the archway, there is a faint crackling sound and a moment of disorientation. You then find yourself in the middle of a circular room with two archways. The doorway you just entered teleported you to a different room! Realizing that reaching the Wall of Knowledge could now be next to impossible – let alone escape from the Learning Prism – you decide to keep moving.

West? Go to **4**

East? Go to **26**

89

You duck and narrowly avoid being struck as the creature passes overhead. Unfortunately, it lands on the far side of the chasm, and after a moment ascends to attack again. You are now forced to fight:

PTERODACTYL

SPEED 2D6

STAMINA 12

Damage inflicted per attack – 4 points.

For this battle you must deduct 2 from your SPEED rolls due to your inability to move. If the Pterodactyl, wins two successive Attack Rounds, turn to 3.

If you win, turn to 67.

90

You are about to turn away when you notice something glittering by the edge of the water. Stooping to inspect the object, you note it is partially covered in black ooze. You carefully wash the object in the water, which is revealed to be a YELLOW GEM (Turn to 57 when wishing to use in combat). You surmise it must have been in the stomach of the creature you have just killed. Now return to 59.

91

The path twists and turns east and to the south, and you walk for some time until you see light ahead. As you approach the path opens into a chamber of well-cut and polished crystal, with light emanating from groups of crystals placed at intermittent intervals around the chamber. As you approach you suddenly take note of a strange sight: there are three large statues of what appear to be wolves (*how did you know to call them that?*) near a set of stairs. All are very life-like, and have been carved with very aggressive expressions, as though about to attack. The detail is incredible, as you can even distinguish individual stone hairs on their hides.

There is a sudden hissing sound from above, and you look up to another strange creature that looks vaguely familiar. It appears to be a cross between a female humanoid and a reptile, having the head and torso of a female, but from the waist down possesses a thick, muscular tail. The creature's head is also distorted: in place of hair it possesses a crown of writhing serpents and has distinctly reptilian features. You also note it possesses a bow and a set of arrows, and wears a pouch at a belt on its waist. The creature slithers down the stairs at incredible speed, all the while staring intently at you. It notices you staring at it in turn and smiles and rears up at the base of the stairs expectantly. As you continue to stare at the creature, its' expression changes to one of anger and it strikes the ground with its tail several times. Clearly the creature expected something that did not happen. You glance at the wolves and surmise that this creature must be able to somehow petrify foes. Being composed of living crystal, you are obviously impervious to this effect. The creature draws its bow and prepares to attack:

GORGON

SPEED 2D6 + 4 (**moves very quickly**)

DURABILITY 6

Damage inflicted per attack – 2 points.

If you win, you decide to inspect the creature. Go to 14.

92

RED GEM

Pain: causes 5 points of damage. May only be used **ten** times before needing to be recharged.

93

You turn down the left passage, which becomes increasingly rocky. The passage veers to the north then east, and you notice a dark passage on your left leading off to the north. You may investigate (53), or continue (74).

94

Looking up, you see an already damaged ceiling cave-in and thousands of tons of crystal plunge down and shatter your form. Your adventure is over.

95

You touch the White Power Node...but immediately realize your mistake as it has summoned three WARDENS! They surround you, lances raised, and you realize your adventure is over...

96

You enter a large, rounded crystal chamber. As you walk across the room, you look down and see a strange sight. There are literally hundreds of rotting humanoid corpses lying just under the crystal floor. Some are only slightly decomposed, while others are mere husks, with bone protruding everywhere. As you bend down to peer more closely at the corpses, you are shocked to see one turn its head and look at you! Its mouth moves open and closed silently as if attempting speech and its fingers slowly open and close. You quickly recoil as the corpse suddenly drives a fist up through the crystal! You stagger back and lose your footing as the entire floor begins to split open and corpses force their way up, slowly inching their way towards you. A glance in both directions reveals the corpses have already blocked both exit points from the chamber. You now have no choice but to defend yourself.

Do you have the correct Gem? If you think you have a means of dealing with such a huge number of foes, turn to the relevant reference, then go to 45.

If you do not possess the correct Gem, or choose incorrectly (the reference will advise as to whether the Gem will effect multiple foes) the GHOULS overwhelm you and drag you down into the crystal floor, eventually shattering your form through sheer weight of numbers...

97

You try to run up the wall and grab the rim of the hole, but it is too slick and you fall back and hit the ground heavily. Deduct 2 STAMINA points. You decide to give up and leave. Return to 63.

98

You materialize at what appears to be your original starting point – the first chamber. Being in space, however, has taken its toll and for a time you will be slightly slower as you attempt to readjust to D’Karr’s gravity. Deduct 1 from all rolls for SPEED when next in combat, *but only during this encounter*. Go to 1.

99

BLACK GEM

Black hole: Creates the event for two seconds and opponent instantly reduced to molecules and drawn inside. Note that this also applies to multiple opponents, irrespective of their number. May only be used once before needing to be recharged.

100

You materialize to see a giant array of vertical blue crystals of various sizes. The Wall of Knowledge! At last! You slowly scan the Wall and see a multi-colored gem sitting on a raised dais in the centre of the structure. *A Dimension Gem!* With that Gem you could...you spin and raise your hand in one motion as you hear movement behind you.

Standing before you are two huge WARDENS, who flank a third, smaller figure. This last figure is a being composed of gold crystals and has prisms of various shades of purple projecting from its brow. You immediately recognize this being as an ELDER. The Elder raises one open hand in placation.

"Peace, young construct. I mean you no harm. I merely wish to explain and offer you a choice."

Confused, but still wary, you lower your arm. Once again, strange sensations flow through you.

"It has been hard for you. We realize that. The feeling that you did not belong and that you wished to be more. The realization that this could only come about if you left our world. This was all expected."

Although you agree with the Elder's assertion, you are curious as to how this was known and try to speak. The Elder, however, raises a hand again.

"Wait. I will explain all. Before today, you were of the belief that all there could be was our world, D'Karr. The notion that other places, other *worlds*, exist would seem preposterous. And yet, you now know it to be so, having seen what a Dimension Gem is capable of. The creatures you encountered represent a fraction of the life on one world. Just one. There are millions more. The Elders have known of this for many cycles, and have spent many more studying these worlds, and cataloguing all within our memory crystals. This accumulated knowledge was to be made available to all on our world. At first we tried to add the information to the codex that all birthing constructs receive, but it was too much. The sheer volume of information overloaded the crystals and an entire clutch was lost. All but one. That one was you. For some reason, you and you alone accepted the information and survived.

To this day we do not truly know why, although early scans of your mind revealed a subconscious affiliation with the information we have gathered on a particular being. This being is the greatest champion on the world those creatures hail from. We believe that somehow, an impression of this champion was imprinted upon your codex...hence your restlessness and desire for exploration, which in turn brought you here.

We watched your progress, and in truth could have intervened at any time. But, we chose not to. We wished to see just how determined you truly were. Now we know."

The Elder stops speaking for a moment, while you gaze at the floor and slowly assimilate everything you have been told. Although incredible, it all made sense. It also explains the strange sensations you felt...

"Feelings", said the Elder, as if divining your thoughts. "Now, the choice I spoke of. If you wish, I can remove your memory of all that has happened and you may re-join our society as an unsuspecting construct who will serve a useful if innocuous purpose in the order of things. Or...if you wish you may explore your new state of being and leave D'Karr. We would offer a Dimension Gem and a full arsenal of twenty self-charging Gems for your use. This we offer freely, as it is we and we alone that are responsible for what has happened.

You study the Elder and mull over his words for a long moment before making your decision. You turn and approach the Dimension Gem, and notice as you reach for it that your arm has become less bulky, with fewer protruding crystals. As you marvel at this the Elder's words carry over your shoulder.

"You are slowly becoming more like the champion imprinted in your codex. Perhaps, in time, you may also care to decide on a *name*. Other forms of life often do this to distinguish themselves from others."

You nod, and still thinking, reach for the gem. What is happening to your mouth? Why does it slowly curl up? Although completely foreign, it is not an unpleasant sensation. It continues as you touch the Gem and scan the images that cross its many facets.

Which world to explore first?

END

Trivia

The full set of twenty Gems:

Base Gems

AGATE
AQUA
BLUE
EMERALD
GREEN
ORANGE
PURPLE
RED
RUBY
SILVER
YELLOW
MOONSTONE
OBSIDIAN
TOPAZ

Effect

Invulnerability
Invisibility
Ice
Intangibility
Poison
Fire
Heal
Pain
Enhanced speed
Sonic
Light
Telepathy
Darkness
Telekinesis

Master Gems

BLACK
DIAMOND
GOLD
PRISMATIC
SAPPHIRE
WHITE

Effect

Black hole
Alter reality
Matter transmutation
Dimensional travel
Teleportation
Supernova