

Time Land magik

The trilogy



Setting the scene

PLUS A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR ADVENTURERS

Time and magik

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—CREDITS—

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If you have not played a Level 9 adventure before, please read all these instructions. If you are an experienced Level 9 adventurer, skip to the preface and just read that.

Boot the disc or load the cassette to start the game. If you don't know how to do this, see the loading instructions on Page ix.

When the game prints "What now?" or ">", it is waiting for you to type a command. (The game also waits when it has more text to print than will fit on the screen at one time; read what's displayed and press the Spacebar to continue.)

Time and Magik knows four types of commands:

- **Movement.** Just type the direction you want to go: NORTH, NORTHEAST, EAST (and the other compass directions), IN, OUT, UP, DOWN or ACROSS.

- **Actions.** For example, LOOK, TAKE THE HOURGLASS, DROP IT, LOOK AT THE PICTURE, WIND THE CLOCK, WEAR THE RUCKSACK, or GIVE COIN TO THE INNKEEPER.

- **System commands.** EXITS, INVENTORY and SCORE give information; WORDS, PICTURES, BRIEF, VERBOSE, EXITS ON and EXITS OFF control what is output. UNDO takes you back a move. SAVE, RESTORE, RAM SAVE and RAM RESTORE save your position or return to an earlier position. QUIT stops the game. See the example game on Page iii for details of these commands.

- **Commands to others.** A spell in The Price of Magic lets you control creatures. Type their name, followed by a command such as BAT, GO NORTH.

You can abbreviate commands, such as SOUTH to S and SOUTHEAST to SE, and even type several commands on one line, like EAST, TAKE ALL, WEST. After typing a command (or commands), press the ENTER or RETURN key.

This adventure is a trilogy of key episodes from the struggles of the Guardians to protect Time and Magik. The three parts are played as separate games.

In *Lords of Time* the evil Timelords are fighting to change world history, with the aim of gaining permanent control over Time and warp eternity according to their wishes. You must bring together nine crucial objects from different times to defeat them.

Red Moon, tells how the Red Moon Crystal, only remaining source of magik power, was lost. And how the Guardians selected a lone adventurer to recover it.

And finally *The Price of Magik* recounts the sad tale of Myglar who, driven mad by the intensity of magikal radiance from the Moon Crystal that he had protected for so long, stole it. His aim was a vain attempt to squander its power and live forever. But a magician of great skill (who eventually rose to lead the Guardians) avoided Myglar's traps, recovered the crystal and ensured that magik survived as long as there was need for it.

Hints for Time and Magik

- You need to enter the clock; nine time zones can be reached from here.
- Tackle the time zones in numeric order most of the time.
- After each of the first eight zones, you can always get back to the clock.
- You score points for each of the nine ingredients and for each of the 18 treasures collected. There are a few bonuses.

Hints for Red Moon

- To cast a spell, enter `CAST [spell-name] [optional-target]`, such as `CAST ESCAPE` or `CAST SNOOP NORTH`.
- If you must attack something, wear armour and carry a weapon.
- You score points for making progress towards regaining the Red Moon Crystal, and 50 bonus points for each of nine treasures collected.

Hints for Price of Magik

- Tackle the outdoor locations before entering the house.
- The HYP (hypnosis) spell lets you command one creature at a time. To give an order, key in instructions such as BAT, TAKE THE FELDSPAR.
- You score points for learning and using spells, and for reaching a few inaccessible places.

If you are really stuck you can get a free set of clue sheets, with over 1,000 entries, from Official Secrets (see Page viii), or direct from Level 9 at PO Box 39, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS24 9UR, England. You must provide a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope (UK users), or four International Reply Coupons (overseas users).

Talking to Time and Magik

As you have seen, Time and Magik understands a lot of commands. The following list is only part of its vocabulary, but it gives an idea of what to try:

North, northeast, east (and other compass directions), up, down, in, out, across, climb, again, attack, inventory, quit, restore, save, RAM save, undo, score, wait, shout, search, examine, blink, look, kneel, take, drop, wear, throw, give, fill, empty, open, unlock, close, eat, drink, light, press, wave, blow, rub, dig, insert, turn, pull, wind, kiss, exits, words, pictures, brief, verbose.

Many words can be abbreviated, e.g. "INVENTORY" to "INV".

The following game example is not Time and Magik, but it shows how to play. The player's commands are in capitals, after each > prompt, and any of the text in square brackets is a comment.

> LOOK

You're standing on the north shore of a marshy island, lost in the mists and reed-beds of a great swamp. Frogs croak incessantly.

> GO NORTH

You bravely wade into the cool water, sink up to your neck in a tangle of weeds and barely manage to struggle back to the island.

> **NORTH**

Some people never learn! You wade into the marsh again, get hopelessly tangled in the weeds and sink beneath the waters. The game is over. You scored 0 out of 1000. Enter UNDO, RESTART, RESTORE or RAM RESTORE.

> **UNDO** [*"Take back move" – available on most micros.*]

You're standing on the north shore of a marshy island, lost in the mists and reed-beds of a great swamp. Frogs croak incessantly.

> **S** [**SOUTH**]

You're on the south shore of the marshy island, which looks exactly like the north shore. You can see a little rowing boat.

> **EXITS**

Exits lead north and south.

> **LOOK AT THE BOAT**

Fragile is too good a description for this craft! The only reason for it remaining in one piece must be because the woodworm, deep in its crumbling timbers, are all holding hands.

> **GET IN BOAT**

OK.

> **BRIEF, WORDS, EXITS ON**

OK. OK. OK. [*Locations will be described briefly, pictures turned off and exits reported automatically in future. To reverse these choices, you could use VERBOSE, PICTURES and EXITS OFF respectively.*]

> **S** [**SOUTH**]

You're in a little rowing boat in the middle of the swamp. By paddling very carefully, you are able to make slow but steady progress. Exits lead north and south.

> **A** [*AGAIN. Repeat previous command*]

You're in a little rowing boat at a jetty. Exits lead north, west and south. You can see a signpost.

> **OUT. EXAMINE SIGNPOST**

The boat rocks as you get to your feet, then breaks apart and sinks into the depths.

The letters on the sign are too tarnished to see properly.

> **RUB SIGNPOST AND READ IT**

You clean the signpost and it is readable now.

Apparently the west road leads along a causeway to the City of the Moon.

> **SCORE**

You score 10 out of 1,000.

> **RAM SAVE**

OK. [*Having escaped from the swamp, save your position in RAM – i.e in the computer's memory – in case you encounter difficulties and want to return to this point, using RAM RESTORE. To save to disc or tape, use SAVE and RESTORE respectively.*]

> WEST

You are on the east end of a long causeway. Exits lead east and west. You can see a wallet.

> TAKE WALLET AND EXAMINE EVERYTHING

The wallet is a tanned fishskin bag. In the wallet are a coin and a card.

The coin is a golden sovereign.

The card is printed with, "J. Fisher Esq, The Burrow, Pondsides".

> EXITS OFF [*stop reporting exits*]

OK.

You can hear a faint buzzing noise!

> WEST

You are in the middle of the causeway. A swarm of insects appears and starts circling around you!

> EXAMINE THE INSECTS AND HIT THEM

The insects are a kind of virulent mosquito.

Something bites your neck!

You flail wildly at the air, but miss everything.

More insects bite you, then they all fly happily away.

> WEST

You are at the west end of the causeway. You can see a pebble. The air seems to be getting colder!

> GET PEBBLE

OK. You seem to have a fever.

> INVENTORY

You own a pebble and a wallet. You shiver uncontrollably.

> WEST

You are on the outskirts of the City of the Moon. Unfortunately, the fever develops apace and you can barely stay on your feet.

> RAM RESTORE [*return to the position you saved earlier*]

You're at a jetty. Exits lead north, west and south. You can see a signpost.

> SOUTH

You are outside a drug store. Exits lead north and in.

> IN

You are in the drug store. You can see a shopkeeper and a bottle of plague antidote pills. "Good morning", says the

shopkeeper, “Can I help you?”

> **TAKE PILLS**

The shopkeeper slaps your hand away. “Naughty!”, she scolds, “Antidote pills are extremely valuable – one gold sovereign each!”

> **OUT. N. W. GET WALLET. E. S. IN. GIVE SOVEREIGN TO SHOPKEEPER**

[then, armed with the antidote pills, try to pass the insects again...]

Hints

1. Draw a map (or a series of maps). Remember that the EXITS command lists the possible paths from each location.
2. To make life easy for you, the objects that matter in a location are normally listed in a sentence like, “You can see a shopkeeper and a bottle of plague antidote pills”. (Some other authors mix in useful objects amid the background scenery, but Time and Magik avoids this time-wasting trick.) The rest of your surroundings are probably scenery, but by all means do things to them if you like.
3. Examine all the objects that you see, and take everything that you can. Most objects are useful – either as treasure, or in solving later puzzles.
4. Remember “UNDO”. If you make a mistake and get “killed” or lose a vital object, the UNDO command is available on most versions and takes you back in time – hopefully to before the mistake. On larger micros you can use UNDO many times in succession to step backwards a long way through the game.
5. SAVE your place occasionally, so that if you notice a mistake too late to be able to UNDO it, or if the electricity flickers and your computer crashes, you can RESTORE the saved position and continue from there. SAVE puts your position on tape or disc and RESTORE can retrieve it later. RAM SAVE is quicker but less secure, as it just saves the position in memory.
6. Try everything you can think of – even weird or dangerous actions sometimes provide clues, and might be fun. You can always use UNDO (or SAVE followed by RESTORE) to

recover if the results are “fatal”.

7. You can word a command in many different ways. For example, if there were an axe and a ball on the ground, you could take the axe by typing any of the following:

- > GET THE AXE
- > TAKE AXE
- > GET ALL BUT THE BALL
- > LOOK AT THE AXE AND TAKE IT

If Time and Magik doesn't understand your command, try rephrasing it and using synonyms. If Time and Magik still doesn't understand, you are probably trying something that is not important in the game.

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We will send you a detailed Clue Sheet for Time and Magik and invite you to membership of our exclusive

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Loading instructions for Time and Magik

This card tells you how to load and run Time and Magik on your computer, and lists the specific features of each version. Should you experience any loading problems, return the cassettes or disc without the packaging to Mandarin Software at Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

Disc loading instructions

Look down the alphabetical list of computer types and follow the instructions for your computer. The underlined text is what you type, and remember to press the ENTER or RETURN key after each command.

Amiga 500	Insert the game disc and turn on your Amiga.
Amiga 1000/2000	Insert your Kickstart disc and turn on your Amiga. When it asks for Workbench, insert the game disc.
Amstrad CPC 6128	Turn on your CPC (6128 or 464/664 expanded to 128k) and insert the game disc. Enter <u>RUN"MENU"</u>
Amstrad PCW	Insert your usual CP/M+ disc and turn on your PCW. Insert the game disc and enter <u>MENU</u>
Apple II	Insert the game disc and turn on your Apple II.
Atari ST	Insert the game disc and turn on your ST.
Atari XE or 800XL	Remove any cartridges. Insert the game disc. While holding down OPTION for at least five seconds, turn the Atari on. If nothing happens, turn off the Atari for 30 seconds and try again.
BBC Master or 128k+	Turn on your BBC Micro, insert the game disc and press SHIFT and BREAK together.

CBM 64 or 128 disc	Turn on your Commodore (while holding down the Commodore key, if you have a 128). Insert the game disc and enter <u>LOAD""",8,1</u>
IBM PC and clones	Insert the normal operating system disc and turn on your IBM PC. Replace it with the game disc, and enter <u>MENU</u>
Mac, Mac Plus	Insert the normal operating system disc and turn on your Mac. Insert the game disc and double click on the MENU icon.

Tape loading instructions

Put one of the game tapes in your recorder, look down the alphabetical list of computer types and follow the instructions for your computer. The underlined text is what you type, and remember to press the ENTER or RETURN key after each command.

If the tape doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again.

Amstrad CPC tape	Turn on your CPC. If it has a disc drive, enter <u>!TAPE</u> . Type <u>RUN""</u> , press PLAY on the tape unit and press the Spacebar.
Atari XE, 800XL	Remove any cartridges. While holding down START and OPTION for at least five seconds, turn on the Atari. Start the tape on play and press RETURN. If nothing happens, turn off the Atari for 30 seconds and try again.
CBM 64 or 128 disc	Turn on your Commodore (while holding down the Commodore key if you have a 128). Press SHIFT and RUN/STOP together and start the tape.
MSX 64k	Turn on your MSX, enter <u>RUN"CAS:"</u> and play the tape.
Spectrum 48k	Turn on the Spectrum, type <u>LOAD""</u> and play the tape.
Spectrum 128/+2	Turn on the Spectrum, press ENTER and play the tape.

Save on disc

To save game positions from the disc version of Time and Magik, you first need a blank disc of your own.

Before playing Time and Magik, format (initialise) this disc, using the ordinary software bought with your micro. (Exceptions to this are Apple II and Atari XE/800XL discs – Time and Magik uses its own disc format on these computers and will initialise the disc itself.)

When playing the game, enter SAVE and follow the instructions displayed.

To return to a SAVED position, enter RESTORE and YES, and follow any instructions asking for one word from the story. When entering a file name, you can either type a short word such as POS1, or use the full format permitted by your particular computer.

Save on tape

To save game positions from a cassette version of Time and Magik, you need a blank cassette of your own.

When playing the game, start a blank tape on RECORD and enter SAVE (if the cassette doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again). When the game starts running again, e.g. to prompt for your next command by displaying ">" or "What now?", stop the tape.

To return to a SAVED position, enter RESTORE and YES, then follow any instructions asking for one word from the story. Finally, rewind the tape on which the position was saved, and play it (if the cassette doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again).

Save in memory

To save your game position in memory (all but 48k Spectrums and 64k Amstrad CPCs allow this), enter RAM SAVE.

To return to a SAVED position, enter RAM RESTORE.

Remember that saving in memory is very quick and convenient – it is an ideal way of saving your position before trying something risky – but a RAM SAVED position will be lost if your computer is turned off or crashes, so SAVE to disc

or tape occasionally.

Note also that the UNDO command is available on all versions which have RAM SAVE. UNDO takes you “back in time” to before you last moved: It’s a bit like RAM RESTORE where the corresponding RAM SAVES are automatic, except that UNDO can be used many times in succession on larger micros.

Copyright

Please remember that Time and Magik is protected by copyright and took a lot of time and technological “magik” to produce, so make no more than one copy, for your own use, to keep only as long as you have the original game. Before copying any game you must check the copyright conditions in its documentation.

Additional features

The versions of Level 9 adventures on large micros tend to have more facilities than those on smaller machines. Here is a summary of the additional features available with Time and Magik...

AMIGA FEATURES

- Colour pictures (use the mouse, with its left button pressed, to slide the picture up and down).
- Picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads)
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace.
- README file. For more information, boot the Amiga with Workbench, then insert the game disc and double click on its icon and README.TXT.

AMSTRAD CPC DISC FEATURES

- Colour pictures (use F8 and F2 to slide the picture up and down). To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something – then flip the disc over.
- Picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads).
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys

- and DELETE.
- README file. For more information, turn on the CPC, insert the game disc and enter LOAD"README" and LIST.

AMSTRAD PCW DISC FEATURES

(the PCW and CPC versions share a disc)

- Black-and-white pictures. To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something – then flip the disc over.
- Picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads)
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and DELETE.
- README file. For more information, boot the PCW with CP/M+ as usual, then insert the game disc and enter TYPE README.TXT.

ATARI ST FEATURES

- Pictures on colour and black-and-white displays (use the mouse, with its left button pressed, to slide the picture up and down).
- Picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads)
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace.
- Variable text size, (experiment by pressing F1 or F2, then typing a few characters). This will help television users.
- README file. For more information, start the ST with a disc which does not auto-boot (e.g. a blank disc). Then insert the game disc and double click on its icon and README.TXT.
- Demonstration game. If you would like a continuous demonstration of Time and Magik, perhaps for use in a shop, start the game and WAIT UNTIL THE FIRST PICTURE HAS FINISHED LOADING and the game is waiting for a command. If necessary, press the Spacebar a couple of times so the game can print the rest of its start-up message and reach the first prompt, ">" or "What now?". Only then should you press Alternate R.
- An interpreter which can be used with Knight Orc and Gnome Ranger, letting them benefit from new features. Copy the previous game to a new disc, then copy GAME.PRG from the Time and Magik disc, replacing the old version. Hey presto! Variable text size etc.

COMMODORE 64/128 DISC FEATURES

- Colour pictures (use the cursor keys to slide the picture up and down). To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something – then flip the disc over.
- Fast performance when the pictures are turned off; partly because loading from disc takes a little while (even though we use a good turbo) and not needing to maintain a moveable split screen (the division between picture and text) frees more processing power.

IBM PC FEATURES

- Pictures in MGA, EGA and CGA modes. (To cope with so many display modes, the disc just contains one set of pictures and converts them on output when MGA or CGA is chosen).
- Picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads).
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace.
- README file. For more information, boot the PC from its normal operating system disc, then insert the game disc and enter TYPE README.TXT.
- Demonstration game. If you would like a continuous demonstration of Time and Magik, perhaps for use in a shop, start the game by entering MENU and waiting for it to load. Then, before doing anything else, press ALT R. Continue by choosing a display format as usual.
- An interpreter which can be used with Knight Orc and Gnome Ranger, letting them benefit from new features. Copy the previous game to a new disc, then copy AINT.EXE, MENU.EXE and MENU.TXT from the Time and Magik disc, replacing the old versions. Hey presto! CGA graphics etc.

MAC FEATURES

- Black-and-white pictures (use the mouse, with its button pressed, to slide the picture up and down).
- Recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and DELETE.

Time and magik

A short story by Peter McBride

It was a still, chill night. The moon stood high and full, making the village almost as bright as day but drained of all colour. I walked home across the silver sea that was the village green and there in the centre I saw an old man. He was hunched low over a strange device which reminded me of a sundial.

I stopped, overcome with curiosity, and stared in silence. What was that device, and who the man? Was it indeed a man, and was he yet alive, for he moved not.

"Tis a moondial," he said at length, in answer to my unspoken question. "Have ye not seen one ere now?"

"No indeed," I replied, "Does it tell the time?"

"Time!" He gave a dry cackle, "Aye, it tells the time. And time will tell of it."

He raised his head, and a grey face, deeply lined, looked up at me from within the blackness of his hood. "Time! Aye, 'tis time. Sit ye now, if ye have time!" He laughed again at some irony that only he understood, and waved a withered hand to the ground opposite him.

I sat cross-legged on the silver grass and watched the moon-dial tell the time and listened to the old man tell of Time – and Magik.

And this was what he said.....

The Lords of Time



“Time was when Time was not, nor Death, nor Life as you would know it. And the Red Moon lay high above, bathing the world in its ruby light. Magik there was in that light and in all upon which it fell.

But the Red Moon did not enjoy sole sovereignty of the skies. The Sun shone then as it does in these latter times, and when it rode through the heavens, its fiery brightness overlay the Moon’s cold crimson light. Only when the Sun passed below the land did the Moon reign unchallenged. Yet for long ages the world grew and lived in harmony, the sun’s coarse vigour tempered by the pure magik of the Moon.

We were young then... Young? No, not young, but ageless, for there was no Time and therefore no aging. But we had all the strength and impudence of youth, we who had being but not form. We who called ourselves the Ten that were One, the Guardians of the Timelessness.

And the world was reflected in the thoughts of we Ten, and our thoughts were reflected in the world. Each took an aspect as his own; one delved into the mysteries of the deep seas; another allied his powers with the birds of the air; a third found fascination in rocks and running rivers; and there was one who contemplated the Heavens above. Yet did we study the world or were we its designers? Who could tell? The question was of little import then, when what was, what could be and what should be, was all one. Neither did we question our right to lordship. We knew no limit to our powers, and we set no limits. Ha! So wise and yet so ignorant.

Throughout the Timelessness, for that was how we named it when Time afterwards came upon the world, the Yellow Sun and the Red Moon circled, each in its chosen path, high above the world. Then the Astronomer began to speak of Change and the passing of Time.

'Observe the Sun and the Moon,' he said. 'See how their paths cut across each other as they track through the Heavens. I have marked the junctions in our mind. Look within and you will see that a collision must come. The Gods are set on courses that must lead them to do battle.'

And we others looked, and saw, then shied with horror and said, 'Do not think that thought! This must not be!'

Ah! The meddling fool! He should have known that some things are best left unknown. But the thought had been made and could not be unmade.

And so it came to be that the Sun and the Moon met in the skies. The Moon standing before the fiery majesty of the Sun, striving to make the world its own, letting only its red light shine upon the world. The Sun in its fury hurled its fires into the Heavens, dragons of flame lashing angrily around the Moon, until that lesser god gave way and slipped aside, paled and weakened by the contest.

They parted and the Moon seemed to regain its former strength and cold glory, but at length its path drew once more close to the Sun and again they did battle in the Heavens above, and again the Moon withdrew, its light less brilliant than before. And throughout the Timelessness-that-was-ending, the Moon would return to do battle ever and anon, and each time it gave way, its red light growing paler and less bright.

Mayhaps, if we had conjoined our powers, we could have guided those heavenly bodies into new and safer courses. But we did nothing, only stood by like helpless maids, and wrang our hands in horror, while the Astronomer observed the conjunctions and measured the Ages. He chronicled the cycles of the Sun and called them years. He observed the cycles of the Moon and called them months. And with the fading of the Moon came that alternation of light and dark that he called Day and Night. Thus, Time was born, and Time passed.

That harmony was no more, that once the world had enjoyed. Magik faded in the crude vigour of the Sun's light, and thrived only at night when the Moon still held sway. Men walked upon the earth and turned their faces against magik.

They built machines and fortresses, and through them fought for mastery over the world.

We, that had been the Ten that were One and had existed only in mind and magik, were One no more. Now we were truly ten, and oftimes thereafter, as Time crept upon us, we took human form. Thuswise we went among the world and strove to restore and rebuild the magik that was fading. We breathed our powers into the mantle of the earth, wove charms into the fibres of the plants that grew in the wilds. We entered the cities and installed ourselves on the Councils of men and sought to lead them from merchandise and machinery, back to magik.

Ah, what vain effort went into our attempt to staunch the flow of Time and magik. Yet not all of the ten mourned the passing of the Timelessness. He that had measured and named Time, that was himself then named Father of Time, looked upon the new world and was glad, for in Time he had found Death, and in Death he had mastery of Life.

We other nine were deeply troubled and met in council to debate amongst ourselves how best we could return our world to the Timelessness. For with the passing of time and the fading of magik our dominion over creation was fast slipping away.

But there was no return, for Time was, and all things must end with the passing of Time, except Time itself.

We Nine came to know this, and sought for other ways to reclaim our mastery. Long we wrestled with the mysteries of Time and Change, then one who had steeped himself in the science of Physics spoke up in that council and spoke thus;

'Fellow Lords, we treat Time as an enemy to be beaten, as the Moon treated the Sun. Can we not learn from that lesson? In battling against that which is the stronger, will we not merely weaken ourselves? Look now through the eyes of Science. Time is a force that can be measured, and if it can be measured it can be understood. And if understood, it can be controlled. We should not seek vainly to defeat Time, but should learn to ride it and thus bend the world to our will.'

He spoke true, of that there was no doubt. Thenceforth, we turned our energies and our minds to the study of Time; and the fruit of our labours was the Moondial – such as this that you see before you."

The old man reached out to the moondial and traced the line of shadow that fell upon its scale. Then slowly he leant back and stretched an arm heavenwards.

“Ha! There’s little magik in this faint white Moon. But in the days of which I speak, the Moon was yet red, though paler than it had been, and the magik was still there for those that could feel it. By the light of this Moon, I can tell what the time is. But by the light of the Red Moon, I could tell the Time what it should be.

Thus we travelled through Time; and Past, Present and Future were as one to us. We saw what had been, what is and what will be; and if we saw ought that worked against magik, then we created what should have been, what ought to be and what shall be. And the empires of men began to crumble and fall, and magik came forth from the darkness once more.

‘Twas not easy, that re-writing of History, you must understand. But we made progress – ha! – I should say we unmade Progress! And we called ourselves the Lords of Time and we were pleased with our work, but the Timekeeper railed against us.

He would have no part of our interventions. While we other nine had laboured over the making of the Moondial, the Timekeeper had compiled a History of the World, and he foreswore any re-writing of it. When he saw that his Present was changing constantly, and realized what we were doing, he chafed and raged and sought to stop us. But we were nine, and he was one.

We protected the secrets of the Moondial from him, and kept him from our councils and our private towers. Yet so engrossed were we in our labours that we failed to keep observation upon him. He turned from his History, that which had become an account of what might have been, and not of what was; then wrapped himself in a shroud of secrecy and began to investigate Time for himself.

It took him time to master Time; but he did, and he built himself a Timepiece – or did he build it? I have met many a paradox on my travels through time, but this was the one above all. The Timekeeper told me of it in latter days when we had made our peace once more.

He discovered, as we had, that Time is a stream that winds relentlessly through the landscape of life, carrying us on in its current. ‘Tis a deep, strong current. Fight it, and you may hold still for a brief while but you can never swim upstream. Strive to get ahead, and you may gain on it for a few short moments before the current drags you down. Aye, there were those of us that tried it and near perished in the attempt. But there is

another and better way to travel through Time.

There are many places in the course of Time's passage where it forms loops that bring Past, Present and Future close together. If you can but reach the bank, and step out of Time, then can you cross over to the Future or back to the Past. This is what he had found. But having found this, he did not set out, as we had done, to create a device that would allow him passage in all directions. No, he could have done so, but our success in reworking History to our design was nearing completion and he felt the need for haste.

He built only the simplest device. One that would give him transit across to the next loop of Time. It was a bold move, as the device lacked the means of taking him back. If his plan had failed, then he would have been stranded in a future that he would have already reached by other means. That was a terrible prospect. You must understand, the Timekeeper was not an easy soul to spend time with. He could never have shared the rest of Time with another of himself.

But his boldness was justified. He reached the future juncture, handed himself the Timepiece that he would otherwise have had to build, and returned to his Present. He knew, of course, that he would have to hand the device back to his Past self when he reached that future point with it, unless he created an alternative future – and his scruples as a Historian would not allow him to do that. Nevertheless, his move had won him the use of his Timepiece during the time that would otherwise have been spent in the making of it.

Ha! A brilliant ploy, yet with a fatal flaw. He, who lacked our experience in these matters, did not know that any movement through Time sends ripples across its surface. We others detected them, saw that they had not been stirred by our activities and traced them back to the Timekeeper. We could not see his Timepiece, any more than we could see him, for it too was enclosed in the shroud of secrecy; but we could sense his presence – and his movements.

We followed him wherever he went, back and forth through Time. And wherever he went, one of us would be there to forestall any action. Yet in the end it was a close-run race, and he nearly had the better of us, for his Timepiece had a greater power than those we used. His was not a Moondial, to be used only when the Moon rose in the Heavens. He had captured Time in a machine, while we relied on the magik of the Red Moon, and the Red Moon was fading.

But nine hounds and one stag, we wore him down, until he abandoned his attempts to pervert that course of Time that we had set. He retired to his tower and sat in solitary contemplation for many a long day. We watched and waited, but he made no move against us. At length, we approached and entered into his citadel.

He had lain aside the shroud of secrecy and sat, as if waiting for us, in his great oak chair at the head of a massive table hewn from a single tree. His History lay open on the table before him, a fresh-cut quill close at hand. As we came close he gestured to us to take the chairs ranged along each side.

‘Welcome, fellow Lords,’ he said, ‘I am honoured by your presence. Please be seated. There is much about which we must speak.’

He seemed philosophical, to have accepted his defeat, and said that his interest then was only to correct the History that he had written. He offered us a bargain, and exchange of secrets. He would expose to us the mysteries of his Timepiece, if we would but tell him what we had done, so that he may rewrite his book.

‘But let us treat with the History first,’ he said. ‘That was my great Work, and my first love and duty.’

Ha! He was ever the sly one! And we believed him.

We went through his History with him, pointed out the interventions we had made, the inventions we had unmade, the meetings we had arranged, the matings we had prevented – all in Magik’s favour. And at the end he asked us, each in turn, to say what of all that we had done, we believed to be the thing of greatest import. And we told him, and he wrote it all down.

‘Now come,’ we said, ‘Time it is for you to show us the working of your Timepiece.’

‘Indeed,’ he replied, ‘I shall do so.’

He stood and walked across towards the hearth. There beside it stood a device in the shape of a grandfather clock, a beautifully decorated and innocent seeming device. ‘I set the Time so,’ he explained, opening the glass face and moving the hands. He closed the face, and spoke again. ‘Then begin its motion thus. ...’

Before we could stop him, he had opened the lower door and set the pendulum swinging, and the clock disappeared. The Timekeeper turned to us and smiled, and I knew why. For when he had reached into the case of the clock he had dropped within a slip of paper. I saw it clearly as it fell, and though it

was for but a brief moment, I can yet recall the words that were written upon it.

*Into the cauldron you must throw –
an olive branch, make friendship grow.
A dragon's wing, a sign of flight,
An ivory tusk, a sign of might.
Mix in the teardrop, a touch of sadness,
and the evil eye, a sign of badness.
Add a dinosaur egg, a sign of birth,
with the jester's cap, a symbol of mirth,
plus the silicon chip, a vital invention,
and the golden buckle, a bone of contention.
If you do all this, before time runs out,
a winner you'll be – there is no doubt.
But take care when you find the lords,
or you'll not gain your just rewards,
your quest will all have been in vain,
and you will have to start again.*

'Where has the Timepiece gone?' I asked, 'To whom did you direct it?'

'It has gone I know not where, nor to whom,' he replied, 'I know only that my fellow Lords will ever prevent me from using it, and must hope that some adventurous human soul will take up the challenge and restore the corruptions that you have made. Let Time take care of itself.'

We slumped back into our chairs, angered that the Timepiece had been spirited away from us, but not unduly troubled by the thought that it might fall into the hands of Man. Ha! Was there ever a human born that could match the Lords of Time?"

Red Moon



The old man had sat in silent contemplation at the ending of that tale. He watched the shadow creep slowly around the Moondial until the next hour was reached, then he began to speak once more.

“Time had been locked in its course, and closed to us. And the Red Moon that had been, was then dull and ashen white. Magik was lost to the world, and lived on only in Baskalos.

To Baskalos we had repaired when our cloud castles fell from the sky that noontide, when their fragile foundations of magik collapsed with the fading of the Moon. Only seven of us were there now, for three had perished with their towers. Living amongst men, we took human names – Cazab, Golitsin, Hagelin, Hollis, Skardon, Venona and Volkov.

We came together in Cazab’s tower, within the city of Baskalos, and there we turned our magiks to the rekindling of the Red Moon. Ha! What vanity! As if we, whose powers stemmed from the light of the Moon, could muster sufficient magik to set that orb a-glowing once more. Yet we tried. For nine days we rehearsed our charms and incantations, summoning up a lightning storm the like of which had never before been seen on this Earth, nor ever will be again. On the tenth night we set a vortex of wind spinning madly up from the tower, forcing apart the thick black clouds above so that the Moon was revealed directly over us, full but wan. We called bolts of lightning down into that vortex and stood poised with spears of magik ready to hurl them at the Moon, to carry the tumultuous power up to it and thrust new fire into its ashen body. A thousand

bolts of lightning were drawn from the four corners of the sky and coalesced into one solid pillar of blinding, crackling blue-white power in that vortex..”

The old man paused trembling, his aged eyes aflame with the memory of that moment. Then, abruptly, he gave a short rasping sigh and shook his head.

“...and every jot of it went straight down into Cazab’s tower! The shock of it flung us into the air and left us strewn throughout Baskalos. The tower was burst asunder, its stones found later up to ten leagues beyond the city walls; and of Cazab himself, for he it was that stood at the centre of the vortex, we found nothing but a single smoking boot.

We six that remained came together in council some months later, when our bodies and our powers had healed enough for us to move. Venona had thought much about our problem during that time, as had we all, and it was his suggestion that we should construct an alternative focus and source of magik, that we should recreate the Red Moon but smaller, in the form of a crystal. We were loathe to abandon our intention to rekindle the Moon, but knew that it was not possible at that time or place. Likewise we knew that we must have some focus if magik was not to be dispersed and lost for ever; and so Venona’s idea was accepted.

In the city of Baskalos, in the castle of Xax, we caused to be built a high tower. There within it we installed the Red Moon Crystal, and on Mid-Winter’s night, when the new Moon rose over the distant hills, we joined our powers to infuse the Crystal with the cold fires of magik. And a pure crimson light shone from it and illuminated the city and the lands of the Kingdom of Baskalos.

So Baskalos stood as an island of light and magik when all around the world fell into the darkness of mechanics. The gardens of Baskalos sparkled with colourful arrays of fragrant flowers through all seasons of the year; the buildings were triumphs of inspirational architecture; the people grew tall and healthy, and lived long, happy and fruitful lives; and the Kings of Baskalos were ever wise and noble rulers, their armies unconquerable yet never sent forth in cruel conquest.

Peace and prosperity, music, magik and the carefree laughter of children. What else could the heart desire?”

The old man looked across at me from under his hood, his lined face enlivened by a wry smile. He raised a single eyebrow to echo his question and I smiled and nodded in agreement.

Baskalos must have been Paradise on earth. Who could not have been happy there?

“Know you, there were those of us that were bored near to distraction before the end of the first century. Baskalos was a small kingdom, its boundaries defined by the range of the Crystal in the Tower of Xax. Those of us who eschewed domesticity and the narrow delights of urban life were soon chafing for new challenges and the view beyond distant horizons.

We travelled far through the realms of darkness, and the sights that met our eyes filled us with deep sorrow. There was so much pain and anguish, so much empty greed and degradation of the soul in those lands of merchants and machines. We took our wisdom and our lesser magiks with us, and did what we could to bring some light into the dark places, but to little avail.

Kings would welcome and honour us, should we but put ourselves and our powers into their service, so that they might tighten their grip upon rebellious subjects, or extend their sway over lesser lords. And there were those of us who would do just that, in the vain hope that thus we might influence their rule for the better. But if we sought to uplift their downtrodden subjects, enslaved by armed might, or by the power of money or religions, then would we be called Warlocks and Necromancers and hounded from the lands.

Ah, if only the Red Moon shone still upon those unhappy realms. Or if the King of Baskalos would extend his dominion. Surely the lands beyond would be better places beneath his wise and just rule. Mayhaps it would be possible to take the Red Moon Crystal on pergrination through the outerlands. How much light would it take to penetrate the darkness? These questions ran through my mind constantly as I travelled in the world beyond Baskalos.

I returned one winter's day to the city determined to take magik to the relief of the outer darkness, and went straightway to make entreaty with the King that he should set forth on a conquest of mercy at the first thaw of Spring. I was stopped by Skardon, ere I reached the Palace.

‘Volkov! At last!’ he cried. ‘Come at once for we have need of your wisdom in our council.’

He explained to me breathlessly as we hurried through the snow across the city to Skardon's tower. It seemed that he and Hollis had essayed to build a new and greater Crystal so that magik could be spread beyond the limits of Baskalos. I was

surprised and impressed, for they had ever been the ones to stay content within the city while the rest of us had been driven far afield by our desire to bring enlightenment to the world. So Hollis and Skardon too had laboured in Magik's service, though in their own way.

'But why the haste? Does the time to illuminate this new crystal fast approach? Or has magik been focussed within the crystal and has Hollis suborned it for his own private gain?' I questioned Skardon as we laboured through the thick drifts of snow.

'No, no!' he replied, 'Tis not that. 'Tis.. Why look, you can see for yourself.'

We had rounded a corner and stood then in sight of Skardon's tower. He pointed upwards, and I followed the line of his finger and exclaimed in surprise. 'Why, Skardon! You have added a new pinnacle to your tower.'

'Pinnacle! Forsooth! 'Tis no pinnacle. That which you see is the new crystal; and look within.'

I cast my sight aloft and looked within. 'Twas not magik that was contained within that crystal, but Hollis himself!

Skardon spread his hands in apology. 'I did not see that he was standing within the hexagon as I made the final incantation,' he explained. 'The crystal formed around him even as I stood and watched. I have gathered together our fellow magicians and we are now meeting to decide what to do.'

'Twas a difficult decision. Should we attempt to illuminate the crystal with magik, even though Hollis was within? Could we indeed succeed to do so without his contributions? Or should we shatter the crystal to free him? And could we accomplish that without shattering Hollis? We sat in deep thought in Skardon's study, gathered round his great log fire, but could not settle upon a course of action.

At length, I suggested that we bring Hollis down to join our deliberations. He might have been able to signal to us his wishes if he were there amongst us. They had been unable to bring the crystal down by physical means – it was too cold and slippery to be held, and in any case too large to pass through the stairwell – but I was able to use my special facilities to transpose it from the roof down to the study.

There it stood in front of the fire, sparkling and gleaming in the light of the flickering flames, casting shafts of multi-hued brightness throughout the room. Hollis stood statue-stiff within, showing no sign of life, as much cut off from our deliberations

as he had been when on the tower's top. We repaired below to Skardon's hall to dine and continue our discussions, and there, over his well-laden board, we decided that the new crystal could not be illuminated while Hollis stood within, but that it was a thing of beauty and not to be destroyed. We therefore determined that it should be transposed to the roof of Hollis's tower to stand forever as a tribute to his memory.

'Twas at this moment that water began to drip through the ceiling and Hollis, teeth chattering and soaked to the skin, appeared at the door. The crystal had been formed of ice, and had melted in front of the roaring fire in Skardon's study.

This experience did little to dampen Hollis' enthusiasm for the project, and he and Skardon began to plan a second attempt at a greater crystal. I was invited to add my skills, but having looked through their designs and assessed the import of their incantations, I had little faith in their eventual success.

Instead, I turned my attention back to the King of Baskalos and sought to persuade him to extend his domains and to carry the Red Moon Crystal into the new lands to spread the light of magik. But he was old and set in his ways, and fearful of moving the Crystal from the Tower of Xax. My fellow magicians too opposed the plan, believing that the only hope for the future lay in cherishing magik within the confines of Baskalos.

Ha! I was impatient for change and chafed beneath this conservatism. I had done too little for too long, and knew that the time for action had come. If the King of Baskalos would not use the Crystal to bring the darkness under his rule, then would I make it my own and set out to impose my own enlightened dominion upon the world entire. And why not? There was no being more fitted than I to take such a heavy burden.

But determining to take possession of the Crystal, and actually laying my hands on it and removing it from the Moon Tower, were matters of two different hues. The magik inherent in the Crystal of Xax would resist any attempts to take it by means of lesser magiks, and all magiks were lesser than that of the Crystal. Thus I would be forced to resort to physical methods, and that presented numerous difficulties.

In the three centuries or more since the creation of the Red Moon Crystal, certain traditions and conventions had grown up around it, as much in reverence as in defence of its powers. Foremost amongst these was that we true Magicians should have contact with it but once a year on Mid-Winter's Night,

when a ceremony was held to reconsecrate it to the Kingdom of Baskalos. This ceremony also afforded us the opportunity to examine it for signs of aging or imperfection, though I am pleased to say that such was its quality that we never found any cause for concern.

Lesser magicians, the King and his lords, and all military men were always denied access to the Crystal, for it was held that its power would prove too great a temptation for them. The Castle of Xax was therefore handed to the care of those two Guilds whose members were believed to be the most trustworthy in respect of the Crystal – the Blacksmiths and the Pastrycooks. An unlikely co-operation, but one that worked well. They were all deeply practical men, whose sole ambitions were in the perfection of their crafts. The Blacksmiths provided physical strength and force of arms, should such be necessary in defence of the Castle; and the Pastrycooks contributed intelligence and sensitivity.

This Castle was situate in the midst of a small lake, and could be reached only by a guarded causeway that ended in a drawbridge. This latter was lowered but twice a day, to send produce to the markets in the city, and to receive fresh supplies. Entry to the Castle was therefore difficult, but this was only the first stage. Any intruder would thence have to pass through the inhabited rooms and workplaces to reach the inner courtyard where stood the Moon Tower. Narrow windows let onto this courtyard, but there was only a single door and the key to that hung on the belt of the Chief Pastrycook.

These obstacles were problematic, but not insuperable. Was I not, after all, a Magician of the highest degree? Had I not studied men and all their crafts for millenia, and at close hand for the past three hundred years? A simple disguise, a little subterfuge and the judicious use of some lesser magiks would take me thus far. The true difficulty lay beyond.

That locked door did not merely keep the inhabitants of the castle out of the courtyard; it equally kept the inhabitants of the courtyard out of the castle. Seven gryphons lived there, ever restless and hungry, patrolling constantly and sleeping never. They, and the four great falcons that nested above, were the incorruptible guardians of the Moon Tower. Infused with magik themselves, and living always so close to the Crystal, they could resist all my incantations, withstand all my potions, and sense my nature and purposes through the deepest disguise. How then to pass the gryphons?

Though I pondered long and hard within my tower, the answer came never to my mind. And then, one autumn evening, eating pastries by my fire, I had an inspiration.

The following morn, I went straight to the market, lighted on a pastrycook that stood momentarily apart from the rest, and in a trice had magiked him to a distant city, where I knew his skills would be in great demand; donned his shape and his memories, and took his place. That eventide I returned to the Castle of Xax with his fellow cooks and took up residence there, the better to learn its secrets.

They were a happy band of brothers, those men of Xax, delighting in their crafts and comradeship. And it was a pleasant life, one I could have endured for many years. I had a cell close by the inner courtyard, and through its slit window I kept surveillance upon the gryphons. They sensed my closeness, of that I am sure, and for some while the men of the castle wondered what made the beasts so restless. But men will ever seek to explain the unknown as simply as they can, and so the cooks and smiths decided that it was merely the onset of winter that disturbed the gryphons.

My opportunity came at last, as I should have realized it would, on Mid-Winter's Day. That night was to be held the ceremony of reconsecration, therefore the gryphons and falcons must be removed from the courtyard so that the magicians and the King could have access to the Moon Tower. That day there was no delivery to the market place, but the entire morning's bake of sweetmeats and delicate pastries was laid out on great tables within a high chamber close by the door to the inner courtyard. When all was ready, the cooks retired to the perimeter of the antechamber beyond and watched as the Chief Pastrycook walked resolutely through and unlocked the courtyard door.

Then he swung open the doors, and stood aside, armed only with his strength of purpose and his rolling pin, and watched as those terrifying beasts swarmed in for their yearly feast. As they set upon the food, he closed the chamber doors behind them and locked them fast. The way through the antechamber to the courtyard and thence to the Tower lay open!

A number of the cooks were then detailed to go out into the courtyard and make it clean for the passage of the King that night. I went with them, and made myself busy while seeking for an opportunity to approach the Tower without being seen. A besom broom in my hand, I swept a circuitous path towards

the Tower door, then, when no eyes were upon me, I slipped the catch and eased myself inside.

There were no rooms in that tower save the one at the top where the Crystal lay. Below that was nought but the stone stairway that spiralled upwards, steep and narrow. It was dark in there, with only the faintest glimmer of red light filtering down from on high. I walked up steadily, keeping close to the tower wall, tense with anticipation at being so near to my prize.

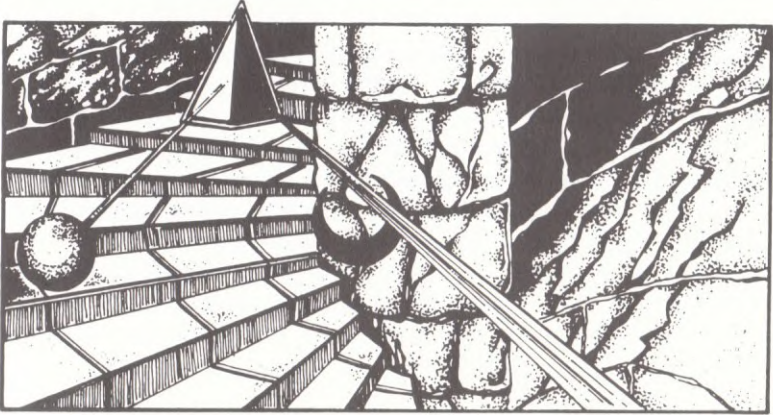
Yet even then I had doubts. Once, twice, I stopped and almost turned back down. Not that I feared discovery, or the wrath of men or of my fellow Magicians; but that deep in my heart I could not be sure that I could resist the awesome temptations of the power that the Crystal held. I shook off my doubts and pressed on upwards. The light grew brighter and the thrill of magik grew ever stronger as I approached the top, until I was at last there!

I stood on the topmost stair, almost blinded by the light of the Red Moon, now but two steps away, when I heard a sudden rush in the air. Hagelin, dressed in blacksmith's garb, came in through the window and swept up the Crystal into his arms. I gasped in surprise. He turned and saw me and laughed. 'You look tired, Volkov!' he cried, 'Did no-one tell you that flying is easier?'

With that he launched himself through the window and was gone, and the Crystal with him. I had been but two paces from possession of it!

Where now was that wonderful Crystal of the Red Moon?"

The Price of Magik



A small cloud drifted in front of the Moon, throwing the moonial into darkness. The old man gestured towards it and spoke wryly. 'See. I am lost in Time without the Moon. Was it not ever thus!'

His huddled figure seemed to have become even more bowed and fragile than it had been when I had first encountered him, yet his voice was still firm and strong as he started upon his third tale.

'Time takes its toll on all who live within it. And even we who were there at its beginning, must reach an end. Magik too makes its adherents pay a price.

When it became known that one of our number had stolen the Red Moon Crystal, the people of Baskalos grew suspicious of all the Elder Magicians. And in the absence of the Crystal, there was little to hold us to that place. Therefore, our company departed in our several ways; Skardon and Hollis made off for the Far North to experiment further with their crystals of ice; Venona set out for the East; and Golitsin and I turned our faces to the West, and thence travelled singly. And Hagelin? I heard no more of him, and must judge that he was lost when the Moon Crystal was found – as it was some time after.

We never again gathered in Baskalos, even after the Crystal was restored to the safekeeping of that city. Nor shall we all meet again anywhere in this world.

I yet had much strength and vigour, and though distance from the Moon Crystal robbed me off my greater powers, still I

possessed my wisdom and a whole host of lesser magiks. These qualities were sufficient, in those days of ignorance and barbarism, to ensure my leadership of men wherever I went. I amused myself for many centuries in the pursuit of architecture, erecting great monuments of stone, knowing full well that lesser mortals would look upon them afterwards and marvel how they came to be built.

Even now I smile to myself as I walk through the world and see them wondering at my pyramids and temples, saying 'How could Men make such things?' Ha! Men! They could never equal my constructions for all their technology.

Meantime, while I made my entertainment in the realms of darkness, a Golden Age had been born in Baskalos. When the Moon Crystal was recovered, it was given to the safekeeping of the Guild of Scholars and Wizards, and they had decreed that the one of their number who was most wise and least worldly should take responsibility as the guardian of the Crystal. The guild always did well in its choosing, and over the years a long succession of guardians had cherished and nurtured the Crystal, so that it gained steadily in power, until, at the time of which I am speaking, its light shone out far beyond the limits of the Kingdom of Baskalos.

Then Satyr, that had been the guardian, passed away, and the time was come for another election, and they chose from their number the one who was called Myglar. He had travelled far, and had learnt much wisdom and magik upon his travels. I had myself initiated him in many of those ancient mysteries that had been lost to Baskalos, for he had sojourned with me for some time in the outerlands of the West. On his return to the city, he had freely shared his new-found lore with his fellow guildsmen, and by this action had won much gratitude.

Myglar had protested against his election, saying how unworthy he was of the honour, and how little he could be trusted, and how greatly he feared the temptation of power. His electors had smiled when they heard this, and congratulated themselves that the choice was good, for surely only he who knew his limits and his weaknesses could rise above them. And Myglar had smiled secretly to himself as he bowed to their urgings and took up the guardianship of the Crystal, for he had known that his protestations would but make his position the stronger.

Myglar's election came as no surprise to me. Had I not shared my life and my lodgings with him? Had I not watched

as he politely devoured my secrets, and seen the way that, with obvious self-effacement, he could thrust himself to the fore? Were not his gifts so freely given that the receiver stood forever in his debt? Aye, Myglar was ever ambitious for power, though he hid it well from mortal eyes. But then, mayhaps it were a good thing that the guardian of the Crystal should be ambitious, for would he not then be more assiduous in its care, that its magik might grow and his power with it?

He must surely have served his office well at first, for when I moved to Aranstan, beyond the mountains that stood to the west of Baskalos, I felt the touch of the Crystal that had never reached so far ere then. Indeed, I began to make use of that power for the first time in many years, and set upon the greatest and most elaborate design that I had ever attempted, a magnificent, soaring bridge of stone that would arch across a vast chasm.

That chasm was so wide and so deep that it could not be spanned with a temporary framework of wood such as we would normally use, and without the closeness of the Crystal even my powers would have been unequal to the task. But as it was, I was able to create a rainbow of moonlight of such strength and solidity, that the stone arch of the bridge could be assembled upon it.

We had almost completed the task – indeed, the keystone stood ready at one side of the chasm, waiting to be carried out to the centre – when the rainbow trembled for one brief moment. And in that moment all was lost. The stones of the bridge fell tumbling down, down into the depths of that great chasm, falling for an eternity before at last they reached the river far below. So far below that the sounds of their impact never reached us.

I knew then that things fared ill with the Red Moon Crystal, and set forth straightway for Baskalos. It was a long journey, for I had been on the wrong side of the chasm when the rainbow gave way, and, though it had re-formed I would no longer trust it to hold my weight. Thus must I walk the length of Aranstan before I could cross the river and turn my face towards Baskalos. By then, winter had taken its grip upon the land and the mountain range that stood across my path was well nigh impassible.

Mayhaps I should have tried the crossing despite the deep snow. I had felt the flickerings and falterings of the Crystal's magik and knew that time was short, but that very failing held

me back. For as the magik of the Red Moon weakened, so did mine and to have attempted the mountain crossing then would have meant almost certain death.

Through the long winter, the longest and hardest in all memories, I kicked my heels restlessly in the village of Langley in the foothills of the range. At last, when spring had brought forth a rush of bright flowers and the streams were in full spate with the melting of snow on the mountains, I made ready to start the final stage of my journey. It was then that I felt the presence of another Elder Magician not far off. I sent out my thoughts to him and sensed his response.

Again I waited, fretful at the delay, but eager for the company and assistance of a fellow on a difficult and dangerous journey towards I knew not what. On the second day I spotted Golitsin hurrying up the valley towards the inn where I had made my lodgings, and soon we embraced like long-lost brothers.

'When did you feel the faltering of the Magik?' I asked, for I knew it was that which had brought him there.

'I was in battle,' he replied. 'I had gone to the assistance of a weak but goodly lord who faced a mighty foe. The enemy had fallen upon us in great numbers and the fight had gone badly against us. I had rallied our forces round me for one last valiant stand when of a sudden I felt a fracturing in my Moonshield..'

'And all was lost!' I broke in upon him.

'Nay,' he said with a wry smile. 'The shield disintegrated with such outward force that the enemy was laid flat and we won a famous victory! But the shield was no more, and I knew that I must return yonder to Baskalos. And you,' he continued, 'what were you doing when the Crystal first failed?'

'Let us say that I was playing bridge and lost a trick,' I replied, and he laughed for he had heard, as I knew he would have, of my calamity at the chasm.

We debated much on the fate of the Crystal during our journey over the mountain range. I held that Myglar's successor had been badly chosen, or perhaps the scholarship of the Guild had decayed so far that there were none fit for the stewardship of the Crystal. For Myglar must have been dead by then. He would have been long past the span of human years, and it was known that the Crystal took its toll of its guardians. Golitsin, who had spent most of the previous century on military pursuits, was inclined to the belief that Baskalos had fallen under barbarian rule, and that the Crystal itself was

under attack.

We were both wrong, as we discovered when we entered the realm of Baskalos. The kingdom yet enjoyed peace and prosperity, though even here the falterings of magik could be seen. The early crops did not have the lustre and fullness of the past, and I saw the first stirrings of diseases that, though common in the outerlands, had never troubled the people of Baskalos.

And Myglar was yet alive! We heard thus from the peasants and could scarce believe it, yet 'twas true enough. On our second day in Baskalos, we were met on the road by a body of Myglar's guards and courtiers.

'O wise ones of the Elder Days!' their leader greeted us. 'My Lord Myglar bids you welcome to Baskalos in its time of need, and entreats you to allow us to escort you to his castle.'

'Fair words, but I trust them not,' muttered Golitsin as we mounted the horses that they had brought for us. 'Myglar is yet alive. That can only mean that he has been drawing life from the Crystal itself.'

'Aye, he was ever the smooth one,' I agreed. 'But he is cunning. He will not hope to hide his corruption from us. This is no guard of honour that surrounds us, this...Ha! Did you sense it?' There had been a shimmering in the veil of magik that lay over Baskalos, and I had felt a sudden chill deep within my innermost self.

Golitsin nodded, then started as the shimmering came again. Myglar was draining the Crystal's power while his vassals delayed us on the road.

'We must make haste, said Golitsin urgently. 'But how to rid ourselves of these guards?'

'By boldness,' I replied, then cried out loud, 'Ho! I hear you master summoning us! Ride hard, men of Myglar.' I spurred my horse on savagely, Golitsin at my side.

The guards knew not what to do. They could not attack us on the open road, but must strive to keep up with us and hope to forstall us ere we reached Xax. But this they could not do. Golitsin and I had the form of men, but not the substance. We rode our steeds as light as thistledown, while the guards weighed heavy on theirs. By the time we passed through the city gates, we were nigh on half a league ahead. The city guards too were taken unawares by our sudden rush. They called to us to stop, but we were long gone by then. On we galloped to the castle, cross the drawbridge and through to inner chambers.

The doors were locked that led to the courtyard wherein

stood the tower of the Moon Crystal. Golitsin tried a spell of unlocking, but the door had been proofed against that. I called down a thunderbolt to blast our way through; yet in vain. Myglar had placed a magik on that door that resisted all our efforts. In desperation, we took the form of owls, that we might fly through the windows and thence to the top of the tower. 'Twas desperation, for as owls our own powers would be much reduced. Our hope was to gain access to the tower room and return to human form before Myglar could intervene.

'Twould appear that Myglar had found some way to view the future, for certainly he seemed to anticipate our every move. As we rose into the courtyard together, we were met by a massive black falcon, swooping down upon us. We dodged and dived, but that great bird, for all its size, was every bit as agile as us. We parted, and flew either side of the tower. The falcon, closer to Golitsin than to me and smelling blood, rushed after my companion. Behind and below I heard a shrill cry and a flurry of feathers, then great wings began to beat the air in pursuit of me.

With moments to spare, I reached the sanctuary of the narrow windows of the tower room, flew in and alighted in human form once more. The Crystal was yet there on its pedestal, and for an instant I was lost in wonderment of it. For all it was pale and wan, it yet had such beauty, such symmetry; its light, though sadly dimmed, remained so pure and clear. How well it had fulfilled its task in those long centuries since the setting of the Red Moon!

That moment of reverence was my undoing. Myglar hopped down from the windowsill and stepped between me and the Crystal.

'Meddling Magician!' he hissed. 'What ill wind brought you back to take my Crystal from me?'

'Myglar, that Crystal belongs not to you, but to Magik itself. No man can ever own it. Its power is too great to be borne by one.' I reasoned with him to gain time, while I felt for the limits of his magik with questing fingers of thought.

'Seventy years I have tended this Crystal,' he replied, raising a cloaked arm to encompass it. 'I know it well. It is in my power. Mine alone!'

I launched shackles and chains of moonsilver at his hands and feet to hold him still. But alas, as they touched him, they turned into wisps of moonlight and disappeared. Myglar laughed, and with a flick of his fingers threw up a wall of glass

between us. I made it into a curtain, pulled it aside and set to rush upon him. He grasped the Crystal and held it aloft, poised to dash it against the floor.

‘Stand back!’ he cried, ‘Or you shall be responsible for its destruction!’

Ah! The Crystal of the Red Moon! Would it be better broken into pieces than left whole in the power of that madman? I knew not, and while I hesitated, Myglar made the decision for me. He enfolded the Crystal within his cloak and as its red light disappeared, so did he.

Oh, the pride and the folly of it! The Crystal would do Myglar no good. True, it would stave off death for as long as he clung to it, but what life would he have? Such selfish ownership of such terrible power must lead him fast to madness. He would pay the price, the price of magik.”

Epilogue

The old man sighed heavily and was silent for some time before speaking again.

“The Crystal was at length rescued from Myglar’s grip, and restored to Baskalos, but magik was never the same in after years. The end of the Age had come, and true magik was disappearing from this world.

Now there is but little, and that only when the full Moon shines bright and time can be measured on a moondial once more.”

I gazed down at the moondial that lay between us. The setting Moon had pushed the shadow of the gnomon to the very end of the scale, and even as I looked a new shadow, cast by the first rays of the rising sun, fell starkly across the face.

Then the moondial was gone, and the old man with it.

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