

Quest for the Crown of Trent: Chapter Three

By MIKE MACKINNON

(Summary: Jar and his two companions have reached the Shaman who lives in the northern regions of the Hain Plain. After drinking the potion that the Shaman gave him, Jar begins to feel his work.)

The pain subsided and Jar was able to see a bright light in the distance. It was shining through a spreading mist. At first Jar thought that he was floating towards it, because he could not feel any ground below his feet. He soon realized that the source of light was coming towards him. As the light grew brighter he was able to distinguish the form of a man in dark contrast against it. The figure was moving to him in a gentle glide. Jar watched in fascination.

The figure's face was hidden by the heavy hood of the cloak but Jar was still able to see the penetrating eyes. They glared at him with an intensity that made him want to turn away however he found himself unable to. Slowly, the figure raised a bony hand to the hood and pulled it back. Though he had changed greatly Jar was still able to recognize the shaman. His skin was pulled tightly across the bones and the eyes were set in deep

hollows. They burned with a red fire.

Extending the same bony hand to Jar, the shaman turned and headed back into the rolling mist. Jar followed and soon was swallowed up by the mist. After walking about thirty yards, the mist came to an end. What was waiting on the other side was awesome. There was a large number of branches - too many to count - all heading and twisting towards a large central trunk barely visible in the distance. Jar and the shaman were standing on one such branch.

Jar looked at the Shaman: an unasked question showing on his face. The healer merely shook his head and Jar surmised that he would have to wait

to have his questions answered. Once again the Shaman headed out and Jar followed. Slowly they made their way across the branch and out across the mist filled chasm. Jar looked down and thought he could see activity. One scene would quickly change into another and Jar soon realized that what he was witnessing was the past. Soon the Shaman stopped and pointed down into the mist.

Jar peered through the swirling fog and was able to see what appeared to be some sort of battle on a plain. As he watched, the battle scene drew closer until Jar was able to make out the individual combatants. With a start he realized that the fight was the

one he had fought earlier on Hain Plain against the Plain-Wraiths. He felt strangely uncomfortable watching something that had happened in his past.

Both he and the Shaman watched the skirmish until it reached the point when Jar had been wounded. Just as the blow was about to strike, the Shaman shot out a hand with lightning-like quickness. The blow never fell and the Jar character escaped unscathed.

"Your wound is healed," the shaman said softly.

"But I still feel the numbness." Jar was worried that the healer had failed.

"You will feel the effects of my healing only when we have

gone back to our correct branch. This is not the same branch."

Jar looked at the Shaman with confusion. "I thought that now we were on the same branch as before."

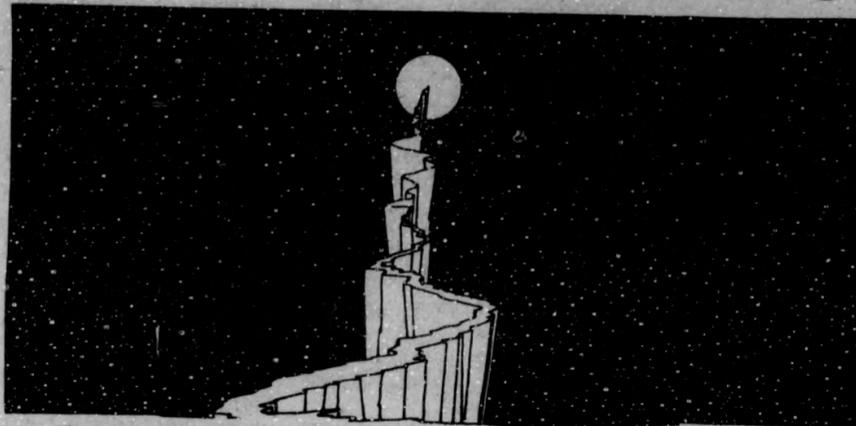
"The changes of time are subtle and you have to be an experienced time traveller to detect those changes."

There was something else bothering Jar. He had been told that it was dangerous to try and change the past. He voiced this concern to the Shaman.

"We are on a branch of time that had not yet happened. Therefore I can alter that branch, though only slightly. Otherwise there would be too large a gap between this branch and ours, and we would not be able to return." The Shaman turned to leave.

Jar reached out and grabbed him by the cloak. "Does this mean my future may be changed?" The Shaman simply shrugged and began to turn back towards the light. Jar followed him, mulling over his worry about the future. Then he remembered the Shaman had said the alteration would only be slight. Jar hoped fervently the change would not affect his quest.

(to be continued next issue)



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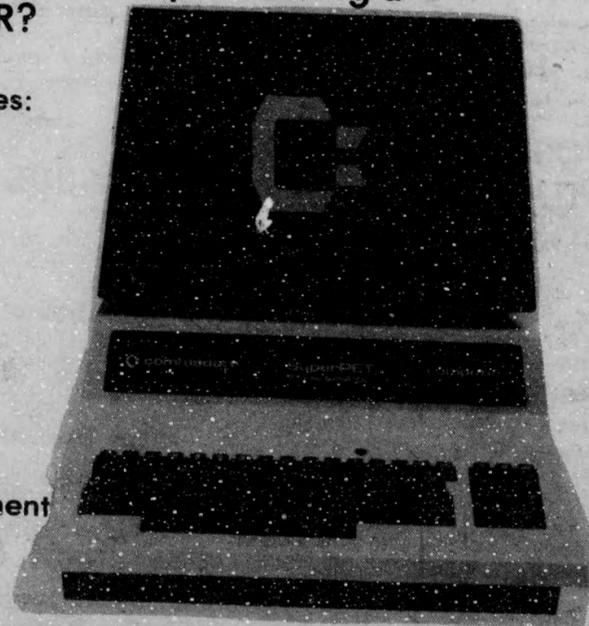
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