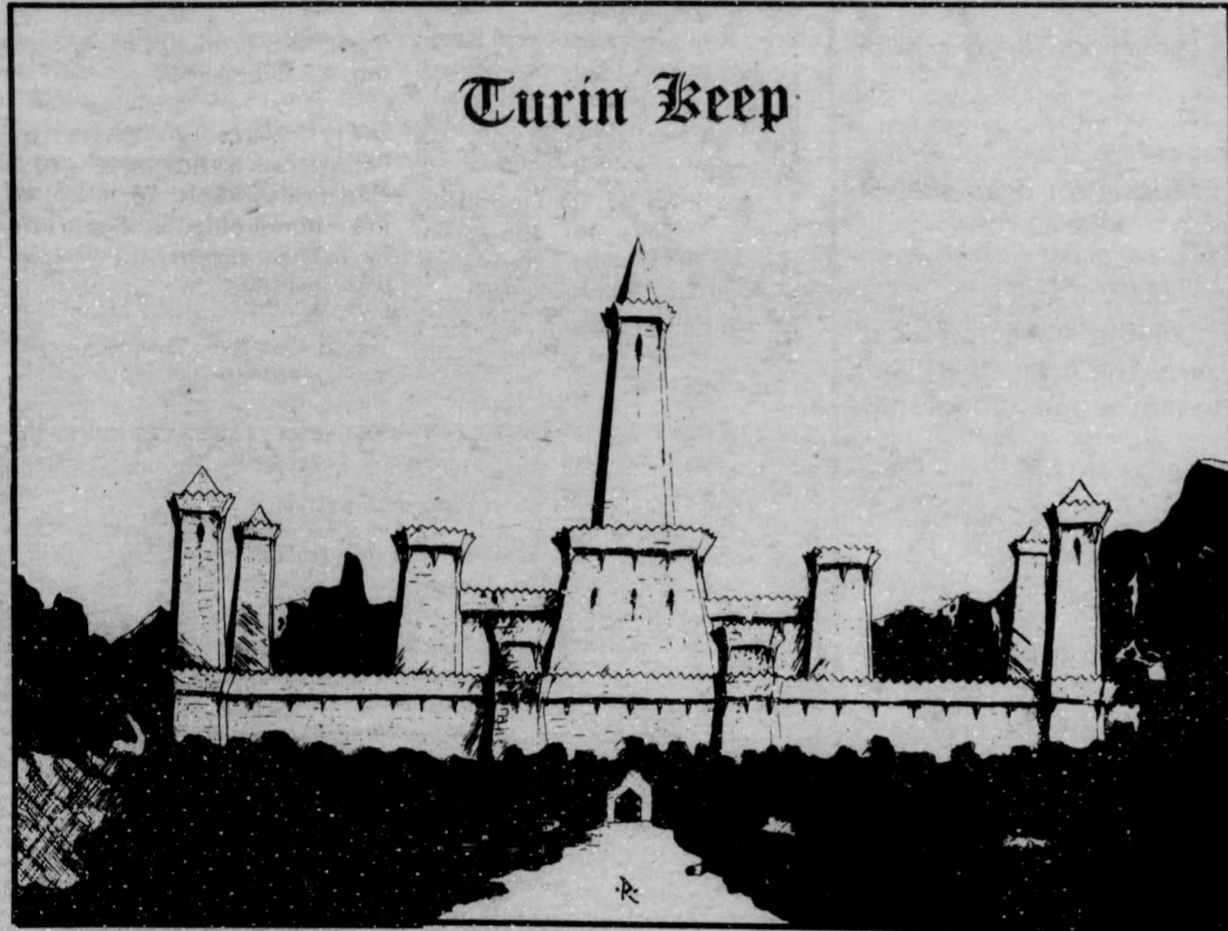


Quest for the Crown of Trent
Chapter Seventeen

Washed up on the beaches of Nymn



Turin Keep

by MIKE MACKINNON
(Summary: Valton has rescued Althar from the dungeons of Drak's fortress. During their escape the volcano over which the fortress is built explodes to life destroying it. Drak and his assistant are trapped in the ruins.)

Aboard the *Ste. Lucifius*, Jar and Tran have met with a worse fate. The ship is caught in a storm. The last thing Jar sees before losing consciousness is Tran and Tralick being washed overboard.)

Jar came to and discovered

his mouth was full of sand. He tried to open his eyes but they were too caked with dirt. He wiped it away and looked at his surroundings. He was on a beach of fine white sand. Not far away began the forests of

the continent. Slowly Jar sat up and winced as pain lanced through his skull. He looked about but could see not sign of either Tran or Tralick. They had either washed up somewhere further along the beach or had drowned. Whatever the case was Jar

was alone in a strange land.

The sun was directly overhead so Jar was able to discern it was midday. He had no idea how long he had laid on the beach. The sun was hot and he was not burnt so it could not have been too long he decided. Hopefully he had not lost much time. Not that it mattered all that much. Without the help of Tran or Valton he was not likely to be successful. Still he had to try. If he failed he would not be around to see the consequences.

Jar started down the beach in what he hoped was a northerly direction. It was difficult to judge from the sun's position as it was directly overhead. The forest was on Jar's right side so he was confident he was going the right way. The sand scrunched under his feet and a cool breeze blew in off the ocean. Jar felt himself slipping into a state of lethargy, the temptation to lie down was strong. He forced himself on though.

A dark blotch appeared on the horizon. Shaking himself out of his drowsiness Jar broke into a run. As he approached the blotch he could see that it was someone lying on the beach. Jar figured it was Tralick judging by the size. He was right. He checked for signs of life and was able to detect a faint pulse. Tralick's breathing was shallow. Jar tried to rouse the sea captain but failed. Dried blood was caked in Tralick's beard and a dark stain was on his tunic. Jar ripped open the tunic and saw an ugly gash across the captain's chest. Blood seeped through the scab that covered most of the wound.

Jar was not certain what he should do to stop the bleeding. He ripped a sleeve off Tralick's tunic and placed it over the wound. Then he ripped a length of material from his cloak and used to secure the cloth over the wound. It was not perfect but would have to do for the time being. As he worked Tralick's breathing became more regular and his pulse grew stronger. Some of the color returned to his face. Jar had wanted to clean the wound but was afraid he would make the bleeding worse.

From behind came the sound of someone walking across the beach. Jar turned quickly and saw the figure of someone approaching. He drew his sword and crouched behind Tralick. He watched, tensing for a quick jump. He relaxed when he recognized the approaching stranger as Tran. The dwarf was a welcome sight. Jar was glad to have his company in the new land.

Tran grinned when he saw his friend. It was strange sight for the dwarf preferred to scowl rather than smile. He was obviously relieved at finding Jar.

"I see you managed to make it to land," he remarked.

"I don't know how," Jar answered. "The last thing I remember seeing was you and Tralick going over the side."

"How's he doin'?"

Jar shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. He has a bad wound across his chest and took a blow to the head. He is in better shape now than when I first found him."

"What did you do about the wound?"

"I bandaged it but I didn't clean it. I was afraid of making the bleeding worse."

Tran nodded his head in agreement. He looked at Jar's neck.

"What happened to the talisman?"

Jar clutched at his neck where the talisman should have been. There was nothing there. His eyes widened.

"How are we going to pay Tralick?"

"What do you mean?" The voice came from behind Jar. He turned and saw Tralick trying to rise from the sand.

"I lost the talisman," Jar explained. He looked out at the ocean desperately.

"No problem," the sea captain said. "I did not live up to my end of the deal. Besides we are marooned here on this land. What use would I have for it now?"

Jar realized how attached he had become to the talisman. While he had it he did not think about it. Now it was lost somewhere in the ocean. The loss was only to Jar though for the talisman would not effect the outcome of the quest. In fact it might even better its chances, Jar thought.

Tralick staggered over to the two men. He was still weak from the wound.

"What do you suppose happened to Syph?" Tran asked him.


"I don't think he made it," Tralick answered. "He was old and not in very good shape." The captain shook his head sadly. "I'll miss him. He may have been ugly but he stuck by me whenever we ran into trouble. He was a good pilot."

Jar looked at Tralick incredulously. "Pilot?"

Tralick laughed at some private memory. "Yeah. It was amazin' how he could guide a ship in and out of a port better n' any pilot I ever knew. Don't know how he did it."

They were well into the afternoon and Jar did not want to delay any longer so he suggested they try to find a town. Tralick was somewhat familiar with Nymn so he decided to guide them. The three started up the beach. The final leg of the quest was underway.

(continued next issue)



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