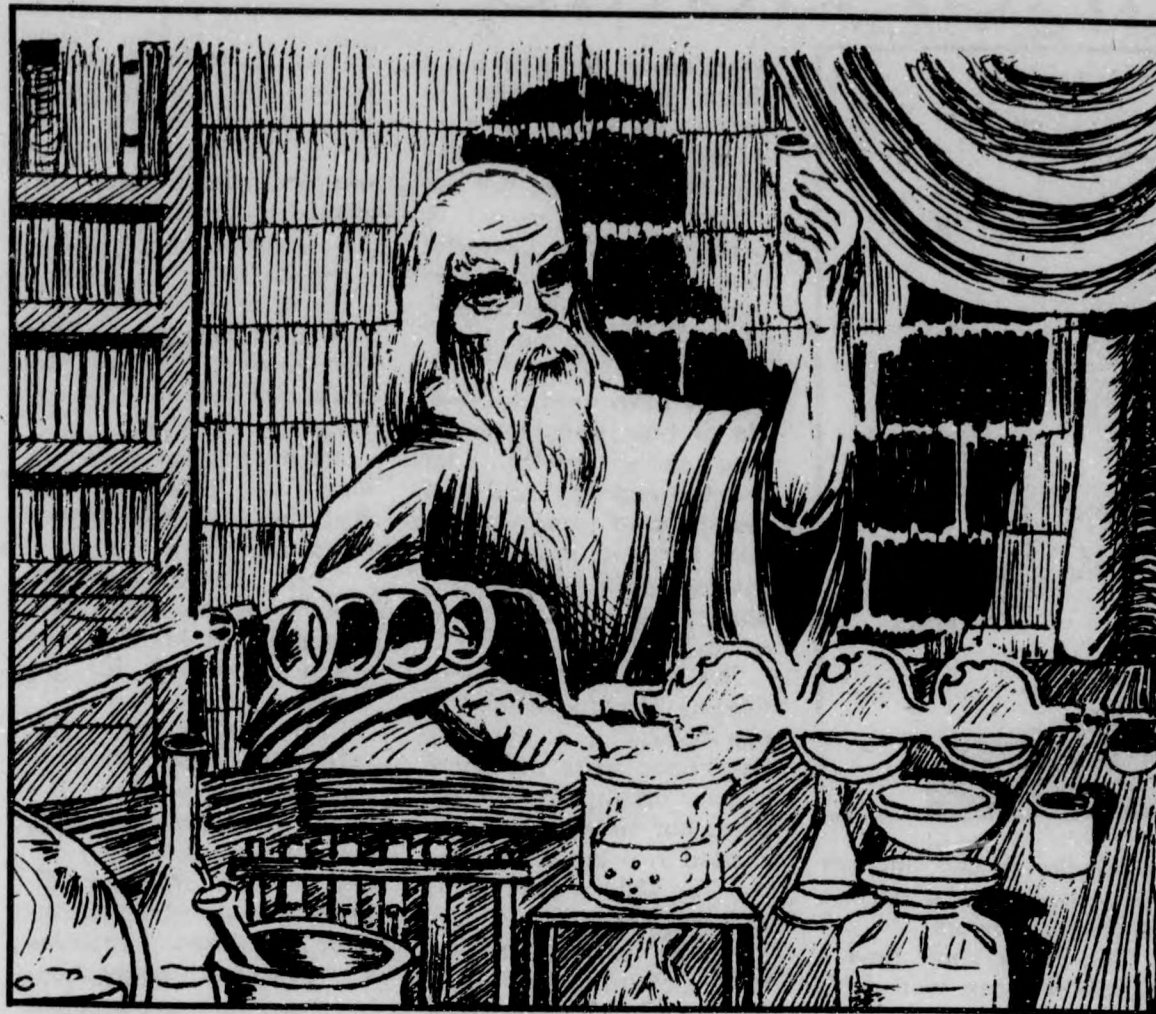


Discovery of power



(continued from p. 19)

ding not more than ten feet from him, still wrapped in the green cocoon. Energy burst from it in green bolts of flame. The ring of guards had scattered and Jar saw his three companions watching the battle. Valton stood there with them.

Jar wondered why Valton was not participating in the fight, instead of just standing there watching. Valton seemed to sense the question on Jar's mind.

"Jar, you have to fulfill your destiny." Jar did not understand. Too much was happening to him. "Jar, the crown is yours. That is why you were chosen to go on this quest. Only you can defeat Drak."

Drak extended both arms and green bolts flashed out towards Jar. Instinctively he raised his hands to fend off the blow. The bolt glanced off them harmlessly to smash into the wall. Jar stared at his hands in surprise. Again Valton tried to explain Jar's role.

"Drak needs that crown just as he needs the talisman. Both were forged by the same wizard and both give their owners the power of the original owner. Jar your ancestors came from the wizards. You are half man, half wizard.

That is why you were able to use the talisman just as you can use the crown. Drak knows that."

Drak whirled about and stabbed a finger in Valton's direction. The wizard placed both palms to accept the blow. A golden fireball smacked into them, throwing the wizard into Tran and the others. Jar watched helplessly, now knowing how to use the power he was supposed to have. Drak threw another fireball at the group and Valton accepted its force once again. It was only a matter of time before Valton was too weak to protect himself and the others. Jar clenched his fists in frustration.

He watched as Drak readied himself to hit again. The wizard turned to him.

"Valton is right Jar. Just as you can destroy me you can save the lives of your friends. I will destroy them, crush them like flies, unless you hand the crown over to me."

"Don't give it to him." Valton said weakly. "With the crown and the talisman he will be unstoppable."

"I don't have the talisman." Jar replied.

"Where is the talisman?" Drak demanded. Jar refus-

ed to answer. "It hardly matters. With the crown the talisman's location will be known to me."

"A lot of good that will do you." Jar retorted. "It lies at the bottom of the ocean."

Drak exploded into a rage of fury. Green flame lashed out at Jar's companions. Valton tried to form a protecting shield but is was faint. He lacked too much the necessary strength. Jar screamed in frustration, his fist clenching at his sides. White fire exploded from the crown and enveloped him. The sound of the explosion caused Drak to turn. The flame that surrounded him shot towards Jar but it could not penetrate the white fire. Jar stepped towards Drak and drove the flame back. Drak stood his ground, forcing the green flame to grow in intensity. Jar fed his anger to the white fire and its brightness was too much for onlookers. He stepped into the cocoon around Drak and embraced the wizard. Drak screamed in agony as Jar's white fire extinguished his flame. Slowly the cocoon faded so that Drak was immersed in white fire. Jar watched as the wizard's face melted revealing his skull. His lips

were drawn back in a grimace. The white fire burned away the wizard's clothing. Still Jar continued his embrace, driven on by his anger. Anger at the manipulation of his life, anger at the harm done to his friends by Drak and anger at the lack of control he had over his life. With a final groan of pain Drak slumped in Jar's arms. Jar let him drop to the ground.

The white fire burned out of control. It fed on Jar's anger and he had no way of stopping it. He looked for an outlet to expend the rest of his anger. The guards of Turin's army stood about watching Jar. He turned his wrath against them. They scattered before his fury. He wandered about the compound aimlessly letting his fury subside. White fire lashed out in all directions but slowly it died out. When the fire was completely dead he turned to his friends wearily.

They were staring at him in astonishment. Only Valton was smiling.

"You did Jar. You have destroyed Drak and the threat to Haln."

"So how come I don't feel happy?" Jar demanded.

"You have just discovered a power that scares you. That power will be with you all your life so you had better learn to master it. It was in control of you."

Jar glared at the wizard. "I don't want the power. I'm tired of this whole quest. All I want is to go back to Trent and try and forget this whole ordeal."

Valton placed an arm around Jar's shoulders. "It is not that easy. I told you before to fulfill your destiny and I say it again. At this very moment Haln is on the verge of civil war. I have been able to delay it somewhat but it is inevitable. Drak was merely a means for that war to come about. Haln is about to undergo a change and the only person who can control that change is you."

"What if I don't want to have anything to do with it?"

"You have no choice." Wearily Jar shrugged the wizard's arm from his shoulder. "I had a feeling when I first undertook this quest my life would be different. The shaman's warning came true."

"Jar, you are weary from the battle and the discovery of your power. In time you will grow out of this weariness and come to accept the power."

"What if I become too accustomed to power? What if I misuse it?"

"We all have that potential."

Jar smiled softly to his companions when they approached him. Not a word was spoken yet much passed between them. With a sigh Jar turned and led them from the keep. He did not bother to look back at the charred smouldering remains of the wizard who had tried so hard to destroy him.

A breeze came up and blew across the compound stirring the tattered material of Drak's robe. The burnt skinless bones of the wizard's right hand flexed slightly then were still.



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