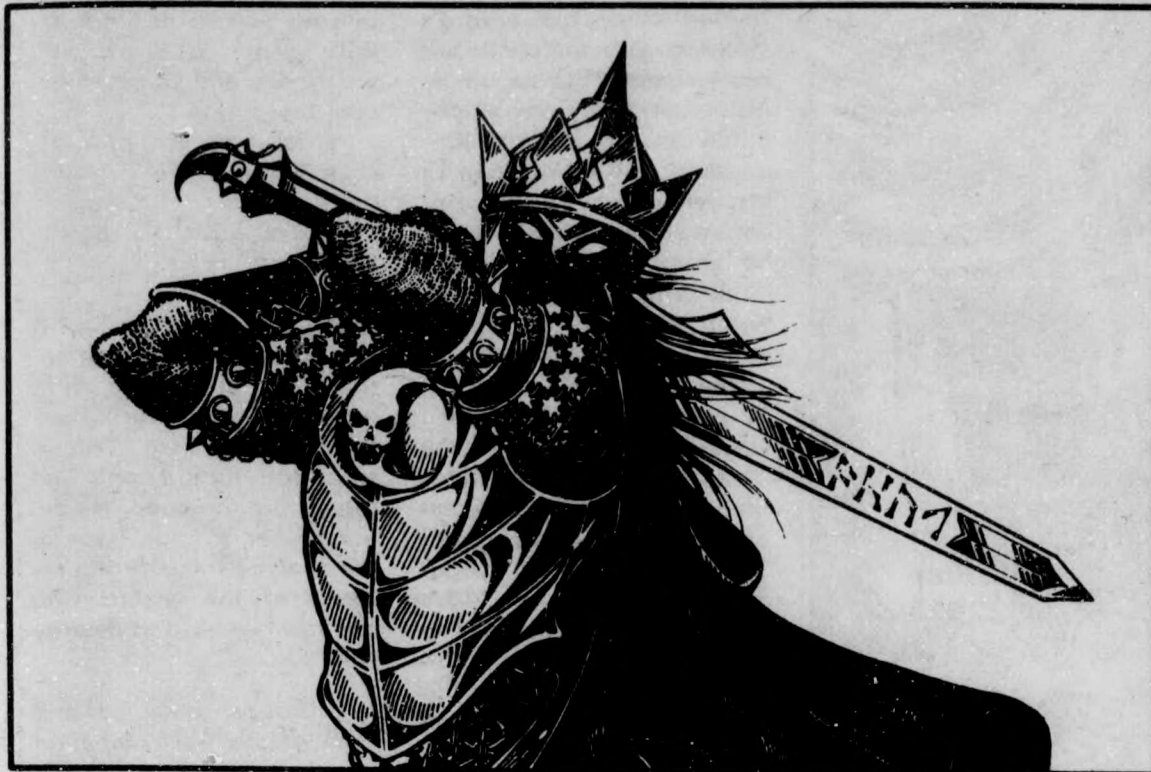


## Quest for the Crown of Trent

# The final battle



by MIKE MACKINNON  
 (Summary: Jar, accompanied by Tran and the sea captain Tralick, has gained the Turin Keep. Entering the keep through a breach in the outer wall he is knocked unconscious and thrown in a dark cell. A short while later he is confronted by Turin and informed he will have to fight the rulers best warrior. The fight is short lived as Drak puts an end to it. Jar takes advantage of the confusion to locate the crown.)

Jar stared about helplessly. There was no escape. Anyway, he was powerless against the wizard Drak. Turin reached to take the crown, but Drak stopped him.

"The crown is no longer yours," Drak said ominously. "Your betrayal has cut all promises between us." Turin started to protest but the wizard cut him short. "I will deal with you and your lack of faith after I have taken care of more pressing business."

Turin stared about at his army. Jar could see he was

sizing his chances of using his army to delay Drak while he escaped. He realized Turin was no fool and knew his army was in Drak's control now. A shout of despair broke from Turin's mouth and he ran across the compound to the breach in the wall. Drak merely turned and watched, allowing Turin to gain the outer wall. He snapped his fingers as Turin stepped through the opening. The ruler fell back into the keep and collapsed on the ground. He writhed in agony, clutching at his throat. Drak watched calmly, his face frozen into complacency. He snapped his fingers again and Turin arched his back, screaming at the sky, his hands clawing at the air. Saliva trickled from his mouth as the scream became a low gurgling sound. The saliva turned red and Turin slumped on to the dirt. After a final twitch he lay still.

As Drak turned back to face Jar he realized the wizard had gained strength. Somehow he had survived the ordeal at his fortress in

the Badlands and Jar felt this was what had given him his greater powers.

"You have seen how I deal with those who don't please me," Drak said. "You have caused a great deal of trouble, even though the outcome was inevitable. It is a constant source of amazement the way you lower races feel you can outwit or defeat a wizard. Had it not been for your friend Valton I would have resolved this matter earlier. No matter though; he is dead and you soon will be. The crown will belong to me as will the continent of Haln. Nymn I already control. Soon the world will feel my revenge for the wrongs done to me by your Valton and his council of wizards."

Jar tried to gain some time in the hopes his friends would show up. He wondered again where they were.

"What wrongs were committed?"

Drak laughed hollowly. "Did Valton not tell you?" Valton had told Jar about Drak's history but Jar wanted to hear it from the wizard himself.

"I was banned from the Council of Wizards because of my curiosity of the darker aspects of wizardry... sorcery. That was a fate I could not bear so I plotted the downfall of the council. Valton was able figure out was I was up so he tried to stop me. He failed though and I imprisoned him in the ravine. Death would have

been easier for him but I chose to allow him to observe my actions as I ruined his beloved council. The council I destroyed but not without harm to myself. A spell was more powerful than I thought and I was trapped in the dimension in which you found me."

"You have used the people of Haln and Nymn for your selfish means," Jar shouted angrily. "You have manipulated many lives, mine included, in order that you may gain revenge. It is about time you were stood up to."

The wizard laughed mirthlessly. "I suppose you feel you have that ability. You have been quite persistent in your attempts to foil my plans but all you have succeeded in doing is delaying me. You will not stand in my way any longer."

Jar decided to attempt a bluff. "What about the talisman Drak?" Drak's face paled and he stepped back. "Your power is based on that Talisman and I have it."

"It will not work for you, only I possess the secret of releasing its power."

Jar shook his head. "You're wrong Drak." The wizard show no mention. "I was able to use the talisman to dispell the amnesia you had placed on me before boarding the ship at the Oceanic Port. I know it was the shaman who was watching me from the dock."

Emotion played across the wizard's face. "no matter," he said through clenched teeth. "Your will is obviously stronger than I had thought but you will still give in to my power. I have waited a long time for this moment and not even you will stop me from achieving what I want."

During the exchange the guards had moved back and formed a circle around Jar and the wizard. Drak extended his arm and turned his hand so the palm faced Jar. An invisible force hurled Jar against the wall of Turin's quarters. The wizard laughed ominously and stepped in front of Jar. He stood there with his legs splayed and hands on hips, glaring. The air about him took on a greenish glow and Jar could feel the tingle of electricity. He tried to stand

up but found he could not move. The greenish glow grew deeper in color and turned the fabric of the air into an opaque sheet. The sheet wrapped itself around the wizard forming a protective cocoon.

"Give me the talisman." The voice came from within the cocoon. "It will be useless to you. Nothing can penetrate my aura."

Jar tried to speak but his mouth and throat were too dry. "You won't get it Drak," he rasped.

"Fool." Drak raised his arms over his head. Jar scrambled to his feet and prepared himself for the blast.

"I haven't got the talisman," he shouted through cracked lips. The forces Drak was drawing to himself were buffeting Jar and making standing difficult. The wizard did not appear to hear him. Jar started to back away, hoping that Drak would be blind from his madness and not see him.

"Don't move, Farnel," the wizard warned. "There will be no escape from my wrath. Even if you don't have the talisman I will still destroy you. I no longer need it, I have grown beyond the weakness of using it as a catalyst.

Now prepare to die."

The air about Jar exploded into fury. Green flame lashed at him, causing his skin to burn in agony. The crown he still clutched in his right hand absorbed much of the heat and took on the greenish glow. The red jewel in the crown burst into flame. Jar stared at the crown, not comprehending what was happening.

"Put the crown on your head." Jar could barely hear the voice and had difficulty placing it. "The crown. Put it on."

Jar stared at the crown again. Dare he do it? He was going to die if he did not do something so he placed the crown on his head. A searing pain penetrating his scalp where it came in contact with the metal. The smell of burning flesh assailed his nose as he grabbed at the crown in agony. He tried removing it but it would not come off.

The air cleared and Jar was able to see Drak stand (continued on p. 20)

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