So naturally, brother and sister have plumbed the depths after it!

Our ghostly mentors challenged us to enter the second world that lies below--to claim both the sword and our own destinies!

Well, we've come this far--and by the gods, we won't stop now!

As seen in our companion volume "Earthworld!"--gold with game one of "Swordquest."
Torr, you may think I'm mad, under the circumstances, but a chill just ran down my spine—

---as if, somehow, we were being watched!

IT IS A SMILE WITHOUT HUMOR... A SMILE LIKE THE GRIN OF DEATH...

BOOK TWO

FireWorld!
...yet a smile that swiftly fades, when...

Well, Konjuro? Have you located those two thieving whelps yet?

Of course, my lord Tyrannus. The powers of Konjuro are not long mocked...by anyone.

If that wry comment was meant for your kind, wizard, best keep a civil tongue in your head.

Where are they? Has your demon dispatched them yet?

Alas, they are beyond the reach of my powers...for the moment, at least...

...in the place called Fireworld, which lies far beneath our very feet!

And is it as you said?

Are they indeed the gold-haired ones who, 'twas prophesied, will claim my very throne, with 'a sword shining brightly as summer's sun'?

But how can they have eluded me all these years—so that I thought them dead from infancy?

After you slew their father, their mother leaped to her watery death holding two swaddled jars...

Not her newborn twins as we then imagined.

I have pierced the Future's veil just enough to learn that, and a bit more...

As you claimed their parents' lives, aye, my king.
"...for when they stole near my tower this night, intent on robbing me, their thoughts of vengeance were strong..."

"...so strong that they hovered wrath-like in the air, long enough for my spell to gather and read them, like so many tea-leaves..."

"They were thinking of their warrior-father's death at your hands, and of their own orphaning when their mother sacrificed herself for them..."

"...as well as of what happened in the months and years which followed:"

Young Torr grows straight and tall, eh?

No taller than Tarro, husband.

They're twins, after all...

Ah, if only you could, child!

But no one dares walk abroad in the shadow of Darkspire Castle, after the night-bell has sounded, and...

Listen! It tolls—...and all must obey the curfew, this night as every night for five years now—!

May we go out and play now, Felecia?"
"And we know full well why.
Freeman and slave alike were
forced to hide their fearful
hearts indoors from dusk to
dawn. Do we not, Tyrannus?"

"To forestall possible
rebellion against
your rule, you
bade me unleash two
sword-wielding
nether demons each
day as the sun died
burning in the west..."

"...demons who
could not be
perceived by
human eye..."

"...yet who appeared
to the cringing
populace as a
sinister mist which
snaked its way
through street and
alleyway of the
city below..."
...Bringing a hideous death to all who could not reach home and hearth in time!

"While, within one of those novels..."

If only we dared reveal their true selves, Pelicia -- instead of hiding their golden locks beneath that crude, dark dye --

--The people might rise against Tyrannus, and bring him down!

Would you seal their death warrants?

"And so, unknowing, you have reigned for nigh a score of years, thinking yourself safe from the prophecy revealed to me in a magical trance..."

"How often you must have passed close by those two dark-haired brats as they grew up..."

"...considering them beneath your royal notice..."

"...riding like a helmed deity among your quivering subjects."
"When they were of an age to understand such things, they were told of their true heritage...

"But still, having never known their real parents, they did not hate.

"...but still, having never known their real parents, they did not hate.

"They merely worked at the homely tasks their pseudo-parents set for them, till one day quite recently--"

"I... I heard it, my sister--cries from the street below!

"It sounded like--"

---

"Look!

It--IT CAN'T BE--!

"...to see those they had called mother and father for so long, lying lifeless in the dirt of the street.

"...and over their corpses, the armored form of Malavol, your captain of guards...

"...the man who had presided over the slaying of their true parents so many years before.

"Let this be a lesson to all you peasants!"

---

"If I were a normal mortal, my king, I might almost sympathize with the two wide-eyed striplings, as they gazed out the window--"

"...torn between what they saw, and desiring to do..."

---

"How horrified and speechless they must have been, for an eternal moment..."

"...and the years of admonition from their foster parents to keep hidden, and give no offense to the king or his men."
"Yet so embrowned in them were
the habits of obedience that
neither boy nor girl lifted a
hand against Malavol at that
moment..."

"...But merely embraced the poor dead figures, as if hoping to
breathe precious life back into them.

"And so it might have
remained, had Malavol
possessed the good
sense to keep his
own mouth shut.

OH, FATHER,...
FATHER...

MOTHER...

"But of course he did not.
YOU TWO! Be sure these
carcasses are buried
at once...

FOR, I'LL BE RIDDING BACK
THROUGH HERE IN A LITTLE
WHILE...

...AND I WOULDN'T
WANT MY VALUABLE NEW
STEED TO STUMBLE
OVER SUCH PEASANT
CARRION!"
"What in the name of all the gods--?"

"Consider the irony, my king: if not for this petty incident, the demigods might have lived all their lives, without striking a blow in vengeance."

"But now, with a hasty blowing of his shrill whistle--"

"Who threw that stone? Speak!"

"Don't try to hide or I'll burn down the whole city, till I find--"

"I threw it, you lapdog to a murderous tyrant!"

"Tarra--no! You'll just get yourself killed--like they were!"

"No! It was I!"

"Do you think I care--while the man who blew Garth and Felecia lives?"

"If it's death you court, whelps--then death shall you both have!"
"MALAVOL made that impossible."

"Strike, man! This blow at my honor must be punished!"

"They're mere striplings, Captain! We'll gut them without much trouble."

"Ready, Tarra?"

"Ready, dear brother!"

"The peasant called Garth, however, had been a wandering acrobat in his youth as well as a master thief..."

"...too well, in fact, for the unfortunate Malavol..."

"...and he had taught both his foster-children well..."

"...who broke his neck, next moment, when the boy tripped his chariot..."
"Fugitives now, the fair browne thriens... and thus came to pass where we now abide them, my king, they..."

"The flames they plunge through do not seem to harm them, I must talk with them, Konjur.""HEED MY WORDS, YE POOR OFFSPRING OF MY MOST FAITHFUL WARRIOR, MY MOST BELOVED FRIEND, TARR!

SISTER! THAT VOICE--IT SEEMS TO COME FROM EVERYWHERE--YET FROM INSIDE MY OWN BRAIN--!

I HEAR IT, TOO.

AND FROM THE WORDS IT SPEAKS -- THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN IT CAN BE!!

AS YOU WISH, ROYAL TYRANNUS, SPEAK... AND THEY SHALL INSTANTLY HEAR!!

KONJUR SAYS THAT IF YOU WILLINGLY SURRENDER YOUR OWN WILLS TO HIS, HE CAN DRAW YOU BACK FROM THE INFERNO INTO WHICH YOU HAVE RASHLY HURLED YOURSELVES.

DO SO, I PRAY YOU... FOR YOUR OWN GAMES!

AYE, CHILDREN! I AM TYRANNUS--AND I SPEAK TO YOU AS A FRIEND, WHO HAS SEEN THE FOLLY OF HIS WAYS.

TYRANNUS!

THE MAN WHO BLEMISHED OUR TRUE FATHER--AND MOURNED OUR MOTHER TO HER DEATH!!
TOO TRUE, ALAS... BUT A MAN WHO HAS CHANGED AND REPENTED, AND WILLING TO SHARE HIS THRONES WITH THOSE HE WRONGED IN HIS TRAGIC YOUTH!

THINK OF WHAT I OFFER—COMPARABLE TO WHAT LIES BELOW, EVEN IF YOU SURVIVE YOUR FALL!

THE ADVENTURE OF KONJURU'S LONELY TOWER, FROM WHICH THEY FLED, PURSUED BY A THING FROM BEYOND.

THEY REMEMBER THE GHOST-LIKE MENTORS WHO APPEARED AND BADE THEM SEEK OUT THE SWORD OF ULTIMATE SOREZER—

DOWN A DARK-YAWNING PIT WHICH LED DOWN TO THE PLACE CALLED EARTHWORLD.

YOU—WHO THEY SAY MURDERED EVEN HIS OWN ROYAL FATHER?

WHAT MEANS THAT TO YOU, COMPARED TO THE RICHES AND POWER I WILL GRANT YOU?

AND, BECAUSE THEY ARE ONLY HUMAN, AFTER ALL, TARRA AND TORR DO INDEED THINK—AND THEY REMEMBER THIS NIGHT'S STRANGE DOINGS...

IT WAS, THE MENTORS SAID, BUT THE FIRST OF FOUR WORLDS THE YOUNG THIEVES MUST FOLLOW IN PURSUIT OF WHATEVER DESTINY IS HELD IN STORE FOR THEM.
Yet what a world it turned out to be!

Twelve separate and interconnected chambers, each loaded over by a living incarnation of a zodiac symbol.

--Who either attacked or aided the youthful siblings on their quest for the mystic sword.

Still torn and their periphery--and eventually triumphed.

--Gaining not the sword, but at least the zoological talisman with it.

--A talisman which had metamorphosed, in turn, into twin swords for twin adventurers!
Such are Torr's and Tarra's thoughts as.

Well, my young friends! Have you considered my generous offer?

Aye, Tyrannus—and we hurl it back in your teeth!

We'll make no deals with the slayers of all those who loved us!

For once, brother, you're no more impetuous than I'd be!

And now, even though they have entered an ethereal state, it seems they hold it over your head, eh, my king?

Give up not so easily! The way before the young thieves is long and hard... and they may yet falter and fail... and die.

As, no longer within even sorcerous ear-shot of the usurper of Darkspire...

The flames don't really burn us—even slow our fall—but it seems we've been descending forever.

It's no mere land of flame we enter, torn but of wizardry and wonder.

In fact, it seems our downward plunge is about to end...
"But I don't know if that's a cause for rejoicing or despairing!"

"Shades of a thousand spirits!"

"Gentle if stiflingly hot winds seem to buoy the startled pair to a feather-soft landing..."
--IN THE SCARLET WORLD CALLED--
FIREWORLD!
AND NEVER WAS A
PLACE MORE APTLY
NAMED!

VOLCANOES--
BLAZING GEYSERS
--RIVERS OF LAVA--
AS FAR AS THE
EYE CAN SEE.

WE'LL PASS OUT
FROM THIS TERRIBLE
HEAT--UNLESS WE
FIND A COOLER
SPOT, AND
QUICKLY.

WE'D BETTER TALK THIS
OVER, AND FIGURE OUT
WHICH DIRECTION
WE SHOULD--

NO TIME
FOR THAT!

THIS WAY LIES AS
OPEN AS ANY!
COME ON!

I WILL
NOT!

YOU'RE CONSTANTLY
ORDERING ME AROUND--
AND I'M SICK AND TIRED
OF IT, DO YOU HEAR ME?

WAIT!
THAT PATH
LOOKS EVEN
WORSE TO--

WILL YOU
QUIT ARGUING,
AND FOLLOW
ME?

I DON'T CLAIM TO
KNOW WHICH WAY IS
SAFER, OR COOLER,
OR WHATEVER--

--BUT I'M GOING THIS
WAY, AND YOU CAN DECIDE
IF YOU WANT TO FOLLOW
ME FOR A CHANGE!

TO BLAZES
WITH YOU
THEN!

I'LL GO
MY OWN
WAY!
Yet, as Tarras's lithe form vanishes from view...

Now, what made me pick a fight with her that way?

Well, nothing to be done for it now.

My only hope is to find the sword. Wherever it fell...

Then use it to find her, and get us both out of here.

---

Herminus, old thief, it seems you were right to follow those two cubs.

One of them's likely to find the sword of ultimate sorcery you've been seeking for so long.

But... which to follow?

Twill then be no trick for a professional thief like yourself to wrest it from those amateurs.

---

Before we both perish of this horrible heat!

Well, well, well...!

What say we let the gods decide?
Soon afterward, upon the leftward path chosen by the headstrong Torr...

SO HOT... AND GETTING HOTTER EVERY MINUTE!

CAN'T SEE FAR ENOUGH AHEAD TO KNOW IF I TOOK THE RIGHT PATH OR NOT?

TOO LATE NOW, THOUGH. MY WAY BACK IS ALREADY BLOCKED BY FIRE AND LAVA.

GOT TO KEEP GOING-- FIND THE SWORD, AND THEN TARRA, BEFORE...!

OH, MENTOR-- WHERE ARE YOU, NOW THAT I REALLY NEED YOU ?

WE SHOULD'VE STUCK TOGETHER, NOT SEPARATED.

WHY DID I GET SO PULSIV WITH TARRA, ANYWAY?

GODS! NOW THE FLAMES ARE SHOOTING UP BEFORE ME, AS WELL!

WAIT! I JUST REMEMBERED-- THE ZODIACAL TALISMAN THAT WE RECEIVED ALONG WITH OUR BLADES!

YOU ARE CORRECT, TORR.

MENTARRA IS EVEN NOW APPEARING TO YOUR WANDERING SISTER--

--BUT MENTOR MAY BE OF SMALL SERVICE TO YOU.

WE KEPT THEM WHEN WE JUMPED, AND PERHAPS...

I HAD NO IDEA I COULD SUMMON YOU-- ONCE I REACHED FIREWORLD!
ONCE AND ONCE ONLY IN EACH OF THE FOUR WORLDS OF THE ELEMENTS CAN YOU CALL UPON US, LAD.

THIS IS THAT TIME, SPEAK!

AH, NOW AT LEAST YOU HAVE ASKED THE PROPER QUESTION—WHICH ALONE IS HALF THE STRUGGLE TO FINDING THE ANSWER.

I SHALL SHOW YOU WHAT YOU ASK, TORR.

—AYE, AND SO VERY MUCH MORE—

--IN THE CHALICE OF LIGHT!

C-CAN YOU TAKE ME TO THE SWORD—OR TO TARDA?

THAT IS A WAY YOU MUST FIND FOR YOURSELF, ALAS.

THEN SHOW ME SOMETHING COOL TO QUENCH MY THIRST, I BEG OF YOU... BEFORE I PERISH!

IT—IT'S TRULY A THING OF BEAUTY, MENTOR!

BUT WHERE IS IT? HOW CAN I REACH IT AND QUENCH MY THIRST—SO I CAN STAY ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO FIND TARDA AND THE SWORD?
YOU WILL FIND IT WHEN YOU BECOME THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR IN THIS WORLD -- AND NOT BEFORE.

YET, IF AND WHEN YOU DRINK OF THE CHALICE OF LIGHT, NOT ONLY SHALL YOU KNOW NO MORE THIRST IN THIS FIERY PLACE...

-- BUT YOU WILL BE IMMUNE TO HER FLAMES, AND THUS WILL CONQUER!

NOW, I MUST DEPART...

HOLD IT! DON'T GO! I'M NOT THROUGH WITH...

BLAST! I SHOULD'VE KNOWN -- NOBODY KEEPS MENTOR AROUND WHEN HE DECIDES IT'S TIME TO GO.

JUST SEEING THAT CHALICE GAVE ME STRENGTH -- AND HOPE.

I'LL FIND IT -- AND I'LL BECOME THE GREAT WARRIOR MENTOR SAID I MUST BE --

-- FOR THE SAKED OF THE REVENGE WE SEEK -- AND FOR TARQAQ!

MEANWHILE, HIS SISTER HAS LIKESWISE COMMUNICATED WITH THE FEMININE WRAIGHT MENTARRAQ, AND NOW...

CAN'T GO THAT WAY -- BUT MAYBE I'LL FIND RESpite FROM THE HEAT IN THIS CAVE.

WH - WHAT? IT'S NOT REALLY A CAVE AT ALL--

I LET THE STIFLING HEAT IN THIS PLACE Warp my JUDGMENT.

THIS IS ONE TIME I WAS JUST ASCUPIDLY STUBBORN AS TORQ.
--IT'S A TREASURE CHAMBER!
EVEN KUNJUR'S SEA
KEEP DIDN'T POSSESS SO
MUCH GOLD--SO MANY
SPARKLING JEWELS!

I'VE GOT TO BECOME A WARRIOR IF
I WANT TO QUENCH MY THIRST--
LET ALONE TRIUMPH!

STILL, THEY
WON'T GET ME
THE CHALICE
MENTARRA TOLD
ME ABOUT.

THIS SWORD
--SO MUCH LOV-
LIER THAN THE
ONE I SAID
ABOVE...

AND this
ARMOR! PERHAPS IT'S
TIME I LOOKED
NO MORE LIKE
A STARVING
THIEF--

--AND MORE LIKE THE DAUGHTER
OF THE GREATEST WARRIOR OF
THE OUTER WORLD.

NO--NOT JUST HIS
DAUGHTER--BUT A
WARRIOR IN MY
OWN RIGHT!

STILL HOT,
THOUGH--SO
THIRSTY! I'D
BETTER FIND
THE CHALICE
QUICKLY, BEFORE--

WHAT'S THAT--
IN THAT SECOND
CHAMBER BEYOND,
FRAMED BY
A CRIMSON
BLAZE?

This Armor--Shield
--Sword--So Rich and
Gleaming--I Feel I
Really Could Conquer
This World of Fire!
I... CAN'T RESIST...

AND WHY SHOULD I WANT TO?

SOMETHING... DRAWS ME TOWARD IT...

IT'S A UNICORN-- CARVED OF GOLD, LIKE MY ARMOR!

8-BY THE GODS...
Next moment, it seems as if treasure chamber, profusely scattered wealth, and, even Fireworld itself, have all but vanished from Tarra's fevered sight--

It's ALIVE!!

--As the glistening metallic stallion bucks and heaves, as if to hurl its human rider to a fiery death, a million miles below and away!

And Tarra hangs on--for life, for vengeance--

--And perhaps most of all, for the sake of her brother Toar!
Meanwhile, using the words of Mentor as the foundation of his actions, Tarrr himself has wandered into yet another of the strange circular chambers which seem to dot the crimson face of Fireworld...

Warlocks and wizards! I came seeking a chalice to drink from—perhaps refuge from the numbing heat—

—and I've found a weirdling altar instead!

Well, might as well search it before I go on.

But I can't imagine whose altar it could be in this devilish place...
LIKE HIS SISTER BEFORE HIM, TORR FINDS ARMOR ENOUGH TO EQUIP A SMALL ARMY.

A KING'S RANSOM WORTH OF SHIELDS AND SWORDS AND BREASTPLATES--AND ALL OF FINE-CARVED SILVER!

...FOR I'VE CERTAINLY SEEN NO ONE ABOUT!

IF I'M TO BECOME A WARRIOR--MAYBE IT WAS MEANT THAT I FIND SUCH ARMOR. AND IF NOT--WHY, I'M STILL CALLED A THIEF BACK IN TYRANNUS' KINGDOM, AFTER ALL.

THIS HELMET--indeed, all the armor--fits me like a well-tailored glove!

IT'S AN Omen, all right--and who am I to disregard an omen?

THE BOWS AND ARROWS I CAN DO WITHOUT--they're the weapons of cowards and weaklings. but--

WHAT--?
Loathsome monsters, all aflame and leaping from out of the very fire!

And where else should fire-goblins dwell, pray?

Come! Put down your weapons, and we'll take you home with us to see, eh?

No? Well, then, stripling, if you'll not come willingly—!

Balls of flame—leaping from their very fingertips!

Only my silver shield saves me from them, even for the moment...

---and my sword---
IT MELTED IT THEIR TOUCH--LIKE AN ICICLE UNDER THE SUMMER SUN!

NOW YOU COME PLAY WITH US, INTRUDER FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD?

SURE! WHEN THIS PLACE FREEZES OVER!

NO SWORD--AND MY AXE ISN'T GOING TO STOP THOSE THINGS.

BUT--THE ARROWHEADS ARE ALL MADE OF--ICE!

THIS BOW-- MAYBE IT'S NOT SUCH A SHAGGY WEAPON, AFTER ALL!

AND RIGHT ABOUT NOW, NEITHER CAN THEIVES!

TOGETHER NOW, MY BROTHER! WE MUST--
The fire-gobling cry is cut off in mid-shout, however, as... to Thor's great shock--the ice-arrow strikes home.

And when clouds of steam and smoke have blown away--

Well, what do you know!!

He's frozen stiff!

All right--you fugitives from a fireplace--come ahead!

The snow-shoes on the other foot now, isn't it?

Good! They're all fleeing--those who still can, anyway.

I didn't care much for icing you down, old Buddy, but you ought to be more hospitable to strangers.

You'll probably melt back to normal in a little while--

But I won't be here to see it.

I will say this, though--

--even when your mouth's as dry as the desert, victory still tastes sweet!
Elsewhere, a youthful figure with armor to match her golden tresses sits astride a galloping unicorn with mane like fire.

Well, at least it's stopped trying to toss me into the lava! Thank Helios for small favors! It even responds to my commands already, and--

wait! What's that??

Is it just that overwhelming heat getting to me--baking me inside this armor--

--or is that a man lying there, upon that bier in the middle of this lake of lava?

Aye, that it is--unless the heat's driven me balmy!

A handsome lad, too—full of manly beauty—a strange sort of harmony about his features, somehow.

I feel—I've seen him before somewhere—but that's impossible.

I don't know quite why...

...but I can't resist kissing him.

Ah! He's waking up!

I hope he won't mind that I--

Mind, lass?!

Resist? Nay—I want to kiss him!
NAY, WHY SHOULD I MIND--

WHEN IT WAS I WHO PUT THE VERY IDEA INTO YOUR MIND??

BY THE GODS!

THE MAN I KISSED--HE'S TURNED INTO SOME KIND OF TENTACLED MONSTER--

--IF HE WAS EVER TRULY HUMAN AT ALL!

CAN'T--GET FREE! CHOKING ME--I CAN'T--

HOLD! WHAT'S THAT MOVEMENT OVER THERE--NEAR MY MOUNT?

I HOPE YOU WOULDN'T OBJECT TO MY BOAR ROWING YOUR HORNY STEED, DEAR CHILD.

SOMEHOW, YOU DON'T LOOK AS IF YOU'LL BE NEEDING HIM AGAIN.

I'M SORRY TO DO THIS LASS--REALLY I AM.

BUT I SEEK THE SWORD OF ULTIMATE SORCERY, TOO, YOU KNOW!

--AND TARDA HAS FAR MORE PRESSING CONCERNS!

HERE'S WHERE I FOUND OUT IF THIS FANCY SWORD I TRADED MY OLD ONE FOR IS GOOD FOR ANYTHING BESIDES SHOW!

THEN, THE MASTER THIEF IS GONE--

HERMINUS!
APPARENTLY NOT!

THE OCTOPOIDS' STRENGTH!
MY OWN'S LIKE A CHILD'S
BESIDE IT!

IT'S DRAWING
ME TOWARD
IT—INTO ITS
GAPING
MOUTH!

MY SHIELD—
IT'S MY ONLY
CHANCE!

IT'S HUGE JAWS
CRUSHED THE SHIELD
—SHATTERED IT—
BUT THE JASHED EGGS
ARE HURTING ITS
SOFT INSIDES!

YYARARG

I—I
DID
IT!

IT'S SCUTTLING BACK
INTO THE MOLTEN LAWR
WHERE IT MUST LIVE!

IF ITS PAIN HADN'T
DISTRACTED IT—IT WOULD
HAVE TAKEN ME WITH IT!

THE MONSTER MUST HAVE READ
MY MIND SOMEHOW—USED AN
IMAGE OF MANLY BEAUTY
BURIED THERE—TO LURE ME.

STILL SO HOT—AND
WEARIER THAN EVER—
BUT I CAN'T GO
ON WITHOUT
A SWORD.

WELL, I
SURVIVED ITS
ATTACK—JUST
BARELY.

MUST GO
BACK TO THE
CHAMBRER
OF
SPLEENDOR—
FOR MY
OLD
ONE—

—BUT I LOST
MY UNICORN—
MY WEAPONS—
EVERYTHING!

—AND IF
IT ISN'T
THERE—I'M
IN DEEP
TROUBLE!
As, on another of the myriad
rock-bridges which form the
sole roadways of Fireworld...

So! I thought you two
fire-goblins had all gone
skittering back into the
lava pool.

Too scared even
for that, huh?

Please--
D-don't hurt
us, master!

We just
wanted
to protect
our l-land!

No, thank you,
master! We--

Now don't get
mad at me,
or I'm liable to
change my
mind.

Get away
from there!
You want to
set my boots
on fire?

Don't know why I showed
you guys any mercy--
unless it's because
I'm not used to
winning fights.

If you really
want to show
me some
grate--

--you can point
me to my sister
Tarqa--or the
chalice of
light--

--or just
a plain
drink of--
BY THE GODS, THIS FEELS GOOD—AND COOL! IT'S NOT THE CHALICE OF LIGHT, BUT IT'LL DO.

JUST HOPE TARA'S FOUND SOMEPLACE LIKE IT; IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENED TO HER—

DO YOU ALWAYS TALK TO YOURSELF THIS WAY, BOY?

YOU!!?

WATER!

I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE THAT THIEF CALLED HERMINUS!

YOU TRIED TO GET MY SISTER AND ME KILLED—BACK IN EARTHWORLD.

GET DOWN OFF THAT FANCY HORSE, AND I'LL—

AFTER ALL, IN CASE YOU DON'T KNOW, I'VE BEEN SEEKING THE SWORD OF ULTIMATE SORCERY A LOT LONGER THAN YOU TWO HAVE.

AND, THOUGH I'LL ADMIT I WOULDN'T MIND QUENCHING MY CONSIDERABLE THIRST AT THAT FOUNTAIN—

MAYBE YOU GUYS ARE MY GOOD-LUCK CHARM AFTER ALL, AND—

NOW WHERE'D THEY GO? OH WELL, LIVE AND LET LIVE, I ALWAYS SAY.

I'VE REALLY NO TIME, BOY.
--BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL SETTLE TILL I FIND THE SAME CHALICE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR!

WAIT, HOW'D YOU LATCH ONTO--A UNICORN THAT FLIES?

THAT GUY'D STEAL THE COWS OFF A DEAD MAN'S EYES!

NICE LOOKING UNICORN, THOUGH, WISH I HAD--

Huh??

THE RAIN--SOME KIND OF ROLLED-UP PARCHMENT!

THERE'S SOMETHING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE FOUNTAIN--

DON'T LIKE WASTING TIME WHEN I MIGHT BE LOOKING FOR TAURUS OR THE SWORD.

BUT WHO KNOWS IF THE WAY THINGS GO IN THIS UNDERGROUND WORLD...

AND NOW...

BESIDES, A FAST COOL PIP WOULD SURE FEEL GOOD RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

...MAYBE THAT SCROLL WILL TELL ME HOW TO FIND THEM.

A FEW MINUTES AGO, MY TONGUE WAS HANGING OUT LIKE A DOG'S FROM THE HEAT...
OH NO!

SOME KIND OF GIGANTIC REPTILE
IT MUST'VE BEEN LYING IN WAIT BENEATH THE FOUNTAIN FLOOR!

IT'S GOT MY LEGS--PULLING ME DOWN--!

GLOMP!
In the meantime, Torrs's gold-haired twin has retrieved a second outfitting from the chamber of splendor, and...

Speak of the devil!

There's a full suit of armor—hanging on that blazing tree—

—and it looks as if it would fit me perfectly!

No! What in the name of this terrible heat am I thinking of?

Now I get it! This place just throws one temptation after another at you—like the 'sleeping prince' before, and now this—

—taking images from my mind, and using them to disarm me!

THINGS SHOULD GO A BIT MORE SMOOTHLY FROM HERE ON.

Maybe I could just...

This time, I choose my weapons for sturdiness, not sheen.

Too bad there wasn't a second suit of armor lying around. But—by the gods!

I'd take off this bit of armor, and then be totally unprotected if...

Ow!!

That blast of heat! Wh-where'd it come from??
SKRAWWWW!

I HAD TO ASK!!

THIS PLACE NEVER GIVES UP, DOES IT?

UNICORNS... HYPNOTIC OCTOPOIDS... AND NOW THIS FIRE-HAWK!

WELL, AT LEAST THIS ARMOR'S PROTECTING ME BETTER THAN THE OTHER DID...

...BUT THAT LAST PASS BY THE HAWK... LEFT ME SO FAIN'T... FROM IT'S SHEER UNRELenting HEAT!

ANOTHER ONE LIKE IT... AND I'M DONE FOR...
--UNLESS I TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS--
OR, IN THIS CASE, THE BIRD BY THE BEAK--

--AND SEE IF THIS FEATHERED FIREBALL WILL OBEY A RIDER AS READILY AS THE UNICORN DID.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? IT DOES!
MAYBE I AM ON MY WAY TO BECOMING THE WARRIOR MENTARRA TALKED ABOUT, AFTER ALL!

BUT--THOSE WEIRD LITTLE CREATURES BELOW--GESTURING FRANTICALLY AT ME, AS IF THEY'RE TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING!

Huh? Better take a look over where they're--

BY Darkspire's Walls--it's Torr!
AND IT LOOKS AS IF HE'S IN DEEP TROUBLE!

MY BLAZING BIRDIE WON'T BE ABLE TO FOLLOW WHEN HE AND THAT THING GO UNDERWATER AGAIN--
UNLESS THIS IS ANOTHER OF FIREWORLD'S BEER 'ILLUSIONS'!

BUT NO! THE OTHER IMAGES SHOWED ME THINGS I WANTED TO SEE.

---NOT THINGS LIKE TORR IN DANGER!

---SO I'D BETTER DIVE FOR IT, AND HOPE THIS ARMOR IS AS LIGHT AS IT FEELS!

TOO BAD! I COULDN'T GROWN TO LIKE TRAVELING BY FIREFLAKE.

GOT TO MAKE THAT LIZARD, OR WHATEVER IT IS, LET GO OF TORR!

THIS ARMOR'S LIGHT, ALL RIGHT! I'M POPPING UP LIKE A CORK.

NOTHING LIKE THE DIRECT APPROACH!

TORR-- ARE YOU-- I WON'T FEEL-- LIKE GOING SWIMMING FOR A WHILE-- BUT OTHERWISE--

SAME OLD BROTHER-- OF MINE, ALL RIGHT-- THANK THE GODS! GOOD THING I DIDN'T TRADE IT IN.
WELL? WHAT'S WRONG, TORR? AREN'T YOU GLAD TO SEE ME?
WHAT ARE YOU GAPING AT?
YOU, SISTER--YES--

---BUT NOT THAT!

WOULDN'T YOU JUST KNow IT--IN A FIRE-HAPPY PLACE LIKE THIS--
THAT THING WOULD BE A FIRE-BREATHER??

TORR! WILL YOUR SHIELD--?
I DON'T KNOW--

BUT OUR ONLY HOPE--IS TO FIGHT FIRE--WITH FIRE--

---AND PRAY--

FROOOSH!
IT--IT WORKED!
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT THING'S DEAD OR NOT-- AND I DON'T MUCH CARE--
--AS LONG AS IT STAYS DOWN THERE, AND WE'RE UP HERE.

NOW, ABOUT THAT QUESTION YOU ASKED BEFORE. DARREH...

SO THE WAY I FIGURE IT, I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WALK AROUND THE GATEWAY, AND IT'S WHAT ENABLED ME TO "WALK" THE FIRE-HAWK.

LITTLE BIT WHEN MORE, WHEN I'M NOT THE "OWNER" OF THE HAWK.

AND IF THIS GATEWAY IS AN EVIDENCE--I'M NOT SURE WE'RE GOING TO...

IT'S LIKE A ROARING FURNACE--THE GREATEST INFERNO WE'VE ENCOUNTERED YET.

BUT NOW THAT OUR PATHS HAVE JOINED--OUR GOAL MUST BE JUST BEYOND IT-- MUST!
WE CAN'T HAVE COME SO FAR, SITTEN SO CLOSE—ONLY TO FAIL—
—CAN WE?

YOU DIDN'T LET ME FINISH BEFORE, TORR--TELLING YOU ABOUT MY UNDERSTANDING OF FIREWORLD.

I MASTERS THE FIRE-HAWK BECAUSE I'D BEATEN THE OCTOPHIA, DON'T YOU SEE?

CONQUER ONE ASPECT OF THIS WORLD—AND YOU CONQUER IT ALL!

I'D HAVE STOOD UP TO THAT DRAGON, TOO—IF I HADN'T PANICKED.

BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH--
TARRA! STOP!

NO! THE FLAMES CAN'T HURT ME—IF I DON'T BELIEVE THEY CAN!

FOLLOW ME, TORR! HURRY!

IT—IT'S NO GOOD, TARRA! THAT WAY WOULDN'T WORK FOR ME!

WAIT! I FORGET ABOUT--THE PARCHMENT! MAYBE--THE ANCIENT WISDOM WRITTEN ON IT--

BUT—CAN I READ IT??

TORR'S RIGHT! HE COULDN'T HAVE COME WITH ME.

HE'D HAVE BEEN BURNT—EVEN IF I'M NOT.

MUST GO ON--FIN OUT WHAT'S AT THE END OF OUR JOURNEY.

THEN I'LL GO BACK FOR TORR, AND--

HOLD ON, TARRA! I'M COMING!

THAT PARCHMENT TOLD ME THE PATHWAY THROUGH THE FLAMES!
SOMEHOW, THE WATER I SWALLOWED BACK AT THAT WEIRD FOUNTAIN GAVE ME THE WISDOM TO...

Huh??

DON'T TELL ME--LET ME GUESS--!

THE CHALICE OF LIGHT!

JUBY THINK, 'TERRR--ONCE WE DRINK FROM IT, WE WON'T FEEL THE HEAT ANY MORE--WE WON'T FEEL ANY THIRST!

WE'LL HAVE CONQUERED FIREWORLD, JUST AS WE DID EARTHWORLD--

--AND BECOME THE WARRIORS OUR MENTORS TOLD US WE COULD BE!
I'll drink to that—-a nice long gulp of water!

Yes, and all without slaying anybody to get to it, too!

As a matter of fact—so will I!

Huh? Who—?

The chalice—-it shattered into a million pieces!

Then I'm betting—it wasn't the real chalice of light at all!

Aye, lad and lass—Herminus, and drinking a jolly toast to the both of you!

Fact is, I was quite thirsty, and since this true chalice never gets empty—

Give us that chalice, thief!

But of course! Why not? I've drunk my fill... and learned all that's to be learned from it.

This is what he means, Torr. Look!

There—on the bottom of the chalice—

The image of a crown!

Ah, but you are a perceptive wench, aren't you?

It's Herminus!

I'm too waterlogged even to run from you!
THAT IT IS. MY HEARTIES! A CROWN THAT WAITS FOR ME— IN THE THIRD WORLD WHERE HIDES THE SWORD OF ULTIMATE SORCERY!

HE'S GETTING AWAY— ON THAT WEIRD UNICORN!

LET HIM.

AFTER ALL, WE'VE GOT THE CHALICE, RIGHT?

AND IF WHAT HAPPENED IN EARTHWORLD WAS ANY CLUE, IT SHOULD BE THE KEY TO OUR NEXT DESTINATION.

I GUESS SO... BUT I DON'T TRUST THAT HERMINUS!

WHY SHOULD YOU? HE'S A THIEF, ISN'T HE— JUST LIKE US!

NOT LIKE US! WE'RE WARRIORS NOW, REMEMBER?

TARRA! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING— TO THE CHALICE!

HUNT WHERE'D ALL THIS WATER—

COME—

FROM?
DON'T YOU SEE, BROTHER? IF THE FIRST WORLD WAS INSIDE THE EARTH--AND THE SECOND WAS RINGED IN FIRE--

OF COURSE! A WORLD FOR EACH OF THE PRIMAL ELEMENTS!

AND IF WE CAN'T GO BACK UP-- OR EVEN SIDEWAYS--

NOT FOR LONG, MILORD KING. MY MAGIC WILL FOLLOW THEM THROUGH ALL FOUR WORLDS, IF NEED BE--

TILL THEY MENACE OUR CAUSE NO MORE!

WHERE IS THIS THIRD WORLD-- WITH IT'S CROWN, AND THE SWORD OF ULTIMATE SORCERY?

WHERE??

I ASSURE YOU, THE GOLD-TREASURED YOUNG THIEVES NAMED TORR AND TARRA SHALL FIND THEIR FINAL DOOM IN...

WATERWORLD!

IN SWORDQUEST BOOK 3 AVAILABLE SOON!

WELL, KONJURO?...