

THE VALLEY

CT proudly presents its multi-system, modular adventure game. Presented in module-by-module form the game is fully documented and as well as being good fun to play can be used as a step-by-step tutorial to programming.

The news spread quickly throughout the lands of Tybollea. Vounim, mightiest wizard of the Northern Reaches, had arrived at the gates to the Princess Evanna's castle offering his aid against the Selric hordes which besieged her realm.

Her magical powers alone too weak to vanquish the foes, Princess Evanna eagerly accepted Vounim to her side. Together forming a psychic bond they wove a spell, powerfully constructed from the forces of light and darkness, to drive the savages from Tybollean soil. Their combined magicks scoured the Northern border-lands, scattering the enemy's host and laying waste the Selric threat forever.

In gratitude, Princess Evanna invited Vounim to make his home in her Kingdom and bestowed upon him the title 'Lord of the Valley Between Two Castles'. Knowing the land between the Princess' castle and her brother Xeron's to be most beautiful country, Vounim accepted the honour and began plans to build two strongholds in the forests of the Valley.

Time passed... far away from the village settlements, Vounim's Lairs (as his strongholds had become known) were often the subjects of whispered conversation in the ale-houses of Tybollea. Even the Princess Evanna's councillors felt that the Princess had closed her eyes to the changes that had overtaken Vounim during the years he had attended the castle as her chief advisor. He had become quiet and withdrawn, only visiting the castle at the dead of night. It was even rumoured he had entertained in his strongholds members of the White Order, an evil brotherhood of wizards from the Southern Slopes.

Following just one of these visits from the White Order, Vounim had begun building two temples

dedicated to the worship of an obscene lizard-like god, Y'Nagiath. Shrouded by evil swamps, it seemed as though none could stop the wizard from carrying out his ancient sacrificial rituals. At first, the

Princess listened to the stories of livestock disappearing and

of children running off with an air of humour; but

soon even she could not deafen her ears to the

allegations of the high taxes and cruelty of which

her people complained. However, it was

only when her war-like brother, Xeron, seemed

to wither away in his sick-bed from the

'medicines' administered by Vounim that Princess

Evanna began to see the threat posed to

her throne.

Arranging a Council of War with her neighbouring Lords, Princess Evanna asked them to pledge their allegiance and grant her the aid she needed to crush the evil wizard. There was much brave talk and long discussion but eventually the Lords decided not to intervene. The worship of Y'Nagiath had spread and the peoples of Tybollea would likely as not support the wizard, High Priest of the lizard faith, rather than their over-lords.

The Lords quite clearly feared Vounim more than the Princess and rather than follow their heart's dictates chose the easy route. The Princess was disheartened and, clearing them from her Council Chamber, slumped into her throne deep in thought. She could destroy this wizard, she mused, but at what cost?

As dawn broke, the Princess' meditations were interrupted by a young wizard by the name of Alarian. She recognized him instantly as the novice attached to Baron Niitall, Lord of the Eastern Plains — one of the Lords she had expected would grant her the aid she would need. Although far below the Princess in magical prowess, Alarian was able to offer the wealth of his experiences as a youth apprenticed to the mighty Vounim back in the Northern Reaches. The young wizard also gave the Princess his copper amulet, studded with six precious gems — Alarian's amulet was a magical device, providing its wearer with the gift of life after mortal death.

Mounting her horse at the castle gates, Princess Evanna made one last desperate attempt to encourage her people to her side; the Lords looked away and her subjects jeered. So, muttering a curse, the Princess Evanna set off to face Vounim in his lair.

As she rode, she was saddened by the apparent sickness that hung over the Valley; nothing grew there now, save in the forests and swamps that surrounded Vounim's Lairs and the Temples of Y'Nagiath. Yet as she rode on she discovered, sheltered in the depths of the Valley floor, another building — a six-storey tower. She recognized the tower with sickening rapidity, she had



once seen it in her youth — it was a replica of the Black Tower of Zaexon, the home of the brotherhood of the White Order. Satisfying herself that the tower was empty, she spurred her mount and raced with renewed vigour towards the demon wizard, Vounim.

Catching the wizard amidst a ghastly blood rite, Princess Evanna began casting a spell of banishment on Vounim. Caught off guard, the Lord of the Valley, screaming vile obscenities, started to fade from sight. With a final blood-curdling scream, he made a final gesture at the Princess before passing from the mortal plane. The Princess, surrounded by dancing lights, fell to the floor writhing in pain. She had been poisoned by Vounim's magic and, with mounting horror, realised this would be a magical and not a mortal death — the Amulet of Alarian would not help the Princess to cheat her fate.

Crumpled on the floor of Vounim's Lair, the Princess began to make her last magicks. She hid the Amulet in one of the Temples of Y'Nagioth and three of the stones she placed on the third floor of the Black Tower of Zaexon, the fourth stone on the fourth floor, the fifth and the sixth stones cached on the two top floors. Struggling to keep her consciousness, the Princess made one last gesture at the Helm and as she died, her magick passed into the Helm as it disappeared from sight forever.

The Valley buildings disappeared soon after Vounim's banishment, following him into the ethereal limbo in which the Princess had imprisoned him. Gradually over the years, the Valley returned to its former splendour. Alarian, satisfied that Evanna's spell was well cast, remained there for many years keeping his eye over the Kingdom. Then one fine morning, the first of Spring, Alarian, leaving a spell of watchfulness over the land, left for other adventures.

Concluding the story, he turned his attention to the Valley lying far beneath his window, blanketed in swirling mists shrouding all but the highest tree tops. On the horizon, clearly silhouetted against the morning sun shone the silvery towers of Castle Xeron nestling on the hill many leagues away. All was still... almost peaceful.

"Listen, old man. I've heard your

faerie story — just what is all this about?"

At the sound of the gruff voice, the hooded figure at the window swivelled around using his stick for support and, contemplating the six figures seated around his desk, began the slow and painful journey back to his chair.

"It is no faerie story, my friend" the old man muttered as he eased his back against the oaken carvings of the chair back. "I know the tale to be true for I was that young wizard, Alarian. It was I who, tens of thousands of years ago, sat with Princess Evanna helping her to prepare for her battle with Vounim".

Alarian lifted his hand weakly silencing the doubting questions of the company.

"Please listen. You would not understand the ways I have prolonged my life, so do not ask. Accept simply that I am Alarian and all I speak of is true. The spell of watchfulness I cast so long ago has called me here to protect your lands from great danger"

"With all due respect, Sire, are you not a little late" said another of the figures, a novice wizard by his appearance, "the Valley has been a place of rumour and mystery, concealed by strange mists for nigh on thirty years"

"I'm afraid" sighed Alarian "that you will find out one day soon that not all magic works as effectively as you would wish. I believe my spell of watchfulness was weakened in much the same way as Princess Evanna's spell of banishment. During my time of apprenticeship to Vounim, I too formed a psychic link with my master hoping to amass power before my time. As the fates would have it, Vounim, through the past mystic bonds with the Princess and I, was able to divert much of the strength of our spells, allowing him to attempt a return to the mortal plane unseen.

"Vounim, Lord of the Valley, is smashing a pathway from the chaos of his world of banishment through to our own. In his present situation, halfway between chaos and reality, he is almost visible to me; his followers and his buildings, the Lairs, the Temples and the Black Tower, are already becoming reality again.

"As my wild-eyed barbarian friend pointed out earlier, I am but a frail old man. I can offer nothing but magical aid as I am all but restricted to this chair. Were I stronger,

nothing would stop me fulfilling the quest alone but alas, it is to you I look for favour. Will any of you enter the Valley in search of the missing Helm of Evanna in my place"

At the mention of the legendary Helm, the six figures moved closer around the wizard's desk.

"I can help whosoever decides to go" continued Alarian "but I can help only one of you at a time. I can create a path of safety between this castle and Castle Xeron, both of which will prove safe havens during your quest; I can also make the buildings visible to you — although this means you will be seen and thus attacked by the inhuman creatures loyal to Vounim.

"You will need great experience to find the Helm of Evanna; such was Evanna's curse on her people — they spurned her when she needed their help to defeat Vounim. Princess Evanna hid the means to conquer any threat to the Kingdom so that only the bravest Tybollean could ever find it. To gain this experience, you would be wise to first search out my Amulet in one of the Temples of Y'Nagioth and, once found, journey to the Black Tower of Zaexon where you will find the six stones that fit the Amulet. However, care must be taken to find the stones in the correct order — if you don't, you will find they do not fit and will be useless to you.

"Although I have had little contact with my Amulet over past centuries, I am confident I can illuminate areas of residual magic within the Temples and the Black Tower indicating where magical items have been hidden at some time in the past. I will do my best to show you where the Amulet stones have been cached, but I have found that in my latter years I have not the concentration I used to have and you may find only worthless baubles instead — I will do my best"

"Well that's not good enough for me" cried a thief-like character jumping to his feet, "I'm damned if I'll follow you through this Valley — I've heard stories of the creatures who dwell there. Sorcery — hah!" He spat at Alarian's feet and departed.

As the slam of the chamber door died away, Alarian surveyed the five remaining faces: a barbarian, a novice wizard, a cleric, a thinker and a warrior. Hand-picked and all native Tybolleans, Alarian wondered if one of these could achieve the impossible and bring

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back the lost Helm of Evanna.

"I would not blame you for following him" said Alarian "the dangers he spoke of are all too real. Over the past weeks I myself have seen Dragons, Balrogs, Wraiths, even a creature with the very likeness of Y'Nagioth herself, a Thunder Lizard, roaming the Valley through my enchanted glass .

"You will not, however, enter the Valley unprotected. I will teach you a potent sleep spell and, as you gain experience, will be able to bestow two other spells on you: a mind lance to attack creatures with a high psychic power and a spell which attacks using the very Fires of Hell. However, you will use these spells sparingly as they are extremely dangerous in the hands of the untutored and it takes many years of study before a spell can be cast with no loss of stamina.

"You will doubtless have realised that I am no fighting man" continued the wizard, nodding respectfully towards the warrior and the barbarian, "but if I may offer some advice on hand-to-hand combat. There are three effective ways to fight a creature of great

physical strength; either strike its head, body or limbs. Obviously an attack to the limbs or body will eventually lead to success, but it may initially cause little damage. A strike to the head may kill the beast in one blow, but will leave you open to return blows while striking. The decision will be yours, I cannot help. However, do not waste your time attacking a purely psychic creature with a sword, they can be defeated by spell only.

"Care must be taken when approaching any building; the swamps and forests are dangerous — make sure you have the experience to cope. Also, beware of water, you will be considerably weakened by the weight of your armour".

Alarian, bringing his stick to the ground raised himself out of his chair.

"I cannot promise you riches, though treasure there be in the Valley, I ask only that you save the Kingdom. Find the Amulet. Fill it with the six stones and you will have the ability to cheat death; to resurrect yourself within these safe castle walls. It will also prove

invaluable in your search for the Helm of Evanna in the dark Lord's lair.

"Alas, I cannot help you much in your search for the Helm. For although I can again guide you to the areas of residual magic, the Helm, on its mistress' instruction, will not reveal itself to you unless you have at least the power of a Warlord. It will be up to you to build up this experience, I can only provide an occasional aura of magic to boost your powers, yet you will find that Vounim also has a way of watching over his followers and may surround you in a circle of evil .

"There is little time for discussion; I have arrived thirty years too late . . . and I fear Vounim knows it. The choice must be made here and it must be made now. Will you go and find the Helm of Evanna and bring it back here?"

Each of the five heads nodded as, in turn, Alarian gazed deeply into their eyes. Settling his hands on the carved walking stick at his side, the elderly wizard spoke to the assembled company in a low rumbling voice.

" . . . who then will be first?"

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