

The Fantasy Trip™

Dark Lord's Doom



by David Pulver



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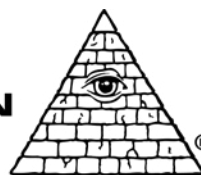
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Dark Lord's Doom

In a distant part of Cidri lies a small but prosperous kingdom. Its capital is the city of Ireton, host to a great Temple of Enok and bustling markets. It is divided into several baronies. Its south and east borders are peaceful, but its western frontier is a bleak wilderness where hardy settlers contend with barbarian tribes of fierce reptile men.

The Kingdom's greatest threat is to the north—beyond the Amberwood forest, Red Fang Mountains, and Plain of Sorrow—where the sinister Overlord rules from the city of Mourn.

Mourn was once a free city. An ally of the Kingdom, it was a bulwark against the Red Fang orcs and a trading partner with their foes, the elves of Amberwood. That was before it fell into the grasp of a murderous despot. There was a year of poor harvests, famine, and a peasant revolt. To put it down, a desperate city council hired a ruthless mercenary company, the Dark Legion (whose name should have given the game away right there). Their captain, the renegade adventurer Saethor, exceeded his orders, ruthlessly murdering and torturing rebels. When the council questioned his excesses, he massacred them, proclaiming himself Overlord. Saethor squashed all dissent and reorganized Mourn under his cruel, efficient rule. He expanded the Dark Legion into an army and embarked on a campaign of conquest.

His first targets were the Red Fang orcs. Weakened by their feud with the elves and divided into warring clans, they were subdued one by one in a grueling campaign by his veteran soldiers. Some grew alarmed, but few listened. After all, the victims were "just" orcs! After their defeat, many Red Fang orcs embraced the Overlord's rule, drawn by his sinister charisma and orc-like displays of power and ruthlessness: They soon swelled the ranks of the Dark Legion. One, General Zond, rose to stand at his right hand. After assimilating the orcish hordes, the Overlord turned against the elves of Amberwood who had previously cheered his victories. Their fall was swift, their fate brutal. Their Countess Taelandra chose to submit rather than see her people massacred; she was taken in chains to the Overlord's palace.

Elvish refugees carried blood-curdling tales of his brutality southward, and the Kingdom slowly awakened to the dark lord's menace. Some of the King's advisors believe the Overlord is content to consolidate his gains. Others fear his ambition, unchecked, will engulf the entire Kingdom. Perhaps too late, the King opened his treasury to hire new mercenary soldiers to expand the Royal Border Guard. He hopes this show of strength will deter the Overlord. If not, there will be war.



Mercenary and Hero

You're experienced adventurers and soldiers of fortune who answered the Kingdom's call to arms. The lure of good service for a just cause has drawn you to the fight; the King's silver doesn't hurt either.

As combat veterans, you've been given positions in the Royal Border Guard. But events have not worked out as expected! While most of the royal and baronial forces are preparing to guard the northern border against the Overlord, garrisons still need to be maintained to suppress common bandits and barbarians. Unfortunately for your dreams of winning military glory against the dark lord's legions, as a new recruit you've found yourself sent far from the threatened northern theater.

Your squad has been assigned to the western frontier, where a tiny garrison must keep the peace and protect border villages from local tribes of reptile men! The Kingdom's natural border is the Osric River, which winds through a deep gorge. Beyond the river is a wilderness of forests and swamps, inhabited by scum-bunnies, monsters, and barbaric reptile men.

There are valuable hardwoods and amber deposits found in the region: Hardy yeomen have settled the borderlands, establishing villages beyond the Osric River.

The reptile men lack armor or iron weapons, and the scattered bands dwell in primitive villages. They ambushed traders and raided villages for captives—often eating them—until the Royal Border Guard established garrisons and launched pu-

nitive expeditions. That was a few years ago. Now a cold peace prevails, punctuated by occasional skirmishes and headhunting.

Your squad is assigned to garrison the small woodland village of Cedar, a few miles beyond the Osric River. You serve under Captain Griswold, who commands 40 soldiers. The terrain is bad for cavalry, so most are light and medium infantry fighting in loose order. Morale is good, though many in the garrison wish they were out north, ready to take on the dark lord, rather than guarding the bilge end of nowhere. Many soldiers have been transferred out to reinforce the northern army; those remaining grumble about having to stay.

Besides your own foot company, there are more men-at-arms—including a couple of gryphon riders—based a day's ride south of the river at Castle Eyrie. It's comforting knowing you might get air support if things get bad!

So far, your company hasn't seen much action. In fact, Captain Griswold worries his troops are growing complacent. He's heard a report from Fort Eyrie that one of their gryphon riders is overdue from a reconnaissance flight in the southwest forest. That's a bit outside Griswold's area of operations, and he doesn't think the reptile men could down a gryphon; maybe they just got lost. On the other hand, the reptile men tribes have been very quiet lately—maybe too quiet.

You think the Captain might be right. With his permission, you decide it's time to lead a patrol into the wilderness, and see what the reptile men are up to...

How to Play

DARK LORD'S DOOM is a programmed solo adventure played using the **IN THE LABYRINTH** rules from **THE FANTASY TRIP (TFT)**. You won't need a Game Master. Instead, a system of branching paragraphs directs you from encounter to encounter as you make your own choices. Resolve combat or other encounters using **TFT** rules and megahex maps.

THE SQUAD

You control a small squad of four troops to start with. You may not divide the squad unless allowed specifically by paragraph instructions. If squad members are incapacitated, you can leave them behind or carry them.

Either use the **Typical Squad** below (four 35-point heroes) or create four 32–36 point characters. For story-related reasons, play a human, halfling, elf, or half-elf.

Seniority

Determine the most senior squad member: whoever has **Strategist** or, failing that, **Tactics**, or failing that, **Charisma**. Break ties by highest **IQ**, or roll dice if equal **IQ**. After that, assign seniority to the rest of the squad as desired, ranking them in highest to lowest seniority.



The highest seniority character is **squad leader**. If the leader is put out of action—killed, missing, incapacitated, asleep, frozen, etc.—the next in seniority takes over as squad leader, and so on. **Replacements** always enter at lowest seniority.

The squad leader determines initiative. If the squad is split among several players, the squad leader's player gets to decide which paragraph to choose when there are several options. Only the squad leader can use **Tactics** or **Strategist** to benefit the squad's initiative rolls, and make **Reaction Rolls**.

In any situation where it's important that something happen to a single character or a single character makes a decision, the current squad leader is the "you" referred to.

Elimination

If everyone in a squad is killed or incapacitated during a fight, the squad is **eliminated**. Your adventure is usually over.

TYPICAL SQUAD

Use these characters...or make your own!

Gentry

Human duelist

ST 11, **DX** 13(9), **IQ** 11, **MA** 10 (6)

Talents: Literacy, Sex Appeal, Shield Expertise, Sword Expertise

Languages: Common.

Armor: Chainmail (stops 3 hits/attack); Large shield (stops 3 hits/attack)

Weapons: Shortsword (2d); dagger (1d-1)

Equipment: Labyrinth kit, torch

Youngest child of a landed-gentry family fallen on hard times. Gentry turned professional duelist and soldier. Convinced to join the Royal Army while drunk in a tavern. Hasn't regretted it yet.



Angel

Human guard

ST 13, **DX** 13(11), **IQ** 9, **MA** 10(8).

Talents: Alertness, Brawling, Charisma, Knife, Pole Weapons, Toughness I.

Languages: Common.

Armor: Leather armor (stops 2 hits/attack).

Weapons: Halberd (2d); dagger (1d-1).

Equipment: Labyrinth kit, torch.

Used to be part of the elite guard of a high priest, until an affair with one of the temple dancers required a rapid exit and new career.

Misery

Human mercenary veteran

ST 12, **DX** 14 (11), **IQ** 9, **MA** 10 (6).

Talents: Alertness, Brawling, Pole Weapons, Quick-Draw (Sword), Shield, Sword.

Languages: Common.

Armor: Chainmail (stops 3 hits/attack); Small shield (stops 1 hit/attack).

Weapons: Spear (1d); Broadsword (2d); Dagger (1d-1).

Equipment: Labyrinth kit, torch.

Misery is a veteran of the Ironskulls. When that infamous mercenary company was dissolved, Misery elected not to join Eldritch Arms, instead traveling west over the sea to join the Border Guard.

Hawk

Human scout

ST 12, **DX** 13 (11), **IQ** 10, **MA** 10 (8).

Talents: Climbing, Crossbow, Missile Weapons II, Naturalist, Sword, Tracking.

Languages: Common.

Armor: Leather armor (stops 2 hits/attack).

Weapons: Light crossbow (2d) with 20 quarrels; Broadsword (2d).

Equipment: Two torches.

Hawk "shot someone who needed shooting" and went into exile, taking up the mercenary life.

Go to [094] if your squad's only survivor was your ally the King; otherwise, go to [124] and record PLOT WORD ZOND.

029 In your career, you've learned not to fight cornered rats. If the Overlord's running, why waste good men's lives catching him?

If she's with you, Taelandra agrees. "I spent too long trapped in this awful place. Let's get out of here," she says. Go to [088].

030 Your squad leader should roll **3/1Q** (or **2/1Q** if you have **Alertness** or **Tactics**). If successful, go to [061]; otherwise, go to [111].

031 The Kingdom's army has marched through the Red Fang mountains and the Amberwood. Ahead is the Plain of Sorrow, and beyond, the dark lord's city of Mourn.

The Overlord's armies have fallen back, executing a scorched-earth policy. The Kingdom has found only burned fields and villages, whether human, orc, or elven. Supplies are running low, and you are on short rations. The few wizards exhaust themselves casting **Meal** spells.

As the army emerges from the Red Fangs, scouts report the Overlord's legions massing in the nearby hills overlooking the Plain of Sorrow. A decisive battle seems imminent. Go to [106].

032 You're fighting the assassin on **Map IV**, the royal tent. If you came here from [083], your squad has initiative on the first turn; otherwise, roll it. The tent interior is shaded gray. Its door is at V. The King, your ally in this fight, is at L and "Rickon" the assassin at V, facing the King. Your squad starts in any H or O hexes, facing V; one character per hex. You can enter/exit the tent via the door at V, or cutting a new door through walls (5+ hits with sharp weapon).

Go to [072] for the King's stats and [077] for the assassin's, then return here to resolve the fight.

If the King hasn't been killed or incapacitated, the assassin tries to get into line of sight and slay him with a spell or his bare hands. If the King's at **ST 1** or dead, the assassin attacks other foes; he'll also do that if he can't attack the King because he's engaged, or someone else is blocking his line of fire.

If desired, one or more of your soldiers can flee to get help. The King will not flee the tent: He is too enraged by this treachery!

If fighting lasts more than five turns, or starting the turn after any of your squad opts to run out of the tent to summon help, roll **1d** at the end of each subsequent turn; on a 6 go to [011].

Otherwise, if the assassin is defeated and your squad survived, go to [016] if the King is incapacitated or dead, [063] if he still stands; if your squad perished but you saved the king's life, go to [073]. If the assassin eliminated your squad and the King, go to [113].

033 Mortally wounded, you gasped out your last breaths amid a sea of corpses. Around you, crows eat the eyes of the dead, while laughing enemy soldiers finish off the wounded, loot the bodies, and drag the few surviving prisoners off in chains. You fought hard, but it was not enough. With the Kingdom's army destroyed, the dark lord's shadow soon extends across the entire realm. It is **The End**.

034 Everything—including honor—appears lost. At least you survived to **The End**.

035 Your squad is assigned to the royal bodyguard! For the duration of this battle, record PLOT WORD ROYAL and add the King to your squad as an ally. Go to [072] to record his stats, then return.

The King gives a rousing speech: This is the hour of decision. We win or we die!

The opposing armies advance, and battle begins. Roll **1d** (at -1 if you have PLOT WORD DESPERATE). On a roll of 2 or less, go to [043]; on a 3+, go to [101].



003 You're taken by surprise when the floor of the mine erupts and a monster emerges! Go to **[019]** but you're **surprised**. Your squad and allies may not act on the first turn of combat, and if within the cave-in zone you roll **4 dice instead of three** to avoid damage.

004 As your eyes close, you are comforted in your final moments by the shouts of victory from the royal army, accompanied by the lamentations of your foes.

How this war will end you do not know. As you breathe your last, it seems you have done your part; there's hope of victory in **The End**.

005 A grinning Ratsinger takes you to an area of the siege works concealed under a tent. It is a shaft, sloping underground toward the city walls.

He explains it was hastily dug under cover of darkness using a combination of **Open Tunnel** spells and hard labor with pick axes. The mine is a narrow tunnel, braced with heavy wooden beams cannibalized from wagons. When it's ready, they'll set fire to the supports, and the collapse of the mine shaft will bring down the walls.

"We'll be ready to go before dawn," he says. "After the walls collapse, I'll need some stout fellows to lead our charge into the breach. They won't be expecting it. Are you in?"

If you agree, go to **[002]**. If not, go to **[014]**.

006 Griswold considers your report and consults with his platoon leaders. If hundreds of reptile men are massing, his little village of Cedar is directly in their path. There's no way his

small company can defend the village against that kind of horde.

He begins planning the defenses and the evacuation of Cedar.

Meanwhile, your squad can take a **Brief Rest** and recover any fatigue and up to 3 hits. You can also add **Replacements** to the squad from other platoons. Give the squad leader **5 experience** for every soldier that survived your recon mission. Go to **[025]**.

007 If Saethor isn't stopped now, he may rise again. You won't let the army's sacrifices be in vain!

Your courage kindles Taelandra's. "I will accompany you," she declares. "Perhaps my small magic can help. I also have a score to settle." She'll guide you to the Chamber of Fire. "It's a private study where he *entertains*," Taelandra explains. "He enjoys seeing his foes thrown into a burning pit." Add Taelandra and Peri as **Companions**; go to **[108]**.

008 If directed here, determine each Dark Legion soldier's stats by rolling **1d** on the **Dark Legionary Generator** table. All carry daggers (**1d-1**).

009 A harried knight in Baron Gwalathar's retinue directs you to reinforce a detachment of knights and Enok Templars. They are storming the palace's west wing. Go to **[061]**.

100 You tell Rickon to wait under guard, while you check with the King.

"Rickon?" The King says, obviously pleased. "I am done with my prayers; my nephew Rickon is our best ranger. I would hear his news."

Dark Legionary Generator

1d Roll	Statistics
1	Human. <i>ST 11, DX 13 (10), IQ 8, MA 10 (6). Chainmail (stops 3 hits/attack). Spear (1d), Small Shield (stops 1 hit/attack); (sheathed) shortsword (2d-1). Talents include Pole Weapons and Sword.</i>
2	Human. <i>ST 13, DX 11 (9), IQ 8, MA 10(8). Leather Armor (stops 2 hits/attack); Halberd (2d), (sheathed) broadsword (2d); dagger (1d-1). Talents include Pole Weapons and Sword.</i>
3	Orc. <i>ST 10, DX 13 (11), IQ 9, MA 10(6). Leather Armor (stops 2 hits/attack); Horsebow (1d); sheathed Saber (2d-2). Talents include Bow, Missile Weapons I, and Sword.</i>
4	Orc. <i>ST 11, DX 12 (10), IQ 8, MA 10(8). Leather Armor (stops 2 hits/attack), Small Shield (stops 1 hit), Shortsword (2d-1). Talents include Shield and Sword.</i>
5	Orc. <i>ST 13, DX 11 (9), IQ 8, MA 10(8). Leather Armor (stops 2 hits/attack); Spike Shield (Stops 1 hit/attack). Morning Star (2d+1). Talents include Axe/Mace, Knife, and Shield.</i>
6	Elf Renegade. <i>ST 11, DX 13 (11), IQ 9, MA 12(10). Leather Armor (stops 2 hits/attack). Longbow (1d+2), (sheathed) shortsword (2d-1). Talents include Bow, Missile Weapons II, Sword.</i>



No Idle March

Another Dark Lord is on the rise, threatening to bring death and destruction to all who oppose him...and maybe a few who don't.

Saethor, whose Dark Legion was hired to keep order in a time of famine, betrayed and massacred the council that hired him, and seized power.

With a name like "the Dark Legion," could one really expect it to end any differently?

He assimilated the Red Fang orcs and defeated the elves of Amberwood. Now, his avaricious gaze turns on the Kingdom...

This solo/programmed adventure features a squad of soldiers fighting in an all-out war to defeat the evil Lord before it's too late.

Will the Dark Lord's Doom fall upon the party, or on the villain himself?

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