



Wounds and weeds

Plants can save characters' lives

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is intended for use as a supplement for the AD&D® game system. It is NOT intended as a guide to woodland plants for players to find and eat! Eating strange plants is a very risky thing to do and is best left to experts; it should also be remembered that even experts have been known to make dangerous or fatal mistakes.)

Delrael the fighter stumbled weakly through the dense forest, crawling and staggering through thickets which clawed at his wounds. Blood flowed from uncounted cuts into his mangled armor. Tattered scraps of bandages lay over some of his most serious injuries, no longer giving any benefit. Some of his wounds had stopped bleeding of their own accord, but were now becoming infected.

The forest grew darker, and by the pounding in Delrael's head and the buzzing in his ears, he knew that the darkness he sensed had nothing to do with the coming of nightfall. "I am done," he moaned softly through cracked lips.

Then he saw a light ahead, swimming in his unsteady vision, and as he stumbled closer, he could make out the dim outline of a rickety hut. Delrael tried to cry out for help, but could not force any audible sounds from his throat. He collapsed with a crash into the thick underbrush near the hut. . . .

. . . And then he awoke to the acrid smell of strong vinegar, discovering at the same time that he had enough strength to grimace and turn his head.

"Hah! The vinegar always wakes 'em up!"

Delrael's gaze fell on what at first appeared to be a mushroom with eyes. Then, as his vision cleared, he saw it was the face of a withered old woman bending over him. She tossed a dampened rag off to one side and addressed him.

"Now then, what's happened to you?"

Delrael swallowed several times before he managed to speak. "My friends . . . all slaughtered by orcs. I escaped . . . hurt bad . . ."

"Well, didn't you bother to care for your wounds? How did you expect to get

healed?"

"No cleric . . . killed . . ."

"Bah! Who needs a cleric? That's no way to heal wounds. You won't always have one by your side — as you now know."

"I tried to make bandages, from some clothing . . ."

"Humph! You call those bandages? I thought they were a new style of body decoration — and they may as well be, for all the good they're doing! Did you soak those rags in wine to clean them before you clapped them on yourself? Did you even clean your wounds? No! You should have used mud for a bandage — it would have been cleaner than those filthy strips of cloth. Now your wounds are infected, on top of all the blood you lost."

"Please help . . . get me to a cleric . . ."

Delrael gasped.

"I'll get you into my house — that's the best thing anyone could do for you now. Well, come on! You don't expect these old bones to carry you, do you? Maybe some more vinegar in the face will get you going!"

Delrael groaned and began to move toward the old woman's hut. He made it almost to the doorway before fainting. . . .

. . . And awoke again later, this time surprised to find himself stretched out on a wooden cot. The old woman had peeled off his armor, cleaned his wounds, and applied some sort of salve to them. Strange smells assaulted his nostrils as he turned his eyes toward the smoky fireplace, where a pot of clear brown liquid was bubbling and steaming. Bunches of dried herbs dangled around the mantle.

"It's about time you woke up! Bloodrust and batterot! You'd think all you have to do is go to sleep, and everything will be fine when you decide to open your eyes. Here, drink this." The old woman shoved a cup of the brown liquid at him.

Delrael frowned and instinctively started to turn away from the foul-smelling stuff, which only made her more determined. "Drink! It's a decoction of adder's tongue — to help you heal quicker, get you out of my house."

As he drank, the old woman continued her scolding. "While you were thrashing

about in the forest, you must have crawled over every sort of herb you could have used to help yourself. When you staggered toward my door, you ended up falling right on my best patch of comfrey. Anyone who travels in the forest should know that healing plants are all around — but you have to know them and know how to use them. And in my experience, human fighters have never been too bright."

Delrael held his tongue and kept sipping the herbal brew. The more the woman talked, the less gruff her tone of voice became.

"Well, one thing's for sure. Before you're well enough to leave here, you're going to learn how to help yourself when you're wounded in a forest. And you better go out and teach some others, too — I've got enough to do without every beat-up warrior staggering up to my door to have his hurts tended to. And you don't have to worry — what I will teach you is not magic, and not the work of the gods. It's just ordinary common sense, as anybody's grandmother can tell you. It's about time common sense became a little more common in these parts! Go to sleep now, so your brain won't be addled when we start our work."

Over the next few days Delrael learned quickly as he got stronger; he wanted to leave the old woman's house almost as much as it seemed she wanted to get rid of him. Now it was examination time, and she held up leaves for him to identify.

"Woundwort," he said.

"And this one?"

"Marsh-mallow. Comfrey. Herb true-love." Delrael rattled off the names as quickly as she thrust the plants into his view.

"Ah," she said, "there is room in that thick skull of yours for a few brains after all. Now that you know how to tell what the important herbs are, this is how to gather them. For leaves, you must pick only the freshest and greenest ones, and cast away those that have begun to wilt; if you mix them in, they will weaken the healing power of the fresh ones. Pick the leaves carefully to keep from bruising them — save the heavy-handed maneuvers for when you're swing-

ing that mighty sword of yours.

"Pick leaves from plants that have not yet gone to seed, or even begun to flower, if possible. If you want to keep them with you for when you aren't in a forest — I know you fighter types like to creep about in dungeons and caves and the like — then you must dry the leaves in the sunlight, *not* in the shade. When they are dried, do not let them get wet again, and keep them out of the sunlight after that. Now, did you understand all that, so I don't have to repeat myself any more?"

Delrael nodded.

"Now, sometimes you will want to use the flowers of a plant. Gather them in their prime, and during full sunlight, for then they'll be all the way opened and not tainted with dew. Dry these, too, in the sun, and they will hold their healing power as long as they keep their smell and color.

"And last of all, you will want to use roots. Clean them before you use them — I know that's only common sense, which is why I feel you need to be told. Don't use rotten or worm-eaten ones, either, and gather them during a dry spell if possible. Dry out the soft roots in the sun, and the hard ones anywhere. Can you remember all of that?"

Delrael nodded again, anxiously this time because he felt the lessons were coming to an end.

"Fine. Now you only have one little task left — to memorize the ways that all these herbs and plants can be used. If we're both lucky, you'll be ready to leave here in just a couple weeks more."

Delrael groaned. . . .

The twelve plants described in the following text are the most common and the most potent of all the herbs the old woman taught Delrael about during his convalescence in her hut. If characters are actively searching for healing herbs, the DM should assign a 50% chance of locating any given plant (roll once per hour of searching for each character involved), provided the search is being conducted in the proper terrain for the plant being sought.

Even if this "chance to locate" roll is successful, there is a possibility that an improperly identified plant has been found instead. The chance of proper identification of a certain plant is 80% for a character who has been specially instructed about the appearance of that plant, and only 20% for a character who has not had such instruction. This identification roll is not necessary for garlic and juniper, both of which are so abundant (in the proper terrain) and so distinctive that they cannot be misidentified. At the DM's option, the identification roll may be waived for druids, bards, and rangers, who would always recognize these plants without fail, thanks to their training in their professions or their adventuring experience.

If a character fails to properly identify an herb, he has found something similar in

appearance but which may have vastly different properties (as in the case of herb true-love). However, most "herb-imitators" are harmless, and recipients of "healing" will not usually be harmed if a character administers the wrong plant — but, obviously, neither will the injured or wounded person receive any of the sought-after healing properties. Members of some races will react differently to certain herbs; the DM, and any characters with extensive training in healing, should note the precautions mentioned in some of the particular plant descriptions.

AARON'S ROD

Scientific name: *Verbascum thapsiforme*

Other names: Great Mullein, King's Candle, Candlestick Plant

Appearance: Aaron's rod has many large, pale silvery green leaves that feel like soft felt. These leaves surround a thick, tapered stalk of large flowers and smaller leaves, which grows to four or five feet in height. According to tradition, this prominent spike of flowers was dipped in suet and then burned as a ceremonial candle. The flowers are bright yellow, bearing five petals each. Aaron's rod has a long, white, woodlike root.

Location: Aaron's rod grows in rocky or clay soil, most often on sunny slopes, cliff faces, and terrain such as that found around rock quarries; sometimes it is found along roads. The flowers appear in mid-summer.

Uses: Aaron's rod is useful as a pain-killer. At least five flowers should be crushed and mixed with water or, better still, wine. This mixture is applied directly to fresh wounds and will deaden the pain from an injury.

Game effect: Since pain itself can weaken an injury victim, this herb will restore 1-4 hit points immediately. These hit points will be lost again, however, within two hours, when the pain-killer has worn off. Aaron's rod can only restore hit points once every two hours; multiple applications before the first application has worn off are not cumulative in effect.

Precautions: If a character uses this pain-killer to help him get back on his feet and fight again while still wounded, he will lose an additional 1-4 hit points when the solution wears off because he has aggravated his injuries in the meantime.

ADDER'S-TONGUE

Scientific name: *Ophioglossum vulgatum*

Appearance: Adder's-tongue has one large leaf, at the base of which rises a thin stalk covered with tiny bumps or knobs; on closer inspection, this stalk is seen to be a spike of tiny, yellowish green flowers.

Location: Adder's-tongue grows in moist meadows and shady clearings. It is most easily found in late spring.

Uses: This herb is used as a secondary treatment, to help wounded characters regain strength. Use four fresh leaves steeped in boiling water to make a potent tea which can be drunk three times a day.

This helps reduce inflammation associated with wounds, and restores strength. Also, an ointment can be made by boiling the cut-up leaves in hog's fat and then by straining out the sediment. This ointment is soothing and promotes rapid healing, so much so that it has been called the "green oil of charity."

Game effect: A character recuperating from injuries normally receives one hit point per day of rest. However, convalescing with the aid of adder's-tongue will allow a wounded character to regain 1-3 hit points per day (roll separately each day). Using the ointment made from adder's-tongue will restore 1-2 hit points immediately per application, but it can only be administered to the same character once a day.

BIRTHWORT

Scientific name: *Aristolochia clematitis*

Appearance: Birthwort is a bushy climbing vine that can grow to about three feet in height. The leaves are rounded and heart-shaped with a deep cleft at the top; the leaves are set on long stems. The flowers are thin and yellow, and tubular in shape.

Location: Birthwort grows wild along hedges and fences, and in thickets exposed to the sun. It flowers in mid-summer.

Uses: This herb has been used frequently all over the world. The Greeks and Romans valued it highly, using the leaves and roots boiled briefly to make a poultice which they placed on wounds that were healing poorly. The snake charmers of India and North Africa claim that the juice of the birthwort will instantly kill a snake, and if the juice is rubbed into a snake bite, it will help neutralize the venom.

Game effect: If the leaves and stems of this herb are crushed to make a juice, and if this juice is promptly (within 1 round) applied to a poisonous bite or sting, the character receives an additional +2 on his saving throw against the poison. This effect only works once on any particular poison attack. Using a poultice made from birthwort will insure that wounds will heal properly, without complications; the wounded character will regain one extra hit point per day for the first two days after application, and then will heal normally thereafter.

Precautions: All non-human characters have a 20% chance of suffering an adverse reaction to this herb. If a wounded character reacts badly to birthwort, he will become temporarily paralyzed. This paralysis is so severe that it is indistinguishable (by sight) from death, and it will last for 1-8 rounds beginning 2 rounds after application of the herb. This effect of birthwort is not common knowledge; even characters who are familiar with birthwort have only a 50% chance of knowing about this side effect before they experience or witness it.

COMFREY

Scientific name: *Symphytum officinale*

Other name: Healing Herb

Appearance: Comfrey has large, hairy

green leaves and hairy stalks which can grow to 2-3 feet in height. The stalks are hollow, and the leaves have a gummy resin which is apparent if the leaves are chewed gently. At the tops of the stalks are small, bell-shaped flowers of a violet, or occasionally white, color that bear tiny black seeds. Comfrey has a large root system; its roots are black on the outside and white on the inside. The roots are brittle and are filled with a clear, nearly tasteless sap.

Location: Comfrey grows by ditches, watersheds, and moist fields. The plant flowers in mid-summer and goes to seed in late summer.

Uses: This herb can be employed as both an immediate first aid and a secondary treatment. Almost all of the parts of this "wonder weed" can be used. The root is most effective on fresh wounds — clean one root, bruise it so that the clear sap flows out, then bind it up against the fresh injury. This will bring about rapid healing. Similarly, the root dried and powdered can be sprinkled on a fresh wound. To use the herb as a strength-restorer, boil a dozen flowers (either fresh or dried) along with the leaves to form a tea, or mix the flowers and several leaves with wine, and drink the liquid twice a day.

Game effect: If comfrey root is applied immediately to a wound, roll 1d4 to see how many hit points the wounded character "never lost in the first place," and subtract this number from the damage done. If comfrey is used as a tea or mixed with wine during recuperation, it has the same qualities as adder's-tongue (see above).

GARLIC

Scientific name: *Allium sativum*

Appearance: Garlic has long, hollow leaves, dark green in color, on top of which appear large, spherical clusters of tiny white flowers. The entire plant has a very strong smell, which becomes doubly apparent if the leaves are crushed. Garlic is so well known and so easily identified by its distinctive smell that characters will always locate and identify it correctly if they search for it in an area containing suitable terrain.

Location: Other than in its garden habitat, garlic often grows on damp grounds, in meadows, and in sparse forests. The cluster of flowers appears in early to mid-summer.

Uses: Crushed garlic cloves, or diluted garlic juice, makes a strong antiseptic — so potent that garlic was used, along with sphagnum moss (see below), in field hospitals during World War I when other supplies ran short. Garlic also eases bites and stings from venomous creatures, and it can act as an insect repellent.

Game effect: The antiseptic properties of garlic are such that a wound will heal more rapidly, and without chance of infection. Wounded characters will recover 2 hit points per day for the first three days after application. If garlic is used as an insect repellent, the juice must be rubbed generously over exposed body parts. This repellent has a 50% chance of working against

attacking insects, giant or otherwise. If used to ease bites and stings, garlic juice can be used one time per injury to restore 1 hit point that was lost from either the bite/sting or the poisonous effect of that attack.

Precautions: Garlic has a bad reputation among herbal healers. Some claim it is a dangerous plant with many supernatural properties. However, in AD&D lore it is really only directly harmful to vampires. But if garlic is used for any remedy, especially as an insect repellent, the strong odor may give away the presence of the character using it and increase the chance of attracting wandering monsters.

HENBANE

Scientific name: *Hyoscyamus niger*

Appearance: Henbane has large, thick, soft leaves covered with hair and deeply cut. These leaves lie near the ground. Henbane also has many short and thick stalks, spread with branches bearing smaller leaves. These stalks have hollow yellow flowers with large sepals covering much of the petals; the petals are laced with purple veins. The flowers bear tiny gray seeds. The root is thick and branched, much like a parsnip root. The plant has a heavy, offensive smell.

Location: Henbane grows in clearings and along paths. It flowers throughout most of the summer.

Uses: This herb is a potent pain-killer, deadening virtually all discomfort from a wound. Boil the leaves, seeds, or roots together in a small amount of water, and apply as a poultice.

Game effect: Henbane applied to an injured character will immediately restore 1-6 hit points, similar to the effect of Aaron's rod; however, only 1-4 of these hit points will "wear off" two hours later (along with the pain-killing effects), so the character has a chance of regaining more than just temporary hit points. If a character attempts to fight or engage in other strenuous activity while being affected by henbane, he will do so as if he were moderately intoxicated (as defined on page 82 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*) because of the numbing effects of the drug. When used against fever, henbane will restore 1 point of lost strength and constitution per day; this treatment can be used daily until the victim has fully recovered.

Precautions: Henbane is very poisonous if taken internally: if ingested in any form and any amount, the herb will cause 2-12 points of poison damage (save for half damage) in the round following ingestion, and the affected character will be unconscious for 3-6 turns thereafter. This herb also has hallucinogenic properties that may affect the character who prepares a poultice. While boiling the henbane plant, the character has a 40% chance of inhaling fumes that will act as a hallucinogen. If this happens, the DM may moderate the effects or, optionally, roll d6 to determine what happens: 1-2, the character sees imaginary enemies in the distance and runs off to fight them; 3-4, he becomes unaware of his surroundings and

refuses to respond to any stimulus; 5-6, he sees other party members as enemies and attacks them immediately. The hallucinogenic effect will last for 1-6 rounds.

HERB TRUE-LOVE

Scientific name: *Paris quadrifolia*

Other names: Herb Paris, One-Berry

Appearance: Herb true-love has a small creeping root just below the surface of the ground, from which spring clusters of leaves, some of which have one starlike white flower or one blackish-purple berry. A leaf has four leaflets set at right angles to each other, in a cross pattern.

Location: Herb true-love grows in woods and copses, sometimes on the borders of fields. Clusters of leaves appear in mid-spring; berries are ripe in late spring.

Uses: This herb is useful as an antidote for poisons and as an antiseptic. If poison is suspected in a wound, the victim should eat at least three berries of herb true-love, or somehow ingest several leaves, either by eating them raw or (more effective) mixed with wine or as a tea. To speed healing and prevent infection in a wound, crush the leaves and use them to clean wounds, or boil four leaves in a small amount of water and use the broth so obtained as an antiseptic wash to rinse or soak wounds.

Game effect: The use of herb true-love will add +2 to saving throws vs. poison, +3 for halflings and dwarves, if it is ingested or applied to the affected area (depending on the type of poison) within 2 rounds of when the poisoning took place. As an antiseptic wash, herb true-love can be used once per injury to restore one hit point to a wounded character.

Precautions: If a character searches for herb true-love and fails to identify it properly, he has found another plant that looks very similar but is deadly: nightshade. If a poisoned character ingests nightshade as a remedy, he must make another saving throw vs. poison (in addition to the saving throw that was already required). Failure to make the save vs. nightshade means death; making the save means no damage. Nightshade will be harmless and ineffective if applied externally.

JUNIPER BERRY

Scientific name: *Juniperis communis*

Appearance: Juniper is a bush with thick branches bearing short, scalelike needles similar to pine needles. The bark is rough and has a shredded appearance, and the entire bush is very fragrant. Clusters of berries are green in the first year of their growth, and turn dark purple when they ripen the following year. Each berry has a strong, distinctive taste. Like garlic, juniper is so well known that characters will automatically be able to locate it and identify it properly if they are searching for it in appropriate terrain.

Location: Juniper grows upon heaths and in sparse forests. It is an evergreen.

Uses: Juniper berries help to counteract all forms of poison, but not so effectively as

herb true-love (see above). Most importantly, juniper is a powerful stimulant for those who are severely wounded and near death. If a character is able to, or can be forced to, eat two juniper berries, he may gain the strength to fight off some of the effects of shock.

Game effect: If a character is brought to zero or fewer hit points, and is unconscious, the stimulant effect of juniper berries will add 1-4 hit points to the character's total, possibly bringing him back to consciousness, or at least out of a coma. A character revived in this manner cannot fight or engage in any other strenuous activity until he has rested long enough to regain as many more hit points as he "artificially" got back from the juniper. (Note, however, that hit points restored by juniper berries do not "fade," as with Aaron's rod.) If used as an antidote to poison, juniper berries will add +1 to a victim's saving throw if they are eaten within 2 rounds of the poisoning.

Precautions: Juniper berries may have a strange effect on elves and half-elves. If a member of either of those races eats even one juniper berry, that character must make a saving throw vs. poison or be affected by an uncontrollable attraction to the first member of the opposite sex that the character sees. The object of the character's attraction may be of any race as long as the elf's or half-elf's normal preference for that race is not hostile to begin with. This effect will wear off in 2-8 rounds, and does not negate the other, beneficial effects that the juniper berries will bring. An infatuated character may be too weak to do anything about the feeling, but will feel it nonetheless.

MARSH-MALLOW

Scientific name: *Althaea officinalis*

Other names: Mortification Root, Sweet Weed

Appearance: The marsh-mallow has soft, hairy white stalks that can grow up to 3-4 feet in height and have many branches. The wide leaves are soft and hairy, with serrated edges. The plant has many large pink flowers with purple centers, and it has an extensive system of long roots that are pliant and tough, whitish yellow in color. The roots are filled with a clear, slimy juice that thickens like jelly when mixed with water.

Location: Marsh-mallow grows abundantly in salt marshes and in damp meadows near the seashore. It flowers during all the summer months.

Uses: This herb is effective both as an immediate treatment for burns, and also as a secondary cure for those severely weakened from loss of blood. The root is used for both applications. Smash it, then dip the pulp into boiling water and use it as a poultice, binding it up against fresh burns. Or, crush the root and boil it in a pot of water until one third of the original water in the pot has boiled away, then drink this decoction once a day to help recovery from severe blood loss.

Game effect: Used as a poultice for

burns, marsh-mallow speeds healing to such an extent that a character will receive 2 hit points per day for each of the first three days of rest following application, and will recuperate normally thereafter. When the decoction is used to help counter the effects of blood loss, the victim will regain 1-3 hit points per day (as with adder's-tongue and comfrey) instead of the usual one hit point.

ST.-JOHN'S-WORT

Scientific name: *Hypericum perforatum*

Other name: All Saints' Wort

Appearance: St.-John's-wort grows about knee-high, on hard, woodlike stalks. The leaves are smooth and oval, appearing in pairs from opposite sides of the stems so that they form a shape similar to a figure-eight. The leaves have very tiny holes, like pinpricks, in them, which are visible only when the leaf is held up to the light. St.-John's-wort bears large yellow flowers with five petals; the petals, when bruised, yield a reddish, resinous juice. The flowers bear small blackish seeds. The root is hard and woodlike and brownish in color.

Location: St.-John's-wort is found in shady woods and copses, and also at the edges of forests. It flowers in mid-summer and bears seeds by the end of the season.

Uses: The oil from fresh flowers is especially good for healing wounds. Boil a dozen flowers in wine to make a tincture to be applied to injuries. This will help heal bruises. A teaspoon of powdered seeds drunk in a broth helps to combat the effects of venom.

Game effect: If a tincture of St.-John's-wort is applied immediately (within 2 rounds) to a wound, roll 1d4 to see how many hit points the victim "never lost in the first place," and subtract this number from the damage suffered. When the broth is drunk as an antidote to venom within 2 rounds of the time of poisoning, the powdered seeds will add +1 to the victim's saving throw against the poison.

SPHAGNUM MOSS

Scientific name: *Sphagnum cymbifolium*

Other names: Bog moss, peat moss

Appearance: Sphagnum moss is a pale green in color, although it may turn yellowish or reddish. It consists of many tiny branches of leaves tangled into a clump of moss which grows into large cushions. It has no roots, but absorbs water directly through its leaves; this absorbent quality makes it almost as effective as a sponge.

Location: Sphagnum moss is found in wet, boggy spots. Sometimes the moss is so thick that it may appear to be solid — until someone steps on it and gets wet feet.

Uses: When sterilized, this moss is an ideal dressing for wounds. Two ounces of it can absorb up to two pounds of liquid. Sphagnum moss must be collected beforehand to be used, then cleaned and dried, and stored loosely in cloth bags.

Game effect: Getting a proper dressing on a wound is one of the most important steps in healing. If an injury is bound up

with clean sphagnum moss, the victim will heal 25% more quickly; that is, lost hit points will be regained at the rate of four every three days, with that "extra" point regained on the first day of the three-day period. The dressing must be changed after three days and replaced with fresh moss in order to keep receiving this quick-healing benefit.

WOUNDWORT

Scientific name: *Stachys palustris*

Other names: Clown's woundwort, downy woundwort, marsh woundwort

Appearance: Woundwort has rough, slender green stalks, up to two feet high, bearing long and narrow dark green leaves covered with fine hairs. The leaves are pointed, with jagged edges. The flowers of woundwort are large and purplish red, with white spots. The roots are long and stringy, with small tubers growing among them. The plant has a strong, acrid smell.

Location: Woundwort grows in or near ditches, or by the sides of paths and in fields. The marsh woundwort, identical in healing properties, grows in marshy areas. The plant flowers in mid-summer.

Uses: This herb is very effective as an immediate treatment for all wounds, especially deep cuts such as those produced from sword thrusts. Woundwort is a remarkable styptic, staunching bleeding almost immediately and quickening the coagulation of blood to form scabs. To use it, bind enough fresh leaves up against the wound to form a dressing, or steep the leaves in hot water and apply them as a poultice.

Game effect: If applied immediately (within 2 rounds) to an injury, woundwort will stop bleeding and prevent further weakness from blood loss. The wounded character will immediately regain 20% (round down) of the hit points he would have lost from the damage of the injury, reflecting the blood loss that "never took place."

Precautions: While woundwort will always stop bleeding and benefit its user as described above, dwarves will sometimes suffer an adverse reaction to it. If it is used on a dwarven character, he has a 25% chance of being blinded for 1-6 rounds.

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Despite her words to the contrary, the old woman seemed rather downcast when Delrael made ready to leave her hut.

"Now, my young fighter," she said, "you know how to care for yourself without the aid of a cleric." She wagged a finger at him. "Just think of those who struggle to survive in worlds where no magic exists."

"I have heard stories of such worlds," Delrael answered, "but I always thought them to be no more than fantasies."

The old woman began pattering with her herbs, looking away so he did not see the sadness in her eyes. "Ah, but one man's fantasy is another man's reality. Don't doubt it."

Delrael thought about that as he went off into the forest.