

RETURN TO LONG SHADOWS

a fantasy role-playing game for 1-3 players for the 48k Sinclair ZX Spectrum, written by Martin Page

Many years have passed since you first braved the Forest of Long Shadows. Now it has grown - the forest is bigger, and there are now three levels to explore: a new world of the Forest of Long Shadows, a second level, which is similar to the first, entered via portals, and a 'Netherworld', where the denizens are dark and deadly.

You are warrior/wizards who are equally adept at spellcasting and combat.

Once the program has loaded, you will be required to press the SPACE key. There are lots of random elements in this game and it appears that ZX Spectrum emulators will display the same map, attributes, etc. each time you load the program. Pressing the SPACE key is a workaround to run the program as if you were playing on a real Spectrum computer.

Selecting players

After this process, you'll have to wait a couple of minutes while the game sets itself up. The good thing about this is that the board is different from one game to another. If you're playing the game on an emulator, it's worth selecting maximum speed to get past this bit. When this process has completed, (and you've set the emulator back to normal speed) you will be asked to name your character(s) - (up to seven letters each - upper and/or lower case). You will then be required to choose your 'Head' (1-6 - below) - this will be displayed on the screen when it's your turn. It will then ask you to choose your 'Quest' (1-5) (see below). There is nothing to stop you duplicating the character name or head number but that would be a bit silly! Duplicating a Quest is fine as some players will want to do the same one.



1 2 3 4 5 6

The Quests

1. Amass 500 EXPerience points
2. Visit the Wight Cave
3. Acquire the Shield of Kandos
4. Slay the Deathfiend
5. Visit two of the four castles positioned around the realm

Once you have chosen your quest(s), the main playing screen opens up. At top left is your player number and name, plus your avatar (head). Under your head is your invisibility status, (see Disappear spell). Also shown is your Quest number, turn number and the geographical level that you are on (1-3). At top right is the status of Quests 2-5, (quest 1 shows in your EXPerience points). Whether or not you have chosen the Quest or not, it will still indicate if you have technically achieved it. As said above, things can change. You may have found the Shield of Kandos but in a multiplayer game someone could take it from you in battle. The same applies to the Deathfiend. Say, for example, that you and another player had both chosen Quest No. 4. If, say, player 2 had already slain the Deathfiend, if player 3 then beats player 2 in combat, the slayer of the slayer of the Deathfiend now holds that status - player 3. Also, if the Deathfiend slayer dies, the Deathfiend becomes active again as there could be another player with the same quest.

To win the game the player must visit 'The City' location on level 1 of the game after achieving his/her Quest. You might find The City in your initial explorations so it is obviously worth noting its location, (see Villages,below). Letters W, K, D & C are shown at top right. The number beside the first three will either be a 0 or 1 to show if a player has attained that status. C will have from 0-4 to signify castles visited. I might add that to visit a particular place you will still have to be at the location at the end of your turn, e.g. not teleported away after unsuccessfully fighting denizens. You have five 'lives' at the start of the game as you have four resurrection points in your attributes. If you lose (die) in combat to either a denizen or another player, you will be teleported to another location on that level.

At the left of the screen are your attributes (randomly calculated): MAGic, STRength, AGIlity, EXPerience points, RESurrection points, HTP (hit points), ESA (eyestone adds) - for every two Eystones found (shown below), you will gain one ESA. More on that later. Attributes can change in various ways in the course of the game.

To the right of that is the current location on the map. If this is a special location, it will be detailed accordingly. If the location is a Portal, a DOWN staircase will be shown. There is no corresponding UP stairway on the level below although there is the occasional UP stairway elsewhere on levels 2 and 3, again with no corresponding DOWN stairway.

Below that there are the 20 Spells that can be learnt (A-T). The number below the letter designates the number of that particular spell that you have 'learnt'. New spells can be learnt by visiting one of the ten guilds scattered around levels 1 and 2. Once a spell is cast it is decremented on this scale.

The main menu is on the right of this: 1. FIGHT another player; 2. MAGIC: casting non-combat spells (J-T); 3. INVENTORY will show what special items you have acquired in the Netherworld (lev. 3); 4. Save or Load a game** or Quit; 5. WAIT at a location rather than move; NSEWUD, which is self-explanatory.

Below that is an area used for combat with denizens or players and also at the very bottom right will be shown players at the current location. The general message screen is to the left of this.



** If you're using an emulator rather than a 'real' Spectrum, don't use the SAVE option, as it can cause some odd results. Emulators will probably have a Save Game option already for you to use. Also, if you select option 4 in error, you can simply press 'R' to get you back to the main menu. Incidentally, if there are two or three players, Saving should be done as player one's turn - Loading can be done on any player's turn.

Movement

When it is your turn you can move around the map. Your starting point is randomly chosen on level 1. Press N, S, E, W, U, or D. If you press say, N and there is no pathway you will be told that there's No Pathway and so you've wasted your turn. If you make what looks like a legal move and you get the message that the Pathway is Blocked it means that there is no corresponding pathway in the location that you were trying to get to. If everything is okay you will move to the chosen location. When you get there you may be attacked by denizens. You must defeat these bad guys to gain anything in that location, e.g. drinking from the Fountain, etc. Being invisible through a Disappear spell will also limit your activity at a location. It'd be a good idea to draw a map as you go along, although if you're teleported, you might get disorientated and have to piece together the various elements of the maps that you've drawn!

You'll notice that on Levels 1 & 2 that there are different terrain types: forest, mountains, marshland and desert. There are no special movement rules for these - it's only to help you orientate yourself on the map. In the Netherworld you'll see a suitably coloured asterisk (*) showing where you are relative to the world above.

Special Locations

There are certain locations on the map where you can benefit from the location (as per Fountains) but not benefit again until several turns have elapsed. At some locations, the benefit is a one-off, e.g. The Abbey. They're marked as (O)ne-off or (P)eriodic (below).

Levels 1 and 2

The Guilds (P)

Ten Guilds are scattered around the map. Here you can learn spells for use in the game. You learn one of two spells taught at the particular guild (decided randomly).

Towers (O)

There are four towers where you can gain EXPerience points.

The Abbey (O)

Gain extra STRength from the Bishop.

The Church (O)

The priest gives you an Eyestone.

Fountains (P)

You can drink from the waters to gain six MAGic points;

MAGic points are used to cast spells.

Camps (O)

A friendly wizard will teach you a random spell.

Inns (O)

You can be fortified with extra HTP.

Castles

These count to your tally of castles visited, which may or may not be the Quest that you chose at the beginning of the game.

The City and Towns

They will give you immunity from denizen attack plus as said above, **The City** is the location that you must return to after your Quest has been accomplished.

Villages

When you visit a village, a villager will tell you the location number of The City. It is not stated in these rules how many locations there are on each of the three levels - it's up to you to work out how the 'world' is constructed. The Villager's enlightening information will only be told once to each player.

There's also the Pools and the Ruins - I'll leave you to discover what they're there for.

On Level 3 (Netherworld) there's The Wight Cave, which you must visit if you choose Quest No. 2. Apart from that there is little else apart from more deadly monsters than seen on the other levels. In fact they get worse the further you delve. There are several objects in the Netherworld, which bestow special powers on the bearer, which includes the aforementioned Shield of Kandos.

Objects

All the objects bar one will add to your attributes for the rest of the game. Apart from The Shield of Kandos, which can be lost in battle to another player, all the objects stay with you until your ultimate death. If you die 'completely' whilst holding the Shield of Kandos, it will be dropped at your final location, and subsequently be available to another player who might stumble upon it on his/her travels. There's also another object, the Orb of P'Thaal, which will show you the location of the Wight Cave via a flashing number in the corner of the message screen; this will also be shown whenever you select the Inventory option from the Main Menu. Also, the Golden Eyestone is worth six ordinary Eyestones and will show in your attributes accordingly. Eyestones are ancient artefacts that are scattered randomly around all levels.

Spells (non-combat J-T)

MAGic points to cast in brackets.

You are given seven spells at the start of the game. Each player has A No-Foe, K Pathtwist & S Mapmake. Together with these you will receive four other spells decided randomly. Sometimes this can mean more than one of a particular spell.

J Megajump (7)

Enables the caster to teleport one level up, e.g. 3 to 2.

K Pathtwist (4)

This is a particularly useful spell as it enables the wizard to open up a path in a corresponding location where the message had shown Path Blocked. Once it is cast, it must be used on the following turn by moving through the route that had shown as being blocked.

L Disappear (6)

Enables the caster to be invisible for six turns. This will limit any interaction in special locations.

M Moremagic (3)

When this spell is cast the Wizard receives eight extra MAGic points (actually five points net).

N Rezzireck (5)

This increases your RESurrection points by one point.

O Swift (4)

Increases AGLlity by three points

P Deesixus (6)

Gives you an extra 1d6 in 'die rolls' in subsequent attacks against denizens.

Q Strongman (4)

Gives you an extra two points of STRength.

R Fortify (5)

Gives you five extra HTP.

S Mapmake (4)

A map of the current level opens up on the right of the screen showing your current location. This will stay on the screen for a few seconds before disappearing. You might notice that there can sometimes be little 'islands' of paths (probably on the edges), which have formed as a result of the initial board creation process. The Pathtwist spell can be a good way of getting into or out of these areas.

T Giantleap (9)

Teleport two levels up, i.e. level 3 to 1 - very useful after completing a Quest in the Netherworld.

Spells (combat A-I)

It might be worth pointing out here that there is a law which prohibits spells of any sort (apart from self-non-combat spells) to be cast against any wizard in your guild. Ordinary combat between wizards (other players) is permitted.

Another thing worth noting is that spells can be wasted if cast incorrectly, e.g. a Dembones spell against Gargoyles will not work and the spell will be ineffective.

A No-Foe (8)

Destroys the enemy in one fell swoop. This doesn't work on Balors, wights or The Deathfiend.

B Gorlab (9)

Balors' MR (monster rating) is reduced by 50%. This would be followed by ordinary combat. EXPerience is earned for casting this spell irrespective of the outcome of the ensuing melée.

C Dembones (3)

Annihilates skeletons.

D Blackout (8)

Eliminates wights.

E Fireball (5)

Partial damage to foe before further combat ensues. EXPerience is earned for this spell.

F Teleport (5)

Teleport away from the fracas to elsewhere on the same level.

G Fear (6)

Creates fear in the enemy and their first combat round is ineffective.

H Lifedrain (6)

Drains 50% MR before combat commences. EXPerience is earned for this spell.

I Repel (5)

Drive away the enemy. One third EXPerience is earned for this spell.

To help you refer quickly to spell details, there's an 'AT A GLANCE' spell table at the back of these rules.

Combat

Combat can be between two players or player v. denizen(s). To initiate combat between players, select 1. FIGHT on the menu. Combat against denizens will happen automatically, i.e. no need to select the FIGHT option. You will initially be asked if you want to cast magical spells and then combat ensues. EXPerience points are earned if you win; being teleported and losing a RESurrection point will happen if you lose. If you lose (you'll be doing a lot of this!) you'll be resurrected with all your attributes intact, (minus one resurrection point) and new HTP will be decided randomly - it could be more or less than your previous incarnation.

Whether it be against fellow wizards or monsters, you are given a WR (wizard rating). This is derived from adding STR, AGI divided by 2, EXP divided by 250, HTP and ESA, (divisions are rounded down, e.g. EXP of 249 divided by 250 counts as 0.

As mentioned above, there is an MR (Monster Rating) used for combat. The WR and MR are used for determining the number of 1d6 'dice' that are used to determine outcome. Don't be worried if the WR is less than the MR - these ratings are used in different ways to determine the 'dice-rolls'.

The combat screen will open up on the right of the screen and once initiated you sit back and watch your fate unfold.



The Wizard and Sorcerer

These folks will occasionally throw a combat spell in your general direction! This will happen at the start of combat and its effects will be reflected in the initial combat round.

Denizens

You've already heard about some of the bad folks you'll meet in the text above but rather than spoil it for you, you'll have to wait to see who you might encounter on your travels. What can be stated here is that there are 30 different nasties that you could meet in the game. The Deathfiend can be found in the Netherworld. Incidentally a mu-badger is a mutant badger!

Warning!

This game is written in Sinclair BASIC. If you inadvertently press the BREAK key by mistake (please don't!), just type in GOTO 560 and it should get you back on track.

Playing tips

The easiest Quest is No.1. Providing you don't get killed (5 times) on your travels, you could just wander around level one, fight some bad guys and win. Quest No.5 will require you to find two castles, which could be anywhere on levels one and two. Quest Nos. 2, 3 & 4 will mean exploring the Netherworld but resist the temptation to get there early in the game - you'll need to bolster up your attributes and Experience before you venture to level three. The higher STrength points the better and it will make you a better fighter. Also, look out for Fountains - they'll enhance your ability in casting spells, plus guilds where you learn spells.

Afterword

Back in the eighties I had five of my games published in Sinclair User magazine. One of these games was also published in another computer magazine:

- Forest of Long Shadows (type-in - Oct. '86)
- Forest of Long Shadows (Your Sinclair Digitape - Nov. '86)
- Goblin Mountain (type-in - Jun. '87)
- Portals of P'Thaal (Megatape - Apr. '89)
- The Seven Parchments of Kandos (Megatape - Aug. '89)
- The Lost City (Megatape - Dec. '89)

In the first three of these games I used the variable board concept - I'd played the boardgames, Sorcerer's Cave and Mystic Wood in the early 80s, which both used the variable board system. This, I thought, gave these games longevity.

Fast forward 34 years later, after not using my Spectrum at all in that time, I decided to write an even bigger game incorporating elements from Forest, Goblin and Portals. Players who've encountered the first three of my games will see some of those elements utilised in Return To Long Shadows.

Have fun!

Martin Page, June 2023.

Players' notes

AT A GLANCE SPELL TABLE

REF	Spell	Description	MAG	C/NC
A	NO-FOE	Kills denizens (exceptions)	8	C
B	GORLAB	Wounds balors (50%)	9	C
C	DEMBONES	Kills skeletons	3	C
D	BLACKOUT	Kills wights	8	C
E	FIREBALL	Damage to foe	5	C
F	TELEPORT	Teleport away from combat	5	C
G	FEAR	Foe's 1st com rnd ineffective	6	C
H	LIFEDRAIN	Drains 50% MR	6	C
I	REPEL	Drive away foe	5	C
J	MEGAJUMP	Teleport up one level	7	NC
K	PATHTWIST	Open up blocked path	4	NC
L	DISAPPEAR	Invisibility for six turns	6	NC
M	MOREMAGIC	Increase MAG points (5 net)	3	NC
N	REZZIRECK	Increase RES points (1)	5	NC
O	SWIFT	Increase AGI (3)	4	NC
P	DEESIXUS	Plus 1D6 in next combat	6	NC
Q	STRONGMAN	Increase STR (2)	4	NC
R	FORTIFY	Increase HTP (5)	5	NC
S	MAPMAKE	See map of current level	4	NC
T	GIANTLEAP	Teleport up two levels	9	NC