
Pêledgathol

- The Last Fortress -

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for Short Gamebook Fiction
by Ashton Saylor

Pêledgathol – The Last Fortress

Introduction

For hundreds of years your fortress had stood strong, held by the Khazâd, the dwarves. It seemed unthinkable to you that it could ever be threatened.

Yet there you sat, in the safety room with the children and the elderly. Waiting for news of a battle that was beyond your control. How your hand itched for an axe. How your eyes longed to see goblin skulls splitting. How your heart yearned to be out fighting with your father, your mother, your brothers...

Standing, you stretched to try and relieve some of the tension from your bones. You paced over to Udûn, your father's most trusted warrior, where he sat guarding the door.

"Any word yet?" you asked.

He looked up at you, his eyes twinkling, "There will be word when there is word, son. Not a moment before."

You had to fight down the urge to throttle someone.

"Come, lad, sit here next to me," Udûn said, patting a spot on the stone bench next to him. Taking a seat, you watched as he lifted a pair of small, wooden figurines he had been carving.

"Do you know the story of Devra, God of Passion?" he asked.

You shook your head.

"Devra is the god the goblins worship. He was the god of passion, but his passion led to rage. Rage led to hate, and hate turned to corruption. He turned on his wife because of a misunderstanding. Now, he is revered by the angry, hateful, destructive creatures of the world. But there is a little of Devra inside of each of us."

He poked you in the chest and said, "Know your place lad. Your brothers are all fighting. Your parents are fighting. Should the battle go poorly, who will lead our people? Who will carry on the line of Kings?"

"If I were with them, we'd be more likely to win," you said sullenly.

Udûn chuckled, "Ah, the confidence of youth. Here, take an axe and practice your technique. You'll need it, one way or another." He pressed his own axe into your hand and grabbed another, pointing you toward the practice dummies.

Just then a crash sounded through the room. You looked up sharply to see a dwarf, bloodied and gasping, step through the safe room door.

"Lost... we have lost," he moaned. Then he screamed, "Take the King and go! Flee for your lives!" The injured warrior stepped back out, slamming the door behind him, with the look of a dwarf prepared to sell his life dearly.

All eyes turned to you. The King. No...

A frantic fear surged up in you. Your family! Your brothers! All of them? You started toward the door, but Udûn's strong hand caught you. He hissed, close in your ear, "You are the King now! Behave as a King must. Lead your people to safety."

A confusing torrent of emotions swept through your heart, but at last, one simple fact rose to the top. The fortress had fallen. Your people needed you.

You opened your eyes to find the people, your people, looking at you. You could see mirrored in their eyes the same terror and uncertainty in your own heart.

Rallying your strength, you tried to put confidence in your voice as you said, "We have planned for this. Take your assigned packs. You know the secret tunnel to the surface. Take it now. I will be the last out."

For a moment, only silence met your words. Then a shudder seemed to go through the dwarves, and

they began to move. You had to restrain yourself from sighing out loud in relief.

A youngish dwarf moved up, so quietly you hardly noticed him, and kneeled before you. Udûn stepped up beside the newcomer, not someone you had met before, and said, “Sire, this is Bêrek Stonewhisper, the best of the Cave Rangers. He, more than any dwarf, can guide you across the mountains of the Zirikzimân. Your father left him with us, in case this moment should come to pass.”

A grim, haunted look hovered around the edges of Udûn’s eyes. That, more than anything, terrified you.

You sharply clamped down on your own fear and turned to call commands, “Leave everything that has not been assigned to you. But bring the wounded! We will leave no dwarf behind.”

“Nevermind me!” one wounded dwarf shouted as several commoners came to lift his cot. He looked up at you, his eyes bright beneath his forest of thick, tangled hair. A bandage covered half his face. He stood up and staggered over to you, saying, “You’ll be a good king, lad. Watching out for your own. But this is one dwarf who’ll walk.”

As the huge dwarf turned to go, Udûn leaned in and whispered, “Ghuzdim Halfjaw. A fearsome warrior. They call him that because a goblin chopped off half his beard.”

You watched as the host slowly filtered out. Ingildun the Master Craftsdwarf struggled under a load of precious treasures almost heavier than himself, his long, thin white beard swaying as he cursed and swore at his apprentice, a young female dwarf by the name of Tiren. She calmly moved some items from his pack to her own while he was not looking, and then helped him keep his balance as they left the cave together.

“Mag!” you shouted, kicking an old dwarf who dozed against one wall, still hugging a mostly-empty tankard of ale. The old dwarf was, or rather used to be, the Runesmith. Old Mag hadn’t done any runework since you were a child, but that didn’t mean you would leave him behind.

He stumbled to his feet and shuffled toward the exit. Looking around, you saw that the place was almost empty. A surge of homesickness welled up in you, even though you hadn’t left yet. This might be the last time you would see the walls of your birthplace. It already looked so empty, with only Udûn and the last few remaining guardsmen left to guard your escape.

You caught the gruff warrior’s eye and he shook his head. It might have been a trick of the light, but you thought you saw his eyes misting. He said, “A dwarf has to do what he must. No goblin will come after you, except over my dead body.”

Neither of you had anything to say to that. You had suddenly felt unworthy to be king, unworthy to have a noble spirit like Udûn die so that you could live. You did the best you could think to do, and saluted him with your axe.

His spine straightened a little, and he saluted you once, sharply. Then he nodded, giving you permission to go.

You turned, and fled into the darkness.

A Note About This Story

The story you read now is not a normal story. You may have already noticed it’s written in the second person, a very unusual format for fiction—and from this point on it will also be written in the present tense. This is because in this story, YOU take on the role of the main character. YOU participate, making choices on his behalf, managing his resources, and ultimately determining the outcome of the story!

This story is part game, part book. Hence, it is called a “gamebook”. In order to fully enjoy this story, you must read with a pencil and paper (or a text document) on hand to take notes. You will also require one or two six-sided dice (abbreviated as d6, or 2d6 to indicate two of them) in order to enjoy the game aspect of this story.

You will keep track of all necessary information on your “Character Sheet.” The Character Sheet represents the attributes of your character and his allies. You may gain or lose allies over the course of the story. IMPORTANT: Always keep careful track of which allies are with you at any given time! This can have a dramatic affect on the story!

As for the attributes, Strength and Skill are used when your character is forced into combat, and Leadership represents skill at organizing and commanding large groups of people. For advanced players: you do have the option of rearranging the points rather than leaving them assigned as suggested. No attribute may be raised higher than five or lowered lower than two.

To begin, see the Character sheet on the next page and write down (or copy and paste) the information contained there.

Character Sheet

Strength: 3
Skill: 3
Leadership: 4

Fortress Status: None
Battle Points: None
Season: Winter

Allies

Bêrek Stonewhisper the Cave Ranger
Ghuzdim Halfjaw the Warrior
Ingildun the Master Craftsdwarf
Tiren the Apprentice Craftsdwarf
Old Mag the Runesmith

Retainers

10 Dwarf Warriors
20 Wounded Dwarf Warriors
140 Commoners

Resources

Food
Treasure

Notes and Keywords

Important: Do not read this story straight through from beginning to end! As you read, you must make choices and turn to the numbered chapter assigned to you. This allows you to interact with the storyline as intended.

Chapter 1

Daylight seems harsh to your eyes after the long journey through the escape tunnels. Light glares off the snow-covered mountainside before you where your people mill about uncertainly. These bedraggled refugees are all that remains of the great fortress of your ancestors. A bitter feeling tears through your heart. You swear that you will protect these people and see their greatness rebuilt, even if it costs your life.

Taking a deep breath, you survey the land around you and make a decision. Calling to your people, you announce, “We go south across the Zirakzimân. The Peaks of Winter are high, with dangers both deadly and mysterious. But the goblins will not follow us there.

“The way will be long. The snow will pile in our beards. But when we emerge from the other side, we will be safe and free. We are *Khazâd* and we will survive!”

Your voice resounds across the hillside, reaching every ear. A stir goes through the crowd. Slowly, one by one, your people shoulder their packs and begin the long ascent.

As you heave your pack and follow them, you look up at the menacing Zirakzimân. The peaks ahead are crowded with heavy storm cloud, and lightning flashes as you watch, illuminating the sharp spires against the dark sky. You cannot help but wonder what you are leading your people into.

Shouts of alarm call your attention--a shadow darkens the trail ahead. Goblins! A scouting party must have somehow circled around behind your fortress. The goblins burst upon your people from out of hiding places along the path, their blades flashing, spilling dwarven blood.

With a cry of rage, you swing loose the axe Udûn gave you and fall upon the foe! A big, ugly GOBLIN CHAMPION cuts down one of his fellows to get to you!

You must fight for your life!

[As this is your first combat, we’ll explain here how this works:

[Combat progresses in rounds. Each round, you roll one six sided dice and add the result to your Skill trait. Compare the total to your enemy’s Skill trait. You **win** the round if the result of your Skill + d6 roll is greater than the enemy’s Skill. You **tie** if the two values are the same. And you **lose** the round if your result is lower than the enemy’s Skill rating.

[No damage is dealt in the case of a tie. Otherwise, the losing party takes damage, losing Strength points. 1 point of Strength is lost if the winner currently has equal or less Strength than the loser. 2 points of Strength are lost if the winner currently has more Strength than the loser. Be sure to subtract damage at the end of each round to keep track of current Strength points for each combatant.

[Whichever combatant is reduced to 0 or less Strength first is knocked unconscious and loses the fight. After any battle you survive, your Strength returns to full.]

GOBLIN CHAMPION

Skill 5

Strength 3

If you win, turn to Chapter 35.

If you lose, turn to Chapter 34.

Chapter 2

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. You must bring at least 20 Dwarf Commoners as laborers to build the Outpost. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

It takes you nearly a week to hike up into the mountains and find a suitable location to begin your mining operations. Your men are harassed by wolves in the night, but you chase them off with fire and stones. Scouts report seeing goblins skulking around the hills, but they keep their distance.

You finally pick a location deep in a narrow canyon, where your miners will be able to come out under open daylight without exposing themselves too much. Work proceeds smoothly, and inside of a week you have the foundations of your Outpost laid.

You are just sitting down to a meal at the end of the day when a dwarven scout bursts into the camp, blood flowing freely from a dozen wounds. Staggering, exhausted, he cries, "Pêledgathol! We are under attack!" and then collapses. Two dwarves leap to catch him.

Your throat tightens in fear. Has Goza come already? Could this be the end, before it has even begun? No! You will fight to the last, even if it means your death! Shouting orders, you gather your men, equipping even the builders with axes and hammers, and put on a forced march back to Pêledgathol.

If you left at least 20 Dwarf Warriors at Pêledgathol, then turn to Chapter 60.

If you left less than 20 Dwarf Warriors at Pêledgathol, then turn to Chapter 11.

Chapter 3

A stir goes through the dwarves of Pêledgathol when a strange caravan is reported to be approaching through the mountains. As they draw closer, you can see the colors of the caravan. It hails from Zhadagh-dum, the only other dwarven stronghold in this region.

When the caravan arrives, a dwarf in fine livery emerges and introduces himself as Nagash, the ambassador from Zhadagh-dum. He and his men unload the caravan to display fine gifts brought from the King of Zhadagh-dum, bolts of cloth and stores of food, seeds and ale.

Your warriors gleefully cart off the fine ale, and some of your farmers cheer with delight at the seeds that have been provided. Foods you haven't seen since the flight can be grown again.

"Let these gifts be a sign of the goodwill between our people," Nagash says, bowing low, "my King is pleased to welcome you, and he wants you to know that we have your best interests at heart."

"Aye, but will he stand and fight with us when the goblins come?" you ask.

"If the goblins come this far south..." Nagash's tone makes it clear he does not think this will happen, "Then we can discuss the terms of a military alliance at that time. We must consider all the factors."

"I thank your lord for the gifts, and remind him that dark times may fall on us all if we do not stand together," you say stiffly, and return to your quarters.

Briefly, you let your head rest in your hands. You feel so tired. How will you fight for the survival of the Khazâd, when the Khazâd themselves will not fight?

Turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 4

After a moment's silence, you reply, "I will kill any goblin who crosses my path, but only to safeguard the future for my people. What's past is past. More killing won't bring my family back."

Jugen gives you a long look. Finally he takes a deep breath and says, "I admire your work, King, but I could never be like you. These men and I..." he gestures at the ragged, fierce bunch who stand behind him and continues, "there's no hope for us. No future. No regrets. All there is is the chance to bring death to those who have wronged us.

"Perhaps we will see each other again someday. More likely not. In any regard, good luck to you, Kingling." Jugen turns and walks away, and his men follow him silently.

You and your men return to surveying. You do not see Jugen and his men again, but you can sense their presence in the mountains now and again. When the season is complete, you return to Pêledgathol with accurate maps of the region.

Turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 5

When you return to Pêledgathol this season, you are surprised to find a number of unfamiliar faces. One of your warriors explains, "They just showed up here. They said that they had fled their homes to the north, chased out by goblins. They begged refuge... we could not turn them away. What are your orders, sire?"

You walk among the newcomers. They are refugees even more than your own people, starving, penniless and haggard. An old man comes up to you, grinning from ear to ear through his thin beard.

He clasps and kisses your hand, saying, "Bless the Seven Gods! One young King remains. Please, my lord, we are but a few of many. There is a camp of refugees that has gathered in the mountains. We will work for you, we will fight for you. Just let us stay. Please!"

"Sire?" one of your warriors asks, standing threateningly above the old man.

"Can you tell me where to find these others?" you ask, holding the old man's hand tightly.

"Certainly," he nods, and gives you directions.

You look over the hungry eyes of the assembled refugees. Catching your warrior's eye, you say, "Of course they can stay. Make them as comfortable as we are able."

With that, you return to the hollowed out cave that will someday be your quarters and put your head in your hands. To see the Khazâd, a people so proud, so fierce, in such a state is almost more than you can bear.

It is later than night, while you write by lamplight, when they bring you the news. Scouts have found the body of Bêrek Stonewhisper. He was discovered at the bottom of a deep, icy chasm, lying next to the broken and mangled corpse of a giant Yeti.

You go out to watch them bring his remains in. Instead of a bier of gold, as he deserved, he is brought in on a plank, but they have done well to make him appear at peace. Your voice chokes up to see your trusted guide like that, but you manage to say a few words to the few dwarves gathered and return to your room.

It is a dark time for all of you.

One of the scouts disturbs your silence with a knock. He stands respectfully outside your space, even though there is no door yet.

"Come in," you call gruffly, quickly wiping away tears.

"My lord," the scout says, "This was recovered upon Bêrek Stonewhisper's body. It seems to be a

report he had prepared for you just before he...”

You nod sharply and take the report. It is stained with Bêrek's blood. Unfolding it, you find a detailed map along with invaluable information about the local area, which he must not have had time to share with you.

Please turn to Chapter 29 to read Bêrek's report.

Chapter 6

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

Following the directions given by the old refugee, you quickly find your way to the area he described. For a few minutes you think you must be in the wrong place, and then between one step and the next, the entrance to a valley comes into view. If you hadn't known it was there, you easily could have passed right by it.

Stepping in, you see a pitiful sight that arrests your heart. Dwarves everywhere, dozens, hundreds of them, each more ragged and hungry than the last. A few, skinny warriors challenge your approach, but you can make out wary hope in their eyes when they see you and your men.

You explain yourselves, and the refugees make you welcome. They gather around you as you move among the crowd, striving to touch you, to feel your hand or cloak and assure themselves that you are real.

When you invite them to join you in Pêledgathol, a ragged cheer goes up among the hiding refugees. You sense that they might not have lasted much longer here on their own.

Roll 2d6 and multiply the result by 20. You can add that many Dwarven Commoners to your Character Sheet. Also add an additional 10 Dwarven Warriors.

Then return to Pêledgathol by turning to 70.

Chapter 7

Struggling against your deadening limbs, you pull yourself to your feet and begin to rouse your people. More than one dwarf weeps weeps when you order the treasures left behind, and even your own heart bleeds to see the last heirlooms of your home left behind in the cold cave.

As you are turning to leave, a commotion arises from one corner of the room. Ingildun, the old Master Craftsdwarf, shouts and raves madly, while his apprentice Tiren struggles to calm him. You walk over to see what the matter is.

“I won't leave it! I can't! You can't make me!” he cries shrilly, clinging to a pack full of the most valuable masterworks from his years of craftsmanship. He stands and staggers toward the door carrying it, but his weakened legs won't bear the load. He collapses on the bag.

You join Tiren in trying to coerce him to leave behind the treasure to save his life, but he is blind to reason. He mutters and weeps, and finally you are forced to leave him.

Shaking your head bitterly, you move down along the trail to catch up with the others. Tiren walks beside you, her head low, tears frozen on her cheeks.

Cross off Ingildun the Master Craftsdwarf from your Character Sheet, and make sure to cross off the Treasure if you have not already done so. Then turn to Chapter 38.

Chapter 8

The goblins come at you in a terrible wave, the beating of their drums fueling a battle frenzy. Their priests come behind, carrying the flaming spears that are meant to emulate the spear of their rage-god Devra, driving the goblin warriors before them.

The first tide crashes against the walls of Pêledgathol and breaks. Then another comes, and another. The goblins seem immune to pain, immune to fear. They know nothing but their fury and the hunger for death, either theirs or yours.

You repulse their attacks deep into the night, but their fury does not abate. Whenever one wave can go no longer, fresh goblins are brought up from behind. The host shows no signs of tiring.

At this time, you must determine the result of the Battle of Pêledgathol. Roll 2d6 and multiply the result by 5. Then add that to your total number of Battle Points.

If the result is 149 or less, turn to Chapter 22.

If the result is any number from 150 to 199, turn to Chapter 55.

If the result is 200 or more, turn to Chapter 32.

Chapter 9

Your path takes you directly into the shadow of Taragzimân. As you cross into the storm, day becomes like night. Thunder rips open the sky and hailstones the size of pebbles lash down onto you and your people.

Bêrek struggles through the wind and screams, "There is a shelter ahead! We just have to make it there!"

His words are whipped away by the wind almost before you can catch them. You nod rather than speaking, and turn your collar up against the storm. For what seems like an eternity, you focus simply putting one foot in front of the other on the treacherous, icy ground, the cold seeping into your bones.

A thunderous noise arrests your attention, powerful even over the wind. You look up in time to see the mountain shrug--and a huge shoulder of snow collapses onto the trail behind you, catching the tail end of your line of dwarves. A crack of thunder rolls across the mountains, for a moment sounding eerily like deep, mocking laughter.

You start back to help your people, but Bêrek grabs your shoulder and shakes his head. There is nothing to do but press on.

Nearly full darkness has fallen before you find Bêrek standing next to a door that seems to have appeared almost magically from out of the storm. He opens it, leading you and your people into a well-stocked emergency shelter.

Lamps are lit, and you stand by the door, ushering one dwarf after another into the small shelter. Not enough dwarves come in, but when you look out into the darkness, there are no more to be seen. Remove 20 Dwarven Commoners from your Character Sheet, lost in the storm and avalanche.

Once you have eaten, you fall immediately into a deep and dreamless sleep.

You feel as though you have barely just drifted off when a rough hand shakes you awake. You open your eyes blearily to see the grey light of dawn shining in through a crack in the shelter door. The lamps have all burned down.

Bêrek kneels over you, his face hardened by exhaustion. Frost clings to the tips of his eyebrows and beard. He says, "It is time to move. Before the storm rises again. But, my Lord... our people are overburdened. We won't make it across the mountains if we go on like this. We must leave something behind."

He looks at you with a grim set to his eyes. You groan and lean back to let your head rest. The cold stone of your resting place feels warm and easy compared to getting up, moving and speaking. You struggle to get your thoughts together to give the necessary orders.

To leave the Treasure behind, cross Treasure off your character sheet and turn to Chapter 7.

To leave the Food behind, cross Food off your character sheet and turn to Chapter 90.

To leave the Wounded behind, mark the 20 Wounded Dwarf Warriors off your character sheet and turn to Chapter 13.

To stay and rest a little longer, turn to Chapter 82.

Chapter 10

The seasons turn and time marches on; work is completed and new work begins. You rise at dawn in your quarters in the heart of Pêledgathol. A servant greets you with a breakfast of stew and sweet ale, and leaves fresh clothing folded beside your bed. Rising and stretching, you thank the Seven Gods for another day. (You are now beginning a new Season.)

Dressed and ready to face your people, you leave your quarters and make a circuit of the fortress. You must determine how much Pêledgathol has advanced, if at all...

Your Fortress Status starts as Shelter.

If you have either the resource **Wood** or the resource **Ore**, change your Fortress Status to Fort.

If you have all the resources **Wood**, **Ore** and **Arms**, change your Fortress Status to Stronghold.

If you have **Wood**, **Ore**, **Arms** and **Treasure**, change your Fortress Status to Hall.

If you have all of the above, as well as a population of greater than 1,000 Commoners, change your Fortress Status to Castle.

You examine new halls that have been dug out and nod approvingly. You encourage the workers and admire their crafts-dwarfship. You inspect your warriors, straightening their posture and pointing out spots of rust on their shields and axes. All the while, you know in the back of your mind that Goza the Goblin is out there, gathering his forces. It will be only a matter of time before blood is spilt, either yours or his.

Satisfied for the moment, you go to meet your advisors. You must decide where to direct your efforts for the coming season's work. To review Bêrek Stonewhisper's still-invaluable report on the surrounding area, go to Chapter 29.

Pick your action for the Season from the list below. You will need to choose from among your Allies and Retainers those who you wish to bring with you on the expedition, remembering to leave trustworthy dwarves to see to the defense of Pêledgathol.

To do a thorough survey of the surrounding countryside, go to Chapter 98.

To establish an Outpost in the Forest (if you don't have the keyword *trout*) go to Chapter 94.

To start logging in the Forest (you must have the keyword *trout*) go to Chapter 37.

To build an Outpost in the Mountains (if you don't have the keyword *stone*) go to Chapter 2.

To commence mining in the Mountains (you must have the keyword *stone*) go to Chapter 74.

To rebuild the Horns of Winter and establish a military outpost at the pass, go to Chapter 54.

To investigate the Ruins of Khaz'Gorath, if you have not done so already, go to Chapter 42.

To send a search party for the Refugee Camp the old dwarf told you about, go to Chapter 6.

Chapter 11

You reach the fortress in less than two days--to find the gates broken in and the walls scrawled in blood. As you watch, dwarves in chains are led out from the fortress under the watchful eye of fierce goblins with whips.

Tears sting your eyes. You are too late. The Last Fortress has fallen, and in its fall, you see the end of your people.

You swear that you will never surrender. Over the next few years, you and a last, dwindling warband of dwarves wage a guerilla war against the slowly encroaching goblin invaders. But to no avail.

The goblins swarm south through the Kepak Gabilbatâk pass, cutting and burning as they go. You are forced to watch as first the human village of Elmdale, and then the last dwarven stronghold of Zhadagdum fall before the goblins.

At last, you see your chance. A slim chance, but it's the only one you will have. You and the last of your men are lurking in the hills as GOZA THE GOBLIN goes out to hunt with only a few bodyguards.

Screaming your hatred, you ambush him. The last of your dwarves fall buying you time to get to Goza's side. The evil goblin leers menacingly and unlaces a huge battlemace with wicked black spikes. You must fight for your life!

GOZA THE GOBLIN Skill 8 Strength 7

If you lose, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, read on...

You have killed the great goblin chieftain who was responsible for the destruction of your home and the deaths of your family. So it is with satisfaction that you are able to accept the blades of his followers piercing your body.

You fall on the corpse of your enemy, knowing that the goblin alliance will disintegrate now, and sooner or later they will sink back into warring tribes incapable of hurting anyone except themselves. The light fades on your last, bitter smile.

THE END

Chapter 12

As the returning warriors grow closer, you recognize some of the men you had sent to range across the nearby lands, killing goblin scouts. There are injured in their midst. You give orders that they should be fed and their injuries tended, and that the leaders should be sent to report to you in your council chamber.

Gathering your advisors, you go to your War Council room to await their report.

At this time, consult the orders you had already written down during Chapter 72. To determine the results of the mission, roll 2d6 and add the Leadership of the General of this mission. Also add 1 to the result for every 5 Dwarf Warriors or Human Rangers that were sent on this mission.

If you have the keyword *map*, then the total must equal 13 or greater in order for you to succeed.

If you do not have the keyword *map*, then the total must equal 17 or greater in order for you to succeed.

If you succeed, turn to Chapter 68.

If you do not succeed, turn to Chapter 96.

Chapter 13

Glare both sullen and relieved answer your announcement that the wounded must be left behind. Those who can bear their own weight force themselves to their feet. Those who cannot are made comfortable in the warmest part of the cave, farthest from the door.

Stores of food and water are left within reach for them, but you both know they will likely not survive long enough to need it. You leave last, turning to look back once to regard the injured dwarves. One spits, but the others salute you with grave dignity.

Your people refuse to meet each other's eyes as you walk away from the shelter. But without the extra burden, you find that the host is able to move more quickly and surely across the treacherous ground.

You vow that the sacrifices of those left behind will not be made in vain.

Make sure to cross the 20 Wounded Dwarven Warriors off of your Character Sheet, if you have not done so already. Then turn to Chapter 38.

Chapter 14

The ogre goes down and you make a break for the mine entrance. They slam the heavy steel door behind you, and you turn to see another hapless dwarf who wasn't as fast get grabbed up by ogres.

The ogres ransack your camp while you and your men stay in hiding in the mine. The ogres can't fit in here, but there just aren't enough of you to reliably fight so many ogres, not without some tactical advantage.

Eventually the ogres leave. The dwarves cautiously take stock of the camp the next morning, piecing together what you can from the ruins. They have taken food, valuables, and more than one life. Your casualties were light, but there are some dwarves who will not live to see the sunrise.

You move the miners' housing into the empty upper levels of the mine itself for protection, and work continues. Once you have some protections in place, the ogres will think twice about raiding again, but you can leave that in the hands of your engineers. For now, your duties call you back to the fortress.

Lose 10 Dwarf Commoners in the Ogre attack. Mark them off your Character Sheet. While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of available Dwarf Commoners.

Turn to Chapter 70 to return to Pêledgathol.

Chapter 15

"While I appreciate your... generous offer, we have craftsmen and materials enough to replenish our own supplies. Perhaps we can find other ways to assist each other."

Nagash bows low and leaves. You go to find Ingildun, the Master Crafts Dwarf, and together the two of you tour the armory, the barracks and the smithy, discussing plans and possibilities. By the time you are done, you feel confident in your ability to manufacture the arms you need.

Add the resource **Arms** to your character sheet, and turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 16

Gathering the dwarves with you, you continue your explorations. The darkness of the tunnels seems to press in close, but you carefully keep track of your path. After some time, you come across an opening going down.

Taking a deep breath, you start the descent. These stairs are carved with more care than the tunnels above, raising the question of who came down here to build them, and why?

Your steps seem muted on the smooth stairs. Eventually, the descent flattens out to a short tunnel, which ends in a large door. The face of the door is carved in silver runes that seem to glow with their own light.

You step forward and run your fingers across the runes, but you cannot read them. There is dwarven magic built into this door. Only one dwarf you know might be able to make out these runes, and that is Old Mag, the drunken Runesmith.

Turn to Chapter 50 if Old Mag the Runesmith is with you.

If he is not, turn to Chapter 53 to return all the way back up to the Main Hall.

Chapter 17

After a long, hard journey, at last you begin the descent out of the Zirikzimân. You descend into the southern tip of the Kepak Gabilbatâk pass and find yourself at the Niburzimân, known as the Winter's Horns. A pair of ancient, ruined towers, they still guard the pass from hazards of a bygone era, when Khazâd ruled the lands to the north, and their foes were men and monsters from the south.

Now, fates have reversed your role. You flee from the land of your ancestors. You look back the way you came, at the dark, towering peaks of the Zirikzimân. You have made the crossing, but the wintry spikes seem to mock you.

"While I yet live," you whisper, "Goza shall never rest without fear. One of us will die. I swear it upon my father's blood." Cutting your hand, you press your blood against the stones of the ruined fortress to consecrate your oath.

Looking up from your prayer, your eyes pass over the stonework with practiced knowledge, and you can still see the strength of this ancient fortress. With a few months to make repairs, and a mere half a hundred stolid warriors, you could hold this pass against any force.

While your people rest, you wander the ruined towers of Niburzimân, lost in thoughts of your own. An air of desolation hangs over the once proud fortress. Weeds grow in cracks among the stones, and nothing remains except an odd bit of mouldering armor or dry bone poking up from the grasses.

Suddenly a motion startles you, but it is another dwarf which emerges from behind a tumble of fallen stones, followed by a mule laden with heavy packs. He wears merchant clothes in the colors of Zhadagh-dum, a stronghold of the Khazâd that you know to be not far from here.

"Peace, friend," the merchant says, "I did not expect to run into so many fellow Khazâd here. This way is not travelled often any longer."

You tell the strange dwarf your story, while he listens with guarded interest. When you finish, he shakes his head heavily as you and he speak of the dark times that have fallen upon the Khazâd.

When the evening wears down, he hitches up his packs to leave, but makes you an offer before he goes, "Zhadagh-dum cannot take a whole city of refugees, but we could make room for one more. You are an honored son of my king's cousin. Come with me, and I can promise you the hospitality of Zhadagh-dum."

If you accept the merchant's offer and take refuge in Zhadagh-dum alone, turn to Chapter 89.

If you decline the offer and choose to stay with your people, turn to Chapter 63.

Chapter 18

Returning to where your people are camped, you tell them all about the adventures you had under the earth and the things you found in the Ruins. Quickly, you begin drawing up plans for how to renovate the old Fortress. Within a matter of days you are leading a team of engineers in to begin the most pressing repairs.

Pêledgathol, The Last Fortress. Is it the beginning of the end, or the end of the beginning? Only time will tell, but of one thing you are certain: you will make your stand here. Your people will rise or fall on this spot. You will not run away again. And when Goza leads his goblins across the Zirikzimân to the south, if ever, you will be ready for him.

The main bulk of your people camp outside the entrance to the ruins, at least until your Engineers are able to fix up the entryway and the first few rooms enough to provide accomodation. It will be a time consuming venture to reclaim the whole fortress from degradation and disrepair, but faster than building a new fortress from scratch.

Slowly, you dwarven workers get comfortable, and the new location begins to feel like home. Soon, you will need to begin considering how to acquire other resources to bring Khaz'Gorath--no, it is Pêledgathol now--up to the living standards you expect.

Any Wounded Dwarf Warriors still with you finally have a chance to recover during this time. You may remove all remaining Wounded Dwarf Warriors from your character sheet and replace them with an equal number of Dwarf Warriors.

As you now have a Fortress, change the "Fortress Status" trait on your Character Sheet from "None" to "Shelter." Add the keyword *fortified* and the keyword *stone*. Mark on your Character Sheet that this is the beginning of your first Summer, and then pick from one of the following options.

If you do not have Food, you must choose one of the actions from List 1 to seek food until you can get the traditional dwarven cave farms up and running. If you have Food, it will last you through the first season, and you must choose one of the actions from List 2.

List 1 (Do not have Food)

To trade with Zhadagh-dum (only if you have Treasure) turn to Chapter 61.

To raid the nearby human village of Elmdale, turn to Chapter 92.

List 2 (Have Food)

To do a thorough survey of the surrounding countryside, turn to Chapter 98.

To establish an Outpost in the Forest (if you don't have the keyword *trout*) turn to Chapter 94.

To start logging in the Forest (you must have the keyword *trout*) turn to Chapter 37.

To build an Outpost in the Mountains (if you don't have the keyword *stone*) turn to Chapter 11.

To commence mining in the Mountains (you must have the keyword *stone*) turn to Chapter 74.

Chapter 19

Because the defense of the Horns is so vital, you set up daily runners between Niburziman and Pêledgathol. From one missive to the next, you are able to put together a solid picture of what's happening there.

The formidable Khazâd fortress at the south end of the Kepak Gabilbatâk has effectively stemmed the tide of the goblin hordes. The goblin armies are camped back into the pass, their fires reaching out of sight into the depths of the Zirikzimân. But so far, Goza has not shown his own face.

After several missives reporting a standoff, you receive one letter indicating that the goblin army seems to be preparing for some sort of major assault. Later that night, as you stand on the walls, looking in the direction of Niburziman, you see a fireball of monumental proportions lick up into the night. After several seconds, the faint echoes of an explosion reach your ears.

It is all you can do to keep from ripping your beard out in anxiety. When the next morning's runner comes, you cannot read his report soon enough.

You must now determine the outcome of the Battle of Niburziman. Roll 2d6 and add the Leadership of the General you sent there, if any. Then add +1 for every five Dwarf Warriors or Human Rangers who are stationed there (including both the troops you sent on this mission, if any, as well as the 20 Dwarf Warriors who were already stationed at Niburziman.)

Turn to Chapter 45 if the result is 17 or under.

Turn to Chapter 69 if the result is 18 or over.

Chapter 20

You mount the battlements, the Hammer of Thiran'Dul thrumming with power in your hands. The hosts of the goblins are arrayed before you, but with the power granted to you by the ancient artifact, you will defeat them all.

Your mind flashes back over the pains you have suffered, the wrongs that have been inflicted upon you and yours, and raw hatred flashes through your veins for the goblins. A terrible rage comes over you as you step out onto the forward parapet of Pêledgathol and look over the horde. Rage against goblin-kind, rage against Goza, rage against the world for all that you have done.

The weapon in your hand flashes into a lance of flame, fueled by your fury. Red overtakes your vision. Power flushes your body. You let out a cry of pure rage and leap from the battlements. Some small, backward part of your mind wonders at the leap, and cowers at the heights you have come. The armies themselves are like ants beneath you. You merely stifle that voice, glorying rather in the power that lets you soar over the battlefield.

You slam onto Goza's throne platform, shattering it with the force of your landing. Goza himself falls from his throne, staggering backward, looking up at you in an expression of pure terror.

His slaves scatter. You stalk through the ruins of his glory to stand above him, reveling in his fear. Then you raise your weapon and shout to the heavens. The army which surrounds you returns your shout, the thunderous motion of thousands of voices. A crack of lightning descends from the sky to enter into the tip of the spear you hold above you. It is merely the heavens doing you homage.

Feeling yourself growing taller and longer of limb, fire bursting from your skin, you look down at the pitiful, cowering goblin king. Your voice reverberates across the valley as you say, "You have been faithful, goblin. And you will be rewarded. You will have the honor of being the first that I kill with my own hand."

You strike with your upheld weapon, driving the shaft of the spear through his heart. Some quiet voice in the back of your mind idly notices that it is not a hammer you carry anymore, but a spear. A spear that matches the flaming spear of the god Devra on the banners held by the goblin priests.

That voice dies as you rip the spear from your enemy's breast, reveling in your power and glory. The pitiful goblins of the host fall on their knees before you, swaying and trembling. You are unto a god.

Slowly, you turn your attention to the annoying matter of a few stubborn dwarves not far away. The satisfaction of power brings a smile to your face. It will please you to make them bend the knee, or die.

THE END

Chapter 21

Life leaves your broken body like a dove flying from the nest. As you gasp your last breath, you can think only that you have failed. Songs may be sung of your deeds, but you will not live to hear them. Your life and your story ends here.

THE END

Chapter 22

The fight lasts three days and three nights without respite. When the goblin horde smashes in the gates of Pêledgathol, you are almost too tired to care. Your men lie dead around you. The last defenders give their lives killing the first few goblins through the gates.

But the goblins do not kill you. They would not be so kind. You are bound and chained, and brought before Goza, where he gloats over your failure. He makes you watch as your people are led out in chains.

When Goza finally tires of his games and ends you, it is a mercy. As you die, an apology is on your lips. Your people put their trust in you, and have failed them. You know that this defeat spells the end of the race of the Khazâd.

THE END

Chapter 23

After much debate and frantic scribblings on pieces of paper, your engineers present you with the following plan: They will redirect a nearby stream into the Ogre's valley, flooding the valley and hopefully triggering a landslide in the unstable valley walls. Ogres are not known for their ability to swim.

You and your men will stand at the entrance to the valley, where you can ambush any ogres trying to escape and hopefully bring them down quickly.

You give the okay and take your position. When the water comes, it isn't just a flood, it's a torrent, a rushing wall of water that bears down on the ogre village. Ogres scream and disappear under the waves. But when a soggy group of them pull themselves from the waves near you with rage in their eyes, you know you are in trouble.

The ogres fall upon your men, slamming the earth with their heavy clubs and forcing your warriors to scatter or be crushed. One particularly ugly brute sets his eyes on you. The OGRE shakes the water from himself like a dog, splattering you with droplets, then grins evilly and approaches, whirling his club.

Separated from your men, you must fight this battle alone!

OGRE	Skill	5	Strength	8
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If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw was with you on this mission, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw was not with you on this mission, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, then you live to see the ogres defeated. Turn to Chapter 41.

Chapter 24

When you happen to overhear worried whispers around the campfire one night, dwarves speaking of ogres in low frightened voices, you burst in on them with a laugh, saying, “Ogres? Yes, there were ogres here. They’re dead and gone. They were no match for the Khazâd.”

With that, you tell them the tell of how your engineers dumped a lake on the ogre village, and how the strange mountain dwarves came to your rescue. Some of the veterans of that fight overhear and join the circle, adding tales of their own. Before long, a large circle has gathered around the campfire, laughing and cheering at each new tale of a dwarf’s narrow escape, or an ogre’s comical demise.

The fear dispelled, your men set back to work with renewed vigor on the morrow. Sure enough, your word holds true: the signs of ogres left in the mountains grow older and older, and none of the brutes come to bother your mine.

While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of available Dwarf Commoners.

Turn to Chapter 70 to return to Pêledgathol.

Chapter 25

Coming out from the darkness of the cavernous ruins, you gasp fresh air and blink up at the blue sky. It seems strange that the daylight, with plants and animals and wind, has been here all along.

You take a moment to make sure everyone is accounted for and to take stock of who made it back out, and what you brought with you. Then you begin the hike back to your people.

If you want to try the Ruins again, you can re-arrange the Allies and Retainers that you are bringing with you, returning some and bringing others on, and return into the Ruins by turning to Chapter 42.

If you have the keyword *settlers*, turn to Chapter 18.

Otherwise, turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 26

The goblin resistance breaks quickly, and your warriors spend half the day cheerfully hunting down and slaying fleeing goblins. Taking stock of the supplies that your forces have claimed, you find that the weapons are mostly useless to your warriors, being not high enough quality, but that the food can easily be made into something more palatable by your good Khazâd cooks.

The warriors return, cheerful and satisfied, with full bellies and sated blades. Goza will be sorely disappointed when his army finds no supplies at the rendezvous point, and this puts everyone at Pêledgathol into a good mood.

10 Dwarf Warriors were lost in the fighting. Cross them off from your Character Sheet. (You may substitute Human Rangers for these casualties if they were present on the mission.)

Add 7 Battle Points to your total, to represent the strategic victory your forces won today.

Turn to Chapter 83 to await the next report.

Chapter 27

The scout's voice catches, and another dwarf has to step in to continue, saying, "They attacked us at night. We fought, but there were so many of them..."

"What happened? Where are the others?" you demand.

The scout shakes his head, "There are no others. The General commanded the three of us to leave immediately, to bring word back to Pêledgathol, in case the worst should happen."

The resolve of one of the other dwarf scouts breaks. He begins to tear at his beard, saying, "They are all dead. All dead!"

You turn to one of your guardsmen and says, "Get these men somewhere safe. And somewhere quiet. We can't have them starting a panic. This war isn't over yet."

With that, you turn on your heel. It isn't until the privacy of your own quarters that you let your own emotions loose.

The Outpost has been destroyed, and all defenders slain. Anyone sent on a mission to defend the Outpost is dead, including the General and all Dwarf Warriors and Human Rangers that were present. In addition, 10% of your Dwarf Commoners were at the Outpost, and have also been killed. Cross all of the above off your Character Sheet, and then lose 7 Battle Points for the loss of the supplies at the Outpost and the blow to morale.

Turn to Chapter 83 to continue.

Chapter 28

Tension hangs thick in the air over Pêledgathol. You have stopped sending scouts out, because the goblin presence is so thick in the region that only one in three were returning anyway. All of your dwarves and supplies have been withdrawn into the fortress to weather the siege. Now, there is nothing to do but wait.

One evening, as you pace the walls restlessly, you hear the deep, thrumming beat that can only mean one thing: goblin war drums. Out of the darkness you see them emerge, thousands of them, tens of thousands of them. Every unit carries a banner with a flaming spear, the symbol of the god Devra. There, in the center of the horde, riding on a throne made of skulls and carried by dozens of slaves, gloats Goza the Goblin, as he looks upon the land that he intends to claim in the name of the fallen god Devra.

You taste blood and realize you are biting your own cheeks hard enough to bleed. Hatred and vengeance flow so strong in your spirit that you didn't even feel the pain.

The goblin army slowly surrounds your fortress, unit after unit moving into position just outside the reach of your war machines. There are so many, and even after they have all moved into their places, hundreds deep, you can still see more descending from the mountains above.

Looking around at the dwarven defenders near you, you see the strong hands and stalwart hearts of the Khazâd. But there are so few of you...

It is time to calculate your total number of Battle Points. Add the following elements to determine your total number of Battle Points

- * all of the Battle Points gained or lost so far as a result of story events,
- * 1 point for every five Dwarf Warriors or Human Rangers available to fight in this battle,
- * The sum of the Leadership values of all Generals present,
- * Your own Leadership value, including a bonus of +2 because you are the King,
- * +15 if you have the keyword *defensible*.
- * +30 if you have the keyword *fortified*.

Before you do anything else, if you have the Hammer of Thiran'dul, turn to Chapter 20.
If you do not have the keyword *artifact*, but you do have the keyword, *ring*, turn to Chapter 33.
If you have neither of the above keywords, turn to Chapter 8.

Chapter 29

Seated at your desk, or what passes for one in this time of sorrows, you pull out the last report written by the most trusted of your advisors, Bêrek Stonewhisper.

Dear Sire,

I have completed a cursory scouting expedition of the surrounding area. There are several points of interest. First, in order to secure our new homeland, I advise committing the manpower to survey the surrounding land, clear out any threats that may be present, and draw accurate maps of the region.

As to the basic amenities of life, we must secure both Wood and Ore before our people can be comfortable. Food can be grown in our traditional cave-farms, as long as we have initial stocks to get us through the first season, but gathering Ore and Wood will take more preparation. Ore can be dug beneath the Mountains, and Wood can be logged in the Forest, however we may need to establish at least one Outpost on the surface in order to secure both.

Considering the defense of our new homeland, the principle defense we have against Goza and his Goblins are the mountains themselves, the Zirikzimân. But there are ways to cross. The only true pass is guarded by a pair of ancient, ruined towers called Niburzimân, the Horns of Winter. If we are to secure this pass, we must send men to rebuild the Horns and fortify it against assault. A few men there may hold an army from crossing the mountains.

As a further point of interest, the Ruins of Khaz'Gorath, the ancient stronghold of your cousins, are to be found not far from here. Khaz'Gorath has stood empty for over a century, but the death of your cousins and their people still stands unavenged. If you have not ventured there already, we may find not only justice for the fallen there, but valuable supplies and perhaps even treasure left by those who fell. I'm sure the spirits of the dead would want to see it taken back into dwarven hands.

*Your ever faithful servant,
Bêrek Stonewhisper*

You set down Bêrek's report, mourning the man who died to bring you this intelligence. There is still so much to do, and so little time.

To give your orders, go to Chapter 10.

Chapter 30

You hurry across, hoping to get out of the gallery before the unstable floor gives way. But there are too many of you. With a terrible splitting sound, the gallery cracks open and collapses in a shower of rocks and screaming dwarves!

Roll 1d6 once for every dwarf with you, including yourself.

On a roll of 1 or 2, that dwarf falls into the chasm on one side of the gallery. That Ally or Retainer is dead and must be removed from your Character Sheet. If you fall into the chasm yourself, you tumble in darkness for about 30 seconds and then hit the bottom. Turn to Chapter 21.

On a roll of 3 through 6, that dwarf either made it across before the collapse, or fell onto the lower level of the gallery and landed more or less uninjured. If you survived the collapse, then you gather with the other survivors and dust each other off. You are able to find staircases that will let you either continue ahead, or go back the way you came.

If you wish to give up and leave the Ruins now, turn to Chapter 25.

If you wish to continue deeper into the Ruins, turn to Chapter 53.

Chapter 31

Moving deeper into the ruins, you pass through several hallways and go up and down stairs. Eventually you come out into a large gallery. You seem to be on the upper floor. Looking out over the edge on one side, you see another level about twenty feet below you. Looking over the other side, you see a chasm that extends into darkness deeper than the light of your torches.

The walls in this room are engraved with images of the founding of Khaz'Gorath. They seem to be older and more worn than other images you've seen, as if dating back to the earliest days of this place. Here you see dwarves digging out tunnels. There they are hollowing out rooms and carving engravings on a room that looks very much like this one.

A sharp cracking sound suddenly catches your attention. Looking down, you see fine cracks appearing in the floor of the gallery level that you are standing upon. You call to your people and hurry across, while the floor shifts and splits ominously beneath you.

Roll 2d6 and add 7. If there are more people in your party than the result, then the gallery floor collapses. Turn to Chapter 30 to determine the results.

If you have fewer people in your party than the result of the roll, then you make it across safely. Turn to Chapter 53 to continue exploring the Ruins.

Chapter 32

The fortress holds out for seven days and seven nights without respite, while goblins pound at the gates hour after hour, night after night, day after day. The dwarves grow weary, but fight on. The goblins die in droves.

Over the week, you see the goblin numbers slowly but steadily shrinking. You take some grim satisfaction in the knowledge that, even should you die here, you have slashed the armies that Goza has under his command. There is no way he will be able to replace the sheer number of bodies that lie before Pêledgathol.

At last, GOZA THE GOBLIN himself emerges. He howls his rage at the night and gathers the last of his forces for one final, ultimate assault on your gates. Battering rams are brought up. The goblin priests chant and wave their censors, sending out a foul smelling smoke.

The goblins throw themselves at your gates in desperate, pointless fury. Seeing how few goblins remain, a new excitement rises among your dwarves. At last, Goza the goblin himself stalks from the ground, whipping goblins who bear a battering ram before them.

Defenders fire from the battlements. Arrows slam into goblins holding the battering ram, but more rush up to replace them. Arrows slam into Goza, and he screams and tears them loose from his flesh, leaving gaping, bleeding wounds.

Slam. Slam. Slam. Crash. Splinters of wood and bent bits of iron fly from the gates of the fortress. The

defenders form up in front of the gate, and manage to hold until Goza himself pushes through, howling. The great goblin cuts through your defenders, but not before dwarven axes take a measure of his hide. Nearly mad with fury, ignoring his wounds, the leader of the goblin hosts stalks into Pêledgathol.

There are none to stop him but yourself. Taking up your massive warhammer, you step out and shout your challenge, "Goza! I am the King of Pêledgathol, and this is my land. You have wronged my family and hurt my people. If you take another step forward, you will die!"

In the thunder of your voice, the yard immediately clears of all except you and Goza. The great goblin grins and howls his response. He spins his spear and stalks forward, his eyes bright with anticipation.

You must fight for your life!

The last week of warfare has increased your skill and experience. On top of that, you are equipped with the very best arms and armor that your fortress can provide. As a result add +2 to both Strength and Skill for this fight. If you have the keyword *masterwork*, then you may add an additional +1 to both Strength and Skill to represent the consummate crafts-dwarfship which has gone into your equipment.

As Goza has been injured, his Strength and Skill have both been reduced for this fight.

GOZA THE GOBLIN Skill 7 Strength 3

If you lose, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, turn to Chapter 100.

Chapter 33

Looking out over Goza's forces, you shudder at the sheer weight of numbers he has to throw against you. The war drums of the goblins increase in tempo and intensity, until they roll like thunder across the land, piercing your fortress and shaking the very hills around you.

Shaking the hills... a noise catches your awareness that is not drums. It is a thunder of a different sort. You look toward the mountains.

Suddenly a silver light flares from the north, and lights shoot from the heart of the Zirikzimân into the sky! The lights seem to take the shape of a woman with her arms spread, as though taking flight, and in the silver gleam that they cast, you can see an avalanche forming (like the rippling of her gown) -- with the hapless goblin hosts beneath it!

Goblins scream and run. The solid, unified beat of the hundreds of war drums becomes jumbled and broken. The avalanche strikes in a glow of silver light, burying thousands of goblins under ice and snow.

The lady above them fades, the lights that form her seeming to become one with the stars in the skies. But before she vanishes, you could almost swear she looks you in the eye and smiles.

The last to fade are the silver bangles on her arms, which, you remember, are holy to her.

Double your current Battle Points, as fully one half of Goza's army just got crushed underneath a titanic avalanche. Then turn to Chapter 8.

Chapter 34

The battle goes poorly, your size and inexperience working against you. The goblin clubs you a ringing blow on the side of your head and you fall to the ground, blinking away tears.

Just then a roar of "*Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-menu!*" rings out and a huge dwarf flies past you, axe

whistling. When you look up, Ghuzdim Halfjaw stands over the dead goblin champion, blood dripping from his axe. He turns to help you up and asks, “Are you all right?”

“I’ll be fine,” you groan. Ghuzdim laughs as you try to blot the flow of blood and clear your eyes, saying, “You’re blooded now, lad. The next fight will be easier.”

“Why do you lie to the boy?” Bêrek Stonewhisper asks.

“The next fight may be easier,” Ghuzdim protests in an injured tone. Bêrek just stares, and the big dwarf backs off, grumbling. The Stonewhisper bandages your forehead. When he is done, you take stock of the damage.

10 Dwarf Commoners have been killed in the attack (mark this on your character sheet now, by reducing the number of Dwarf Commoners from 140 to 130). Warily, you lead the rest of your people up into the mountains.

Please turn to Chapter 35.

Chapter 35

Leaving the goblin corpses behind you, you turn to continue the long and cold hike up into the cruel mountains of the Zirikzimân. By nightfall, every one of your dwarves is shivering. You make camp in a small dale, risking a few small fires for warmth in the sheltered depths of the little valley.

Bêrek goes out to scout, alone. You are standing just outside the camp watching the sunset, when you see a figure struggling through the snow. The figure approaches a few dwarven children playing nearby.

You tense up, moving quickly in that direction, but when you get there you find simply a human woman, bundled in rags. You overhear her saying, “Greetings, children. Please, it’s so cold, I’m chilled near to death. Where is your camp and family? Won’t you take me home with you?”

As you approach, she sees you coming, and bows. Her face is pretty, but smudged with dirt. Her cheeks are hollow, and her eyes gleam as with fever or madness. Her hands, where they emerge from her rags, are too thin to be healthy, and her hair is as white as snow.

If you take her in for the night, turn to Chapter 57.

If you turn her away, turn to Chapter 39.

Chapter 36

You frown over the map for a moment, then pronounce, “We will settle the Ruins of Khaz-Gorath.”

A buzz of excitement goes through your community of refugees. Dwarves gather their equipment and sharpen their blades. None know what dangers the ancient refuge might hold, but all are excited at recovering the treasures of that fabled place.

Bêrek scouts ahead, and you meet him partway, with refugees trailing behind you for a league. On an icy hilltop, he gives you a map of the area and points out the landmarks you need to know. Just as he opens his mouth to explain the dangers of getting to Khaz-Gorath, a snowball the size of your head hits him and knocks him to the ground.

An animal scream rises from somewhere nearby. It is a YETI! The creature is shaped like a human, but stands twice as tall. It has black hands and a black face, and elsewhere is coated in shaggy white fur. It charges you, howling!

You must fight for your life!

YETI Skill 7 Strength 9

If you survive two rounds of combat with the monster, then read on.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

The Yeti is powerful, and you barely survive facing it for even a few moments. It's long limbs swat you with terrible power, and your axe barely even seems to annoy it.

Just when you think you are finished, a throwing axe slams into the beast's shoulder. It is enough to grab its attention, and you see Bêrek, crouched near the top of a cliff nearby. The Yeti charges Bêrek, howling, but Bêrek rolls to the side at the last minute, luring the creature to run right off the cliff!

As the monster slips and falls behind him, Bêrek grins to you--but just then a long, white furred arm lashes up from the cliff face and grabs Bêrek! The two of them vanish together beyond the cliff.

"Bêrek!" you cry, rushing to the cliff face. He is gone. There is nothing below but gently drifting clouds that fill the deep ice canyon.

"He's gone, come on..." one of the other scouts says, pulling you aside. You choke back tears, but the scout does not comment on your un-kingly display. You swear to yourself that you will find him--his remains, at least. But looking out over the shivering refugees behind you, you know that right now it is most important to get them to shelter.

Fighting back tears that freeze on your face, you consult the map Bêrek handed you just moments before, and use it to lead your people to the Ruins of Khaz Gorath.

Turn to Chapter 42.

Chapter 37

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. You must bring at least 30 Dwarf Commoners to man the logging camps. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

Gathering your woodcutters, you depart for the logging camp you have prepared at the forest's edge. Your workers quickly fall into an easy rhythm. Trees great and small fall before dwarven axes. Work proceeds smoothly, until...

You awaken one night to the sound of screams! You run outside, but you find nothing except darkness, missing men, and several patches of sticky webs coating the ground and walls. Spiders!

In the morning, you gather what men you can for a rescue mission. You are three days into the dark forest, far from any civilization, when you stumble into a clearing filled with massive, stringy spiderwebs. Twitching shapes hang in cocoons all around the clearing.

Suddenly a GIANT SPIDER descends from a line just in front of you! Its hundreds of beady eyes glare with evil hunger. It lifts its soft underbelly and spits web at you!

You must fight for your life! If you have any Dwarf Warriors with you, add +2 to your Skill for this fight, as the nearest Warrior jumps to your aid.

GIANT SPIDER Skill 7 Strength 3

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, keep reading.

The spider falls before you, spraying ichor from the mortal wound you delivered with your axe. Wiping the bloody goop from your eyes, you proceed to cut your fellow dwarves from the cocoons they have been wrapped in, while your militia fight off more giant spiders.

You have just cut free the last of the dwarves, when you see a few more figures just up ahead. These have the long limbs of humans. Will you cut them free, and risk further attacks, or leave them to their fate?

If you flee now to get all the dwarves out while you can, turn to Chapter 48.

If you have the keyword *stealth* on your Character Sheet, you must turn to Chapter 48.

If you take your chances with the spiders and cut free the humans, turn to Chapter 85.

Chapter 38

Hardening your heart to your losses, you push your people hard during the brief spell of good weather to make time. You come out onto the high ice flats of the Zirikzimân, a long, highland plain marked only by deep chasms in the ice.

Bêrek and the other guides pick a slow course for you, sometimes guiding you for hours out of your way to get around a crevasse. As an early evening settles in, the weather changes to a gentle snowfall. The reduced visibility slows your pace even more, but there is no shelter to seek. You have no choice but to push on through the night.

As you wait, shuddering, in the cold darkness for the guides to announce the next path, a murmuring from the dwarves around you catches your attention.

Standing, you see tiny lights twinkling in the darkness. For a moment, you think your imagination is playing tricks on you, but the dwarves around you are pointing and whispering, awe on their faces.

The lights approach like tiny stars, illuminating falling snowflakes as they move. They come closer, bobbing among the upturned faces of your people as though curious. Your people laugh, some of them trying to catch the lights--you realize this is the first time you have heard laughter since leaving your home.

One of the lights bobs near you. When you hold up your hand, it settles slowly toward your finger, pulsing like a butterfly. Where it touches you, a warm, tingling sensation spreads up your hand, and then it alights.

After a few moments, the lights gather and begin to march purposefully away up the mountain. You get the feeling you are supposed to follow. Some of the younger dwarves are already moving.

To accept the strange invitation and follow the lights, turn to Chapter 49.

To call together your people and lead them away from the lights, turn to Chapter 62.

Chapter 39

For three days and three nights you and your people ascend into the mountains, braving the snow, the cold, and the harsh, rocky trails. You occasionally see signs of goblins tracking your movements, but they stick to the valleys far below, where they can outpace you, waiting for you to come down again.

Through it all you can see dark clouds up ahead, gathering with stormy menace around the feet of

Tarakzimân, the tallest peak of the Zirakzimân. As you rise on the fourth day, you feel a cold wind blowing from the heights of the mountains. Lightning flashes in the darkness ahead.

Bêrek catches your look and says, "There are shelters up ahead, but we are not close enough yet. That storm will break before we can reach them."

"Is there another choice?" you ask.

He shakes his head, "Not and stay on high ground. We could descend into the pass of Kepak Gabilbatâk. The pass would take us through the Zirakzimân, but..."

"Goblins," you say. Bêrek nods grimly. The goblins are afraid to ascend the heights of the Zirakzimân, and as you look at the storm brewing ahead, you wonder if they aren't wiser for it. Yet to descend would be to give up the protection of the mountains.

You must choose...

To risk goblins and go to the lower land of the Kepak Gabilbatâk pass, turn to Chapter 66.

To stay in the high places of the Zirakzimân and brave the weather, turn to Chapter 9.

Chapter 40

The empty hours drag on into silent days. The people of Pêledgathol grow restless, cooped up inside the fortress, where they cannot hunt or tend their outdoor farms. Some are even suffering from the sunless-sickness, which strikes dwarves sometimes who spend too long in caves.

You almost wonder where Goza is with his army, when one bright morning you see a dwarf approaching, tied to a pony. As he grows closer, you can see he is slumped over the pony's back, unconscious or barely conscious.

The pony finds it's own way to the gates of Pêledgathol, where you let him in and your healers quickly pull the injured warrior off the pony.

The warrior stirs and his eyes open, seeking yours. He grips your hand with his own bloody one, his fingers surprisingly strong, and says, "Goza... he is crossing the Zirakzimân over the ice flats. His goblins are dropping like flies... worth it... for a surprise attack..."

He starts to fade, and you shake his hand, demanding, "The others! What happened?"

"Dead... all dead..." a gleam comes into his eye, "but we took our tithe going out..."

His head rolls to one side, and the light in his eye goes out. His breathing stills, and in the silence that follows, you can see the same prayer for vengeance in the eyes of the dwarves around you as echoes in your own soul.

Gain 10 Battle Points for the forewarning regarding Goza's surprise attack. However, if Jugen was leading this mission, gain 15 Battle Points instead, due to a brilliant suicide ambush that dealt heavy casualties to Goza's army.

Turn to Chapter 28.

Chapter 41

Panting and gasping from the fight, you look around. Your warriors are scattered, and there are more ogres chasing them than there are dwarves running. In a moment, you know that you are doomed. The water helped, but it was not enough. You have failed, and you will pay with your life.

Just then you hear the deep, thrilling warhorn of the Khazâd sound above the battle. With a cry of "*Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-menu!*" an army of dwarves pours from the surrounding mountains!

They fall fiercely on the sodden and startled remnants of the ogre village, axes flashing in the wind. You marvel at the sight of so many dwarven warriors. They have no colors, no insignia. Who are they? Where have they come from? It is obvious they are skilled warriors, from the way they quickly put down the remaining ogres with precise teamwork. Add the keyword *ogrebane* to your Character Sheet.

When it is over, a tall dwarf warrior with a long, braided beard approached you. He looks at you with hard eyes and says, "I am Jugen. You are trespassing upon my land."

Standing alone, injured and damp, you draw yourself to your full height and say, "I am the King of Pêledgathol. I believe it is you who are trespassing upon my land."

A long moment hangs between you, then you wave your hand and say, "However, as you have saved my life this day, I will forgive you."

The tall warriors face breaks into a grin, and chuckles erupt from the dwarves around.. Axes are lowered, and you and he step forward to clasp hands.

Jugen explains that his warriors are refugees from many dwarven clans, none of whom have homes or families any longer. In return, you tell him about your flight across the mountains, and the founding of Pêledgathol.

Finally, you say, "You left your homes behind, but there could still be a future for you and your men. Pêledgathol is meant to be a new beginning for all Khazâd. And we could use your strength. What do you say?"

Jugen gives you a hard stare and asks, "Answer me this, youngling who calls himself King, what is your goal? Do you want to build a life of peace for you and your people? Or do you seek to kill the goblins who did this to us?"

To answer, "build a life of peace for me and my people," turn to Chapter 4.

To answer, "kill the goblins who did this to us," turn to Chapter 75.

Chapter 42

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you into the Ruins. On this expedition, any time you leave the Ruins you have the unique opportunity to change your selection of Allies and Retainers, and then venture into the Ruins again without using an extra season. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

The entrance of the Ruins of Khaz'Gorath is blocked by a huge stone slab. Time and weather have worn a crack in the sealed entrance, but as you push your way through the ruinous rock crack, your knowledge of stonework tells you that this handiwork was done from the inside. For some reason, the former inhabitants of Khaz'Gorath sealed themselves off from the outside world as their last act.

Once inside, you stand in nearly pure darkness. Torches are passed around and lit, casting a dim circle of light out to about fifty feet. As you wander around the hall, you see engravings done on the walls. They are dim and faded with time, but they seem to show dwarves battling with and killing each other. Beneath one engraving you see these words carved:

Dwarven folly crafted doom
In the halls of Khaz'Gorath
Man and child, dwarf and dwarf,
At dwarven hands did die.

A sound of slow, heavy breathing creeps up on your awareness, coming from behind you. You slowly turn around, and find yourself face to face with a massive, lumbering CAVE BEAR. The bear lets out a

thunderous roar, nearly shaking down the walls of the cavern, and lunges to attack!

You must fight for your life!

For each Ally or Dwarf Retainer with you, gain +1 to your Skill and Strength for this fight, up to a maximum of +5 due to the close quarters.

CAVE BEAR Skill 11 Strength 9

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, turn to Chapter 31.

Chapter 43

Just as the festivities reach full swing (with some of the older dwarves even dancing on the tables) a great knocking on the hall doors rings out. The music falters, and the doors are thrown open.

In strides a broad-shouldered dwarf warrior in full armor, followed by a column of strong, thick dwarf warriors armed and armored to the teeth. At first, you tense up, but there are smiles on the faces of the strange dwarves. Looking over the warriors, you quickly count eighty strong, and you pray that this does not turn violent.

The one in the lead marches up the hall to look you frankly in the eye, grinning, and says, "Ah, so you are the young king who tweaked the nose of my pompous cousin, Nagash."

You rise and ask, "And who is it that asks?"

The warrior bends the knee and says, "Forgive me, I am Garash. I am a war-commander out of Zhadagh-dun. With increased sightings of goblins in our lands, there has been talk of forming an alliance with you. The old King, my great-uncle, is aging and more cautious than wise, but when I came to him and asked directly to lead my column to join you against the goblins, he consented."

"Why did you do this?" you ask, genuinely curious.

He grins at you again, "My cousin is a pompous ass, and he has been a thorn in my side since we were children. When I saw the look on his face as he returned from Pêledgathol, I knew I owed somebody a favor!

"Besides, my men want to kill goblins, not hide behind walls. We are here to join you in battle!" He stands, addressing the last phrase to the crowd, which brings out a round of cheers from your own people. The dwarves of Pêledgathol quickly move aside to make room for the newcomers, offering them food and drink and seats.

You settle back into your seat with a smile and watch the dwarves, new and old, slap each other on the backs and swap drinks, stories, and laughter. Eighty more warriors to fight Goza with could mean the difference between life and death.

Add Garash Hammerfist to your Character Sheet as an Ally and add 80 Dwarf Warriors to your Character Sheet as Retainers. Then turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 44

“They attacked at night, but the General was expecting them,” one of the scouts says. Another continues, “They came in the darkness, like monsters, carrying fire and blades. We were as ready as we could be, but they still killed so many...”

You bark, “Straighten up, men! Tell me what happened!”

Slowly, the story comes out. It seems that the goblin war party found the Outpost and attacked, but your General had predicted the attack and set up a fiendishly clever set of defenses. When the goblins attacked, they took heavy casualties.

There were enough of them that they kept coming, however. It came down to a pitched battle in the streets of the Outpost, but in the end, stalwart dwarven tenacity carried the day. Trapped inside the walls of the Outpost, the goblin war party was slaughtered, almost to the last man.

These three men are advance messengers, and the rest of the Warriors and Commoners evacuated from the Outpost, along with their supplies, are not far behind.

The victory was not without casualties, however.

20 Dwarf Warriors were killed in the fighting, and must be crossed off your Character Sheet. Everyone else returns safely, along with the supplies from the Outpost. Gain 5 Battle Points to reflect the damage done to the goblin army, and the influx of reserve supplies from the Outpost.

Turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 45

Ripping open the letter you hold, you see a report in the hand of your commander at Niburziman. You read, “Yestereve we saw preparations stirring among the goblin forces. I set double watch, and so we wouldn’t be surprised. Just as the second watch started, me men came to get me. ‘Ye must see it yerself, to believe it,’ they said.

“So I followed ‘em, and there on the hillside, in plain sight ‘cept for the dark, was a great big wagon filled with barrels. Now me, I had no idea what them barrels were for. We shot some arraws at ‘em, but they jes’ stuck in the wood. Then that wagon started rollin’ downhill, straight at us.

“If I’d a known then what I know now, I’d a fled for me life. That wagon hit the wall and created the biggest fire I ever seen. Knocked them walls right down.

“Me and some of the boys, we’ll hold ‘em here as long as we can. We’ve already lost the inner bailey. We’re fightin’ to hold the walls. This’ll be the last messenger I’m like to send. Hot on his heels, you’ll have a real goblin army.

“I’m sorry m’lord. I’ve failed you. By the time you read this, I’ll have paid the price in blood, and met me judgement with the ancestors.”

All forces you had stationed at Niburziman are lost. You must cross them off your Character Sheet. Then turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 46

Fighting back a sense of unease that makes your skin crawl, you step through the dark opening. Stairs narrow and steep extend into the darkness beneath you, and you slowly work your way down them. Despite the thick darkness that seems to press in on you, you imagine a persistent feeling of being watched. A faint scent of brimstone rises from the darkness beneath you.

Narrow tunnels branch off from the main staircase in either direction, twisting and turning back on themselves to rejoin the staircase. From somewhere in the depths, you seem to hear a scraping sound. The sound persists as you move, giving you an eerie sense of being followed.

When the scraping turns to a sharp clicking sound, startlingly close, you whirl, your heart beating quickly, but there is nothing to see. Then you hear a long, drawn out hiss of something from another direction.

Suddenly, a blast of fire erupts down one hall! If you have Dwarf Warriors with you, two of them get caught in the blast and are instantly incinerated.

You give a shout to rally your men and dart to one side, diving into a chamber large enough to give you a chance to see what's coming at you. Carven images line the walls, the light of your torches on them casting long shadows that reach across the room. Your men pile in after you, trying to look everywhere at once.

Another blast of fire causes you to dive to one wall. When you sit up, you see the long, wicked snout of a FIRE WORM entering the chamber. It hisses, and opens its toothy maw to release another blast of fire.

You must fight for your life!

Two Dwarf Warriors have been killed already. If you have at least that many with you, then remove 2 Dwarf Warriors from your Character Sheet.

For each Ally or Dwarf Warrior you have with you (after removing the two dead Dwarf Warriors) gives you +1 to Strength and Skill, up to a maximum of +10, due to the cramped quarters. For every point of Strength you lose after the first 2, you lose one of the people helping you. Be sure to keep track of the casualties as the fight goes along.

FIRE WORM	Skill	14	Strength	9
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If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, turn to Chapter 73.

Chapter 47

"We have materials..." you say, "but our Master Crafts Dwarf did not survive the crossing. What you propose is tantamount to outright theft. But we may have no choice."

The door to your conference chamber suddenly bursts open, and Tiren the Apprentice Crafts Dwarf rushes in. You rise, demanding, "What is the meaning of this?"

Tiren throws herself at your feet and says, "Sire, please, let me be the new Master Crafts Dwarf. You know that I have the skill." She waits, quivering with anticipation.

Nagash storms to his feet, saying, "This is an outrage! Not only would you appoint a female, but this child was eavesdropping upon us!"

Tiren's cheeks brighten, and you know he was correct. Yet there is something that impresses you in the girl. She may be not much more than a child, but neither are you, and anyone with this much passion and dedication should not be squandered.

"Nagash, I thank you for your generous offer," you say, coming around the table. You extend your hand to Tiren and continue, "but I believe we have materials enough for our new Master Crafts Dwarf to create the weapons and armor that we need."

Nagash splutters, "How dare you? You would appoint a *woman* to the position of Master Crafts Dwarf,

rather than trade with your neighbors!? I will see to it that Zhadagh-dum hears of your insolence.”

Nagash storms out, and you and Tiren share a look, and both burst into laughter at exactly the same moment.

You may add the keyword *snubbed*, the keyword *masterwork*, and the resource **Arms** to your Character Sheet, then turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 48

You can see the ghostly shapes of more spiders moving through the trees, and you realize that you are out of time. You call an order to rally your dwarves. Together, you hurry away from the clearing, those who can walk carrying those who can't.

The spiders that emerge from the trees gather together around the few struggling cocoons you left behind, rather than chasing you. You feel a wince of sympathetic pain for the humans, but there is nothing you could have done. For now, you focus on what you can do, which is to get your own people home safely.

Back at the logging camp, the wounded are cared for. Trees are cleared in a wide space around the camp, and torches placed to warn of impending danger. From now on, work proceeds only in the daytime.

With no more attack from the spiders, your people are soon back at work. It is not long before your presence is no longer needed here.

While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of available Dwarf Commoners.

Turn to Chapter 70 to return to Pêledgathol.

Chapter 49

The bobbing lights move ahead of you, quickly enough to always be just out of reach, but slowly enough that you can easily follow. Sometimes, as you look ahead at them, you seem to make out a figure between the light, perhaps the shape of a young woman. Now a pair of lights are her eyes. Now the lights form the trail of her gown. Now there is nothing but snow and sparkles.

Before you realize it, you find yourself standing in the lee of a great wall. Looking up at the snow that whistles across the surface of it, you realize this is no natural cliff, but a wall made by mortal hands.

The lights guide you around the wall, to a narrow alcove which opens into a sturdy oaken door. Stepping through the door, you find yourself in complete darkness.

As each of the bobbing lights crosses the threshold, it vanishes, and a light flares into being somewhere in the room, illuminating a row of hideous and terrifying statues that line the walls. This light becomes a torch held in the hand of tall goddess. This light becomes a pale flame in the mouth of a god with a frog-like face and long tusks. A pair of lights illuminate the eyes in the face of a grinning demon.

But the statues do not move or threaten you, and one by one, the dwarves filter in out of the cold. Bedrolls come out and secret stashes of food and ale are produced. A low, peaceful murmur goes up among your people, but by some unspoken agreement, no voices are raised.

You find yourself drifting toward the far end of the room, a scone shrouded in darkness, examining the statues as you go. As you get toward the darkened end of the room, you make out in the shadows a great, white slab of pure stone. Stepping closer, you see that there are carvings upon it.

“An ancient tongue, I almost didn't recognize it,” says a voice that is both familiar and unknown. You

look over sharply to see Old Mag, the Runesmith, for once without a drink in his hand. He heaves a sigh with something like nostalgia, and runs his fat, wrinkled fingers over the runes, reading them by touch as much as by sight.

“And so it was, that on the thirteenth day of the fast, Devra, the God of Flame and Passion, came in upon his wife Isiera and her brother, and he mistooketh their deeds for something they were not. Despite her cries, he ripped the silver rings from her arms, which were holy to her, and threw them into the depths of the earth, whereupon he bound her in gold, and sucked the heat and life from her veins, and chained her where the earth would never forget her sins...”

You hardly recognize Mag’s voice as he reads. When the familiarity strikes you, you realize that this is the voice you heard as a child, the intonations that read of the Family Book to you and your kin. He has not spoken in such clear tones since those days, in your memory.

And he does no more. His voice breaks off in a cough followed by inaudible murmurings. He speaks up, his voice old and thick, long enough to mutter, “Old myths... that’s all... Mm, they say she is the Goddess of Lost Causes... very appropriate, don’t you think?” and with that, he wanders off.

You take the opportunity to get some sleep while you have the shelter. In the morning, you awaken more rested than you have felt in days. The dwarves quickly pack up and whisper their thanks to the spirits of this place. You wonder if it may be appropriate to leave an offering of thanks of some sort.

If you have the resource Treasure and would like to leave an offering of a pair of golden candle holders for votive candles, write down the keyword *candle*.

If you have the resource Treasure and would like to leave an offering of a silver bracelet, write down the keyword *ring*.

If you have the resources Food and would like to leave an offering of an untouched meal for the spirits, write down the keyword *sustenance*.

If you leave no offering, write down the keyword, *aloof*.

Then turn to Chapter 17.

Chapter 50

Old Mag steps forward with a sigh and spends a few minutes examining the runes. He mutters and curses as he goes, but to your eye, his fingers seem to come to life with his work. They fly over the silvery runes, touching here, feeling a shape there, and tapping the stone whenever he takes a moment to think.

After about twenty minutes of this, interspersed with heavy sighs of frustration whenever he gets stuck and mumbled complaints about not having a drink, he turns to you and pronounces, “It’s a warding. Either made to hold something in or to hold something out. Can’t be sure.”

He thinks for a moment, stroking his beard, and then adds, “I can take it down for you if you’d like, but I’d think careful before you do that. This was no mean work. This took time and effort, and whoever did it put it there for a reason.”

If you would like to open the Runedoor, turn to Chapter 59.

If you would like to return up to the Main Hall, turn to Chapter 53.

Chapter 51

You growl, “Get our people across, those who have strength will hold the rear.”

A young dwarf pushes her way out of the crowd. Tiren, the apprentice craftsdwarf, falls to her knee before you and says, “Sire, let me cross first. I know wood as well as I know stone; I will be able to tell you if it is safe.”

You examine her. A female craftsdwarf is not common among the Khazâd; Ingildun broke all conventions when he accepted her as an apprentice. Before you, you see a young dwarf quivering with her devotion as she waits for your word.

You give a sharp nod. Tiren smiles and fairly leaps toward the bridge, while you turn your attention to organizing the defense. The goblins are nearly upon you now. They are close enough for you to make out their beady eyes and mocking grins.

Tiren rushes across the bridge, marking the safe planks with white chalk and kicking loose the unstable ones. Depressingly few planks are left as she passes, but there is no choice; you shout for the commoners to start crossing.

The goblins hit you like a wave of rage, blades and spikes flashing. Your few dwarven defenders scream their defiance and fight while your refugees swarm across the bridge.

A boss emerges from behind the first lines of the charge, a moss-skinned brute rippling with muscle. The fighting naturally parts to let you and he face each other.

If you can kill this goblin, you know the morale of the others will break. You spin your axe, your world narrowing to just you and the monster. The massive goblin rolls his eyes and wags his tongue, cackling. Suddenly he lunges, faster than his size.

You must fight for your life!

GOBLIN WAR BOSS

Skill 7

Strength 5

If you win, turn to Chapter 87.

If you lose, turn to Chapter 77.

Chapter 52

A group of warriors approaches you, concern in their eyes. One of them clears his throat and says, “Sire... it’s about our equipment. There are more dwarves willing to fight than there are weapons to go around. We need new arms and armor.”

You accept their offer of a tour of the armory, and you can see at a glance that they are correct. For a fortress of war, it is pitifully equipped. A few rusty halberds and a handful of crossbow bolts are all that remains in the large, empty room.

Nagash, the ambassador from Zhadagh-dum, hears of your situation and comes to speak with you, “We could make a trade, you and I. Zhadagh-dum has enough supplies to equip your entire army and more.”

“But at what price?” you growl.

“Tales are told of the great treasure you brought with you from the north. I realize your heirlooms may have... sentimental value, but they will not protect you from goblin blades.”

Your throat siezes up--to even suggest that you would give up your ancestral Treasure!

Nagash leans in closer and says, “I should not tell you this, but such a trade, amenable to both parties, would speak volumes about you to our King. I can promise nothing... yet, but I would be sure to put in a good word for your cause with my people, should we come to an agreement here.”

If you have Ingildun, the Master Craftsdwarf, and you have Ore, turn to Chapter 15.

If you have Ore, and you have Tiren, the Apprentice Craftsdwarf, and you would like to promote her to Master Craftsdwarf, even though this may insult Nagash, who believes the role of Master Craftsdwarf should be held by a male, according to tradition, then turn to Chapter 47.

If you have Treasure, and would like to trade it to Zhadagh-dum for Arms, turn to Chapter 80.

If you have none of the above, then turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 53

You come into a great hall with vaulted ceilings and delicate engravings on every wall. Mouldering tables run along the length of either side of the great hall, now lying in the dust of their own ruin. At the far end stands a mighty throne, now empty and coated with a thick layer of dust.

Wandering around the room, you can see a series of engravings. Each seems to show some important moment in the history of the fortress. The crowning of a king, the marching of armies, the crafting of great treasures. Many of the engravings are too smudged and damaged by... what appears to be the scars of war, gashes from blades and pits from impacts, to make them out clearly.

Behind the throne room, you find a mechanism you are familiar with. Disguised as a decorative torch sconce, it is actually the handle to a secret door. There was one just like it behind your father's own throne, back at home. If the function is the same, that will be the secret vault of the treasure room.

In addition to the secret door, you find two other exits that are still intact. One goes off to the left, the other to the right.

If you go through the door to the left, turn to Chapter 56.

If you go through the door to the right, turn to Chapter 84.

If you open the secret door, turn to Chapter 65.

If you are finished exploring the Ruins and ready to leave, turn to Chapter 25.

Chapter 54

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. In order to Rebuild the Horns, you will need to bring at least 50 Dwarf Commoners as laborers, and at least 20 Dwarf Warriors to hold it once it's rebuilt. If you cannot provide these numbers, then return to the Chapter you came from and pick a different path. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

Niburziman. The ancient towers that guard the southern end of the only pass through the Zirikzimân. They were built in a different era, when the Khazâd needed to hold that pass against foes to the south.

You reach the towers at dusk, and stand for a moment, looking at the Horns. They are tall and glowering against the velvet sky, but underneath the ruin, you can see the strength of the ancient fortress. Last time you were here, it was as a refugee. Now, you return with men and supplies. The ancient stronghold will serve the Khazâd once more.

You work long days without rest, heaving stone with the laborers, poring over blueprints with the engineers, and taking your turn standing watch with the warriors. A scouting party of goblins appears up in the pass at one point, but when they see dwarves standing on the battlements of Niburziman, they quickly flee back the direction they came.

When you return to Pêledgathol, there is still much superficial work to be done, but you leave behind a

sturdy, well-manned fortress. You and yours can rest easier, knowing the pass is closed to goblin-kind.

20 Dwarf Warriors remain at the Horns and will be unavailable for other missions. Any Warriors beyond that return with you. While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of Dwarf Commoners available to Pêledgathol.

Add the keyword *vanguard* to your Character Sheet and turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 55

The fortress holds out for seven days and seven nights without respite, while goblins pound at the gates hour after hour, night after night, day after day. The dwarves grow weary, but fight on. The goblins die in droves.

At last, you see their numbers shrinking. You take some grim satisfaction in the knowledge that, even should you die here, you have slashed the armies that Goza has under his command. There is no way he will be able to replace the sheer number of bodies that lie before Pêledgathol.

On the eve of the seventh night, Goza himself emerges. He slams his weapon into the earth, howling like a barbarian, and prepares to take the battlefield. His goblins whip themselves into a renewed frenzy and throw themselves at your ramparts. In the press of their attack, none of your defenders has time to do anything about the battering rams you see approaching.

Slam. Slam. Slam. Crash. Splinters of wood and bent bits of iron fly from the gates of the fortress. Dwarves scatter. The goblins tear the remains of the gates to pieces and scream through the opening, howling as though possessed.

A red spear banner enters next, and then a tall brute rippling with muscle and agile as a cat. It is GOZA THE GOBLIN.

He cuts down your defenders, slashing his way into the heart of Pêledgathol. You know there are none to stop him but yourself. Tightening the straps on the armor of your ancestors, and taking up a massive warhammer, you step out and shout your challenge, "Goza! I am the King of Pêledgathol, and this is my land. You have wronged my family and hurt my people. If you take another step forward, you will die!"

In the thunder of your voice, the yard immediately clears of all except you and Goza. The great goblin grins and howls his response. He spins his spear and stalks forward, his eyes bright with anticipation.

You must fight for your life!

The last week of warfare has increased your skill and experience. On top of that, you are equipped with the very best arms and armor that your fortress can provide. As a result add +2 to both Strength and Skill for this fight. If you have the keyword *masterwork*, then you may add an additional +1 to both Strength and Skill to represent the consummate craftsdwarfship which has gone into your equipment.

GOZA THE GOBLIN Skill 8 Strength 7

If you lose, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, turn to Chapter 100.

Chapter 56

You explore down the passageway, looking into sitting rooms, gallery chambers, and smaller dining halls. You see one room that looks like a barracks, with many rotting bedspreads laid out on the remains of wooden beds.

Adjoining the old barracks you find a door leading to an Armory. The door itself seems built for security, sturdy and thick, but it has been split open by violence. Inside, the Armory is filled with weapon racks. Many of the racks are empty, but many are not.

You go through the room, hefting and examining weapons, but you quickly determine that those whose wood has not rotted or leather has not split, have suffered from rust and corrosion. None of these weapons will be of any use.

Before you leave, you catch an engraving on a near wall. This is smaller than most, and seems to have been added almost as an afterthought. In it, you see several dwarves battling over a single item. Two of them wrestle for it, while a third sneaks up on them, bearing an axe. Whatever the item cannot be distinguished. That part of the image has been scratched out, as if with great hatred.

Chilled, you leave the empty room and return to the Main Hall.

Turn to Chapter 53.

Chapter 57

You lead the woman back into the camp and get her some food and a seat next the fire. The family of the children who found her agrees to take her in, and they set up an extra bedroll for her in their tent.

In the middle of the night, you are wakened by screams. The kind of scream of raw terror and pain that cannot be faked. You burst from your tent as quickly as can move, to find the camp in a tumult.

The screams are coming from the tent where the human woman stayed.

As you watch, a terrible movement rips through the tent wall, throwing aside the canvas. Some *thing* emerges from the tent and falls upon some of the nearby commoners watching in horror. Blood sprays and bodies fall.

You shout, rallying the warriors who are sleepily emerging, weapons gripped in white-knuckled fingers. The beast turns and looks right at you, its eyes gleaming. It bares its teeth, and you can see the fine, white hair that coats its body, and the long, thin claws of its hands, now black with blood.

The creature leaps away before your warriors can surround it, leaving the dead behind.

As you slowly and sadly clean up the damage, you find that many are wounded, and several dead. Of the original family that took her in, none survived. But among their corpses you find something strange: the empty skin of a human female, now discarded and lifeless.

"A Snow Beast," Bêrek says, when he sees the skin, "they wear the skins of their victims, and use them to get in close for the kill. I should have been more careful. I should have warned you."

No one will be able to get more sleep this night, so the refugees gather up their things and begin the long trek anew in the pre-dawn light.

Roll 2d6 to determine how many people the Snow Beast killed. Remove that number of Dwarf Commoners from your Character Sheet. Then turn to Chapter 39.

Chapter 58

You are inspecting the forges when a breathless scout finds you. He salutes stiffly and hands you a map, saying, "Goblins, Sire. A whole war party of them."

"Where?" you ask, unfolding the map in the red light of the forges.

The scout describes the location, and you know that it is moving dangerously close to your Outpost, which has not yet been evacuated. If that war party finds your Outpost, the results could be disastrous...

If you have the keyword *cleared*, turn to Chapter 81.

If you do not, turn to Chapter 71.

Chapter 59

Old Mag mutters and mumbles incantations for a bit. Finally he pulls out his small, silver chisel and begins to carve the answering runes to the question posed by the door, periodically stopping to sprinkle silver dust on the runes he has carved in order to seal them. Each time he does so, you can feel a quiet movement of magical power.

At last, he stands up from his work and regards it for a long moment. Then he dips his hand into his pouch, grabs a handful of the powder, and tosses it across the final rune he carved, shouting a runeword as he does so.

A glow of silver power goes through the door, and you hear the music of your ancestors in the narrow hall as the magic is released. The great doors open slowly, grinding against the stone to either side of them.

When the magic fades, so does the light, leaving the narrow hall in darkness except for your torches. You step carefully into the room, your torch illuminating a pedestal up ahead. Upon the pedestal you see something encased in glass. It seems to be a large, well-built warhammer.

Old Mag touches the pedestal and mutters a word, and with a flicker of magical power runes light up all along the pedestal and across the walls of this room. In the center of the room is the warhammer, at the apex of all of the runic magic.

Mag gasps and mutters, "The Hammer of Thiran'dul? Can it be?"

Your breath catches as you step forward. The Hammer of Thiran'dul is a legend among your people, an ancient artifact thought lost to time. The glass parts almost of its own will as you reach for the hammer, and when your fingers close about the hilt, a joyous singing seems to thrum through you.

You may take the Hammer of Thiran'dul if you wish. If you do so, mark it down on your Character Sheet. Otherwise, Old Mag will seal the room again for you before you go.

Once you are done, turn to Chapter 25 to leave the Ruins.

Chapter 60

You reach your beleaguered fortress in just two days, and find a host of goblin warriors camped outside the gates. Torches burn through the night, and the goblins chant and sing, carried away with bloodlust while they wait for the fortress to fall.

"An advance expedition," you explain to your men, "not a full war party. But our position is given away now. We can expect a full invasion within a year."

Returning from your scouting position, you plan the attack with your men. There are many of them, and few of you, but the element of surprise could count for much. You bide your time until the early hours of morning, before dawn, when even the goblins are sleeping.

A dozen dwarven torches go up all at once, and a great cry trumpets through the stillness of the night, "*Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-menu!*" With that battlecry, your dwarves thunder down the hillside among the sleeping goblins, laying about you right and left, killing the evil little vermin while they sleep.

A roar of excitement goes up from inside the fortress, and all the fighting dwarves inside pour out to join in the mayhem, led by a spearhead of your strongest and most experienced Warriors. They fall fiercely upon the startled and sleeping goblins, and soon the backbone of the goblin assault is broken.

Chasing away the last goblin survivors, you look around to see a satisfying number of the creatures dead and dying around you. The men who held the fortress greet you with open arms and roars of triumph. Together you return, singing, into the fortress.

After taking a few days to clean the stains of war from the gates of Pêledgathol, you send the builders

back to the Mining Outpost to continue their work. For you, there are other duties that call.

While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of available Dwarf Commoners.

Add the keyword *stone* to your Character Sheet and turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 61

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

You know of Zhadagh-dum only by reputation, but the lore of the Khazâd includes stories and songs meant to guide the Khazâd from one stronghold to another, even to places that they have never been before. You follow the hints left in songs to find your way to Zhadagh-dum, musing as you travel on what songs will be sung of Pêledgathol in ages hence, and whether your new home will still be there in a thousand years for Khazâd of that time to sing their way to.

The gifts you brought are presented before the King of Zhadagh-dum, and he smiles upon the wealth of your forefathers. Selecting a few choice items to keep in recompense, he gifts you three wagons laden with food, seeds, and stock to begin a new life.

You are feasted and entertained to a lavish scale, but in the questions and conversations with these dwarves, you sense caution as well as hope. It seems that you are not the only refugee who has come to the gates of Zhadagh-dum. The great and ancient dwarven holdings of Kigeth'arad and Bodeghakell have also fallen, and refugees swarm across the mountains, mostly starving and dying.

They have made a practice of turning away all comers, but you came not asking for alms, but prepared to purchase what you need. And there are many who seem cheered that in this time of darkness, and of Khazâd-holds falling, there is yet one new stronghold being founded.

With promises of mutual friendship and defense, you depart to journey back toward your own lands.

Add Food to your character sheet. There is no need to remove Treasure, as the wealth of your house was great, and you only had to use a few items from your store of heirlooms to pay for the Food. You journey back to Pêledgathol, where your people, near to starving, meet you with great joy. Turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 62

Raising your voice, you call to gather the attention of your people. Some of the warriors take up your cry, repeating it through the host until all eyes and ears are turned to you. Even the lights pause, bobbing gently in the snowfall and seeming to watch you.

"Come back!" you cry, "We cannot trust this sorcery of the mountains. To me! We will find our own way!"

For a moment, you do not know if they will listen. The younger dwarves already seem spellbound. But then Tiren, the apprentice Crafts dwarf, shifts her weight toward you. When she takes a step, the tide breaks in your favor, and soon all the dwarves reluctantly, but obediently, gather to your call. Some of them glower in annoyance, while others shake their heads as if to wake up.

The lights slowly fade into the darkness and snow behind you, until at one point you look back, and they can no longer be seen. You can't help but feel a little sad as the dark closes around you again.

The going is slow and painful. At one point Bêrek himself stumbles, and another dwarf must catch him to keep him from tumbling into a crevasse. Your people huddle against the cold while the scouts try to find the next path.

Your eye happens to fall on Old Mag, the Runesmith, in the tendrils of light that reach from the scouts torches. He doesn't seem to notice that the host has stopped, and his slow, shuffling steps plod along--into the darkness, away from the huddled Khazâd.

You know that this is wrong, but your brain tiredly refuses to act. Before you can react, the sodden old Runesmith gives a startled little yelp--and is gone.

Your mind jerks back to consciousness and you curse yourself for your dumbness. You cry "Mag! Mag!" and hurry toward the spot where he disappeared, shoving your way past other dwarves.

Somehow Bêrek is there, grabbing your arm. His voice presses insistently against your ear, saying, "He's gone, Sire. You can't help him. And if you go any further, you may follow him. See those crusts beneath the snow? That means ice, my lord. Snow has gathered on the ice shelf, but if you walk out on it, it won't support your weight. Let him go. Come with me."

Struggling with feeble rage, you allow yourself to be led back to the relative safety of the other dwarves. He's gone. No one comments on the tears frozen on your cheeks.

The snow has turned to a light, wispy fall, and somehow it is decided that you will go no further tonight. The dwarves huddle together, with the hardiest on the outside, and prepare to wait out the night.

As you fade into the sleep of exhaustion, the last thought that drifts through your mind is that not all of your people will survive the night.

Cross Old Mag the Runesmith off your character sheet.

Lose 20 Dwarf Commoners to the cold and exposure.

Lose 10 of the Wounded Dwarf Warriors to cold and exposure, if you have any left.

Then turn to Chapter 17.

Chapter 63

As you watch the strange dwarf ride away on his pony, you feel a pang of longing for the warmth of a home and hearth. The cold of the Zirikzimân has taken its toll on all of you. But there is no home to return to. There is only one direction for you and your people.

You return to your camp and sleep. First thing in the morning, you gather your advisors around you, saying, "The crossing has been hard, but this is no time for rest. We must do what the Khazâd have always done: we build. We will build a new home. We will build... Pêledgathol."

"The Last Fortress," Bêrek nods.

"Pêledgathol," some of the dwarves around you repeat the name, murmuring their approval.

Bêrek slides a crude map onto the table and says, "We don't know much about the area, but we have a few options. We can settle in a defensible location high in the mountains, or settle in the hills along the river, where resources will be more plentiful, but where we will be more exposed."

"What about Khaz-Gorath?" another dwarf asks, approaching. He is a grizzled man of older years.

Bêrek frowns slowly, "No dwarf has set foot in the Ruins of Khaz-Gorath in a generation. There may be valuables remaining there, but we have no idea of the dangers we would face."

All eyes turn to you.

If you choose to found your new holding in a defensible location, higher in the mountains, mark down the keyword *stone* and turn to Chapter 91.

If you choose to found your new holding closer to the resources of the lowlands, mark down the keyword *trout* and turn to Chapter 91. (Yes, Chapter 91--the difference is the keyword.)

If you will attempt to reclaim the Ruins of Khaz-Gorath, mark down the keyword *settlers* and turn to Chapter 36.

Chapter 64

As you watch the narrow bridge swaying in the wind, a shudder of revulsion goes through you. “We’ll take our chances with the goblins. March on!” you order, and the refugees put on what speed they can.

The goblin war party breaks ranks and charges, trying to reach you more quickly, but the measured march of the dwarves proves more swift than they realized, and they fall short of your position. It takes their boss some time to rally them again, and by then you have gained ground. The distant edge of the chasm gets closer with every step.

Then, with a sinking feeling in your heart, you see another goblin war party approaching from a different direction--moving to head you off.

“Sire...” Bêrek comes up beside you.

“I know,” you growl, looking at the two armies approaching, and the chasm at your backs. There’s no way you can handle both armies, but it will be impossible to reach the far side of the chasm before they get to you.

If you form up in defensive position to stand and fight, turn to Chapter 93.

If you give the order to keep moving, no matter what, turn to Chapter 76.

Chapter 65

You slip around the massive throne and place your hand gingerly on what you suspect to be the handle of a secret door. Pulling with all your strength, you hear a grinding as the ancient mechanism activates. A slit appears between two sections of the wall, and then the nearer wall segment slides back and inward with a surprisingly smooth motion.

You step into a room that was clearly once a treasure room, but is now barren and empty. A few forgotten coins lay scattered on the ground, and a massive rip in the far wall opens into darkness. It looks as if some terrible force tore through the wall by main strength, but stepping closer, you can see rough-hewn stairs leading down from the opening.

Above the dark hole, words are chiselled in a shaking hand, “Do not go down!”

A chill goes through you, and you wonder if it wouldn’t be wiser to just wall off this opening. Just then, one of your men calls, “Sire, I think I see something!” He points at an engraving on one wall. It shows several figures placing objects of great value into a hole in the ground beneath a large blockish object. The soldier points at the block above the stash and says, “This shape... sir, don’t it look like an anvil?”

You look and nod slowly. Yes, as far as you can tell, this engraving seems to indicate that some of the treasure that was once stored here is hidden beneath an anvil. Add the keyword *blazoned* to your Character Sheet.

If you go through the rip, down into the darkness, turn to Chapter 46.

If you return to the Main Hall, turn to Chapter 53.

Chapter 66

Deciding you would rather face cold steel than face Taragzimân’s rage in the dead of winter, you give the order to descend to the Kepak Gabilbatâk. This is the only pass through the great mountain range of the Zirakzimân, and you know the goblins would not have any trouble with the low lands of the pass.

They may be waiting at any turn.

The electricity of the oncoming storm seems to affect your people. A nervous energy runs through them, tension mounting as the storm grows closer.

Just as a crack of thunder strikes and a torrent of rain slashes the sky, a cry comes up from one of the scouts. A line of goblins on a nearby hillside is making a steady march in your direction, unslowed by the rain. Even through the distance and pelting rainfall, you can see the bright gleam of their eyes and blades.

It is a full goblin war party. With only a handful of trained soldiers, you cannot hope to defeat them in a pitched battle.

“Keep marching!” you cry, leading your people into a full march away from the goblins. You slowly gain ground on them, until Bêrek comes up beside you to say, “Sire, remember the Rent is ahead.”

The Rent--a chasm ripped to the bowels of the earth by a terrible earthquake during your grandfather’s reign. As you crest a hill you can see it before you, deep and menacing. The only way around would be a mile out of your way; the goblins could easily catch up with you by then.

“Didn’t human traders build a bridge across it at one point?”

“About a hundred years ago,” Bêrek growls. You round a corner and it comes into view: a long, rickety bridge swaying in the wind. Just then, a fierce blast from the storm rises, shaking the bridge like a child’s toy.

As you watch, a plank of rotted wood breaks loose and tumbles into the chasm. To your left, the Rent extends out of sight. Behind you, the goblin war party gains ground quickly.

If you will risk a crossing of the narrow bridge, turn to Chapter 51.

If you would rather risk the the extra time it takes to go around the Rent, turn to Chapter 64.

If you choose to stand and fight here, turn to Chapter 93.

Chapter 67

Just as you are finishing up your afternoon meal, you hear a commotion from the gates. Two dwarf warriors approach, helping one of your scouts approach you, limp with exhaustion.

The scout falls to his knees, but looks up at you with his eyes burning like brands and says, “Goza. The goblins are on the move.”

Then he collapses.

You sound the call to battle. The fortress turns into a storm of activity as armor is donned and war machines are brought to the ready.

Consulting with your advisors, you determine that if you rebuilt and staffed Niburziman, then that will hold the goblins for now, giving you a little bit more time to prepare. However, if Niburziman remains an empty ruin, the goblins will be here within the week.

Before you do anything else, if you have the keyword *human-friend*, turn to Chapter 86.

If you do not have *human-friend*, but do have the keyword *vanguard*, turn to Chapter 10.

If you have neither keyword, turn to Chapter 72.

Chapter 68

The leaders of the expedition come into your Council Chamber. You see bandages and injuries among them, but despite that they are standing tall, with grins hiding just under their serious military expressions.

The general steps forward and bows before you, saying, “Sire, we came across a column of goblin warriors. Fortunately, our scouts saw them before they saw us. We were able to set up an ambush, and wipe them out to the man.”

“Casualties?” you ask.

“We lost a few good dwarves, but we killed twenty of the enemy for each warrior we lost. After the battle, we were able to locate the place they had been going. The goblins have set up a forward assault camp in the mountains not far from here. They have enough food and weapons stockpiled to support an army. If we can strike it hard, before the reinforcements arrive, we could deal a serious blow to Goza’s army.”

One of your advisors says, “I would approach this intelligence with caution, my Lord. The goblins are not above throwing away a few supplies to lure our forces out into the open. This may be an opportunity, or it may be a trap.”

You nod and ask the General, “What about their scouts?”

He grins and says, “Slain by the dozen.”

You say, “Well done. Once your men are rested, send them back out on patrol. I want to keep any scouts from getting through. But I want you to stay here with me. We’ll need you for the defense of Pêledgathol.”

Add the keyword *cleared* to your Character Sheet, and add 3 Battle Points to represent the advantage gained from having wiped out the enemy’s scouts.

Five Dwarf Warriors were killed during the fighting. Remove them from your Character Sheet. The remainder of the forces sent on this mission will continue this mission, and will remain unavailable for the rest of the game. Make sure to set them apart. However, the General is returned to Pêledgathol, and can be considered available.

You have the option now of mounting an assault on the Forward Base of the goblins. You may assign a General to lead this mission, if you have one available, or lead the mission yourself. If you choose to attack the Forward Base, write down on your orders who will lead the mission and how many warriors you are sending. Then turn to Chapter 88.

If you will not attack the Forward Base, turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 69

Ripping open the letter you hold, you see a report in the hand of your commander at Niburziman. You read, “Yestereve we saw preparations stirring among the goblin forces. I set double watch, and so we wouldn’t be surprised. Just as the second watch started, me men came to get me. ‘Ye must see it yerself, to believe it,’ they said.

“So I followed ‘em, and there on the hillside, in plain sight ‘cept for the dark, was a great big wagon filled with barrels. Now me, I knew right away them barrels must a held black powder. So I loaded up some catapults with fire, and we took some shots.

“That wagon, she starts rollin’ downhill, straight at us. Then Durgath, he gets a lucky shot, hits that wagon right as it goes by a clump o’ goblins. It went up with a fire like to light the night, so loud your ears went silent for a spell. Did some damage to them gobbos too--blew pits and pieces of ‘em as far as us.

“The goblins tried to charge, some war boss made ‘em do it, too stupid to know our walls weren’t breached. They pushed us hard, I gotta admit, but we threw ‘em back till morning. By the time the sun came up, there weren’t no goblins but dead ones within a mile. The rest, all we could see of ‘em was

they're backsides.

"These men did you proud, Lord. I'm coming home with a few men to spare. Them gobbos have learned their lesson about attacking the Khazâd at Niburziman. But we'll leave enough solid warriors to hold the fort in case they come back."

Your men have won a stunning victory at Niburziman! Gain 30 Battle Points to represent the casualties inflicted on the goblin army and the tactical advantage gained by holding the pass. Only 5 Dwarf Warriors were lost and must be crossed off your Character Sheet. 50 Dwarf Warriors must remain at Niburziman, where they will be unavailable. Any remaining soldiers, including your General (if one was present) can return from Niburziman to Pêledgathol, where they will be considered available.

Turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 70

Your work for the moment complete, you walk among the people of Pêledgathol... your people. They toil at their labors, building, expanding and polishing the fortress. Soon it will be a mighty citadel known to all as a stronghold of the *Khazâd*. For now, your people are safe and happy in their labors. You pray to the Seven Gods it will always be so.

This is the end of a Season. Write down on your Character Sheet which season just ended, (If this is your first time coming to Chapter 70, then it is the end of your first Spring, unless you have been told otherwise.)

Before attending to any other duties, you must greet any refugees and stragglers who have come in over the last Season.

If your Fortress is a Shelter, 2d6x5 Commoners arrived as refugees this Season.

If your Fortress is a Fort, 2d6x10 Commoners and 1d6x5 Warriors arrived as refugees.

If your Fortress is a Stronghold, 2d6x20 Commoners and 1d6x10 Warriors arrived as refugees.

If your Fortress is a Hall, 2d6x50 Commoners and 1d6x20 Warriors arrived as refugees.

If your Fortress is a Castle, 2d6x50 Commoners and 1d6x50 Warriors arrived as refugees.

You must roll one or two six-sided dice and multiply the result by the number given. Add the determined amount to your total under Allies and Retainers on your character sheet.

Once you have been introduced to the newcomers, you take one last turn around your castle. The happy ringing and pounding of hammers fills your ears. Nodding in satisfaction, you return to your quarters for a well-earned night's sleep.

If this is the end of your first Spring, turn to Chapter 5

If this is the end of your first Summer, turn to Chapter 3

If this is the end of Autumn, turn to Chapter 52

If this is the end of Winter, turn to Chapter 78

If this is the end of your second Spring, turn to Chapter 67

If this is the end of your second Summer, turn to Chapter 72

Chapter 71

Several anxious days pass with no news. In the absence of anything to occupy your time, you find yourself pacing the walls, watching the horizon in hopes of seeing dwarven figures returning home.

On the eighth day, you do. Three solitary dwarven figures approach from the direction of the Outpost, their steps weary.

“Messengers,” a warrior near you mutters. You nod, and hurry down to the gates to meet them.

When the three dwarves get close enough to see, you can see the exhaustion on their faces. As they reach the gates, they fall to their knees before you and say, “Sire, thank you. It was terrible. An entire war party of goblins stormed the Outpost..”

If you sent a mission to protect the Outpost while it was evacuated, then roll 2d6 and add the General’s Leadership to the result. Also add +1 for every 5 Dwarf Warriors or Human Rangers you sent on the mission.

If the result is 21 or less, or if you did not send a mission to protect the Outpost while it was evacuated, then turn to Chapter 27.

If the result is 22 or greater, then turn to Chapter 44.

Chapter 72

You gather with your advisors in the war chamber, a map of the local area prominent on the table at the center of the room. The best reports indicate that you are out of time--Goza the Goblin is upon you, with all the hordes of the north at his back.

Your advisors faces look grim and worried as they prepare to hear your report.

“We have several objectives,” you begin, pointing to the map, “In addition to the fortress of Pêledgathol itself, we have several other holdings to protect. We may want to consider sending forces to protect our outpost on the surface while we evacuate the civilians, or to hold the Horns.

“In addition to those objectives, if we can spare the manpower we may be able to claim an advantage by sending rangers out to sweep the nearby hills and kill any goblin scouts. Without their eyes and ears, the goblin army will be operating blind. A few of our braver warriors have also suggested a mission to go back across the Zirikzimân and attack the goblin supply lines from the north. However, this is a dangerous mission. We cannot assume any will return in time to report before the battle is done... if at all.”

The advisors break into loud debate, examining the papers you have provided and weighing their options. But you know that, in the end, it will be up to you.

You must now issue orders to your army. There are four possible missions, in addition to defending Pêledgathol. You can only send Warriors on a mission if a General accompanies them on that mission.

Each of the following Allies can serve as a General:

Ghuzdim Halfjaw	Leadership:	2
Jugen the Goblin-Slayer	Leadership:	4
Hamish Longbow	Leadership:	3
Garash Hammerfist	Leadership:	3

The Leadership trait is a measure of how skilled a leader this Ally is. It will be used in determining the results of a mission, and will add Battle Points to the resolution of the final battle.

Assign each available general to one of the following missions, and choose how many Dwarf Warriors you would like to send with them on that mission. There are four available missions:

Range across the nearby lands, killing goblin scouts.

Protect your Outpost while the civilians evacuate to Pêledgathol

Back up your defenses at Niburziman (only if you have the keyword *vanguard*.)

Cross the Zirikzimân to harrass the goblin supply lines from behind. (It is expected that those who undertake this mission will not return.)

You yourself must remain at Pêledgathol with the greater part of your defenses, prepared to fight the final battle at the gates of the Last Fortress.

Write down your assignments. Though some of the warriors you send out may be able to return to Pêledgathol before the final battle, do not neglect the defense of your own fortress.

Add 5 Battle Points to your Character Sheet to represent the strategic planning done by you and your advisors during this council. As you succeed or fail at missions, you will gain or lose Battle Points to indicate how well you are doing in the war against Goza and the goblins.

Once you have all your orders written down, proceed to Chapter 83.

Chapter 73

The Fire Worm explodes into ashes and the smell of rotting corpses when you strike the final blow. Some sort of disgusting, viscous liquid oozes from its corpses, tainting anything which it touches.

As you back quickly away from the smouldering remains, you hear one of your men shout, "Sire, back here!"

Following his voice, you come to a cavernous room piled high with gold, silks, paintings, silverware, in short, all the mundane treasures of Khaz'Gorath. A foul slime has permeated the collection, eating away like acid at the goods. Even the coins themselves are tarnished and pitted. And the smell is horrifying.

One of the men kicks at some of the detritus and snorts, "Useless."

The tunnels down seem to twist and turn indefinitely, and every turn seems to lead deeper and deeper. Just being down here makes your skin crawl, and you can see the same sense of unease on the faces of your men. Or maybe that's just the smell of the Fire Worm's slime.

Turn to Chapter 16 if you wish to keep exploring deeper into the tunnels.

Turn to Chapter 53 if you go back to the stairwell and go back up to the Main Hall.

Chapter 74

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. You must bring at least 30 Dwarf Commoners on this expedition to begin the mines. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

You occupy yourself helping the engineers plan a minecart rail system, and soon the dwarves are merrily mining away in the deeps, with cartload after cartload of ore coming up out of the bones of the mountain. The mood lifts as the dwarves get back to the kind of solid labor that has always formed their livelihood. You may add the resource **Ore** to your Character Sheet.

Only one thing worries the miners, and that's the abundant presence of ogre tracks that have been found in the local area. Time and time again scouts return bearing report to signs of a large community of ogres in this area. But as yet, none have been seen.

If you have the keyword *ogrebane*, turn to Chapter 24.

If you do not have the keyword *ogrebane*, turn to Chapter 79.

Chapter 75

“Goza the Goblin has killed my family, slain my people and thrown down my ancestral fortress. I will not rest until I see him dead.”

Jugen gives you a long stare, then steps forward and kneels before you. He places his hands on his axe and says, “I will fight by your side until the last goblin is dead.”

A cheer goes up from the men all around you. Men from both camps heave to work together, and over the dead bodies of the ogres, you depart the valley. You send some of your own men to accompany Jugen to Pêledgathol, while keeping some of his to bulk your survey crew.

The rest of the survey passes smoothly. With the extra manpower, you are easily able to deal with any further threats. By the time you are done, you have reliable maps of the local region, and the area is a good bit safer for the Khazâd.

Lose 5 Dwarf Warriors who died fighting Ogres.

Add the keyword *ogrebane* to your character sheet for destroying the ogre camp.

Add the keyword *map* to your character sheet for completing your survey.

Add Jugen the Goblin-Slayer to your Allies.

Add 40 Dwarf Warriors who joined with Jugen to your Retainers.

Then turn to Chapter 70 to return to Pêledgathol.

Chapter 76

You push your people harder than ever, watching the approaching goblins grimly. Your people somehow find the endurance to put on even more speed, and for a moment, you think you will break through. Then the goblins break into a charge and slam into the flank of your host.

Though it breaks your heart, you bellow, “Keep moving! To the South! To safety!” The Khazâd scream the dwarven battlecry, “*Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-menu!*” and fight back fiercely against any goblin who comes within reach.

The goblins fall back, but there are many dead and dying dwarves left behind. Mercilessly, you drive your people onward.

At the lip of the Rent, Ghuzdim siezes you and demands to stay behind. You are about to deny it when you catch a look at his pale face. His wound bleeds freely beneath the bandage now. His wheezing breath tells you he cannot run much longer anyway.

With a reluctant nod, you allow Ghuzdim and a few warriors to stay behind and delay the goblins.

It is all that saves your life.

The goblins overwhelm Ghuzdim and the warriors within moments, but it is long enough to let you and the greater part of the host get a head start.

Over the next few days, your flight becomes a nightmare of exhaustion and fear. Moments turn to hours, hours into days. First, belongings are dropped. Then the elderly, the young, and the sick. The goblins show no mercy. Their continuous raids kill your people and weaken your spirit. Still you push on.

Only days later do you look behind you to see that the pursuit has finally stopped. Your people collapse in sheer exhaustion, but after only a few hours you wake them again to keep moving. You have lost everything except your lives. With heavy hearts, your people turn to the south and continue their long march.

Please cross off the following items from your Character Sheet:

the Food,
the Treasure,
all 20 Wounded Dwarf Warriors,
Ghuzdim Halfjaw and all 10 Dwarf Warriors, who died delaying the goblins,
Old Mag the Runesmith and Ingildun the Master Craftsdwarf, both too old to keep up,
and 60 of the Dwarf Commoners, mostly children and the elderly.

Then turn to Chapter 17.

Chapter 77

The goblin boss capers and taunts you as you fight. Time after time he could have killed you, but instead he mocks you, making a fool of you before your own people. Rage makes your eyes go red and you leap at the huge, mad goblin, determined to end his life or be killed.

You see the strike coming, and a raw, animal fear inspires you to lift your shield--just in time. The madman's blow knocks you flat to the earth with stunning power. Dazed, you feel your men drag you from the fight, dwarves throwing themselves between you and the goblin.

Seeing stars, you are barely aware as your men drag you across the bridge. When you reach the other side, your men toss you to the ground and return to the fight. Shaking your head, you struggle to recover your senses.

Looking up, you see that the far side of the bridge has fallen to the goblins. The bridge itself teems with the hideous creatures. They don't even seem to mind shoving each other off in their haste to reach you. Only your last few brave warriors stand between you and the tide, holding this side of the bridge.

As another dwarf warrior falls beneath goblin blades, you hear a scream, and Tiren throws herself at the oncoming goblins. The sheer ferocity of her attack surprises them. The front lines are thrown back, and some of the smaller ones are knocked off the sides. Her eyes wild, Tiren whirls before the goblins can recover themselves and slashes the ropes holding up the bridge.

For a moment, the bridge seems to hang, motionless. Then it begins to fall.

"No!" you scream, reaching helplessly for the apprentice craftsdwarf. But it is too late. She looks back and you catch the whites of her eyes before she vanishes. A chorus of screams rises from the goblins as they fall, with your friend, into the chasm.

"She's gone," you hear Bêrek saying, "We must move." Choking back frustrated tears, you bark orders to your people and assemble a ragged line to march onward. The goblins will be trapped on the other side of the Rent now. You have bought safety, but at a steep price.

You have lost 30 Dwarf Commoners, 5 Dwarf Warriors, and Tiren, the Apprentice Craftsdwarf. Please mark these off your Character Sheet, then turn to Chapter 17.

Chapter 78

On the morning of the one year anniversary since the founding of Pêledgathol, all the people of your fortress gather in the main hall. A great feast is prepared on the long table, with whole roast pigs, simmering stew, and castles made of frosted sugar. Not to mention mead by the barrelful. But before touching the food, all of the dwarves who can fit into the hall stand respectfully to hear your words.

Looking out over the assembled faces of your people, you say, "One year ago, today, we founded this

fortress. We had nothing except what we brought with us across the Zirikzimân. This place was barely more than a hole in the ground. There were those who believed we could not survive. Now, look what we have made!”

You make a sweeping gesture, taking in the table, the food, and the whole fortress. The Khazâd roar in a heartfelt cheer.

“But our work is not done. Our enemy still lives.”

You hold up a sheaf of papers and say, “Reports indicate increased movement of goblin scouts in the passes. They have even been spotted near here. It is only a matter of time before Goza himself leads his armies to besiege our last stronghold.

“Eat, drink and be merry tonight. Tomorrow, our rest ends. War is coming, and we will be ready.”

A thunderous applause goes up from the assembled Khazâd before they take their seats and dig into the feast. You watch for a moment before touching your own choice delights. So many faces here did not come with you across the mountains, yet here they are, placing their fates in your hands.

This fortress, Pêledgathol, really might be the last hope for the Khazâd.

If you have the keyword *snubbed*, turn to Chapter 43.

Otherwise, turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 79

Late one night you stop to listen to worried whispers around the campfire. The miners are speaking of the ogres that live in these hills, with worried voices.

Just then, a cry of alarm goes up from the sentries, “Ogres! Ogre bandits! Flee!”

“Into the mines!” you call, hoping to keep your people from scattering into the night, where they will be easy pickings for the ogres. You stay in the open yourself, organizing your men and calling to the last of them to get them into hiding.

Just as you turn toward the mine entrance yourself, a massive OGRE blocks your way, giving you an evil leer. You must fight for your life!

If you brought any Dwarf Warriors on this expedition, add +2 to your Skill for this battle only, as the nearest warrior leaps to your aid.

OGRE	Skill	5	Strength	8
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If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, turn to Chapter 14.

Chapter 80

Sighing heavily, you say, “I have no choice but to accept. But Pêledgathol will not forget that in our time of sorrows, you demanded all that we have in order to provide us the tools to survive.”

Nagash looks injured, “Please, it is a good bargain. Zhadagh-dum smiths make fine arms.”

“I’m sure they do, but the price you ask is ten times, no, a hundred times the value of any number of weapons.”

“Except in times of war,” Nagash points out cheerfully.

“Except in times of war...” you nod, your voice tired. You say, “I shall give the necessary orders. When

you return here with weapons and armor enough to equip an army, then you shall have your price. And only then.”

Nagash returns within the season, and his end of the bargain is admirably kept. Knowing you must keep yours as well, you surrender the treasure of your people.

You must remove the resource **Treasure** from your Character Sheet (though if you have two Treasures, you need only erase one.) Then add the resource **Arms** to your Character Sheet.

When you are done, turn to Chapter 10.

Chapter 81

Several anxious days pass with no news. In the absence of anything to occupy your time, you find yourself pacing the walls, watching the horizon in hopes of seeing dwarven figures returning home.

On the eighth day, you do. A orderly column of Dwarf Civilians comes, bearing supplies and stockpiles of logs on wagons behind them. They are flanked by alert Dwarf Warrior guardsmen, with crossbows at the ready in case of danger.

You hurry to fling open the gates, and are satisfied to see every face accounted for. One of the leaders approaches you and reports, “All clear, Sir. We heard reports of goblins in the area, but never saw them ourselves. We’ve evacuated the Outpost, and brought a goodly number of supplies with us.”

You breath a sigh of relief, and set about organizing the return of the evacuated civilians to Pêledgathol.

Anyone you had sent on a mission to protect the Outpost while it was evacuated returns safely. You gain 2 Battle Points for the influx of supplies and the boost in morale.

Turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 82

You say nothing, and when Bêrek shakes you a few moments later, you realize you were drifting off again. It’s just so comfortable. He shakes you again. Your eyes jerk open and you stare blankly at your guide for a moment, before remembering what he said and why.

You mutter, “Leave me alone... we’ll rest, gain our strength, then go on...” Or at least, that’s what you meant to say. All that comes out is a low mumble. The cave ranger shakes his head in disgust and lets go of your arm.

You fall back to the floor heavily, hitting your head, but strangely, you’ve never felt so comfortable. Deciding it would be easiest just to stay there, you sigh and settle in for a good long sleep.

It is a sleep from which you will never awaken. The cold steals over your bones, and in years to come, travelers will muse over your frozen corpse.

GAME OVER

Chapter 83

The hours pass slowly, while you are forced to do nothing but wait for reports on action happening far away. A cloud of uneasy tension hangs over Pêledgathol. The guards outside your room hone their axes night and day, until you feel sure you could slice a hair lengthwise on the edges of those blades.

Your people go about their business; bakers bake, children play, and smithies hammer, but it is as if all voices and laughter have been muted. No one seems willing to break the silence, as if they fear that Goza the Goblin could hear them himself from his distant armies.

When the horn blows, announcing the return of some of your warriors, you leap to your feet. It is all you can do to keep from dashing to the gates to hear their reports.

If you sent an expedition ranging into the local area to kill goblin scouts, turn to Chapter 12 to hear their report (if you have not done so already.)

If you have an Outpost, turn to Chapter 58 to hear the report from your men there (regardless of whether you sent a mission to defend it.)

If you have the keyword *vanguard*, turn to Chapter 19 to hear the report from your men at Niburziman (regardless of whether you sent a mission to defend it.)

If you sent a mission north across Zirikzimân to attack the goblin supply lines from behind, then turn to Chapter 40.

If you have heard all the above reports that apply, turn to Chapter 28.

Chapter 84

This hallway seems to lead into the craftsdwarves section of the ruin. You pass workshops for carpentry, weaving and more, but the materials are all rotten and brittle with age.

The room which catches your eye is the Smithy. A massive anvil still stands dominant in the center of the room, almost like an altar. It is surrounded by the tools of the smith's trade, an honored trade among dwarves. Upon the highest wall you see another engraving, this one of a smith drawn larger than life, in heroic proportions, one hand raised with hammer to craft some item both wonderful and terrible.

You trace your fingers along the mighty anvil, feeling the dents where the smiths hammer went to work. Then, carved in faint letters along the side of the anvil, you can make out symbols written in the ancient runic script of the dwarves, secret even to you. Only the Runesmiths who carry the knowledge of your people know that script.

If Old Mag, the Runesmith is with you, and if you also have the keyword *blazoned*, and if you have not turned to Chapter 97 before, then turn to Chapter 97 now.

Otherwise, turn to Chapter 53 to return to the Main Hall.

Chapter 85

Gritting your teeth, you leap forward and begin to cut loose the struggling humans. No sentient creature should be left to this fate. The last human you cut free is a tall man with the look of a skilled ranger. He looks up, trying to clear the poison from his mind to speak. Suddenly his eyes go wide and he shouts, "Look out!"

You dive out of the way of a blast of web that hits just where you were standing! Not looking where you are going, you land hard and slam your head on a rock. You can see the spider rushing you, but you can't make your body move.

The spider's teeth are almost upon you when a sword flashes, lopping one of the beast's legs. The human ranger can barely stand, and the injured spider effortlessly knocks him to the ground. The monster then turns its attention to you, poison dripping from its fangs. You must fight for your life!

INJURED GIANT SPIDER

Skill 7

Strength 1

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, keep reading.

Panting and gasping, you stand over the twitching body of your arachnid foe. The last of the great spiders is dead.

“You didn’t have to help us,” the human ranger says. He stands carefully, wincing with pain.

“Yes, I did,” you growl, cleaning your axe from spider ichor. The human gives you a long look, then nods.

“My name is Hamish Longbow. I live in the village of Elmdale, not far from here. I owe you a life debt, dwarf. If there is ever anything I can do for you, come speak to me.” With that, the human gathers the others of his race, and they limp off in the direction of Elmdale. Add the keyword *human-friend* to your Character Sheet.

You watch him go, then gather your own survivors and wounded, and limp back to your own logging camp. The wounded are bandaged up, and work continues. The night-time attacks cease, and before long, you find that your presence is no longer necessary here.

While some of the Dwarf Commoners you took on this mission remain here to work, they can still be counted toward the total number of available Dwarf Commoners.

Add the resource **Wood** to your Character Sheet, then turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 86

Calling one of your scouts before you, you hand him a letter marked with your own seal. You say, “Take this to the human village of Elmdale. We have friends there, and now is our hour of need.”

The scout nods sharply, and departs with keen eyes and swift feet. You wait without word for almost a week, uncertain if your summons will be heeded or not.

One foggy morning, the horn sounds the approach of strangers. You rise to see tall humans approaching through the mists, bedecked for war. At their head is a familiar face, that of Hamish Longbow, the human ranger who you saved from spiders last year.

His face splits into an easy grin when he sees you, but you can see a warlike tension beneath his relaxed demeanor. He says, “Dwarf, you have called on your debt at last. Although truth be told, we would have come, debt or no. The advance of the goblin hordes could spell doom for Elmdale as well as for Pêledgathol.”

You grip his hand in friendship and show him and his men to their quarters. He has brought twenty stalwart rangers with him from the small human village, and they are at your disposal.

Add Hamish Longbow to your Character Sheet under Allies. Add 20 Human Rangers to your Character Sheet under Retainers. You may give orders to these men as though they were Dwarf Warriors.

Then turn to Chapter 10 if you have the keyword *vanguard*, or Chapter 72 if you do not.

Chapter 87

The giant goblin falls before your axe, the life leaving his long limbs. A cheer goes up among the Khazâd, and your warriors press the attack. The remains of the goblin war party split and break. Before your men can chase them too far, you rein them in with a shouted command, “Hold! To the bridge! The bridge!”

A cry of “The bridge, the bridge!” goes up among the Khazâd warriors, and you and your men beat an orderly retreat across the bridge, following the last of the refugees. The goblins gather on the nearby hilltop and chatter angrily at you, but do not move to follow.

As you reach the far side of the bridge, you see more goblins coming up the pass, a second war party. After a hurried consultation, it is determined that the bridge must be brought down. Tiren nimbly steps a few paces out onto the bridge and cuts the ropes, leaping back to safety before the bridge plummets into the gulf beneath.

The goblins scream in rage, but they cannot reach you. A large boss from the other war party arrives, whipping both groups into some semblance of order, and directs them to start circling the long way around the chasm.

You will not wait for them. Your people line up quickly into a marching pattern and set the kind of pace that Khazâd can keep for days. By the fall of true night, you have left the goblins far behind.

Turn to Chapter 17.

Chapter 88

The Forward Base of the goblin army is almost pitifully undefended. Supplies are piled high, but a bare hundred goblins of all the horde are present to defend them. They must have been counting on secrecy, not power, to protect them from dwarven steel.

The battle horn of the Khazâd sounds the charge, and dwarves pour from the hillsides down into the goblin camp. Screams of battle erupt from all sides.

Roll 2d6 and add the Leadership of the General to the result. Add an additional 1 for every 5 Dwarf Warriors or Human Rangers that came for this mission.

If the result is 15 or lower, turn to Chapter 99.

If the result is 16 or higher, turn to Chapter 26.

Chapter 89

Nodding slowly, you realize that there is nothing your people will gain from having you around that they wouldn't be able to do on their own. Bêrek and the others can guide them as well as you can.

You accept the merchant's offer, and travel with him the last long leagues through the mountains to Zhadagh-Dum, where you are given a prince's welcome. But a prince without a people is no prince at all, and soon your status fades. You are kept and fed, but you have little to occupy your time. You grow bored and restless, and when news finally comes of your people, months later, it is only to hear that the goblins finally followed through the pass, found their encampment, and slaughtered them all.

The messenger comes only shortly before the goblins themselves. They wash over the lands south of the mountains like an unstoppable tide of destruction. You stand with the people of Zhadagh-dum, and you fall with them before the onslaught.

Your life and your quest end there.

Chapter 90

Faces grim, your dwarves unlace their packs and set down the stores of food that they had been carrying with them from before. According to your orders, they carry only what they will need to survive the next few days. After that, you must find food, or starve.

After one last feast on the food that will be left behind, you and your people emerge from the shallow cave into a grey mid-morning light. Wind has blown the rocky landscape bare of snow, except for drifts that have gathered here and there in nooks in the mountain. You cannot help but note that there is nothing edible in sight. Even the bits of hardy grass that cling to the rock look battered and frozen.

Nevertheless, you must continue. You take your place at the head of the line and set a slow but steady pace, hoping that you have made the right decision.

Make sure to cross Food off your Character Sheet, if you have not done so already. Then turn to Chapter 38.

Chapter 91

Pêledgathol, The Last Fortress. Is it the beginning of the end, or the end of the beginning? Only time will tell, but of one thing you are certain: you will make your stand here. Your people will rise or fall on this spot. You will not run away again. And when Goza leads his goblins across the Zirikzimân to the south, if ever, you will be ready for him.

Bêrek leaves shortly after work begins to perform a more thorough exploration of the surrounding areas. From morning till dusk, you are hard at work with your men, guiding the labor and laying out the foundations of your new home.

Any Wounded Dwarf Warriors still with you finally have a chance to recover during this time. You may remove all remaining Wounded Dwarf Warriors from your character sheet and replace them with an equal number of Dwarf Warriors.

The days pass swiftly, and one day you rise to find yourself concerned that Bêrek has not returned. After several more days with no word, you are forced to accept that you will have to make certain decisions without the benefit of his report and counsel.

Cross Bêrek Stonewhisper off of your Character Sheet, for now. He is not available to you until further notice. This marks the end of Winter and the beginning of your first Spring at Pêledgathol. You must decide one action to take this season.

As you now have a Fortress, change the “Fortress Status” trait on your Character Sheet from “None” to “Shelter.” Mark that this is the beginning of your first Spring, and then pick from one of the following options.

If you do not have Food, you must choose one of the actions from List 1 to seek food until you can get the traditional dwarven cave farms up and running. If you have Food, it will last you through the first season, and you must choose one of the actions from List 2.

List 1 (Do not have Food)

To forage in the nearby lands (only if you have the keyword *trout*) simply add Food to the Resources on your Character Sheet and turn to Chapter 70.

To trade with Zhadagh-dum (only if you have Treasure) turn to Chapter 61.

To raid the nearby human village of Elmdale, turn to Chapter 92.

List 2 (Have Food)

To do a thorough survey of the surrounding countryside, turn to Chapter 98.

To establish an Outpost in the Forest (if you don't have the keyword *trout*) turn to Chapter 94.

To start logging in the Forest (you must have the keyword *trout*) turn to Chapter 37.

To build an Outpost in the Mountains (if you don't have the keyword *stone*) turn to Chapter 2.

To commence mining in the Mountains (you must have the keyword *stone*) turn to Chapter 74.

Chapter 92

Add the keyword, *stealth* to your Character Sheet. Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

Gathering what men you can spare, you make the journey of over a week down into the valleys, along the river, and to the human village of Elmdale. Looking down on the village from a nearby hilltop, you see a collection of rustic homes nestled between two small rivers. Smoke rises from the chimneys.

You attack under the cover of nightfall, taking the sleepy town by surprise. You easily cut down the guards at the front gate, which sets the alarm bells ringing. But the town is unused to defending itself, and you pound through the streets without confrontation. Bursting into the granary, you quickly load up what you need.

A group of humans appears in the doorway, led by a tall warrior with a long braid. He points and says, "Kill the thieves!"

The humans let out a battle cry and rush you. You must fight your way to freedom!

In this battle, you and whoever you brought with you must fight the HUMAN MILITIA. Combined, the human militia have Skill 8 and Strength 5. For the purposes of this battle, you may gain the following bonuses:

+1 Strength and Skill for every 5 Dwarf Warriors with you (round down)

+1 Strength and Skill for Ghuzdim Halfjaw, if he is with you

+1 Strength and Skill if you brought at least 10 Dwarf Commoners with you.

You must fight for your life!

HUMAN MILITIA Skill 8 Strength 5

If you lose and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is with you, then make a note of your current Chapter number and turn to Chapter 95.

If you lose, and Ghuzdim Halfjaw is not with you, turn to Chapter 21.

If you win, then you and your men manage to fight your way free of the town, with the supplies you need. Add the resource **Food** to your character sheet, and turn to Chapter 70.

Chapter 93

Calling orders to your people, you organize the Khazâd into a defensive formation with your backs against the chasm. There's no time to dig trenches or build walls, so you give your people a few minutes to rest before the battle.

“If this is our last stand, let no one say we went down without a fight,” Ghuzdim says. He crouches next to you, axe in hand. His face is still badly injured. The hurried bandages haven’t been changed, and blood and liquids leak through them. Yet the big dwarf doesn’t seem to notice. He simply stares at the oncoming goblins with the eyes of a predator.

“I’m sure they will sing songs of our deaths,” Bêrek says drily.

“Then let us give them a fight worth singing of,” you add, gripping your axe.

Before the battle begins, you know how it must end. The goblins charge, screaming and waving their weapons like madmen. The Khazâd fight with the unflinching spirit of their race. Not a dwarf gives ground, or flings himself into the chasm in despair. Every man, woman and child dies with a weapon in hand, facing the enemy.

Yet die they do. As you fall, the last of your bodyguards collapsing around you, you realize there are none left to sing the songs of your death.

THE END

Chapter 94

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. You must bring at least 20 Dwarf Commoners to build the Outpost. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

It takes you four days to hike down into the lowlands, where the trees grow lush and tall. You follow a wide, meandering river upstream until you find a defensible location, nestled in a box canyon whose mouth opens onto a river.

Work proceeds quickly, and inside of the first week you have basic shelter and defenses set up. Your scouts report, however, that you may not be alone in these forests. Signs of humanoid tracks can be found here and there among the trees.

One expedition comes back with a man badly mauled by dire wolves, but your men chased them off. Others report spiderwebs thicker and stronger than ropes found in the deep parts of the forest. A bear is roused from a nearby cave and killed before he can become a danger.

Soon enough, the outpost is complete, and the nearby lands explored. All that’s left to do is bring the woodcutters. Leaving only a few men to guard the place, you and the builders pack up to go home.

While some of the Retainers you took on this mission remain here for now, they can still be counted toward the total number available to you.

Add the keyword *trout* and turn to Chapter 70 to return to Pêledgathol.

Chapter 95

Weakness dulls your movements and a blow knocks aside your axe, driving you backward. For a moment, the blood and pain blinds you, and when you shake your head and look up, your enemy stands above you, poised to end you. Suddenly a voice cries, “*Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-menu!*” and a huge dwarf flies into your field of vision, axe whistling.

Ghuzdim leaps in front of you, using his own body to block the blow that would have killed you. A gleaming wound blossoms on his chest. His eyes widen with shock and pain and he staggers. With a roar he grunts and spins, using the last of his strength to cut down his killer. Then he collapses.

You stumble to his side and kneel by the faithful warrior. He grips your beard and whispers, “Make

your fathers proud, young prince. Try to show as much *ghuzâd* as I did.”

As Ghuzdim expires his last breath, you feel tears sting your cheeks. You lift the axe that Udûn gave you and swear that you will not fail again.

Cross Ghuzdim Halfjaw off your character sheet, then turn back to the chapter you came here from and proceed as though you won the fight.

Chapter 96

A few injured warriors finally enter your Council Chamber, their faces drawn and weary with a pain that is not all physical.

“We were ambushed, my Lord. The goblins, they were waiting for us.”

“No,” another grizzled warrior interrupts, “They weren’t waiting for us, we were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

The first warrior continues, “A whole column of them sir, and we walked right into them. We fought hard, but there were too many. Less than half of us escaped.”

“And the General?” one of your advisors asks, leaning forward. The injured warriors hang their heads. One of them says, “He didn’t make it.”

“We didn’t come back empty-handed, though. A lot of good dwarves died to bring you this,” the grizzled older warrior says, and steps forward to hand you a map. He explains, “Them goblins have established a forward base, this side of the mountains. They’ve got stockpiles of food and weapons. They’re clearly expecting to supply an army. If we hit them hard, and hit them now, we could wipe out those supplies before the army arrives.

“And we all know the softest spot on a goblin is his belly,” he says, bringing a round of chuckles from the room.

One of your advisors says, “I would approach this intelligence with caution, my Lord. The goblins are not above throwing away a few supplies to lure our forces out into the open. This may be an opportunity, or it may be a trap.”

Nervous looks are exchanged around the room. Then all eyes turn to you, awaiting your decision.

Consult your orders. Whoever was the General for this mission must be crossed off your Character Sheet, as they died in battle. Only one half of the warriors sent on this mission survived (round down to the nearest multiple of five). The rest must be removed from your Character Sheet. The survivors may be added back into the total number of defenders at Pêledgathol.

You have the option now of mounting an assault on the Forward Base of the goblins. You may assign a General to lead this mission, if you have one available, or lead the mission yourself. If you choose to attack the Forward Base, write down on your orders who will lead the mission and how many warriors you are sending. Then turn to Chapter 88.

If you will not attack the Forward Base, turn to Chapter 83.

Chapter 97

You call Old Mag over, and he mutters as he examines the runes, “Yes, yes I know these words. Some sort of riddle. Hmm... I don’t know.” He seems to lose interest.

“Perhaps it’s a door, or a riddle to open an alcove. Try again. A carving we saw in another room seemed to indicate that there might be a secret stash underneath an anvil somewhere in this ruin. This

might be the place,” you say.

He shrugs, then turns back to the carvings. He mutters and sighs a few times, rubbing his hands over his eyes, and says, “It’s been so long... a drink is just what I need.”

He starts to shuffle away, but you stop him and turn him back to the anvil. With complaints and groans, he goes back to examining it.

Then something seems to perk him up. A different quality comes into his mutterings, one of discovery, even excitement. At last he opens the pouch of his trade and marks another rune onto the anvil, following the first ones. As he applies the silver powder to seal the rune, a glow of quiet magic steals through the anvil. Each of the runes shines with light from the inside, and then you hear a quiet click.

Old Mag gives the anvil a shove, and it slides smoothly out of the way, revealing a cache filled with gold and gems. He crows, “Haha! I knew I still had it in me!”

Your men gather around the treasure, marveling at the gleam and brightness of it. As you pick up and examine piece after piece, you can see that some of the most famous treasure-work of Khaz-Gorath has been stored here, pieces that were famous even back north.

Add Treasure to your Character Sheet, then turn to Chapter 53 to return to the Main Hall.

Chapter 98

Before you read this chapter, you must select the Allies and Retainers who you would like to bring with you. To complete the survey and deal with threats, you must bring at least 10 Dwarf Warriors and 10 Dwarf Commoners. If you cannot, go back to the Chapter you just came from and make a different choice. Write down your choices. When you are finished, read on.

Gathering a small band of warriors and mapmakers, you depart to do a thorough survey of the surrounding area. The first few weeks proceed more or less smoothly. Long hours of charting and mapping are broken by moments of excitement as the warriors flush out an ogre or a nest of cave hyenas.

You often have little work to do yourself, and you find yourself standing on a hilltop overlooking the land, one day, when you see the perfect route for a road to follow. And there, on that hilltop, and on this very one you stand on--both of these would make excellent locations for watchtowers.

You can see a future in this land.

One of the warriors comes up behind you and speaks softly, “My Lord, you should see this...” You follow him to the lip of a ravine you almost hadn’t noticed. Looking in, you see a village of Ogres. There are over a dozen huts, with ogres walking among them. A large firepit in the center still smoulders, and the carcass of a bull twists on a spit over it.

“The engineers have some ideas how to flush them out, but we’ll still have a fight on our hands if we try to take them,” the warrior says. You know it’s an understatement. Ogres are fierce, powerful enemies.

But if you don’t take them out now, you may never have a better chance.

If you would like to attack the ogre encampment, turn to Chapter 23.

If you would rather simply complete the survey and return home, then you may do that. Mark down the keyword *map* and return to Pêledgathol by turning to Chapter 70.

Chapter 99

An easy victory turns into surprised defeat all too quickly. What looked like an undefended camp suddenly swarms with goblins as they emerge from tents and caves nearby. With your warriors trapped between the goblins and the hills, even beating a retreat comes at a deadly price.

The survivors come limping back to Pêledgathol stripped of their pride, if not their lives. As they settle in, rumors fly around the fortress as to what happened, and how badly it went wrong.

Cross off one half of the warriors sent on this mission, as they died in action (round up to the nearest multiple of five). The General survived, and returns safely to Pêledgathol.

Turn to Chapter 83 to await the next report.

Chapter 100

Goza the Goblin falls before you, and you feel relief pounding in your chest with your heart. You fall to your knees whispering a prayer to your ancestors. The dwarves around you shout a battlecry that rings in your ears and charge with renewed vigor.

A moan seems to go through the surrounding goblins as they see their leader dead before them. The cowards turn to flee, dropping their weapons and shields as they run. There will be good goblin hunting in the surrounding areas for several months, until finally they all flee the wrath of the Khazâd.

When the battle is done, your people drag you, dazed and exhausted, before them, where they can cheer for you and drink to your honor. The crown is hastily thrust upon your head by a drunken matron, and a young dwarven lass is pressed into your hand for dancing as soon as you have quaffed your third drink. Every dwarf of Pêledgathol wants to find a chance to touch the great King who saved them all.

As for you... Pêledgathol is safe. Your father's spirit can rest quietly, for his killer has been killed. The future of your people looks brighter than it has in years. With the back broken of the goblin armies, the dwarves are free to flourish. Over the hundreds of years that you reign in Pêledgathol, the name, "The Last Fortress," is put to the lie. Expedition after expedition is sent out to reclaim lost strongholds of your people throughout the north.

When you die, it is in your bed, the the fortress you built with your own hands, surrounded by your children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. And songs are sung of your victories.

THE END

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Khuzdûl Appendix

The dwarven language I use here is borrowed directly from Tolkien, the master himself. As he only created about 50 actual words of the language, there's not much to work with (which is a shame, because it's beautiful, probably my favorite of the Tolkien languages.)

Needless to say, I was forced to supplement Tolkien's corpus with some inventions of my own design, although I tried to avoid doing that where possible. Here is a glossary of all the Khuzdûl words I used in this text, which also includes some place and person names.

Khazâd	The dwarven people
Khuzdûl	The language of the dwarves
ghuzâd	Courage (or "dwarfiness" as in, "manliness," with similar connotations.)
Niburziman	The Horns of Winter
Kepak Gabilbatâk	Grandfather's Stairs
Zirikzimân	The Winter Peaks
Targzimân	Winter's Beard
Pêledgathol	Last Fortress
Zhadagh-dum	A dwarven stronghold on the southern side of the Zirikzimân
Khaz'Gorath Ruins	The ruins of an old fortress in the region
Udûn	
Bêrek Stonewhisper	
Ghuzdim Half-jaw	
Ingildun, the Master Craftsdwarf	
Tiren, the Apprentice Craftsdwarf	
Old Mag the Runesmith	