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A FORGOTTEN REALMS™ ADVENTURE

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

ADVENTURE 17 GAMEBOOK

SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR



By Steve Perrin

CHARACTER STATS CARD
SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR



NAME: Kelson Darktreader

CHAR. CLASS: Ranger

AGE: 55

SKILL POINTS:

Fighting 8 + _____ = _____

Archery 12 + _____ = _____

Phys. Prowess 9 + _____ = _____

Sensory 12 + _____ = _____

Stealth 14 + _____ = _____

EXPERIENCE POINTS: 6 + _____ = _____

_____ = _____

_____ = _____

HIT POINTS: 35 + _____

DEADLY ENCOUNTER

Hopelessly lost in thick fog in the Misty Forest, you and your barbarian companion, Braggi, have been wandering for hours. Now, as the fog finally lifts, you look upon a bleak plain, with no plant taller than a bush. Somehow, in the milky whiteness, you left the forest and came out upon the High Moors!

With darkness rapidly approaching, you need to find some shelter for the night in this dangerous country. Not far ahead, on a small rise, you spot a cave opening.

“Careful, swordbrother,” says Braggi. “Strange things be dennin’ in caves in these regions. Better let me go in first.”

Holding the torch aloft, he advances toward the cave. He pokes his head around the edge of the cave’s mouth, then lets out a yell as an immense hand tries to grab his arm. The hand misses, and Braggi pulls back quickly, but the torch flies out of his hand.

As Braggi backs away from the cave, you see its occupant stalk out after him. It’s tall and thin and hideous-looking, with large, deadly fangs and claws—a troll! You let fly with an arrow and have no trouble hitting such a large target. It roars and pulls the arrow out of its side.

Seeing you, the troll ignores Braggi and charges right at you. You release a second arrow, which also hits the monster, and then have no further chance to shoot as the creature is upon you!

Can you survive the hideous troll’s attack?

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **124**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **132**.

Whatever the outcome, only your decisions, and the luck of the dice roll, can help you survive against the

SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR



**An ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS®
Adventure Gamebook #17**

SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR

By Steve Perrin

**Cover Art by Keith Parkinson
Interior Art by Douglas Ball**



**TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™**

To Ed Greenwood and Clayton Moore, for different reasons

SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR

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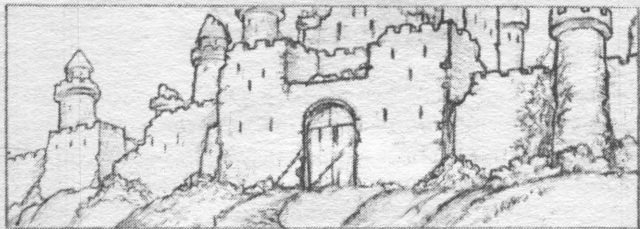
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All characters in this book are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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AN EXCITING NEW EXPERIENCE IN BOOKS!

Welcome, you who are about to face the SPAWN OF DRAGONSPEAR, to an exciting, totally new concept in role-playing gamebooks.

Based on the popular ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® role-playing game, this adventure requires two standard six-sided dice, a pencil, plenty of luck, and—most of all—your skill in making decisions as you play the game. If dice are unavailable, a simple alternative, requiring only paper and pencil, is explained on page 14.

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure Gamebooks have been designed to read easily, without complicated rules to slow down the story. Once you finish reading the rules that follow, you should seldom find it necessary to refer back to them. Your options are repeated clearly in the text at each choice point, with occasional reminders about additional options you may wish to consider to improve your chances. Your adventure reads like a book, plays like a game, and offers a thrill a minute—with YOU as the hero!



YOUR CHARACTER

In this book, you are Kelson Darktreader, huntsman for the dukes of Dagherford. You first served Duke Conan, and now serve his son, Pryden. You will probably serve Pryden's son, Pwyll, as well.

Your father is an elf adventurer named Filvendor Lightfoot, who disappeared mysteriously some twenty years ago. Your mother, Jillian Forestheart, the daughter of a human forester, died shortly after your father disappeared. At fifty five years of age, you are still young, since half-elves such as you usually live two hundred years or more.

Like most half-elves, you are slender and not quite as tall as the average man. Your elven father has left you the shape of your pointed ears and the look of your striking green eyes. You see well in the dark, and your keen sight enables you to pick out flaws and discrepancies that no human eye could ever discern.

Your principal inherited characteristic from your human mother is your impatience. You know that you should really be the Master of the Hunt, but the duke has kept Sean Far-ranger, a human, in that post, though Sean is over sixty years old. You attribute this to typical human distrust for elves. Humans have a difficult time accommodating a race that lives many times longer than they do.

Still, humans, at least, recognize your skills, even if they are not quick to make friends. To the elves, you are a freak—neither elf nor human. Other half-elves have managed to make a place for themselves in elven society, but in such cases, their parents

stayed with them and helped them get established. Without your father to sponsor you, you have been forced to stay within human society.

Now the ancient ruins of Dragonspear Castle are spewing forth legions of devils and other monsters in the land. You have been put in charge of six human militiamen and sent to spy on the orcs gathering in the Misty Forest—the same forest in which your father disappeared twenty years ago!

PLAYING THE GAME

ESTABLISHING YOUR CHARACTER

YOUR Kelson Darkreader will be different from someone else's because **YOU** help to create him.

Carefully tear out the removable **Character Stats Card** at the beginning of this book. This card is your record of Kelson's character makeup. It also doubles as a bookmark.

Since we hope you will play this adventure many times, we suggest that you write on the card in pencil only, so that the character stats can be erased easily when you are ready to play again. If you have access to a photocopier, you may wish to make several photocopies of the Character Stats Card before you fill it in. Permission is hereby granted by the publisher to make photocopies of the Character Stats Card *only*. You may also reproduce the card by writing on a 3" X 5" card or a slip of paper.

You are now ready to round out Kelson's individual identity by establishing his strengths and weaknesses. Your character's name, age, and character class have already been entered for you. Before you fill out the rest of the card, it is necessary to understand the game's scoring system.

SCORING

Playing the game requires you to keep track of three things—**hit points**, **skill points**, and **experience points**—on the tear-out **Character Stats Card** located at the front of the book. An explanation of each of these follows.



HIT POINTS

You, as Kelson, have a specific life strength, represented by **hit points**. Once your hit points are reduced to zero, you are unconscious and near death. Unless someone comes to your aid, you cease to exist, and you have come to the end of the adventure, whether the text has come to an end or not.

Kelson loses hit points when he fails to hit his enemy through the roll of the dice, because his opponent will usually succeed in hitting him back. As a result, you must deduct a stated number of hit points from his hit point total.

Kelson may also lose hit points through sneak attacks, traps, or through carelessness when he has no chance to fight back. In such instances, you will be instructed to either roll one or more dice for **damage**, or you will be told how many hit points to subtract.

Kelson Darktreader, as an experienced ranger with an excellent constitution, starts out the adventure

with 35 hit points, plus a random chance to improve this score. Roll one six-sided die and add the result to 35 to determine Kelson's total hit points. Record the total on your Character Stats Card. If you are dissatisfied with the result of the first roll, you may make one additional roll, but you *must* accept the second total, even if it is smaller than the first.

Guard Kelson's hit points carefully, but don't be afraid to spend them when the goal seems worthwhile.



SKILL POINTS

Now you are ready to determine Kelson's **skills**. **Skill points** allow you to increase your chances of success by adding Kelson's score for a specific skill to the dice roll.

Your previous experience as a ranger and huntsman has given you formidable skills as a warrior and archer. In this adventure, your skills are divided into five categories: **fighting**, **archery**, **physical prowess**, **sensory**, and **stealth**. These skills, and how to use them, are explained below.

A number, called your **skill score**, represents your ability in a given skill. The higher the number, the better your skill. You must help determine what your strengths are. Your base skill scores are already written on your Character Stats Card. In addition, you have 10 more skill points to add to your scores. You

may divide up the 10 points any way you wish, as long as you add at least 1 skill point, but no more than 4, to each of your five skills. There is no right or wrong way to divide up your skill points. Study the explanations of the skills that follow before deciding, then fill in your final skill scores for Kelson on your Character Stats Card.

Each time you begin this adventure again, you may experiment with different strengths and weaknesses.

Fighting

Fighting is your ability to battle with hand-to-hand weapons. Kelson commonly carries a falchion (a short, heavy sword) and a dagger, both of which he is able to use competently.

You will be told in the text when to use your fighting skill score. When you do use it, roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you are successful.



Archery

As a hunter and an elfkin, Kelson has a special affinity for the bow and arrow. While he is competent with the sword he carries, he is a master with the elven longbow.

You will be told in the text when to use your archery skill score. When you do use it, roll two dice and



add the result to your archery skill score. If the total is equal to, or greater than, the number given in the text, you have succeeded.

Physical Prowess

Kelson's physical prowess skill score enables him to have a better chance of success when any task involves physical strength, speed, or endurance.

To use your physical prowess skill, roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you have been successful.

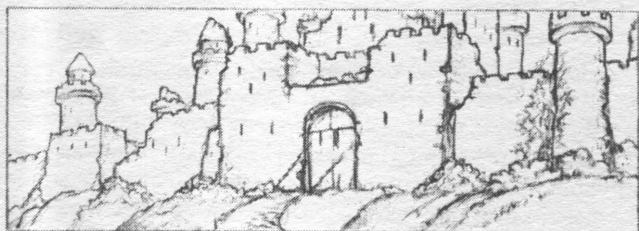


Sensory

Besides the obvious uses of sight, smell, and hearing, your sensory skill score includes your trained

ability to determine the intentions of others, particularly those of animals and monsters. As a half-elf, your senses are far more alert than those of humans, and you have the added advantage of being able to see at night almost as well as you do in the day. Unfortunately your daylight vision, in the direct glare of the sun, is slightly poorer than that of your human compatriots.

You will be told in the text when to use your sensory skill score. When you do use it, roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is equal to, or more than, the number given, you have succeeded.



Stealth

As a ranger and an elfkin, you have an exceptional ability to glide effortlessly through the forest. You are capable of moving soundlessly and blending into the shadows so that the keenest eye and ear cannot detect you.

You will be told in the text when to use your stealth skill score. When you do use it, roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total equals or exceeds the number given in the text, you are successful.



EXPERIENCE POINTS

As in real life, experience increases your chances of success in a given situation because you have encountered a similar situation before and understand the possibilities that may occur.

You, as Kelson Darkreader, begin this adventure with **6 experience points**, plus a random chance to improve your score. Roll one die and add the result to 6 to determine your total number of experience points. Record this score on your Character Stats Card. If you are dissatisfied with your die roll, you may have one, and only one, chance to improve your score. Roll the die a second time, but you *must* accept this second roll of the die, even if the total is less than the first.

Experience points may be spent on any die roll to improve your chances of success, but once they are used, they are gone and must be deducted from your total. You may use only 1 experience point on any given dice roll. Simply add it to the overall total, remembering to deduct it from your experience point total. It is possible to gain experience points during the course of this adventure by acting judiciously and honorably.

PLAYING WITHOUT DICE

Should you ever wish to play this adventure when dice are unavailable, there is a simple substitute that requires only pencil and paper. Simply write the numbers 1 through 6 on separate slips of paper and mix them up in a container. Then draw one of the slips, note the number, and place it back in the container. Mix up the numbers and draw a second time. Each draw represents one roll of a die. If only one die is called for, draw only one number.

Your character—Kelson Darktreader—is now complete, and you are ready to begin your adventure. Start on page 15—and good luck!

"Pssst! Huntsman! I must have a word with you."

You turn, and even in the gathering twilight of the forest night, your elven eyes confirm what your ears had already heard. It is Brightstar, a young acolyte of Lathandar, one of the militiamen that the duke sent with you on this fruitless mission.

You are Kelson Darktreader, huntsman for the dukes of Daggerford. At present, you are leading a frustrating scouting expedition in the Misty Forest, several hundred miles to the southeast of your hometown of Daggerford. One of the principal sources of your frustration is now calling to you.

"Yes, acolyte? What is it?" you ask sharply. You had been about to leave the camp, risking the dangers of night to explore the surrounding woods away from the clambering awkwardness of the duke's militiamen. Now one of the fumble-footed humans wants to talk to you.

"Please, huntsman. We must speak now. It is a matter of considerable urgency!"

You nod, as always reluctant to speak more than is absolutely necessary, and lean against the bole of one of the ancient pines of the forest. The human cleric looks back nervously toward the glimmer of the small campfire where the rest of your party are finishing their meal and getting ready to sleep.

"I—I fear you are putting too much trust in this guide, Blackeye." The youth speaks firmly but apprehensively—and he is right to fear your response. You decide to abandon your habitual taciturnity to tell him what you think of his words.

"Trust, is it? I finally find one human in this world who can walk the forest trails as a trained woodsman, and you, a stone-footed human who couldn't walk quietly in a plowed field or see the trail of a bull in a pottery shop, don't feel I should trust him!" Your voice is cautiously low but piercing nevertheless. "Let me tell you, young militiaman, that I have every reason to trust this man who knows the woods as I do. On the other hand, I have little enough reason to trust you and your five comrades, who have trans-

formed a scouting expedition into a jester's caravan with your clanking armor and whinnying horses and screaming voices. With Blackeye in our midst, we have some chance to discover the reason for all these orcish gatherings. You would all be well advised to emulate this unwashed barbarian your town-bred ways cannot tolerate, for he is of far more service to your town and your duke than any of you will ever be!"

"You do not understand, huntsman. I have performed an augury. There is much danger in following the advice of this barbarian!"

The youngster seems to think his interpretation of the signs from his god should clinch the argument. Well, you have your own opinions of his magic!

"Of course there is danger, young pup! We seek the leader of all the orcs of the High Moors. All your augury tells us is that we indeed are on the right trail, and Blackeye leads us correctly. Now, go back to the camp and get some sleep. Your watch duty begins at moonrise."

Tight-lipped, the young man turns and walks stiff-legged back to the camp, managing to trip on a root he fails to see in the dark. You smile with satisfaction. You haven't had the chance to tell off a townbody in years. It feels wonderful.

If anyone was ever born to tread the forest paths, it is you. You and your father, the elf adventurer Filvendor Lightfoot, wandered all over the surrounding countryside as you grew up, but you haven't seen your father for twenty years. Your human mother, Jillian Forestheart, died shortly after your father left, and you were raised in the woods by the legendary rangers, eventually becoming one of them.

You know the tracks of every beast, natural and supernatural, that has ever trod the ground for a hundred miles in every direction. Your first love is unquestionably the forest. For you, its gloom is as bright as the daylight, and much gentler on your half-elven eyes.

In many ways, you find it uncomfortable around short-lived human company, and this discomfort sometimes takes the form of impatience with their clumsiness in the

forest. Humans do not understand the ways of long-lived elves and their kin.

Grudgingly, you have to admit that humans at least recognize your skills, even if they are not quick to make friends. And their company is still preferable to that of the local elves. To the elves, you are a freak, neither elf nor human. Other half-elves such as you have managed to make a place for themselves in elven society, but only if their elven parents stayed with them and helped get them established. Without your father to sponsor you, you have had to find your own place in the human society. After a brief investigation, service as a hunter for the duke proved to satisfy your preference for solitude and your need for occasional company.

You have been blooded in both the hunt and in intermittent warfare with the vicious creatures that live about Daggerford. As souvenirs, you have the scar from a boar's tusk on your ribs, and you can still feel the ache from the broken wrist you suffered fighting a troll invasion three years ago.

Now war threatens once more. The ruins of Dragonspear Castle to the south have spawned a swarm of devils from some hellish plane. The cities all along the Sword Coast have driven most of the initial swarm back to the ruins and now besiege them. Your master plans to honor his commitments to the other lords of the Sword Coast by joining the besiegers.

Lately there have been rumors of hordes of orcs gathering in the Misty Forest. You had hoped to leave Daggerford on your own, infiltrate the shadows of the Misty Forest, and spy on the orcs. Marching to the siege of Dragonspear with a bunch of human peasants holds no appeal for you. Your skills are ill-suited for sieges. Besides, there have been other stories coming out of the Misty Forest, stories that indicate your father may still be alive! If you could only see him again. . . .

To your delight, the duke granted you your wish to scout out the orcs, though your pleasure was dampened by his insistence that you take companions along with you. You are a week's travel out of Daggerford. In your thirty years

as a ranger, you have hunted and explored much of these woods, but the forest that grows on the slopes leading to the High Moors is extensive and diverse, and you have never visited this particular section of the southern forest before. When Brightstar interrupted you, you were about to slip into the forest to get some measure of its wild animals and plantlife. Now you find that prospect dulled by your argument with the young priest. Shrugging, you return to the campfire. You remember you promised to take the first watch with the fighter, Barth, anyway.

Turn to 9.

2

The bugbears are surprisingly fast. Before you can bring up your weapons, you are pounded by their clubs and torn by their claws. You finally manage to draw your sword, but it is knocked from your hand.

You see Braggi being dragged down by creatures who possess more than even his great strength. You know you will die here, cursing the fate that will not let you save the people of Daggerford. ✕



3

You hail the human voices ahead of you in the fog. "Who goes there?"

A female voice answers, "We be the hunters of the Belcondi. Who be you?"

"Kelson Filvenderson," you answer, using your father's name because you know he made many friends among the barbarians.

"And Braggi Quickaxe, of the Gironi," adds Braggi, pulling his arm out of your grasp and readying his axe.

“Girondi!” cries the barbarian ahead of you, and the cry is picked up by other voices. Even in the fog, you can see that Braggi is both nervous and determined. You recall that the barbarian tribes of the High Moors are continually warring amongst themselves.

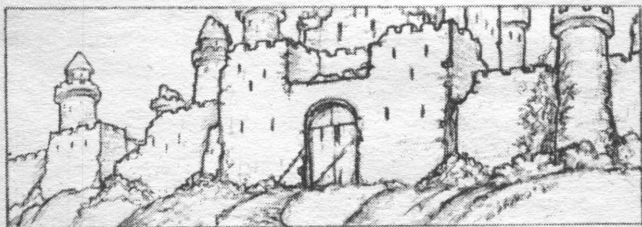
“And what be bringin’ a Girondi to the camp of the Belcondi—particularly a Girondi in the company of the son of a famous father?” calls the feminine voice from the shadows.

“Rather ya should be askin’ why a Belcondi blocks the rightful path of a Girondi,” replies Braggi testily.

The feminine voice replies in an obviously conciliatory manner. “Come now, Girondi, let us not be draggin’ our High Moors feuds down to the forest. Ah be callin’ a hunters’ truce. Come forward and be joinin’ our camp for the night.”

You advance, and Braggi follows reluctantly, still clutching his axe in readiness. You find yourselves in a circle of barbarians, who guide you to a firecircle in which the fire is barely alive. One of the barbarians adds a handful of twigs to the fire, and it burns brightly for a moment. In that time, you can see that the woman who has addressed you seems young for her obvious calling as a druid. Dressed in the full traveling gear of that tree-worshipping sect, she is in turn observing you, though you would think that she would concentrate more on her potential tribal enemy, Braggi.

Turn to 80.



You circle each other warily, until Jagurt suddenly attacks, making wide, sweeping strokes with his scimitar. Your dagger is insufficient to block them, so you duck away from his blows, but one catches you solidly. Subtract 8 from your hit point total.

Gradually, as you continue to dodge his blows, you think you see a pattern in Jagurt's attacks, a pattern that may give you the opening you need. You duck another of Jagurt's swings and quickly dash in under his arm as he's bringing the weapon back into position for another blow. Your dagger snakes out and enters the orc's armpit, then you avoid his falling weapon and stab again for his gut. Jagurt looks at you with blank astonishment in his feral eyes. Then he falls facedown in the dirt.

Before the orcs and goblins can react, you leap to Braggi's side. Your keen dagger rips at the net that holds him, and he leaps free of the mesh, his axe held ready. Almost as one, the leaderless orcs and goblins turn and flee.

Two of the larger orcs, Jagurt's lieutenants, are braver. You barely have time to spot your falchion and snatch it up before one is upon you. You block its attack, catch its sword with your falchion, and force the weapon high in the air as you stab out with your dagger. The orc's eyes cross, then it drops at your feet. You turn to see that Braggi has subdued his opponent with a blow from the flat of his axe. Several orcs who stopped to watch the fight howl loudly and flee.

You smile, pleased with yourself. Suddenly you remember the devil's mention of an agent in Daggerford! That's probably Blackeye, and even without Jagurt, his plans could spell doom for your hometown. You have to get back to Daggerford!

Turn to 122.





5

Suddenly you are surrounded by a number of tall, shaggy humanoid monsters, the giant goblins known as bugbears, who have crept up on you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to 187. If it is 19 or less, go to 2. Remember that your magic sword adds 1 to your fighting skill score.

6

The spear point streaks for your chest, but you knock it aside with your sword and spin along its length, ending up next to Jagurt, your dagger in his belly. Jagurt yanks himself away from you and tries to raise the spear again, then stops, looks blankly off into the distance, and finally falls to the ground.

You duck away as the standard-bearer tries to hit you with the standard. Then it, too, stiffens, the sword of one of the militiamen in its back.

Moving swiftly, you snatch the falling standard, raise it high in the air, and cry in Blacktongue that Jagurt is dead. Then you hurl the standard to the ground and trample on it. The orcs that are still alive yowl in fear and begin to run in panic.

You hear a soft moan from Llewellyn and go to help him to his feet. He isn't seriously injured, though he's badly bruised from the power of Jagurt's blows. He shakes his head, then looks at you.

"Kelson? Is that you?" he asks. You nod. "Then the oily-tongued ranger we've been hosting for the last week is an imposter! Well, at least that explains a lot."

"What happened here?" you ask, puzzled.

"Kelson—or rather the person we thought was Kelson—has been wooing Lady Bronwyn for the last week, since he returned with a story about killing someone called Jagurt Redclaw and sending his troop of militiamen on to Dragonspear. As far as I can tell, he took Bronwyn down to the River Gate tonight and let the orcs into the town. Then he suddenly turned into a winged devil and hauled Bronwyn off to the castle gate tower!" With that, he looks behind

him to the gate tower. "He jammed open the gates and cut the portcullis ropes. I had to defend the gate the best I could."

"So the monster is up there?" you ask.

"As far as I know," he answers. "I've been rather busy the last several minutes."

You walk over to the tower and examine it carefully. It looks climbable.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **152**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **131**.



7

The bearlike devil roars and attacks, but you duck under its massive claws and stab upward with your father's brightly glowing sword. The creature roars with pain and smashes one huge paw down on your shoulder. Subtract 8 from your hit point total.

You withdraw the sword from the bear-devil's wound and slice at the thing's foreleg, inflicting a terrible wound. Blackeye screams with rage and suddenly lunges, encircling you in a bear hug. You struggle and squirm, but the monster is too strong for you. Slowly it crushes the life from your body. Your head swims as you realize that you are dying. As the last iota of life oozes from your body, you can hear the whine of arrows. The monster roars as the war points strike home. By turning into the monster, the devil may have insured your death, but Llewellyn's archers now have no trouble determining who is the monster and who is the real Kelson.

Daggerford, at least, is saved. ✘

8

Jagurt is strong and fast, but like most orcs, he has little art with his weapon. He swings his scimitar at you mightily, but you deflect it with your dagger. Before he can bring his clumsy weapon around for another swing, you move in close, your dagger catching the scimitar on the backswing and your falchion chopping for his ribs. Unexpectedly, he kicks out to knock you away, and you slip on the river mud and fall.

The orc leader roars in triumph and chops down at you with his scimitar. You feel your armor part under the force of the blow as you try to roll away and regain your feet, but he is on top of you again, and the scimitar bites into you once more.

Subtract 30 points from your hit point total. You are bleeding badly from two wounds, and Jagurt is closing in for the kill.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **108**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **65**.

9

Early the next morning, you saddle your horses and follow Blackeye's lead out of camp. Without him, you would have only a rough idea of where you are. You know that you are on the approaches to the High Moors, which are the home of the orcs. The trees had been thinning out all the previous afternoon as you and your band rode upslope through brush and rocks.

You look behind you at the six members of the Daggerford militia who, because of your orders, have turned the solitary scouting trip you wanted into a noisy, unwieldy expedition. They are all town-bred humans; none are more than twenty-five years old. As militiamen, they have all experienced some danger, but none are the equal of a ranger in the woods.

Barth, Rodrick, and young Kelwin are all sturdy fighting men. Felis is a bright but not terribly proficient magician. Derbon calls himself an "adventurer," but he is obviously more at home picking pockets than wielding a sword.

Finally there is Brightstar, a sturdy, devout, and very young follower of Lathandar, the ruling god of Daggerford. Brightstar has proven entirely too eager to share his opinions with those who know more than he does.

None of them have had much experience in forest country. Worse, they are not used to long hikes. The whole party was forced to ride horses to make any progress, far from the silent sliding among the tree shadows you had envisioned.

You'll be glad just to get everyone home alive and out of your hair. It's the first time the duke has entrusted you with a command, and you're beginning to wonder if high rank is worth the problems of dealing with humans and their frailties.

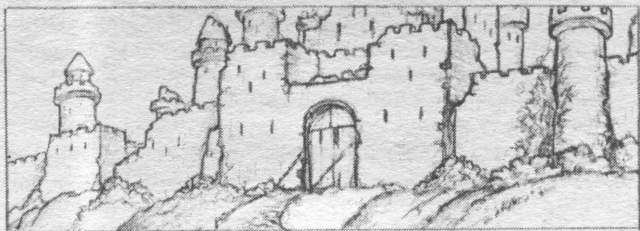
The only member of the party who can come close to matching your experience is Blackeye, the barbarian guide you picked up at the Way Inn. Blackeye is short, bow-legged, and swarthy. He looks a little like an orc himself, but he knows this area of the woods. More importantly, he has a lead on Jagurt Redclaw, the orc leader who has been assembling his followers into a horde.

This morning, Blackeye confided to you, "We should catch Redclaw nappin' today. He's set himself up a camp on the slopes of one of the ravines leadin' down into the forest from the moors. I know of a hidden ravine that leads right above his camp, and I don't think any of his scouts know a thing about it."

If Blackeye is right, your mission could succeed in hardly any time at all. Perhaps you'll have time to search for your father after all. . . .

Turn to 52.





10

The first goblins scream their piping battle cries and charge. Yelling to Braggi to follow you, you move to meet them, with Braggi right behind you. You duck under a spear and spit its wielder. You avoid the chop of an axe and see Braggi's own axe cleave the goblin who swung at you even as you block a scimitar blow with your fighting dagger and chop off the orc's arm. The fight is a blur of weapons and limbs for perhaps ten seconds, though it seems more like hours to you. Suddenly the surviving orcs and goblins pull back. Looking out from the side of your eyes at Braggi, you see that he is a mass of cuts and bruises, but none seem serious. You realize that you, too, are wounded. Subtract 15 from your hit point total. Nevertheless you are still ready to fight on.

More squads of orcs and goblins are coming over the crest of the hill, and you can hear even more coming through the brush, approaching either side of your position.

If you want to continue fighting, turn to **164**. If you want to try to run now, roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **129**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **134**.

11

You try to block the descending blow with your sword, but your strength is not enough to hold the block. The broadsword bites into your skull. Your last thought as the darkness closes in is the hope that Braggi may get through to Daggerford to warn them of Blackeye's treachery. ✘

What indeed have humans done for you that you should risk your chance for an elven life for them? True, Braggi has proved a loyal comrade, but you have never said that all men are worthless—just most of them.

You smile at Drendin and say, "Yes. Let us follow the forest path."

As the wild elves ready themselves to return Braggi to his people, you think one last time of Daggerford and Bronwyn and Duke Pryden, then look again into Drendin's eyes and exchange easy elven smiles. Daggerford will have to solve its problems without the help of its despised half-elf son. ✕

Jagurt takes a mighty swing at you, but you can see from its awkwardness that he does not normally fight left-handed. You block the blow and slice at his unwounded arm, shouting, "This is for Brightstar!" Jagurt howls as your sword cuts into him, but he holds on to his scimitar and swings for your head.

You duck under the blow and move in close. Your falchion chops into his side before he can manage to block it. "This is for Rodrick!" you cry. You see both hatred and despair in his eyes as you step back, bind his scimitar with the dagger in your left hand, and chop at his head. He's too late to block the blow. His head flies from his shoulders as you shout, "And this is for the rest of those brave men!"

You look at the severed head for an instant, then spin around. You can see that Braggi has slain his first opponent and has disarmed the second before it could even pick itself up from where the brush trunk knocked it.

Through the hole in the back of the hut, you can see squads of orcs and goblins advancing on the hut. There is no way you can fight them all. You have but one chance.

Stepping out of the hut, you chop down the standard of Jagurt's Redclaw clan with one blow. "Your leader is dead!" you cry in Blacktongue. "Your plan is doomed! Run, before the devils of Dragonspear come back to find out why you haven't done their bidding!" There is a moment of

silence as the orcs and goblins realize that if Jagurt were still alive, this insult to his army's honor would not have gone unavenged. Then Braggi steps from the hut and tosses the bodies of Jagurt and his lieutenant to the ground.

The orcs stare at you for a moment. Then suddenly a loud orc voice at the back of the mob yells, "Rally to me, orcs of the Blue Feather Clan! We will—*agghk!*"

You see a quivering javelin sticking in the side of the orc who was shouting. Instantly two bands of orcs leap at one another. You assume that one is the band of the shouter, the other the band of the javelin thrower. The fragile truce among the orc tribes brought about by Jagurt is already crumbling, and the orcs are back to doing what they do best—killing each other.

The other orcs and goblins watch for a moment. Then, at the back of the mob, bands of goblins begin to run from the camp. Those ahead of them hear them flee, and the panic catches them all. In seconds, all you can see are the backs of goblins and orcs running back to their tribal lands and their tribal wars among themselves. The land is safe from the goblin scourge.

You smile for a moment, pleased with yourself, then you remember the devil's words about an agent in Daggerford! That's probably Blackeye, and even without Jagurt, his plans could mean doom for your village. You have to get back to Daggerford!

Turn to **122**.



14

The next morning, you head off for Daggerford to try to stop Blackeye. As evening falls, you are surrounded by fog again. Roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **138**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **184**.

Unarmed, you duck away from another of Jagurt's blows and race toward the door of the hut, with Jagurt in hot pursuit. There you find the racked javelins you had seen before. You snatch one up, then spin and thrust, all in one motion. Jagurt is right behind you. You know this one blow has to be perfect, or you are a dead man.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **81**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **85**.

Dendrach gets off the first shot, but your first arrow is barely behind his. The wand on the far right splits from his arrow and the wand farthest left from yours. Dendrach responds by splitting the wand next to the one you split, in an attempt to disrupt your shooting pattern, only to find that you have split the middle two while he was changing his aim. You shoot again and again, not bothering to keep count, until you realize that there are no more unsplit wands.

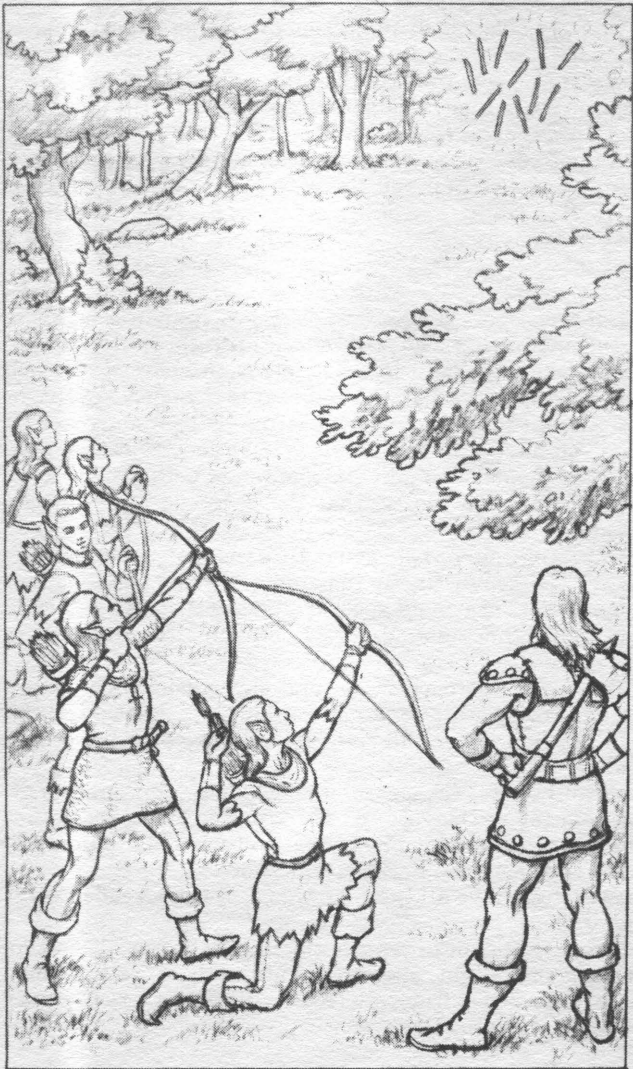
Checking your quiver, you realize that you have shot seven arrows. You distinctly remember missing with one, but you are not sure about several of your other shots. If even one of the others missed, then Dendrach has beaten you in the contest.

Dendrach approaches you and clasps your wrist in an archer's congratulations. "I shot but five arrows, Kelson, and the wands were all split. It seems we are all going to Daggerford."

The other elves congratulate you and start preparing for the journey to Daggerford. You express your concern that the trip will take too much time, but when all is in readiness, they lead you to the river's shore.

"We shall have all the time we need, Darktreader," says Deldragor.

The elves begin to remove the brush that has been concealing their light, slim rivercraft made of well-polished hide over wooden frames. "These will get us there in plenty of time," explains Deldragor.



Braggi is none too sure about such fragile craft, but even he is delighted by how well they handle once you are on the river.

But Deldragor is too optimistic about your arrival time. The spring floods are past their peak now, and the river is sufficiently low to impede your progress with snags and shallows that you must portage around. Moreover, the elves must take time to hunt each day to preserve their emergency rations.

It is night of the fourth day before you see Daggerford ahead of you. The river between you and the ford is jammed with the crude, round coracles of the orcs, and the riverbank is aswarm with orcs on either side. The orcs on the Daggerford side are streaming through the River Gate! Blackeye has already performed his treachery! You must somehow stop the invasion before the entire town is destroyed!

Turn to 118.

17

The blades of the barbarians are too fast and too many. Your armor is pierced repeatedly. The blackness of death washes over you, and you sink to the ground. Someone else will have to save Daggerford. ✕

18

The goblins surrounding you back off in horror. You take their best blows and keep coming, but you barely have time to see that all your companions lie dead around you before the goblins who have brought them down, flushed with their triumph, attack to destroy their one remaining foe-man.

You try to roar your battle cry, but only a hoarse shout escapes your lips.

Turn to 198.

19

Jagurt is strong and fast, but like most orcs, he has little art with his weapon. He swings his scimitar at you mightily, but you deflect it with your dagger. Before he can bring

his clumsy weapon around for another swing, you move in close, your dagger catching the scimitar on the backswing and your falchion chopping for his ribs. He attempts to kick you away, but you avoid it. The sword bites through the orc's scaled armor, but not quite deep enough. Jagurt roars and spins away from you, gathering his wits before you can follow up.

Suddenly he hurls his scimitar at you and snatches up a spear from a fallen fighter while you duck the sword.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **192**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **157**.



20

You cannot break your hands free no matter how hard you jerk. The strands are just too strong. So, instead, you try applying pressure steadily, using every jolt of the ride to add to the pressure. Finally the mane reaches its limit, and one hand, then the other, breaks free of its entanglement. The creature whinnies excitedly and turns its head to watch you.

Before something else happens, you draw your falchion. Putting all your strength into the blow, you bury the weapon in the head of the demon beast. With a gurgling cry, the creature falls heavily, and you barely manage to land on your feet as the mystic attraction holding you on its back finally lets go.

Picking yourself up, you look back and see that the beast left a trail that a novice ranger could follow in his sleep. You start to follow it, keeping an eye out for orcs or other forest denizens.

Two hours later, you are nearing the hill with the standing stones when you see a figure following your backtrail. You hide in the brush alongside the trail, then realize that your tracker is Braggi! You step out and greet him as he approaches.

"It be good to see ya again, swordbrother. I be worried that somethin' be takin' ya away from that sanctuary," the barbarian says.

"All that took me away was my own folly, friend. Let's be getting back to the circle and get some rest."

Turn to 14.

21

The devil may be a perfect match for you physically, but he does not have your years of training with the sword. In seconds, you have wounded him in three places. Only his devilish vitality keeps him going. In desperation, he hurls his falchion at you.

As you duck away, you see his features alter and twist. His entire body begins to writhe and change, and you are suddenly confronting a huge bear-shaped devil, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

But before you or it can attack, you see Bronwyn break free from Braggi's slackened grip. She moves her hands in a strange gesture and utters a phrase in the arcane language of magic. Suddenly a green dart forms in her hand and flies out at the devil-bear, wounding it. "Now, Kelson!" she shouts.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 84. If it is 15 or less, turn to 45.

22

The spear point leaps for your chest, and you cannot block it in time. Your armor eases some of the impact, but not enough, and the air is driven from your body. Subtract 10 from your hit point total.

Jagurt yanks the spear out of your body and starts to

raise it again. He stops and looks somewhere off in the distance, then falls. You see Llewellyn lower his bloody sword after pulling it from the orc's body. The weapon master has returned to the fight.

The standard-bearer swings the long pole at Llewellyn, but he ducks under it. Then the orc stiffens and falls, with one of Drendin's arrows in its back.

Moving swiftly, Llewellyn grabs the standard before it falls and breaks it over his knee. He holds the prize in his upraised hands and yells in the Common tongue that Jagurt is dead. The orcs who are still alive yowl in fear and run for their lives.

Llewellyn isn't hurt seriously, though he's badly bruised through his plate armor from the power of Jagurt's blows. He looks at you as you shake your head and recover your breath.

"Kelson?" he inquires. You nod. "Then the oily-tongued ranger we've been entertaining for the last week is really an imposter! Well, that explains a lot!"

"Lord Llewellyn, what has been happening here?" you ask, puzzled.

"Kelson—or rather a man we thought was Kelson—has been wooing Bronwyn for the last week, since he returned with a story about having killed someone called Jagurt Redclaw and sending his troop of militiamen on to Dragonspear. As far as I can tell, he took Bronwyn down to the River Gate with him tonight, probably on some romantic pretext, and let the orcs in. Then suddenly he turned into a winged devil and hauled Bronwyn off to the castle gate tower!" With that, he looks back toward the gate tower. "He jammed open the gates and cut the portcullis ropes. I had to defend the gate as best I could."

"So the monster is up there?" you ask.

"As far as I know," he answers. "I've been rather busy for the last several minutes."

You walk up to the tower and examine it. It looks climbable.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to 116. If it is 17 or less, turn to 76.



In a week of hard marching, you arrive at a point just across the River Shining from Daggerford. It is just before sunset. Behind you are the recently planted fields of the farmers who live in the town. Across the wide, relatively shallow river and rising from the riverbank are the earth-filled mound walls and stone towers of Daggerford. From the riverbank, you can see the tops of the stone walls and the towers of the duke's castle inside the walls. A hundred paces or so downriver is the site of the ford from whence Daggerford received its name, but the river is still too full from the spring runoff to cross it easily. One might as well swim across here, where the river may be deeper but is less wide.

"Ready for another swim?" you ask Braggi with a grin.

Braggi straps his axe to his belt and grins back at you. "I be ready to renew my lessons, swordbrother," he returns. You both wade out into the river. The water still has a trace of winter chill, but your trail-hardened bodies pay no attention.

The sun sets before you reach the opposite shore. You realize that Braggi, still not as proficient in the water as his teacher, has been swept a bit downstream by the current, but you see him climb out of the river safely. The water drips off your armor as you emerge. It's a good thing you've practiced swimming in armor since you were a child.

Your elf eyes see that the River Gate stands open. There are two figures silhouetted in front of it. As you creep closer, you realize that they are Bronwyn—and *you*. Blackeye has assumed your shape for his mission of deceit!

As you watch from the shadows of the wall, you see Blackeye take Bronwyn in his arms. The devil has capitalized on your growing relationship with the duke's daughter that had been hinted at two weeks before when you last saw her!

Now, when Blackeye is alone with Bronwyn and can be confronted with a minimum of confusion—now is the best time to put an end to this charade! Besides, you realize that the sight of this imposter taking Bronwyn in his arms is too much to tolerate for even another minute.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 110. If it is 20 or less, turn to 47.

24

You strap on your father's magnificent sword, which adds 1 to all the fighting skill score rolls you make in the rest of your adventure. Record this fact on your Character Stats Card.

With your father's sword firmly in place, you look at Silverleaf and say, "I thank you and your people for your help, Silverleaf. Such stalwart fighters can only be helpful in Daggerford. If the others agree with you, then I will lead you all to Daggerford to confront Blackeye and his minions." You are cheered by the ready response of the Belcondi tribe.

Four days later, you have marched the tribe cross-country to Daggerford. Not sure of what Blackeye may have been up to in your absence, you leave the tribe at an abandoned farmstead a few miles outside of town. The farmer who owns the farm is obviously away with the duke and the militia, and his family has been sent to Daggerford until he returns.

You and Braggi cross the ford that gives the town its name. Across the river, Daggerford itself seems peaceful enough.

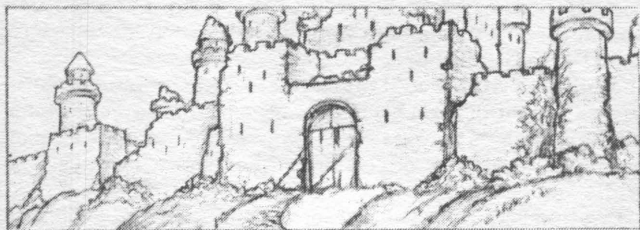
As you approach the River Gate, a voice calls out, "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Kelson Darktreader and a friend," you answer, and the guardsman opens the gate for you. As he does so, he looks

at you in confusion. "Is there some kind of trouble, my friend?" you ask.

"Forgive me, Darktreader, but didn't you just pass through this gate a few minutes ago? Did you leave again by another?"

Turn to 128.



25

Neither man is known to you, nor are you known to them. Yet you do wear the brassard of the duke, and they recognize that as sufficient reason to take you to the duke's camp.

You are led through the busy besieging camp until you reach a cluster of tents and new rough huts that stand under the dagger banner of the duke. The banner of his son, Pwyll, flies next to that of his father.

Your lords' guards recognize you immediately and conduct you to the duke himself. You find him in his command tent, flanked by Pwyll on one side and the wizard Gwydion on the other.

The three listen carefully to your story. Then the duke speaks. "From your story, our poor village faces two related threats, from this devil you knew as Blackeye and from the orc leader, Jagurt Redclaw. We must assume, since the devil said it was going to Daggerford, that the two are connected and the devils intend to have the orcs ravage our town while we besiege Dragonspear."

The duke thinks a moment, then says, "We have only just arrived here at Dragonspear, and most of our troops are still weary from the march. We could march right back, but

that would take another week. We might not have that week. Even if we use Pwyll's troops, who have had some rest, there will be at least four days before we can get help back to the town. Gwydion, do you have a solution to this dilemma?"

"I, myself, have no spell to send help back to Daggerford, Your Grace," the wizard says slowly, "but there are those in the camp who might be able to assist us. Give me two hours, then meet me back here. I shall endeavor to have a solution to the problem."

While you wait, Pwyll takes you to his command hut and orders hot water for a bath and new clothing to wear under your armor. The young heir to Daggerford, anxious to hear every detail of your adventures, plies you with questions while you bathe.

Pwyll orders a light meal for both of you, and then it is time to return to the duke. When you enter the duke's tent, you find three others already there. One you recognize as Piergeiron, the "Paladinson," the only Lord of Waterdeep whose identity is known to the populace and the leader of the forces sent by that city to Dragonspear.

The other two are unknown to you by sight, but they wear the famous white tabards of the Flaming Fist mercenary company, the largest and most important company on the Sword Coast. One is a tall, handsome man with gray eyes and jet-black hair. His companion is a strikingly handsome woman in black robes, bearing wands that show her to be a magic-user.

"Ah, Kelson and Pwyll!" says the duke warmly. "You both know Lord Piergeiron, of course." You bow, and Piergeiron smiles and returns a friendly nod. "May I also introduce Duke Eltan, of Baldur's Gate, and his companion, Moruene?"

You barely manage to hold back a gasp when you realize that these are two of the three leaders of the Flaming Fist. You bow once more, but Eltan steps forward and says, "Let's not stand on ceremony, my friends. The good Gwydion has told us you have a problem, and I think that we can help you solve it. The Lords of Waterdeep seem disinclined to hire the services of my company for this siege, and

my lady and I crave some action.”

He quickly explains that he and his companion were in Daggerford some three years ago—an occasion you missed because you were out hunting in the woods—and therefore Moruene has a clear picture of the town in her mind. Moruene can teleport a limited number of people and their gear to the town.

“To be precise,” he says, “she can transport exactly four people, including herself.” He looks at you and Lord Pwyll and continues. “I propose that she and I be two of those people. It would be best if the party also included two others who are known to the people of Daggerford, so we feel that you, Lord Pwyll, and you, Hunter Kelson, should be the final two in our foursome.”

You eagerly agree. The fame of Eltan and Moruene has spread up and down the Sword Coast, and despite the small numbers of your party, you think you still have a good chance of success, even if Jagurt’s orcs already occupy the town.

In an hour, all of you are ready. If you have lost any hit points, they have been healed by one of the clerics in the camp. You are as fit as you can be when Moruene utters her spell and you vanish from sight.

Instantly you arrive just outside the door of the temple of Lathander. You can hear screams all around you. Almost at your feet lie the bodies of three orcs and a militiaman. Jagurt’s horde is already in the town!

Turn to 107.



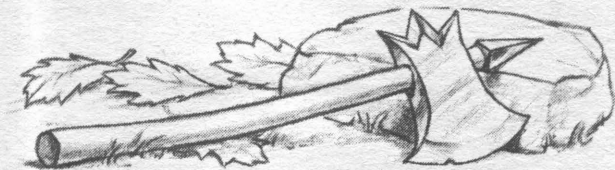
26

You sneak past the lookout and feel confident that most of the weak-eyed orcs will not be able to see you even in the

shaded daylight of the canyon. Suddenly you feel your feet swept out from under you as you are lifted high into the air!

You are high in a tree, entrapped in a mesh net. You were so intent on sneaking past the guards that you crept right into a net trap, no doubt erected to snare just such intruders as yourself. Braggi is caught up beside you, and you watch helplessly as the spear-wielding orcs surround you. A couple of them scramble up the trees holding the trap to cut you down.

Turn to 181.



27

Gathering what little strength remains, you yell, "Braggi, follow me!" and burst through the encircling warriors. Your blade snakes out and chops into the ribs of one barbarian as you pass, and he gives way. Your elf-sight has spotted a clump of trees that you can use for a defended position just off the trail.

The barbarians cannot stop your flight. In seconds, you are in the trees, each of you turned to defend the only entrances to the center of the grove where you stand. You just have time to shout, "I am Kelson, son of Filvendor, and I shall take many of you with me to the Halls of the Dead!" before they attack again.

In the trees, you have a hard time striking a solid blow, but the barbarians have no easier time striking you. You fight for several minutes with no particular advantage to either side before you realize that, despite your superior position, the barbarians can wear both of you down. You know that you are doomed, and you can hear Braggi composing his death song beside you.

The barbarians back off for a moment, no doubt to con-

sider strategy, perhaps the possibility of burning you out of the thicket.

Suddenly you hear a female voice call out a phrase, and you feel the tingle of magic travel over your body. Helplessly you and Braggi fall to the ground, paralyzed.

Turn to 44.

28

The fog stays with you as you climb. You seem to walk for hours, until finally you realize that the ground has become fairly level under your feet. Soon the fog starts to thin out and blow away, and you look around on a bleak plain that sports no plant taller than a bush. From previous trips to this area, you realize you are on the High Moors, Braggi's homeland.

"This be not the way I be intendin' to come home," Braggi says. He shrugs in barbaric resignation. "Ah, well, it be best if we be findin' some shelter."

You look about and see a rise of land a short distance away. You can see a dark area on its flank that looks like a cave. "There," you say, pointing.

"Be careful, swordbrother," says Braggi. "Strange things be dennin' in caves in these regions. Better be lettin' me go in first." You accede to his superior knowledge of these parts and watch him cautiously approach the cave mouth. You take out your bow and ready an arrow.

Braggi approaches the cave mouth cautiously, then stops and sets down his axe. You see him break off a dead branch from a large bush, wrap something around one end of it, and use flint and steel to expertly light the end. Now he has a long-handled torch, just the thing to stick into a hole with who-knows-what living in it.

Holding the torch aloft, he continues his advance. He pokes his head around the edge of the cave's mouth, then lets out a yell as an immense hand tries to grab his arm. The hand misses, and Braggi pulls back, but the torch flies out of his hand. It lands, still burning, on some brush at the side of the cave's mouth.

As Braggi backs away from the cave, you see its resident stalk out after him. It is tall and thin and hideous-looking,

with large, deadly fangs and claws—a troll! You let fly with your arrow and have no trouble hitting such a large target. It roars and pulls the arrow out of its side.

Seeing you, the troll ignores Braggi and charges right at you. You release a second arrow, which also hits the monster, and then have no further chance to shoot as the creature is upon you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **124**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **132**.

29

Even as you rally your remaining men, Derbon falls from his horse, looking like a porcupine from all the arrows in him. The five of you who remain charge a knot of a dozen goblins a few yards up a slope.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to **48**. If it's 16 or less, turn to **139**.

30

You turn and look out over the town. You can see that the villagers and your allies are winning out over the demoralized orcs. By now, every orc must know that Jagurt is dead.

"There will be a great deal of rebuilding to do," says Bronwyn as she moves up beside you and holds your arm. "You and your allies can be a big help here." She looks deep into your eyes.

"I think you realize I was enamored of the false Kelson," Bronwyn continues. "Perhaps he used some devil magic to support his suit. But I think I see enough of the real Kelson to know that I want you here, with me, to help with the rebuilding."

You look at her and realize that, even if you never find a trace of your father and the elves of Daggerford continue to disdain you, you still have a place in this town. At the same time, you know that there is still time to take your place with Drendin and the wild elves and be among true foresters for the rest of your life—a life that Bronwyn, for all her adventuring ways, would not really understand. You



realize that, rather than being neither in one world nor the other, you have a place in both worlds.

You might have to choose between them, but that is the subject of another story. For now, this is the end. ✕



31

The spear point streaks for your chest, and you cannot block it in time. Your armor eases some of the impact, but not enough, and the air is driven from your body. Subtract 10 from your hit point total.

Jagurt yanks the spear out of your body and starts to raise it again. Suddenly he stops and looks somewhere off in the distance, then falls, dead. You see Llewellyn lower his bloody sword after pulling it from the orc's body. The weapon master has returned to the fight!

The standard-bearer swings the long pole at Llewellyn, but the masters-at-arms ducks under it. Then the orc stiffens and falls, with the spear of one of the militiamen in his back. Moving swiftly, Llewellyn grabs the standard and breaks it over his knee. He holds the prize in his upraised hands and shouts in the Common tongue that Jagurt is dead. The orcs who are still alive yowl in fear and run for their lives.

Fortunately Llewellyn is uncut, though he's badly bruised through his plate armor from the power of Jagurt's blows. He shakes his head, then looks at you.

"Kelson? Is that you?" he inquires. You nod in agreement. "Then the oily-tongued ranger we've been entertaining for the last week is really an imposter! Well, that explains a lot!"

"What happened here?" you ask, puzzled.

"Kelson—or rather someone we thought was Kelson—has been wooing Bronwyn for the last week, since he returned with a story about having killed someone called

Jagurt Redclaw and sending his troop of militiamen on to Dragonspear. As far as I can tell, he took Bronwyn down to the River Gate with him tonight, probably on some romantic pretext, and let the orcs in. Then suddenly he turned into a winged devil and hauled Bronwyn off to the castle gate tower!" With that, he looks back toward the gate tower. "He jammed open the gates and cut the portcullis ropes. I had to defend the gate as best I could."

"And well you did," says Pwyll as he wipes off his sword on the garment of one of the slain orcs.

But you have no time for congratulations at the moment. "So the monster is up there?" you ask, pointing toward the tower.

"As far as I know," Llewellyn answers. "I've been rather busy the last several minutes."

You walk up to the tower and examine it. It looks climbable.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **152**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **131**.

32

You creep up the stairs, with Braggi right behind you. At the top, you see two figures standing in the otherwise empty room, gazing out at the hills to the northeast. As you creep closer, you realize that the figures are Bronwyn—and *you*. Blackeye has unquestionably assumed your shape for his mission!

As you creep closer, Blackeye takes Bronwyn in his arms. The devil in your shape has apparently taken advantage of the affection the duke's daughter hinted at two weeks before, when you last saw her!

Now, when Blackeye can be confronted with a minimum of confusion, is the best time to put an end to this charade. Besides, the sight of this imposter taking Bronwyn in his arms is too much to tolerate for another minute.

You leap for Blackeye, at the same time knocking Bronwyn out of his arms. Braggi follows, grabbing Bronwyn. The imposter keeps his feet and sneers at you, then pulls an exact duplicate of your own falchion from his

scabbard. He growls, "So the doppelganger has managed to follow me here. Now, foul creature, prepare to die and show your true nature at last!"

"Liar!" you cry. "It is you who are the imposter, and I shall prove it with your blood!"

The creature advances on you, waving the falchion menacingly. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **180**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **196**.

33

Quickly you kick your feet free from your stirrups and land lightly on your feet as your faithful horse falls, three arrows taking the life from its body. Even as you land, you see two more horses go down and their riders scramble to their feet. Another horse gallops past with an empty saddle. You can see the body of its rider, Felis, on the path behind you. The fourth rider, Barth, spots you and yells, "I'll pick you up, sir!" and leans forward in his saddle to help swing you aboard behind him. Before you can shout, "Save yourself!" the brave youngster is feathered with two arrows and his horse with four more. They fall in a heap at your feet, dead.

You realize there's no retreating now. If you want to engage in an archery duel with the goblins, turn to **106**. If you prefer to attack the nearest cluster of goblins hand-to-hand, turn to **99**.



34

It is nearly evening. You sneak into a recently abandoned hut in the warrens of the Rivermen's Quarter, then send Braggi out to gather what food and information he can. He returns shortly with disquieting news.

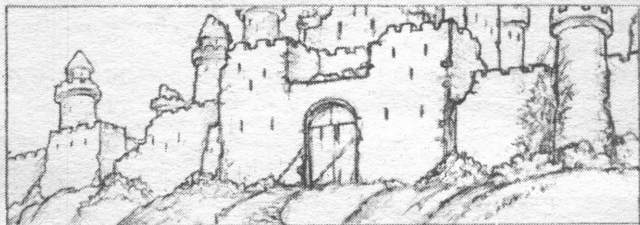
“It be seemin’ that yar doppelganger be makin’ many friends in the town. Worse for ya, swordbrother, he be seen much with the duke’s daughter.” You suck in your breath at this confirmation of your fears. “I be thinkin’ this devil be in the best possible place to be lettin’ them orcs in if they attack here. We better be stoppin’ him now, before Jagurt be bringin’ the orcs here to be backin’ him up.”

“Any suggestion, my friend?” you ask.

“There be more than one way to be gettin’ by a castle wall. My father be tellin’ me the best way is to be gettin’ over a wall when ya can’t be gettin’ through it.”

Seeing no other alternative, you agree quickly. That night, before the moon rises over the horizon, you are at the bottom of the north wall of the duke’s castle. Braggi swings a line with a grapple hook attached to it once, twice, over his head, then hurls it with all his might. There is a muffled *thunk* as it lands, and Braggi pulls the line taut till it hooks in the battlements. With a thankful grin, you start up the line, with Braggi close behind.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **104**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **199**.



35

“Nay, Silverleaf,” you say. “The menace that awaits in Daggerford does not need all of your swords. Braggi and I should be sufficient. Instead, I ask that the Belcondi try to make peace with the Girondi. There is no purpose in humankind fighting each other on the High Moors when the goblins and orcs are so numerous.”

“There be much in what you say, Filvendorson,” she replies, then invites you and Braggi to spend the rest of the night with them. You spend some of the time reacquainting yourself with your father’s sword. In game terms, it adds 1 to any fighting skill score roll you attempt for the rest of the game. Record this fact on your Character Stats Card, then turn to **23**.

36

In a flurry of moves that would have made your father proud of you, you duck around one spear and stab its owner, spin to slice open the abdomen of another goblin, and parry another’s small axe with your long dagger before embedding your falchion blade in its collarbone.

Give yourself 1 experience point for dispatching three goblins in this deadly hillside fight. At the same time, subtract 12 from your hit point total to represent the damage done to you by the remaining goblins. If you have no more hit points, turn to **190**.

If you still have hit points, all the goblins are either dead or running away. But the fight has exhausted you, and even Rodrick has fallen. You look at the top of the hillside as the rain of arrows begins again. You try to race to the top, but you stop your weary struggle when another dozen goblins, armed with billhooks and spears, charge over the hillside toward you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **59**. If it’s 19 or less, turn to **198**.

37

Four days later, you are waiting on top of the River Gate tower for the attack. Yesterday riders from several villages between Daggerford and the Misty Forest brought tales of an immense army of orcs marching toward Daggerford, stopping to loot only those villages directly in their path. The villagers’ small numbers have been added to your defenders, but nothing has been heard of Braggi or the other messengers.

If you lost any hit points in previous combats, you have

been healed by the priestesses of the Earth Mother, Chauntea, and once again have the same number you started with.

It is the dark of the moon, but your elven eyes pick out the round leather boats called coracles, each overflowing with orcs, crossing the river to the town. They are ignoring the ford in favor of a more direct approach to the River Gate. You watch as the lead boats come ashore. The invading army is led by a large orc, bigger than any of the others. You guess that must be Jagurt.

From the shore, Jagurt looks at the River Gate, which you have left slightly open. He seems surprised not to see Blackeye, but he shrugs and motions for his followers to creep toward the gate.

Suddenly the river wall is alight with torches hurled from the wall to illuminate the orcs below. This is followed immediately by a hail of arrows from the militia. At the same time, the River Gate slams shut in the face of Jagurt and his followers. You draw your bow and take careful aim at Jagurt.

Roll two dice and add the result to your archery skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **163**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **150**.



38

Blackeye is too involved with Bronwyn to take notice of you. His first clue to your presence is your battle cry as you attack from only a few feet away.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **169**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **186**.



39

Deciding to discover what gossip there is in the town before confronting the imposter in the castle, you go to the best place you know for the kind of information you seek—the Lady Luck Tavern, gathering place for every adventurer for a hundred miles around.

As you enter the tavern, you are hailed by Owenden Darylson, the owner. “Hail, Kelson! We have not seen much of you since you returned from the forest.”

Your reply is cautious. “I want to introduce you to my friend, Braggi Quickaxe, whom I met in the woods and who comes to Daggerford with a dire message.”

Looking at Braggi, Owenden says, “I fear that, despite Lord Llewellyn’s newfound liking for you, Kelson, he is still too fastidious in his tastes to welcome a High Moors barbarian as a guest at the castle. Welcome, Quickaxe. Any companion of Kelson’s is a brother to us all.” Owenden’s words would have caused insult at any other time, but now they are welcome. You order ale and arrange for a room for Braggi, then continue to engage Owenden in conversation. As virtually everyone aspiring to adventurer status has already been conscripted into the duke’s army and taken to Dragonspear, the innkeeper has plenty of time to talk.

After an hour of being filled in on local gossip, you and Braggi leave the tavern, ostensibly to obtain some equipment for Braggi from your quarters in the castle.

“It seems that my double has taken my place rather thoroughly in this town. Indeed, he has managed to make friends in the castle that I never had. Exposing him will be a difficult task.”

“Worse for ya, swordbrother, he be seen much with the duke’s daughter.” You suck in your breath and curse to yourself at Braggi’s perception. Not only elfkin are keen-eyed.

Braggi nods at this confirmation of his fears. “I be thinkin’ this devil be in the best possible place to let them orcs in if they attack here. We better be stoppin’ him now, before Jagurt be bringin’ the orcs here to be backin’ him up.”

“Any suggestions, my friend?” you ask, at a loss to know what to try next.

“There be more than one way to be gettin’ by a castle wall. My father be tellin’ me the best way is to get over a wall when ya can’t get through it.” Seeing no other alternative, you agree.

That night, before the moon rises over the horizon, you are at the bottom of the north wall of the duke’s castle. Braggi swings a line with a grapple hook attached once, twice, over his head, then hurls it with all his might. There is a muffled *thunk* as it settles, hooked in the battlements. With a thankful grin, you start up the line, Braggi close behind.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **104**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **199**.

40

Before the devil-bear can recover from Bronwyn’s surprise magical missile attack, you are on it, your father’s blade almost moving by itself in your hand, seeking out the weak spots in the devil’s body. The creature roars and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, and the devil-bear slowly slips to the ground. Even as its life ichor pumps out of its body, its form dissolves into mist.

You look up to see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she must realize what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows now that the Kelson who had romanced her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. She is obvi-

ously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

She doesn't know what to do about the feelings she still has for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who had inspired them is dead, but the Kelson who rescued her now stands before her, a veritable stranger.

It's obviously a situation you will both have to deal with in the future. For now, though, both Jagurt and Blackeye are dead, and Dragonspear's threat to Daggerford is over at last. ✕



41

Dendrach gets off the first shot, but your first arrow is barely behind his. The wand on the far right splits from his arrow and the wand farthest left from yours. Dendrach responds by splitting the wand next to the one you split, in an attempt to disrupt your shooting pattern, only to find that you have split the next farthest to the right at the same time. You shoot again and again, not bothering to keep count, until you realize that there are no more unsplit wands.

Checking your quiver, you realize that you have shot seven arrows. You distinctly remember missing with one, but you are not sure about several of your other shots. If even one of the others missed, then Dendrach has beaten you in the contest.

Dendrach looks at his quiver, then waits impassively. The elves who go to check the wands return in minutes. One holds five wands with arrows sticking out of them. The other holds six similar wands. You can tell that the five all hold arrows with your fletching—Dendrach has won the contest!

Your opponent comes over to congratulate you on your shooting, but you find it difficult to accept this defeat in good grace. Still, there is nothing you can do about it. You and Braggi gather your gear and set off to the south, only to find you have a companion.

"Your tale of town life intrigued me, Kelson Darktreader," says Drendin. "I have never been out of the forest. I wish to see what attracts these elves who live near men."

The three of you hurry along the riverbank as fast as you can. After a night of travel and a day of rest, you continue on, only to see the unmistakable glow of a campfire ahead of you. Going around it would take too much time, and you have little to spare. You can approach openly by turning to 137, or you can attempt to sneak closer to see who it is by turning to 156.

42

Evening is rapidly approaching. You have sneaked into a recently abandoned hut in the warrens of the Rivermen's Quarter. Braggi has already gathered some food and information and returned with disquieting news.

"Yar doppelganger be makin' many friends in the town. Worse for ya, swordbrother, he be seen much with the duke's daughter." You suck in your breath at this confirmation of your fears as Braggi continues. "I be thinkin' this devil be in the best possible place to let them orcs into the town if they attack. We better be stoppin' him now, before Jagurt be bringin' the orcs here."

"Suggestion, my friend?" you ask, at a loss to know what to try next.

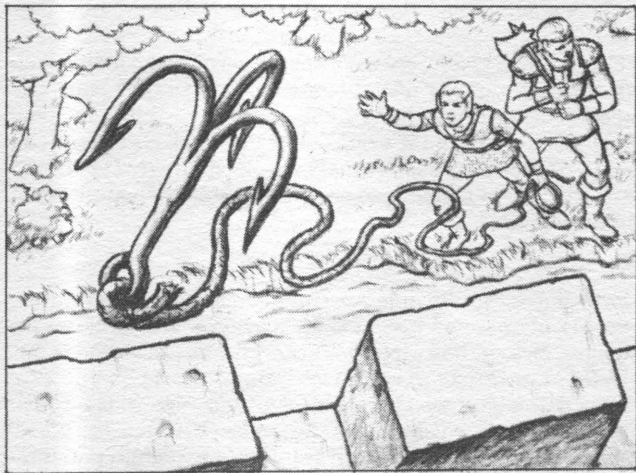
"There be more than one way to be gettin' past a castle wall. My father be tellin' me the best way is to go over a wall when ya can't go through it."

Seeing no other alternative, you nod your head in silent agreement.

That night, before the dying moon rises over the horizon, you stand beneath the north wall of the duke's castle. Braggi swings a line with a grapple hook attached once, twice, over his head, then hurls it with all his might. There

is a muffled *thunk* from high above as it settles and hooks itself in the battlements. With a thankful grin, you start up the rope, with Braggi close behind.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 142. If it is 20 or less, turn to 199.



43

The air is full of arrows. In seconds, your remaining companions fall. Finally you are hit several more times and you, too, slump to the ground. As blackness washes over you, you hear a sudden flurry of human war shouts and goblin yells. Could help be coming after all?

Turn to 75.

44

Strong arms lift you and your friend and haul you away. Helpless, you can see only mist-shrouded fragments of the forest go by. After a short distance, you are dumped unceremoniously at the feet of a tall, bushy-bearded barbarian wearing a bearskin and a young woman wearing the garb

of a druid. It must have been her magic that held you fast. You know that the tree-worshipping druids are the only magic-users barbarians normally tolerate in their immediate company.

The two barbarians look at you, and the woman notices your elflike features. She studies you for another moment, then makes a gesture and speaks another phrase you cannot understand.

Suddenly you discover that you can move again. Your hand reaches and finds an empty scabbard. Across the fire from the barbarian leaders, you see a barbarian warrior examining your falchion.

"Who be you, elfkin?" asks the woman.

You respond, "I am Kelson, son of Filvendor, who is known throughout the High Moors as a friend to all tribes. Who are you to attack us so savagely?"

"Ah be called Silverleaf," says the woman, "and this be our warchief, Dowd Bearslayer."

You look at the man and realize that he refuses to meet your eyes. Then you notice that the sword he is wearing is not the crude barbarian work that his followers often carry instead of axes. Instead, it's a very familiar weapon indeed. You last saw it years ago, on the hip of your father, as he left on his last adventure into the High Moors!

Your mission weighs on your mind. You seem safe enough so far, and you know that you should simply accept this theft and be on your way if the barbarians will let you. But you cannot let this swaggering warchief continue to possess your father's sword! You tell yourself that its enchantment would be of use to you on your travels, but deep down you know that you really just want this last part of your lost father at your side. Having found it, you cannot let it go!

"You have taken my weapon," you say, "but I see one that I would like even better." You stare at the chieftain until he is forced to look at you. "You bear my father's sword, warrior. I want to know how you came by it and by what right you wear it."

"My father be giving it to me, elfkin," Dowd Bearslayer mutters.

“And how did he come by it, manling?”

“Ah be not needin’ to answer to a half-man who runs with the Girondi!” he says with a sneer. “Be throwin’ these two into the cage with the other animals to sell at Water-deep.”

Before you can move, strong hands grab you and march you away.

Turn to 111.



45

The creature roars and attacks, but you duck under its massive claws and stab upward with your sword. The devil roars with pain and strikes downward on your shoulder.

You draw your sword out of the wound and slice at the thing’s foreleg, inflicting a terrible wound. Blackeye screams with rage and suddenly lunges, grasping you in a bear hug. You struggle for all your might, but the monster is too strong. Slowly it crushes the life from your body.

Your head swims as you realize you are dying. As the last iota of life oozes from your body, you hear the whine of arrows. The monster roars as their points strike home. By turning into the monster, the devil insured your death, but Llewellyn’s archers now have no trouble determining who is the monster and who is Kelson.

With your dying gasp, you know that Daggerford, at least, is saved from Blackeye’s treachery. ✘

46

The ground goes by at an incredible pace. Night and day, barely distinguishable from night in the gloom of the forest, pass several times. Exhausted, you lose track of exactly how many days go by. Somehow you manage to keep the demon horse away from any streams, but its pace is untir-

ing. Finally the blur of trees is gone, and you are out of the forest and riding toward some distant campfires. Looking back toward the forest, you see that dawn is approaching.

Suddenly the horse realizes that it can see the pale outline of its shadow before it. Screaming as no mortal horse could scream, it wheels and races back toward the shade of the forest.

With all your might, you strain to hold its head back to break its stride and keep it from reaching the long shadows of the forest edge.

You feel the full sun break over the top of the forest even through your eyelids. The direct sunlight hurts your eyes, but that is nothing compared to what it does to the horse. It screams once more, and you land on your feet as it disappears in a cloud of mist. As you suspected, it could not survive against the full sunlight, unfiltered by the leaves of the forest.

Turn to 178.

47

Blackeye seems absorbed in Bronwyn, but your anxiety makes you careless. Even as you curse yourself for stumbling, Blackeye turns and sees you. You know that his devil eyes are as keen as yours in the dark.

"An intruder! Quickly, my love, alert the guards!" he says as he pushes Bronwyn toward the open gate. She stumbles for a moment, then straightens and races for the gate.

As she disappears through the gate, Blackeye laughs quietly and begins to change. First you see his facial features alter and twist. Then his entire body writhes and changes, and you are suddenly confronting a devil with a bear's shape, ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 90. If it's 18 or less, turn to 7. Remember to add 1 point to your fighting skill score because you possess your father's enchanted sword.

The frenzy of your charge puts you in the middle of the goblins before they realize what is going on. Even as they drop their bows and either run or haul out their spears and hand axes, your falchion descends, and a goblin head leaps from its neck and rolls down the hill.

Glancing around quickly, you see that Felis fell to the barrage of arrows before you ever reached the goblins, but your remaining three companions are laying about themselves with a will. You realize that half your little force is dead because you trusted Blackeye! Their deaths are your fault. They must be avenged!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or less, turn to **70**. If it's 18 or more, turn to **91**.



Blackeye seems absorbed in Bronwyn, but your anxiety makes you careless. Even as you curse yourself for stumbling, Blackeye turns and sees you.

"An intruder! Guards! Guards!" As he yells and releases Bronwyn, she spins and, quick-witted as ever, spots Braggi looming beside you. Before Braggi can reach her, she speaks a word and moves her hand in a spell-casting gesture. Instantly the spell freezes Braggi in place.

Then you are on Blackeye, and Bronwyn can see you clearly in the torchlight. "Two Kelsons!" she cries. "Help! The doppelganger is among us!"

"Yes, my love," says Blackeye, "And I shall soon teach him the folly of impersonating me."

"Liar!" you cry. "It is you who are the imposter, and I shall prove it with your blood!"

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 180. If it is 18 or less, turn to 196.

50

You creep past a sentry and find cover where you can see the faces of some of the band in the reflected firelight. "It's my old war band!" Braggi whispers excitedly.

Braggi stands before you can respond. "Who be there?" comes the surprised query from one of those gathered about the fire.

Braggi yells, "Dykkon Trueblade! It be I, Braggi Quick-axe!"

The camp is suddenly alive with waking men, and you are quickly surrounded by barbarians. They greet you as an old friend, though you do not recognize them, but they look distrustfully at Drendin, who returns their gaze with unabashed curiosity. You realize that these barbarians are indeed Braggi's former war band, the same ones who saved your life more than a week ago!

The barbarians invite you to join them at their firesite. They ask you if you have any news, and you tell your story. It takes no persuasion to win these grim fighting men to your cause. As Dykkon says, "If the elves be too full of themselves to be helpin', we be showin' ya that the Girondi be ready to help against Redclaw's evil plots!" Drendin takes this insult to her people with good grace. She had already come to the same conclusion.

Turn to 71.

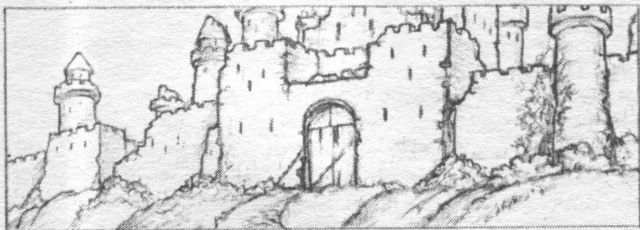
51

You leave the camp after searching through the orc supplies for anything that might be edible by humans. In a couple of hours, you are miles away from the camp. As you walk, evening approaches, and the mists for which the Misty Forest is named begin to gather in the hollows and among the trees.

In another hour, Braggi can no longer see, but with your elf-sight you can still make out the trail. You're anxious to reach Daggerford as soon as possible, so you hold on to

Braggi's arm and continue to walk. Soon the fog has become even thicker, and even your elf-sight begins to fail you. You stumble into a fork in the path you are following. Is the proper trail to the right or to the left?

Roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **155**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **184**.



52

As you ride up the little-used trail, you remember your interview with the duke only a short week before.

The castle and town of Daggerford had been rife with rumors of war and atrocity. The ancient ruin of Dragon-spear Castle to the south had blossomed with the horns of a thousand devils, and armies of men and elves were marching on the ruin to try to contain the outburst. Already the duke's son, Pwyll, had ridden out with half the town's militia, including all the other rangers and foresters, to add their strength to the forces from the great northern city of Waterdeep.

You had naturally expected to be included among Lord Pwyll's advance force. Failing that, you had expected the duke to include you with the main force, which was to leave soon.

Entering the modest audience hall of the Duke of Daggerford, you found Duke Pryden sitting at his council table with his daughter, Bronwyn; his court wizard, Gwydion; and his master-of-arms, Lord Llewellyn Longhand.

At your low bow, the duke boomed, "Don't stand on ceremony, Kelson." He always says that to you, but you know

that, like any human, he enjoys the courtesies at the same time he pretends to disdain them. "Come and sit down. We've been waiting for you," he continued.

The duke was dressed in full war gear, and even old Gwydion, who had hardly ventured out of his study in ten years, was ready for a long ride.

"I am about to lead the rest of the available militia to Dragonspear," explained the duke. "Gwydion will accompany me."

You could see that the old wizard and adviser could think of many things he would rather do, but he couldn't very well refuse the command of his liege lord.

"I am leaving Lord Llewellyn in charge of the defense of the castle and town—and my daughter." The duke paused to glance at his daughter. As he did so, her face screwed up in distaste at the thought of being nursemaided by the old master-of-arms. When she realized that her father was looking at her, she suddenly resumed the dutiful air of an obedient daughter. At the same time, she winked at you with the eye the others could not see.

"Normally I would take you along with me to Dragonspear, Kelson. Your skills could be of great value there. But I think we both know that there is another task that is equally important and that would make even better use of your talents."

"You mean the rumors about the orcs gathering in the Misty Forest, my lord?" You phrased this as a question, but you knew that you were right.

"Precisely. I want you to go to the forest, find out the reason that they are gathering, and either put a stop to it or learn enough about their exact location and plans that we can mount an expedition to put a stop to any mischief before it starts." The mission sounded like just what you wanted. But then the duke complicated things.

"I wish I could send a full troop along with you, Kelson, but I can't skimp on the forces going to Dragonspear. You may have six followers, and you may choose them from the cream of those who are still here. The rest will follow me to Dragonspear."

You tried not to show your dismay at being saddled with a

troop of human followers, and the duke did not seem to notice. Bronwyn, however, seemed to have noticed your distress.

“Father,” began Bronwyn, “perhaps I could accompany Kelson and his men to the Misty Forest. You know that I know some magic . . .”

The duke frowned. “My child, Gwydion speaks well of your aptitude for the magical arts, but I cannot possibly risk both my heirs at the same time. Since your brother has already left for Dragonspear, you must stay here at our home.”

You were both surprised and pleased by Bronwyn’s offer to join you. Besides her charm and undoubted magical ability, she had some experience with adventuring before her father reined in her activities. You hadn’t even been aware she knew you existed, and the look she gave made you wonder if it was more than her love of adventure that made her want to accompany you.

It quickly became obvious that the duke wanted to be alone to speak with his headstrong daughter. You guessed it would develop into a long argument. Feeling ill-at-ease, you begged your leave, saying that you wanted to choose your men and leave quickly. Despite your eagerness to depart, you were surprised to find that you regretted that Lady Bronwyn would not be accompanying you.

Turn to **103**.

53

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **129**. If it’s 17 or less, turn to **134**.

54

The spear point is heading straight for your chest, but you knock it away with your sword and spin along its length, ending up right next to Jagurt, your dagger in his belly. Jagurt yanks himself away from you and tries to bring up the spear again, then stops and stares blankly somewhere off in the distance and finally falls.

You duck away as the standard-bearer tries to hit you

with the standard. Suddenly the orc stiffens and falls, with one of Drendin's arrows in it. Moving swiftly, you snatch the falling standard, lift it high in your upraised hand, and yell in Blacktongue that Jagurt is dead. Then you throw the standard to the ground and trample on it. The orcs that have not yet fallen yowl in fear and begin to run.

You hear a moan of pain from Llewellyn and go to help him to his feet. He's not seriously injured, though he's badly bruised from the power of Jagurt's blows. He shakes his head, then looks oddly at you.

"Kelson?" he says weakly. You nod. "Then the oily-tongued ranger who's been among us for the last week is really an imposter! Well, that certainly explains a lot!"

"What happened, Llewellyn?" you ask.

"Kelson—or rather the person we thought was Kelson—has been wooing Bronwyn for the last week, since he returned with a story about having killed someone called Jagurt Redclaw, then sending his troop of militiamen on to Dragonspear. As far as I can tell, he took Bronwyn down to the River Gate tonight and let the orcs in. Then he suddenly turned into some sort of winged devil and flew Bronwyn off to the castle gate tower!" With that, Llewellyn looks around at the gate tower at his back. "Before he left, he jammed open the gates and cut the portcullis ropes. When I discovered it, I tried to defend the gate as best I could."

"So the monster is up there in the tower?" you ask.

"As far as I know," he answers. "I've managed to keep rather busy the last several minutes."

You walk over to the tower base and examine it. It looks climbable.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **116**. If it's 17 or less, turn to **76**.



55

As you creep closer to the hut, one of the orc lieutenants suddenly barks an insult at Jagurt and turns to stalk away. Before it can take two steps, Jagurt snatches up a javelin leaning against the hut and hurls it into the orc's back. The lieutenant falls with a quiet, gurgling gasp. The two orcs stare at the body for a long moment, then resume their conversation. You think to yourself that all is not friendly among the orcs, which comes as no real surprise.

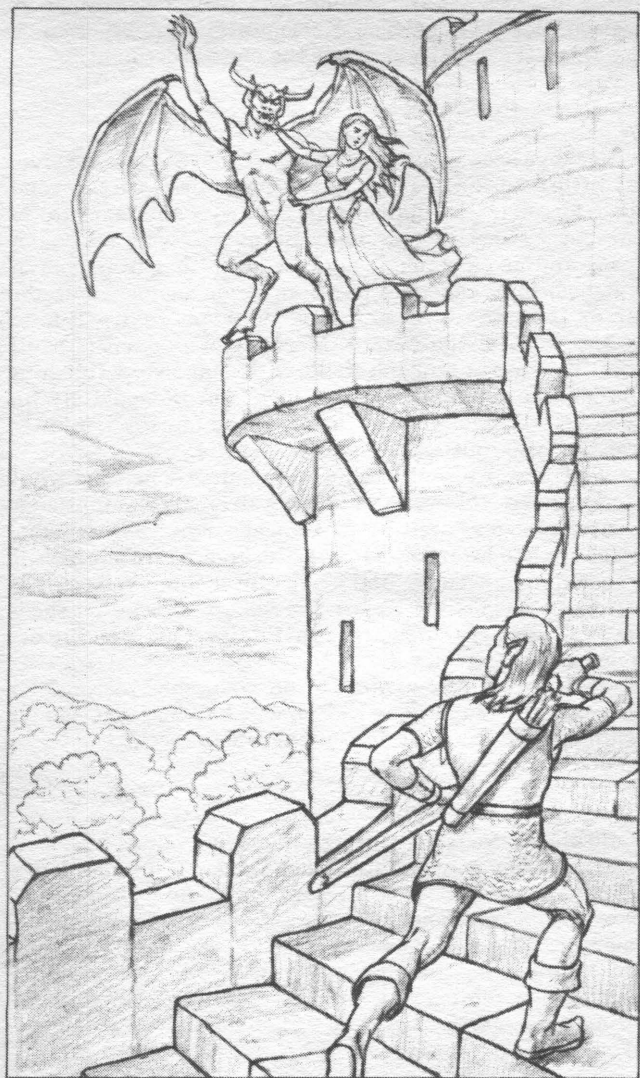
No orc or goblin sees you as you reach the side of the hut. Jagurt and the other lieutenant are still immersed in their discussion when you and Braggi suddenly step around the hut. "Turn and face an avenger!" you announce and charge toward Jagurt, with Braggi right behind you, heading for the lieutenant.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to 74. If it is 16 or less, turn to 117.

56

You try to stay in the shadows, out of sight, but Blackeye sees you and hisses in rage. "So, you survived my little trap, did you? Well, I shall have the best of you yet, little forester!" He snatches up Bronwyn and leaps to the parapet. "I shall fly the lady Bronwyn to Dragonspear and use her magic against her own father from there!" But before he can launch himself into flight, an arrow skewers his throat. Somehow Drendin got a bead on him from far below and hit him with a perfectly placed shot. As he staggers back, you leap at him and strike with your sword. He crumbles at your feet, and his body begins to dissolve. "That's for the militiamen in the canyon!" you declare.

"Well done, Kelson!" exclaims Bronwyn. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to the real Kelson for rescuing her from her mistake.



But she does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 30.

57

Blackeye sees you and hisses in rage. "So, you survived my little trap, did you? Well, I shall be your death this time, little forester." He snatches up Bronwyn and leaps to the parapet. "I shall fly the Lady Bronwyn away to Dragonspear and use her magic against her father from there!" But before he can take off, nine green magical missiles streak through the air and strike him. You realize it must be the work of the wizard, Moruene. The devil is badly hurt. You leap at him and strike with your sword, finishing the job. He crumbles at your feet, and immediately his body begins to dissolve. "That's for the militiamen in the canyon," you mutter.

"Well done, Kelson!" Bronwyn exclaims. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who had inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 203.

58

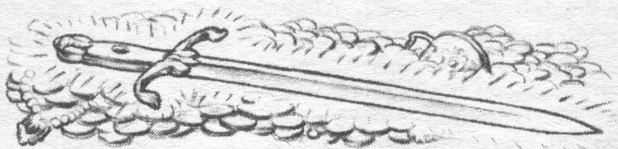
You slide noiselessly through the fog-shrouded forest. At one point, you sneak right under the eyes of a distracted barbarian warrior. As you leave him behind, Braggi hazards a whisper. "Belcondi tribe . . . my tribe's traditional enemies. It be well we be avoidin' them." He gives you a broad wink.

Two hours later, you are still trying to make your way through the forest. There is a full moon somewhere above,

and its radiance lights up the fog-shrouded forest for your elf eyes. Braggi often has to be led, but even virtually sightless, he is as stealthy as you.

Suddenly you hear more voices in the fog. This time they are the high-pitched tones of orcs and goblins on the hunt! It sounds as if there are too many to fight. Your only chance is to use your stealth and the darkness of the forest to evade them.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **193**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **188**.



59

You sidestep the first attacker, then cut with your nocked and bloody falchion and knock him flying down the hill. But you are too weary and slow. Even as you straighten to meet the next foe, goblin weapons pierce you in four more places.

Subtract 16 from your hit point total. If you have no more hit points, turn to **190**.

If you still have hit points, you straighten and relish the look of fright in the faces of your attackers as you run one through with the dagger in your left hand. Turn to **18**.

60

Blackeye is too involved with Bronwyn to notice you. His first intimation of your presence is when you scream your battle cry as you attack from only feet away.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **145**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **93**.

61

You are surrounded by one of those walls of fog from which the Misty Forest gets its name. The path you are fol-

lowing starts to climb a somewhat overgrown spiral path of weathered stones. Something about the stones sets up a response in your elven body. You continue to follow the spiral trace of stones around and around a hill.

Curious now, you finally reach the top of the hill and see a circle of standing stones through the fog. Each stone is more than three men can move, and each stands upright. Not a one has fallen. Your elf-vision picks out a faint nimbus of power around each stone that connects with the stone to each side of it.

"It's a sanctuary!" you exclaim. "I remember my father telling me of these places. They were established ages ago as sanctuaries against the forces of evil. Most have fallen long ago."

Braggi looks about slowly. Then his barbarian practicality comes to the fore, and he begins to set up a camp. "There be some places like this on the moors, but I never be seein' one with all the stones still standin'."

You eat some of your dried provisions, then you tell Braggi to get some sleep. You will wake him before morning to take his watch.

An hour later, Braggi is asleep, though you know that even as tired as he is, his sleep is light, alert to danger. As you watch, you see the fog begin to clear from the forest. At almost exactly the same time, you see a white horse move into the cleared area outside the standing stones.

The horse is a stallion, proud and free, and its white coat is like silver. Even though you prefer to travel on foot, you realize that this is an animal the like of which you have never seen, and that it is the answer to your need to return to Daggerford immediately. Turn to 197.



Having wounded you badly, Jagurt no longer has any fear of you. He swings a blow at you, obviously intended to take your head off your shoulders. You demonstrate his mistake by summoning up your will and ducking under his blow, then driving your dagger into his side, where he has no armor. The orc leader looks at you blankly, then his eyes cross and he falls at your feet.

You look about you and see that the orcs are fleeing as fast as they can. Everywhere on the field are barbarians and hastily armed farmers, gleefully hunting down the panic-stricken and leaderless orcs.

You see Braggi approaching you over the orc corpses strewn on the ground. "What took you so long?" you ask with a grin, then darkness swirls over your eyes and you collapse in his arms.

Turn to 77.

The camp is aswarm with confused orcs. You steal past several of them as you make your way for the hut, but suddenly you are confronted by an orc sentry! Even as it draws its axe, it yells, "Intruders!"

You cannot possibly get to Jagurt now. You turn to run, outdistancing the pursuing orc sentry. But before you can attain the crest of the canyon wall once more, you suddenly feel your feet go out from under you as you are swept high into the air!

You are entrapped in a large net. You were so intent on escaping that you ran right into a net trap, no doubt erected to stop just such intruders as yourself. Braggi is caught up beside you. You watch helplessly as the orcs surround you, and a couple of them scramble up the trees that hold the trap to cut you down.

You are dragged, trussed up like swine to the slaughter, before Jagurt Redclaw. The orc leader sneers.

"So, human intruders. We shall make you pay dearly for attacking me!"

"Brave talk from an orc who attacked a mere seven men with an entire army from ambush a week ago," you taunt

him. "Are you sure you have enough advantage to do the job this time?"

Jagurt looks more closely at you, then recognition dawns in his beady eyes. "So, the brave huntsman was not killed, as my followers reported." He turns to Braggi. "And this must be one of those barbarians who interrupted us before we could be sure of your death." He looks back at you, feels the bandage where his minions have bound his wounded arm, and makes a decision.

"Kill them both!" he says, and turns away as the orc spears jab through the mesh of the net. Your last thoughts are of unprotected Daggerford and the devastation that Jagurt will surely wreak there! ☒



64

You draw your falchion and fighting dagger and await the barbarian attack. In seconds, a half-dozen shapes loom out of the fog.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 173. If it is 18 or less, turn to 102.

65

You try to drive Jagurt back with a furious flurry of blows, but you are too weak from your injuries. The huge orc leader simply lets the ineffective blows bounce off his armor as he smashes you to the ground with his scimitar. You know you are slain.

Jagurt pushes your falling body away from him and raises his sword triumphantly to the sky. Suddenly his victory shout is silenced when he hears war cries behind him.

As darkness steals the last of your life, you can see the glint of swords in the torchlight as Braggi and his reinforcements hit the orc rear defenses. At least you know that Jagurt will be destroyed and Daggerford saved. Then you know no more. ✘

66

You check to see that no one is looking in your direction as you bring out your elf bow and nock a bodkin-tipped war arrow. You take careful aim at his neck and let the bowstring loose, and the arrow streaks to its target. But at the instant you fire, Jagurt turns and raises his arm! The arrow impales his arm and shoulder, but misses his neck. Jagurt howls in pain and anger.

“Half the camp be wakin’ now, swordbrother. What shall we be doin’?” asks Braggi as he hefts his axe and looks around at the sudden bustle of activity in the camp. You ignore him momentarily as you try to get off another shot at Jagurt, but it’s too late. The huge leader ducks back into his hut.

Standing and fighting here is bound to get you killed. You can either attempt to get to the hut to finish the job before the orcs get organized, or you can run for it. If you chose to follow up your attack and go to the hut, turn to 95. If you run for it, turn to 171.

67

With a shout, you and Pwyll wade into the middle of the orcs. You cut down one who turns to meet this new threat. Another orc sticks its spear between your legs and tries to trip you, but your sword shatters the orc’s spear shaft. Then Pwyll shatters the skull of the orc.

Ahead of you, Llewellyn falls before Jagurt’s deadly scimitar. “Jagurt!” you shout. “Turn and face your doom!”

The surprised orc commander turns to meet you. Beside him, you can see a smaller orc holding a standard, from which dangles the severed claw of some monster—obviously the totem symbol of Jagurt’s clan. Jagurt roars his defiance and takes a swipe at you that you just manage to duck under.

Jagurt is strong and fast, but he has little art with his weapon. He swings his scimitar at you once more, but you deflect it with your dagger. Before he can bring his keen-edged weapon around for another swing, you move in close, your dagger catching the scimitar on the backswing and your enchanted sword stabbing for his ribs. Jagurt attempts to kick you away, but you avoid it. Your sword bites deep through the orc's scaled armor, but not quite deep enough. Jagurt roars and spins away from you before you can follow up.

Suddenly he hurls his scimitar at you and snatches up a spear from a fallen fighter while you duck under the sword. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 6. If it is 18 or less, turn to 31.



68

You sleep in a more pleasant section of the cave and awake the next morning to take stock of your position. Right now, you are stuck in the High Moors. You have inadvertently traveled in exactly the wrong direction to try to warn Daggerford about Blackeye and the orcs. You cannot possibly reach the town overland before the orcs do. There is only one other possibility.

You must go north to the River Shining and use some river transportation to follow the spring floods, which are already beginning to subside, to Daggerford. Your chances of reaching Daggerford in time are scant, but they're better than if you made the overland trip.

Braggi concurs with your plan, and the two of you set off across the moors in the ground-eating walk you both know so well. In two days, you are back in the northernmost reaches of the Misty Forest. Only a short distance sepa-

rates you from the river. At night, you approach the river.

Roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **166**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **5**.

69

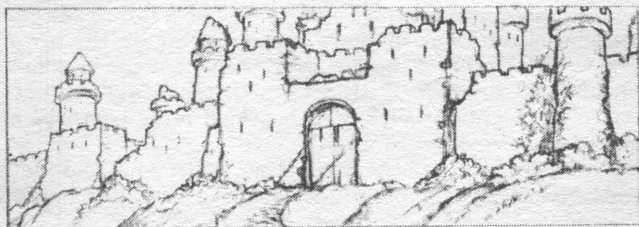
You quickly scan the area for the best possible defensive position, and suddenly you realize that there is a hairline crack in one of the rocks, a crack that is too straight and fine to be natural. Following it, you realize that it's a door right in the rock face! At one point in the side of the door, about waist-high, are two depressions that look like handholds to open the door.

"Braggi," you say, "quick! There's a door in this rock! Try to open it!" Braggi's eyes are only human, but he sees the door when you point it out to him.

Kneeling, Braggi works his hands into the depressions and pulls mightily, but his hands slip away and he falls at your feet. Standing again, he says, "There be fingerholds here, but they be too small for me to be fittin' my hands into them. You try it, swordbrother!"

He watches the assembling goblins while you kneel and fit your hands into the slots. They fit, but just barely. The handholds are obviously meant for smaller hands than yours.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **201**. If it is 17 or less, you fail to get the door open. You stand once more and take up your weapons, for the goblins are starting to attack. Turn to **98**.



70

Five goblins cluster around you and your horse, cutting you off from the remainder of your scouting party. You strike out at one and he falls, but the other four all swing at you with spears and billhooks. Hard points and edges pierce your armor, but you summon your will and keep fighting.

Subtract 16 from your hit point total.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or less, turn to **198**. If it's 17 or more, turn to **172**.

71

The next morning, the war band shows you the crude wooden dugouts they are using for travel. "We be learnin' somewhat since your father be showin' us the ways of the river," says Dykkon. "We be tradin' for these from a river-bank fishin' tribe some days back."

You join the barbarians in their dugouts and give them some further pointers in boat handling as you move on toward Daggerford. Eventually you can travel rather swiftly in the crude boats, but not quite swiftly enough.

It is dark when your flotilla arrives outside Daggerford. You can see that the river between you and the ford is full of the orcs' round leather coracles. Many are already on the beach.

The barbarians cannot see nearly as well as you can in the dark, but then torches start to appear on the Daggerford wall overlooking the river. The barbarians in your boat curse at the sight of a river full of orcs.

There's no time to plan. Instead, you aim your lead boat toward the middle of the coracles. The orcs fail to see you coming because but they are concentrating on the town. The warning cries of the few who spot you at the last minute are not enough. With a crunch, the heavy dugouts strike the light coracles, and boatload after boatload of armed orcs are dumped into the river.

The barbarians yell their battle cry, "Gironi!" and their axes gleam in the torchlight. You see that the heavy-thewed barbarians are already taking a deadly toll.



You look toward the beach, but you fail to see either Jagurt or Blackeye. The River Gate stands open, so Blackeye has probably already done his dirty work. You and Braggi and Drendin are in one boat, along with three of the barbarians. You paddle toward the beach and run your boat up on the sand, leaping out and sprinting for the gate. The orcs at the gate are milling about in indecision as you fight your way through, losing only one barbarian along the way.

Inside the town, you see that many of the Rivermen's Quarter homes are ablaze. Ahead of you, the town stables are also afire, and you can hear horses screaming. Skirmishes are breaking out all over the town.

"Follow me!" you cry. "We've got to see what the situation is at the castle!"

You make your way through the fighting and race up the Hill Road toward the Duke's Way. You run up the slope toward the front castle gate and find a knot of fighting figures in the gate itself.

You see one fully armored human figure, Llewellyn Longhand, and a small group of guards trying to hold off Jagurt Redclaw and a mass of orcs. The castle gate lies open beyond them, and there is no sign of anyone trying to close it. The only way you can get to the castle is through Jagurt.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **174**. If the total is 18 or less, turn to **202**.

72

Before you can attack the horse, you have to somehow get your hands free from the stonelike strands of its mane that hold them. Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **20**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **92**.

73

Seeing no other alternative, you agree with Braggi's plan. That night, before the moon rises over the horizon, you stand below the north wall of the duke's castle. Braggi

swings a line with a grapple hook attached to it once, twice, over his head, then hurls it with all his might. You hear a muffled *thunk* as it lands and hooks into the battlements. With a thankful grin, you start up the line, with Braggi close behind.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **142**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **199**.



74

Jagurt draws his scimitar and takes a mighty but awkward swing at you. You block the blow and slice at his arm, crying, "This is for Brightstar!" Jagurt howls as your sword cuts into him, but he manages to hold on to his scimitar and swings for your head. You duck under the blow and close with him, your falchion chopping into his side before he can block it.

"That's for Rodrick!" you shout. You can see both hatred and despair in Jagurt's eyes as you chop at the orc leader's head. He's too late to block the blow, and his head flies from his shoulders as you cry, "And this is for the rest of those brave men!"

You look at the severed head for an instant, then turn to see how Braggi is faring. You're just in time to see Braggi knock out his opponent with the flat of his axe blade.

Squads of orcs and goblins are already advancing on the hut. There is no way you can fight them all. You have only one chance.

Turning to the grisly standard that looms over the hut, you chop down the emblem of Jagurt's Redclaw clan. "Your leader is dead!" you cry in Blacktongue. "Your plan is doomed! Run, before the devils of Dragonspear return to

see why you haven't done their bidding!" There is a moment of silence as the goblins realize that if Jagurt were still alive, this insult would never have gone unavenged. Then Braggi steps over to Jagurt and lifts the headless body over his head.

The orcs stare at you for a moment. Then suddenly a loud orc voice at the back of the mob yells, "Rally around me, orcs of the Blue Feather Clan! We will—*agghk!*"

You see a quivering javelin sticking in the side of the orc who was shouting. Instantly two bands of orcs leap at one another. You assume that one is the band of the orc who was shouting, the other the band of the javelin thrower. The fragile truce brought about by Jagurt is already crumbling, and the orcs are back to doing what they do best—killing each other.

The other orcs and goblins watch for a moment. Then, at the back of the mob, several bands of goblins begin to break ranks and flee. Moments after those ahead of them hear them break and run, they flee as well, and the panic catches them all. In seconds, all you can see is the backs of goblins and orcs running back to their tribal lands and their tribal wars with other clans. The land is safe from the goblin scourge.

You smile, pleased with yourself, but then you remember the devil's mention of an agent in Daggerford! That's probably Blackeye, and even without Jagurt, his plans could spell doom for your hometown. You have to get back to Daggerford!

Turn to 122.



You awaken in darkness.

For a moment, you can see nothing, but then your elven sight focuses and you can see the rough ceiling and walls of a cave. You are lying on a bearskin-covered pile of leaves, with a blanket you recognize as being from your horse covering you.

"Ah! So ya be awake now, eh?" The voice is gruff but friendly. The accent is similar to that of a High Moors tribe you ran across more than twenty years ago when you were exploring the moors with your father. You realize that the voice comes from the same direction as the sole light in the cave.

As you turn in your rough bed, every muscle aches. Persisting, you see that the source of the light is a small fire, shielded from the mouth of the cave. Sitting at the fire is a young barbarian. He is tall, perhaps a full head taller than you are. His shoulders are broad, and the axe he holds is well polished. His long blond hair is in pigtails, and his square face is painted in the manner of the Girondi people of the moors. Yes, he is from the same tribe you visited years ago.

"Lucky ya be that my tribesmen and I be hearin' the goblin cries as we be comin' down off the moor." The barbarian moves from the fire and hunkers down beside your bed. You realize that the cave roof is not high enough for him, or even you, to stand up under.

"That goblin breed be big for ambushes, but they be havin' no stomach for a straight-on fight when we be havin' the high ground."

"My men . . ." you begin, but the expression on his face tells the story. You are the only survivor.

"I fear yar swordbrothers be not so lucky." He grins sheepishly, as if taking responsibility for every goblin arrow and spear point. "And I couldn't be keepin' my swordbrothers from lootin' yar friends' bodies, neither, I'm afraid. I be only able to be savin' yar own stuff." He gestures toward the back of the cave, and you see your leather armor, your sword and dagger, the elf bow your father gave you, and your quiver, with many arrows less than when

you started. "If it be any help to ya, yar friends' gear will be killin' more goblins and orcs."

"Where are your, er, swordbrothers?" you ask, recognizing the term as one meaning either a fellow member of a war band or a sworn blood brother.

"Well, my own swordbrother be Duffi, but he be dyin' in the attack. Even a cornered goblin has fangs." He pauses for a moment, then, with the typical barbarian stoicism in the face of an unfair fate, continues. "The war band be goin' on three days ago, when it be lookin' like ya be livin' but not wakin' up soon."

At your expression of shock, he confirms, "Aye, ya be dreamin' now for four days. 'Bout time ya be wakin' up and joinin' the livin'."

"Why did you stay to help me?"

"Well, now, perhaps ya be 'memberin' a trip to my country ya be takin' with yar pa some years back?" At your nod in the affirmative, he continues. "Well, maybe ya be 'memberin' the lad ya be fishin' from the River Shinin' when he be near drowned?"

You look at the smiling face, and suddenly you see the young lad you saved from a watery grave that summer afternoon years ago. Your father had led the tribe to the river, which most of them had never seen, and one young chief's son had decided to try to swim, with nearly disastrous results. After you pulled him from the river, near dead, he had followed you around the encampment for the rest of your stay with the tribe.

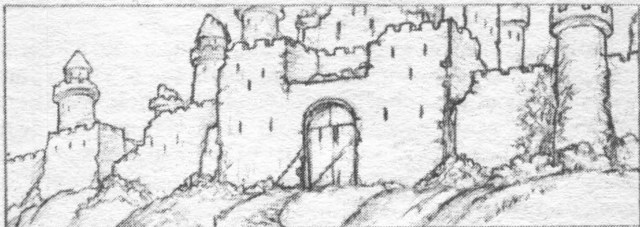
This husky barbarian is that same skinny lad! You're amazed, but you recall how fast young humans grow up. What was his barbaric name? "Of course! Your name is Braggi Quickhands! I remember you well. After your little dunking in the river, I taught you how to swim. Do you still remember?"

"Aye, that I be doin'. I even be practicin' once or twice a year, even if I don't need a bath. But I be havin' a man's name now. I be Braggi Quickaxe." And with that, he spins his axe in his hand so fast that it blurs, then casually tosses it toward the fire, where it buries itself precisely in the center of a short log waiting to be put on the blaze.

Suddenly you realize that the room is swimming before your eyes. You drop from one elbow to lie flat on your back again.

“Ach! I be makin’ ya work too hard, I be. Be restin’ yarsel, swordbrother. We be talkin’ anon.”

Swordbrother, you think drowsily. *It would be good to have a swordbrother.* And the darkness takes you again. Turn to 119.



76

You scale the first story of the tower and start up the second, but battle weariness is taking its effect on you. You can't seem to find handholds. Halfway up the wall, you realize you can go no farther. You look down over your shoulder and see that your allies are already streaming into the town, having driven the orcs from the river. Then you realize that Braggi is next to you. “Ya be comin’, swordbrother?” he asks. “I be seein’ some handholds over this way.” You follow the nimble barbarian up the wall. At the top, he suddenly yells a war cry and hurls his axe. Turn to 195.

77

The next morning, you stand again on the River Gate tower battlement, looking over a scene of carnage. With you are Lord Llewellyn, Bronwyn, and Braggi.

“’Tis well done, Kelson,” says Llewellyn. “Between your bravery and that of your friend Braggi, Daggerford is safe for her lord when he returns from the siege.”

Bronwyn says nothing, but you think you see more than the respect due a hero in her eye. But how much is from the memory of your imposter, Blackeye, and how much is yours?

Your mind whirls as you search for the answer, but you are at least sure of one thing. You have earned a true place in this town and with these people. While the lonely silences of the forest will always beckon to you, you need not ever feel alone again. ✕

78

Rallying your three remaining men, you charge a knot of about a dozen goblins just a few yards up the hill from you. The ferocity of your charge puts you in the middle of them before they realize what is going on. Even as they drop their bows and either run or haul out their spears and hand axes, your falchion descends, and a goblin head leaves its neck and rolls down the hill.

Looking around, you see that the unarmored Felis has fallen to a barrage of arrows before you reached the goblins, but Barth and Rodrick are laying about themselves with a will.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **82**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **198**.



79

The first bugbear swings a mighty blow at you, but you duck under it and close with the creature. Before you can strike, the club of another bugbear almost numbs your sword arm, and you have to backpedal away, almost getting hit by a third as you do. As you duck away from another blow from a club, a claw catches your leg and

shreds a patch of your armor and the skin beneath it. Subtract 6 from your hit point total.

Suddenly the air is full of arrows. Two of the bugbears in front of you fall immediately, and the third is struck down as it tries to run. One of those attacking Braggi dies instantly from the arrows, the other already dead from a fierce blow from Braggi's axe.

At that moment, from the woods around you step a band of wild elves. Turn to 88.

80

"Ah be called Silverleaf," says the woman. "Please be sittin' at our fire, and we can be tellin' each other stories about our adventures in the forest. Ah be thinkin' yours will be interestin' to me, and ah know ah be havin' somethin' of interest for you, Filvendorson."

As a guest of the Belcondi, you tell your tale first. As you speak, Braggi warms quickly to these tribesmen when he sees that, despite their status as an enemy tribe, they are really much like he is, especially in their love of a story well told.

Before you have gotten very far into your story of how you came to be here, Braggi takes over, emphasizing your own bravery in the ambush and how many orcs you slayed. He mentions nothing of your mistake in judgment in getting your troops caught in the ambush in the first place, an omission that bothers you. Yet when you bring it up, Silverleaf is uncritical, saying only that the guile of devils is well known and many of her own tribesmen have fallen for them.

When Braggi is finished with your tale, Silverleaf pauses a moment, then says, "Hard it be to hear that goblinkind be gatherin' again. It be part of our mission to be seekin' out news of the orcs and findin' out why they be not found in the High Moors. Sad it be that they may be gatherin' once more into a united horde." She is obviously thoughtful, but then her demeanor changes.

"Your story be placin' us under a debt, Kelson, one that ah must be repayin' by tellin' you of that which ah merely be hintin' at earlier. While our tribe be never seein' you

before, we be hostin' your father some nineteen winters ago. At first, we be findin' him lyin' in the snow, beside the body of the father of all ice worms. My mother, who be servin' the tribe at the time as ah be servin' it now, be healin' him where he lay. He be tellin' us that he be slayin' this monster and would now be searchin' for any treasure it might guard." You smile to hear this of your father. It sounds just like him.

"In the beast's hoard," she continues, "your father be findin' a sword. It be obviously enchanted, and be havin' a will of its own. He be pickin' it up and strappin' it on, discardin' his own sword at the same time. 'Ah must be goin'," he be sayin'. Then he would be marchin' off through the snow, still bleedin' from his wounds, but that my mother be catchin' him in a spell and forcin' him to return to our village. In a week, he be fully healed, and she be havin' to let him be goin' on this sword-begotten quest that be occupyin' him. He would not be speakin' of the quest, but he did be sayin' that he could not be returnin' to his home."

"But—but where is he now?" you ask excitedly.

"Ah cannot be sayin', for we be not seein' him again since that time. However, since he could not be returnin' home, he be leavin' with us his old sword, to be returned to you. In payment for this favor, he be givin' us his claim to the rest of the ice worm's treasure."

You remember that sword. It was also enchanted, though obviously not so much so as the sword found in the ice worm's treasure. "I do not wish to seem ungrateful, but why has it taken nineteen years for you to return my father's sword to me?" you ask.

Before Silverleaf can answer, a hulking male figure steps out of the fog. "Because it now be *my* sword, and ah do not be meanin' to give it up!" The speaker is tall, even for a barbarian, his face and head hidden in his dark beard and long, uncombed hair. His garb is a ragged bearskin, the head shaped to provide a helmet, so that he seems to look at you not only with his own beady black eyes but also with the empty eye sockets of the bear. Looking at his swordbelt, you recognize the familiar sapphire pommel of your father's sword at his side.

The strangely clad figure continues. "My father be chief of our tribe, and he be takin' that sword from Silverleaf's mother, elfkin. Then he be givin' it to me, Dowd Bearslayer, when ah be winnin' my man's name." He tugs at his bearskin as he says this. By its condition, it is probably the same one that gave him his name.

"It is not honorable to steal a man's legacy when his father's treasure was given to your tribe to pay for your guardianship," you answer. You know that the barbarians value their strange honor above all things, and that respect to a guest also ranks high in their eyes.

"It takes a man to be respected!" Dowd says with a sneer. "You be but half a man, and your father be no man at all. The sword be mine!"

Silverleaf and several of her followers lower their eyes. They obviously disagree with Dowd's statement, but none seems about to come to your defense. As usual, humans support their own kind, despite what justice dictates.

Your mission weighs heavily on your mind. You know that you should probably simply accept this obvious injustice and continue on your way, but you cannot bring yourself to let this swaggering barbarian continue to possess your father's sword. You tell yourself that its enchantment would be of considerable use to you on your journey, but you know that you really just want this last remembrance of your lost father at your side. Having found it, you cannot let it go.

"I challenge you, Dowd Bearslayer," you find yourself saying in a low voice. "I call you an honorless thief, and I defy you to meet me in man-to-man combat and prove your right to that sword you have stolen from me!"

Dowd roars and starts to draw your father's sword. "Hold!" cries Silverleaf. Dowd stays his hand, and you, too, refrain from drawing your own sword. "Hold your blades for the moment, both of you. Let us prepare a proper arena for holmgang."

In minutes, Silverleaf's tribesmen have beaten out a crude ring. You recognize this as the ritual dueling circle for barbarian fights, or holmgangs. If you have been wounded, Silverleaf performs a healing ritual on you. Roll

two dice and add 1 point to the result. Add this total to your hit points. Remember that your hit point total cannot exceed your original hit points.

You step into the dueling circle. The night mists have cleared a bit, and the barbarians surrounding the circle have lit torches, making the light much the same for you and Dowd. You see that your opponent has been persuaded to forego using your father's sword in the fight. Instead, he holds a normal barbarian broadsword in his hand, and your father's blade is in the safekeeping of one of the barbarians in the circle. Dowd bears a shield on his other arm. One of the barbarians offers you a shield, but you see that is a type you are not used to. It would only throw you off. Besides, you have your armor to protect you. You draw your long dagger and hold it easily in your left hand. The falchion in your right hand is shorter than Dowd's broadsword but heavier.

Braggi steps from between the two tribesmen who are nervously watching him and pronounces defiantly, "Dowd Bearslayer, if the gods be givin' ya victory in this unjust fight, ya be havin' Braggi Quickaxe to reckon with!"

You are warmed by this show of loyalty. You never expected this kind of response from a human. You step up to Braggi and put a hand on his shoulder and say, "Nay, Braggi. If I fall you must continue on to Daggerford and do what you can to stop Blackeye and his evil plot."

Braggi looks at you and nods slowly, but you can see that if Braggi succeeds in stopping Blackeye, he will hunt Dowd to the end of his days. The loyalty of this human gives you new respect for them all.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 170. If it is 18 or less, turn to 141.



Jagurt is moving too fast to stop in time. He runs straight into the javelin. You can see the shock and despair in his eyes before they close and he falls dead at your feet.

"That's for the brave men you killed!" you hiss, then turn to see how Braggi is doing. You're just in time to see Braggi knock out his opponent with a blow from the flat of his axe blade.

Squads of orcs and goblins are advancing on the hut. There is no way you can fight them all. You have but one chance.

Turning to the grisly standard that looms over the hut, you chop down the emblem of Jagurt's Redclaw clan. "Your leader is dead!" you cry in Blacktongue. "Your plan is doomed! Run, before the devils of Dragonspear return to see why you haven't done their bidding!" There is a moment of silence as the goblins realize that if Jagurt were still alive, this insult would never have gone unavenged. Then Braggi steps over to Jagurt and lifts the headless body over his head.

The orcs stare at you for a moment. Then suddenly a loud orc voice at the back of the mob yells, "Rally around me, orcs of the Blue Feather Clan! We will—*agghk!*"

You see a javelin quivering in the side of the orc who was shouting. Instantly two bands of orcs leap at one another. You assume that one is the band of the orc who shouted, while the other is the band of the javelin thrower. The fragile truce brought about by Jagurt is already crumbling, and the orcs are once more doing what they do best—killing each other.

The other orcs and goblins watch for a moment. Then, at the back of the mob, bands of goblins begin to break away. Those just ahead of them hear them break and they, too, flee, and the panic catches them all. In seconds, all you can see is the backs of goblins and orcs, running back to their tribal lands and their tribal wars with other clans. The land is safe from the goblin scourge!

You smile, momentarily pleased with yourself, but then you remember the devil's words about an agent in Daggerford! That's probably Blackeye, and even without Jagurt,

his plans could spell doom for your hometown. You have to get back to Daggerford!

Turn to **122**.



82

In seconds, all the goblins are either dead or retreating. As you watch the survivors scamper away, you realize that you are bleeding from wounds you didn't even feel in the heat of the fight. Subtract 7 from your hit point total to represent more damage from the goblins' blows.

The fight has exhausted you, and you see Rodrick leaning on his sword over the cut and slashed body of Barth. You look at the top of the hillside as the rain of arrows begins once more. You try to race to the top but stop your weary struggle when another dozen goblins, armed with billhooks and spears, storm over the hillside and charge toward you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **36**. If it is less than 17, turn to **198**.

83

As you creep past the sentry, you realize that he is a barbarian from the High Moor. "Do you recognize him?" you whisper to Braggi, but before he can answer, you are surrounded by barbarians.

Before anyone can strike a blow, Braggi stands up and says quickly, "Dykkon Trueblade! It be I, Braggi Quick-axe!" The barbarians greet you as an old friend, though you do not recognize them. They look distrustfully at Dren-

din, who returns their gazes with unabashed curiosity. You realize that these barbarians are Braggi's former war band, the same ones who saved your life more than a week ago!

The barbarians invite you to join them at their firesite. They ask you if you have any news, and you tell your story. It takes no persuasion to win these grim fighting men to your cause. As Dykkon says, "If the elves be too full of themselves to be helpin', we be showin' ya that the Girondi be ready to help against Redclaw's evil plots!" Drendin takes this insult to her people with good grace. She had already come to the same conclusion.

Turn to 71.

84

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn's attack, you are on it. The creature roars and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, until finally the devil-bear slips to the floor. Even as its life ichor pumps from its body, the creature dissolves into mist.

You look up to see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. She knows now that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you for rescuing her from her mistake. She doesn't know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who had inspired them is dead now, but the real Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Before you can say anything, the guards, led by Lord Llewellyn, are in the room with you. "What happened?" Lord Llewellyn asks as he looks at you, Braggi, Lady Bronwyn, and the pile of dust that is all that remains of the devil-imposter.

Lord Llewellyn is at first confused by the story you relate of the devil impersonating you. You also sense that he seems sorry to discover that the Kelson he had grown to know and like in the last week was an imposter. In the end, however, he has no choice but to believe your explanations,

particularly with Lady Bronwyn right there to corroborate them. "This is disturbing news, Kelson," he says finally. "His masters at Dragonspear wouldn't have sent an imposter here without reason, so you are probably right to think that Jagurt's orcs are on their way. Now that we are warned, we have a better chance against them, but we are sorely undermanned."

"It may be that I be able to help," says Braggi. "Our friends of the Belcondi be an hour's march out of town. There also be tribesmen of mine about, and yar outlyin' vilages must have some fightin' men. I be willin' to take one of yar horses and gather what help I can."

Llewellyn has little choice but to agree, though he adds a few messengers of his own. You watch Braggi and the others ride off that very night, then turn to join Llewellyn in making plans against the orcish invasion.

That evening, the Belcondi arrive, and you set about integrating them with the militia of Daggerford. They have little love for discipline, but they admire you, and with your help, they soon understand their future roles in the town's defense. You notice that both Llewellyn and Bronwyn watch your actions with approval as you turn the barbarians into a disciplined force. It's a heady feeling, and you find that your time with Braggi has given you the ability to deal with men and make them respect you. If only you had had this knowledge when you led those poor militiamen into that ambush!

Turn to 37.



85

Jagurt is moving too fast to stop in time. He runs himself up on your outthrust javelin, but you see that you've placed it wrong. It drives deep into the orc, but it isn't a mortal

wound.

Unfortunately you have time for no more thoughts, as his scimitar smashes into your skull, and you fall lifelessly, to know no more. ✘



86

Now you know for certain that Jagurt and his orcs are in league with the devils of Dragonspear. Moreover, their target is Daggerford, which, with Duke Pryden and most of the militia at Dragonspear, now lies virtually undefended! As the orcs and goblins return to their huts, taking advantage of their last chance for rest before their upcoming forced march, you realize that you have two choices. You can sneak out the way you came and attempt to outrun the orcs to Daggerford. If you choose to do this, slip back into the Misty Forest and turn to **183**.

Or you can attempt to sneak closer to Jagurt Redclaw and kill the orc leader, thereby preventing this orc invasion before it can start. If you want to do this, roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 22 or more, roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **151**.

If your stealth skill score total is 21 or less, turn to **87**. If your stealth skill roll is successful but the sensory skill roll is 19 or less, turn to **26**.

87

You sneak past the camp's initial lookout. You guess that even the shaded daylight of the canyon impedes the orcs' light-sensitive eyes. But as you creep up on the hut, you are

confronted suddenly by an orc sentry! Even as he draws his axe, he yells, "Intruders!"

You cannot possibly get to Jagurt now. You turn to run, outdistancing the first orc. But before you can attain the crest of the canyon wall, you suddenly feel your feet go out from under you as you are lifted high into the air.

You find yourself entrapped in a large net. You were so intent on escaping that you ran right into the net trap, no doubt erected to capture intruders such as yourself. Braggi is caught up beside you, and you watch helplessly as the orcs surround you with spears. A couple of them scramble up the trees that hold the trap to cut you down.

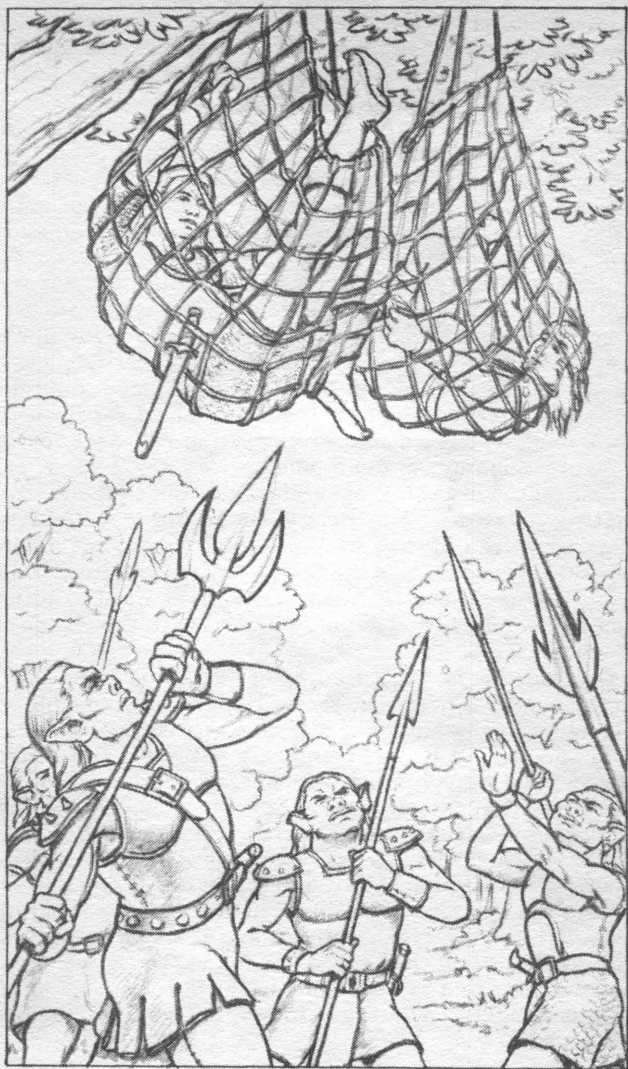
Turn to 181.

88

Three wild elves stand in a group, facing you, and you can see more in the background, their bows upraised and pointing straight at you. The middle elf is taller than you are and much older, obviously the chief. But the elf who draws your attention most is the woman on the right. Her attraction is not so much her beauty, for all elves are beautiful and you have seen elfmaidens more comely, but the lively interest in life you can read in her facial expression and in her stance. It is a quality that seems to have been drained out of most of the elven women you have met.

You have seen an occasional wild elf before, but they are a reclusive breed, far more man-shy than the gold elves of whom your father is a member. These elves still pursue the wild ways of the forest that sages say the first elves followed before they learned to smelt metals and build cities. You notice that these wild elves, like the others you have met in your travels, do not disdain using metal knives and short swords, though the arrows you see them pull from the bodies of the bugbears are flint-tipped.

"Well," says the older elf, "what has Mother Forest brought to our game bag today? The tall one is a barbarian such as we've seen in the vicinity only a few days ago. You, on the other hand," he adds, looking at you, "are such an animal as I have rarely seen. Who are your mother and father?"



"I am Kelson Darktreader. My mother was Jillian Foresheart," you reply, making a point of naming your human parentage first. "My father is Filvendor, son of Elorfindar, of the High Reaches. And who be you, sir?"

"I be Deldragor, son of Melandrach, of the Laughing Hollow. My companions here are Dendrach Highleg of the Hollow and my daughter, Drendin Longshot. And what does the grandson of the illustrious Elorfindar do in these forests? But wait, before you answer, let us prepare for such stories in proper fashion."

Deldragor makes a sweeping motion with his arm, and the arrows that have been pointed at your hearts are lowered and other elves step forward. Some bring finely worked furs to pad the stumps and logs and rocks of a nearby glade; others bring elfcakes and trail potion for your relief. If you are wounded, Deldragor and Drendin both have experience in druidical magic and will heal you to your starting number of hit points.

You take a seat opposite Deldragor and find Drendin sitting next to you. Braggi is being courteously ignored—given food and a place to sit down, but otherwise disregarded—and he seems to prefer things that way. You explain your mission and your need to bring word of Blackeye and Jagurt's plot back to the people of Daggerford.

Deldragor says, "A gathering of orckind is as much ill news to us as it is to you. Yet we have no wish to embroil ourselves in the affairs of mankind. We can move faster than any orc horde, and if they are gathering here, then they will be scarcer in the High Forest, where we could go in a month's time." He looks at you and adds, "You fought well against the bugbears, Filvendor's son, and the fame of Kelson Darktreader has reached us as well. If we leave this place for the High Forest, you may join us."

"Oh, yes, Kelson!" adds Drendin, taking your arm and looking into your eyes. "Join us, and I will show you the glories of the wild elf life. You will forget the ways of town and man and live as you should in the forest."

"But Braggi—" you begin to say, but you are quickly interrupted.

“Have no fear for your human friend,” Deldragor says quickly. “We shall make sure that he is returned to his tribesmen first. I believe they are the same ones we saw not two days ago to the south of here. A few days’ march to find the barbarians, we make sure that he is reunited with his own people, and then we’re off up the Unicorn Run to the High Forest, away from the cares of men and orcs.”

This is the answer to two of your most fervent dreams—acceptance among elves, and a life in the forest, without need for town and lord. Certainly the exciting Drendin seems more than interested in you.

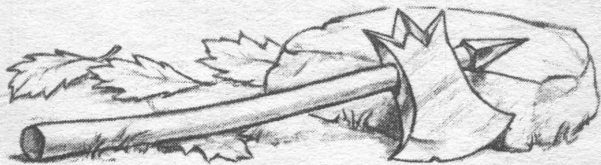
Yet you still feel a loyalty to your duke, and to the people of Daggerford who might be slaughtered by Jagurt’s orcs. You still have a chance to get to the town in time, but it would mean the loss of the chance to be accepted as a brother by the elves, who have long disdained you.

If you want to accept the elves’ invitation, turn to 12. If you decide to continue on to Daggerford, you realize that these elves would be a great aid in defending the town against Jagurt’s horde. Turn to 161 to try to persuade them to join you on your journey to Daggerford.

89

Having wounded you badly, Jagurt obviously has no fear of you. You try to demonstrate his mistake by ducking under the blow he aims at your head, but the scimitar slices into your shoulder, driving you to the ground. Before you can recover, it whips around and chops again, and you know you are slain.

But as you fall, you see a familiar axe split Jagurt’s head open. Jagurt is dead, but you know your faithful barbarian companion is too late this time to save you. ✘



The bear-devil roars and attacks, but you duck under its massive claws and stab upward with your father's brightly glowing sword. The creature roars with pain and smashes one paw downward into your shoulder. Subtract 8 from your hit point total.

You draw the sword out of the wound and hack at the thing's foreleg, inflicting a terrible wound. Blackeye screams with rage and tries to grab you in a bear hug, but you slip away from its grasp and drive the point of your blade into the creature's eye! The monster falls at your feet, and even as its life ichor pumps out of its body, it dissolves into mist.

You look up from the dust that is all that remains of the devil to see Braggi approaching from the river on one side and Bronwyn coming through the River Gate on the other with Sir Llewellyn and a half-dozen guards.

"Well done, Kelson!" says the master-at-arms. "You handled this demonic thing yourself before Lady Bronwyn could get us here to help you." He claps you on the back with a familiarity you've never known from him before. What has Blackeye been doing in your name in the last week, anyway?

Your problem is compounded as Bronwyn draws you from where Llewellyn is talking to Braggi. She has a very strange expression on her face.

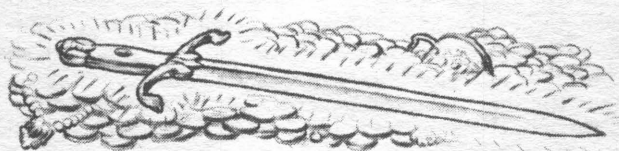
Lady Bronwyn says, "Well done, indeed, my dear Kelson. We shall no doubt have to get you feted and praised this evening. Then you can take up your lessons in the ways of woodland lovers where you left off when this monster attacked us."

You realize that, when Blackeye sent Bronwyn away from him, she did not get a clear look at your face. When she returned, she found you standing alone over the decomposing body of a demon—obviously the thing that attacked her out of the darkness. No one else saw the fight except Braggi, and perhaps some guardsman on the wall who has not made himself known as yet. No one realizes that the Kelson that stands before him now is not the same Kelson he has associated with for the last week.

Moreover, that Kelson has obviously both made a friend of Lord Llewellyn and commenced a romance with Lady Bronwyn. For a moment, you toy with the idea of somehow acceding to this view, somehow silencing Braggi and stepping into the devil's shoes in the same way he stepped into yours.

But you know that you could never face yourself for such perfidy, so you try to explain everything to Bronwyn. She hears your story with a judicious pose, then smiles sweetly. "Well, then, I must say that I am sorry to learn that the Kelson Darktreader who had gone such a long way toward winning my heart was an imposter. But I am happy that his treachery has been revealed. However, I think your story shows qualities in you, huntsman, that I wish to explore."

You realize that, in saving Daggerford from invasion from without and treachery from within, you have made an unlooked-for conquest of your own. You are not altogether sure that you're prepared for it. . . . ☩



91

You guide your horse toward your companions, in the meantime killing another goblin with a crushing overhead stroke. However, you do not escape unscathed, as two goblin spears strike you.

Subtract 8 from your hit point total to represent the damage the goblins did to you in passing.

You manage to rejoin the others, and together the remaining four of you make a knot of blood-stained steel. In seconds, all the goblins are either dead or running away, but young Brightstar, the acolyte's, body lies dead on a pile of goblins he took with him as his last offering to Lathandar.

Credit yourself with 1 experience point for the tactical idea of joining forces. Subtract 12 more from your hit point total for the damage you have received fighting off the goblins.

You turn your horses toward the top of the canyon wall, but the climb and fight has exhausted them and your two remaining followers. The rain of arrows begins again. The horses scream as they are hit, but none falls, even though there is considerable blood amidst the foam and arrow shafts on their bodies.

You try to race to the top of the hill, but you halt your weary horses when another dozen goblins armed with bill-hooks and spears surge over the hillside and charge at you. You ready yourself as the goblins arrive.

The horses are the first victims, cut out from under you. Then you must face the mob of blood-crazed goblins.

Turn to 198.

92

Try as you might, you cannot wrench your hands free from the horse's mane, nor your seat from its back. By strength and clever applications of your weight, you manage to keep it from diving into streams that you pass, but both night and day, barely distinguishable from night in the twilight of the forest, pass by, and you are still riding—faster than you have ever ridden before. You settle into the riding trance your father taught you, and half-dozing, half-awake, you continue to keep the creature from streams and ride it through the forest.

Finally the monotonous blur of trees is gone, and you are out of the forest and riding toward some distant campfires. Looking back toward the forest, you see that dawn is approaching.

Suddenly the horse realizes that it can see the pale outline of its shadow before it. Screaming as no mortal horse could scream, it wheels and races back toward the shade of the forest.

With all your might, you strain to hold its head back to break its stride and keep it from reaching the long shadows of the forest edge.

You feel the full sun break over the top of the forest even through your eyelids. The direct sunlight, without the forest leaves to filter it, hurts your eyes, but that is nothing compared to what it does to the horse. It screams once more, and you land on your feet as it disappears in a cloud of mist. As you suspected, it could not survive against the full, unshaded light of day.

Turn to 178.

93

At the last minute, Blackeye turns aside, and your blade merely glances off his skin. However, he has let go of Bronwyn. The devil says, "You! You are supposed to be dead! I will make certain this time!"

You see his features alter and twist grotesquely. Then his entire body begins to writhe and change, and you are suddenly confronting a huge bear-shaped devil, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

But before either of you can attack, you see Bronwyn make a gesture with her hand and speak a phrase in the arcane language of magic. A green dart forms in her hand and flies straight at the devil-bear, wounding it severely. "Now, Kelson!" Bronwyn yells.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 127. If it is 15 or less, turn to 182. Remember that your enchanted sword adds 1 to your total.



You tell the guard that yes, you were inspecting the Caravan Gate, and he passes you inside without further comment. You enter the Riverside district of the town and ride to the town stables, where you leave your horses with instructions to return them to Tosti's Tower.

With that detail taken care of, you turn to Braggi. "The guard said he saw me enter just minutes earlier. Do you realize what this means, Braggi?"

"Aye, swordbrother. Blackeye be masqueradin' as ya. But what can we be doin' about it?"

You can either go straight to the castle or you can scout out things in the town. If you want to go to the castle, turn to 167. If you want to scout things out in the town, turn to 175. In either case, Braggi goes with you.

You are too far away to simply make a run for the hut. The goblins and orcs would see you before you were half-way there and you would be doomed.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 176. If it is 20 or less, turn to 63.

"I am Kelson Filvendorson," you say, using your father's name because you know he made many friends among the barbarians. "We have no wish to bring harm to your camp," you add.

"And Braggi Quickaxe, of the Girondi," says the still truculent Braggi, pulling his arm out of your grasp and grabbing his axe handle.

"Girondi!" cries the barbarian ahead of you, and his cry is echoed by other voices around you. "Girondi!" Even in the fog, you can see that Braggi is both nervous and determined.

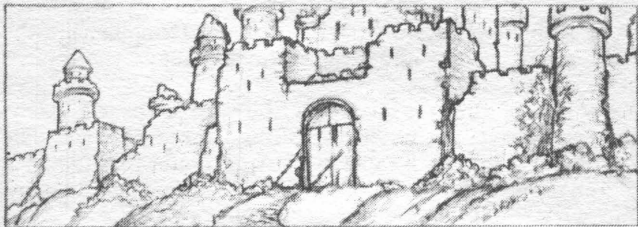
"Girondi?" remarks a feminine voice from the shadows. "And what be bringin' a Girondi to the camp of the Belcondi—particularly a Girondi in the company of the son of a famous father?"

"Rather ya should be askin' why a Belcondi blocks the rightful path of a Girondi!" responds Braggi threateningly.

The feminine voice replies with a laugh. "Come now, Girondi, let us not be draggin' our High Moors feuds down to the forest. I be callin' hunters' truce. Be comin' forward and joinin' our camp for the night."

You advance, Braggi still clutching the handle of his axe, and find yourselves surrounded by barbarians, who guide you to a firecircle in which the fire is barely alive. One of the barbarians puts a handful of twigs on the fire, and it burns brightly for a moment. In that time, you see that the woman who has addressed you seems young for her obvious calling as a druid. Yet she is in the full traveling gear of that tree-worshipping sect. She is just as obviously observing you, though you would think that she would spend more time keeping an eye on her potential tribal enemy, Braggi.

Turn to 80.



97

Striding up Hill Road to the Duke's Way, you turn at the temple to Lathander and march to the gate of the duke's castle.

The gate stands open, as it usually does, and the portcullis is drawn. Two guards lean on their spears in the gateway.

As you approach, the guards snap to attention, examining the strangely clothed Braggi. Then one's glance turns to you, his eyes widen, and he holds his spear out at the ready position.

“Halt!” he cries. As you stop before him, he adds, “Do my eyes deceive me, or are you Kelson Darktreader?”

“I am he,” you reply, annoyed at his questioning. As a respected resident of Daggerford, you have every right to be here. You realize that you have seen this man before, but you’ve never bothered to learn his name or position. This might put you at a disadvantage.

“You lie!” cries the guard. “Kelson himself passed through this very gate only minutes ago, and he has not come out again. You will have to explain yourself to Lord Llewellyn!”

The guard cries out, “Captain of the Guard!” and you realize that your forthright approach is about to get you thrown in the dungeons. It could be several days before you are able to prove you are who you say you are and Blackeye is the imposter. Who knows what damage the devil could do in that time?

Since you don’t want to harm these guards, your only alternative seems to be to run. Without waiting another moment, you spin and run down the Duke’s Way. With most of the population with the duke at Dragonspear, the road is empty. You and Braggi quickly leave the guards behind.

A couple of minutes later, you find yourselves in the Rivermen’s Quarter, a notoriously rough area of town. The guards have given up their pursuit, no doubt to organize a search for you. For the moment, you seem safe enough—but now what?

Turn to 34.

98

The goblins come at you, screaming their high-pitched battle cries. You block the first one’s blow and hack off its arm, kicking it away to fall at its companions’ feet. You greet the next one the same way, and the next, but your arm is growing weary from the strain and your hard run. You fail to block a spear and feel it stab into you.

You cut off the haft of the spear as a javelin slams into your side. You retaliate by stabbing an axe-wielding orc, but its fighting mate stabs you with a scimitar. Darkness

comes over your eyes again, and you fall, just as you did in the canyon, but this time Braggi falls at your side, and his tribesmen are nowhere near to help. Jagurt and Blackeye have won, and woe to the people of Daggerford! †

99

Rallying your two remaining men, you charge a knot of a dozen goblins just a few yards up the hill from you. Two of their arrows penetrate your armor as you charge. Subtract 4 from your hit point total. Suddenly you are in the middle of them, screaming your own name as a battle cry. Several goblins drop their bows and run; their braver brethren take up their spears and hand axes. You pick out one brave goblin and your falchion falls. The goblin's head leaps from its neck and rolls down the hill.

Looking around, you see that Brightstar has fallen to the arrows before you reached the goblins, but the remaining fighter, Rodrick, is laying about himself with a will.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **36**. If it's 17 or less, turn to **198**.



100

You advance into the cave, feeling confident that no other denizen would dare share it with a troll. You find that the cave is actually a whole complex of caves, carved out by water many centuries ago. Turning a corner of the cave, you are nauseated by the stench in the room you are entering and simultaneously intrigued by the shine of metal in the torchlight.

Holding your breath, you find that the room is the troll's

combination larder and loot storage room. In one corner are several bodies—human, orc, and, perhaps, elf—and in the other corner are chunks of armor, broken weapons, piles of coins, and a few other metal objects. One of these objects is an unbroken sword that gleams in the torchlight and, as you discover shortly, gleams without benefit of torchlight as well.

“Magic,” you say.

“You be takin’ it, swordbrother,” says Braggi. “I be an axeman.” You find no scabbard and guess that the troll probably ate it. You put the sword through your belt until you can make a scabbard, and the two of you search through the rest of the troll’s hoard.

The armor and other weapons are all of no use. A smith could perhaps use them to make another item, but they are only useful for scrap. The money includes what must be the contents of the purses of some wealthy travelers slain by the troll. You have little use for money here and no easy way to carry it, but you cache it in the side of the hill, far away from the cave, withholding some gold and silver for any chance expenses you might have.

The sword adds 1 to any fighting skill roll you make in the future. Record this fact on your Character Stats Card, then turn to 68.



101

Dowd Bearslayer’s first blows are incredibly powerful and drive your blocking weapons back toward you. Nevertheless, you realize that he has relied on his strength and your father’s sword for too long. There is no art to his fighting. In a series of feints, you draw his shield low. As he attempts to protect his bare knee from your sword, your dagger flicks over the top of the shield and slices through the bearskin and into his chest. He draws his shield back

up to eye level and jabs at your dagger arm with his sword, but you drop your dagger and grab the bottom edge of his shield, forcing the top back into his face. Before he can recover, your heavy falchion caves in his exposed ribs.

Dowd swings a dying blow at you, then falls at your feet. He is dead before the druid can reach him to try to heal him. As she looks up at you, you say, "I'm sorry that I had to kill him, druid. He was a brave, if greedy, man."

Silverleaf says, "He be also a braggart and a bully, and we be well rid of him and his claims to leadership. We be again in your debt, Filvendorson. Be leadin' us to your Daggerford, and we be helpin' you confront your enemies."

"Nay, Silverleaf. The menace that awaits in Daggerford does not need all of your swords. Braggi and I should be sufficient. Instead, I would have the Belcondi try to make peace with the Girondi. There is no purpose in humankind fighting each other on the High Moors when the goblins and orcs are so numerous."

"There be much in what you say, Filvendorson," Silverleaf replies. She invites you and Braggi to spend the rest of the night with them. Around the campfire, you spend some of the time reacquainting yourself with your father's sword. In game terms, it adds 1 to any fighting skill score roll you make during the rest of the game. Record this fact on your Character Stats Card, then turn to 23.



102

The first barbarian is tall and raw-boned, armed with shield and axe. You try to slay him quickly, but he is clever with his shield, and suddenly there are more attackers.

You defend yourself desperately, but there are just too many of them. You can see Braggi beside you, equally overwhelmed.

Roll 6 dice (or 2 dice three times) and subtract the result from your hit point total. If you still have hit points left, turn to 27. If you don't, turn to 17.

103

Choosing your followers proved to be more difficult than the duke made it sound. "The cream" offered by the duke consisted of the remnants after the duke's son, Pwyll, had taken the best of the rangers and the most experienced militiamen south to Dragonspear two days before. Despite their eagerness to please and enthusiasm to be chosen to go on this mission with you, you found yourself forced to spend at least half your time wet-nursing them instead of hunting down Redclaw.

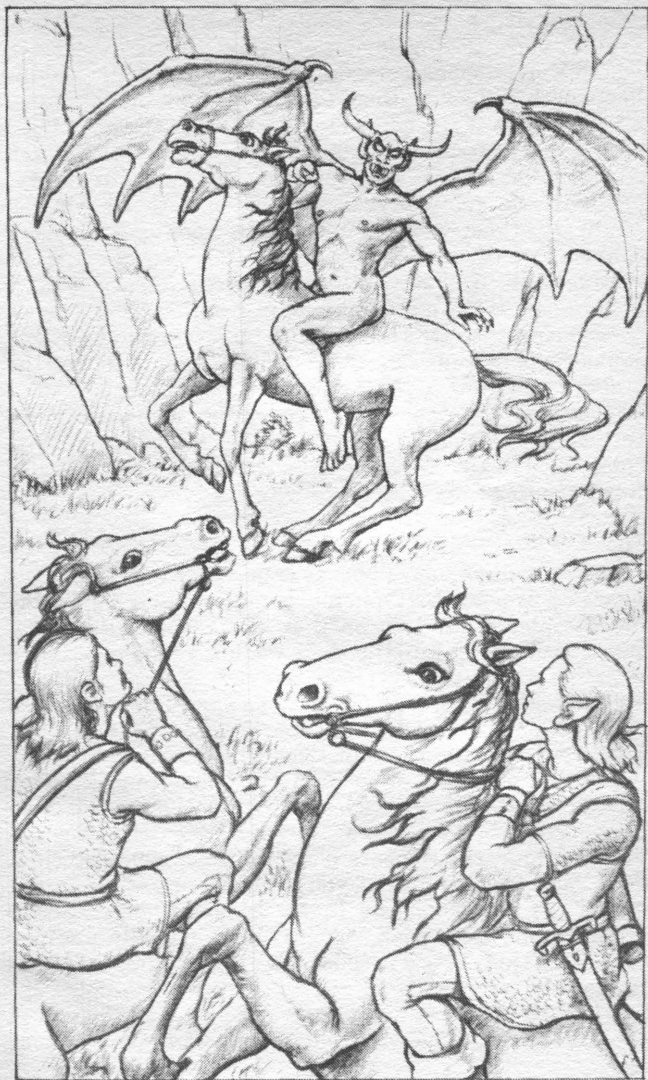
Now, thinking about the incident last night with young Brightstar, you wish even more that Bronwyn, an experienced adventurer who seems to appreciate a difficult challenge, was accompanying you around the next curve in the trail.

As you follow Blackeye around the curve, you realize that the trail quickly widens out, then stops abruptly. It's a blind canyon! At your side, you hear a sneering laugh that chills your spine.

You swing to face Blackeye. Brightstar gasps behind you at the same time. Blackeye is changing shape! Sharp horns sprout from his forehead, and huge black wings billow forth from his shoulders. His mouth, opened in a sinister laugh, is full of sharp, pointed teeth!

Suddenly both your horse and his go mad, snorting and rearing in fear. Their animal senses have told them what Blackeye is just as your reason has told you: Your trusty guide is a devil—one of the devils of Dragonspear!

"Ha-ha!" The devil that had been Blackeye roars with laughter, lifting itself into the air with black feathered wings. "I am no simple barbarian, Ranger. My friends in the hills will make you welcome, while I continue my charade at Daggerford!"



You get your horse under control, then pull out your bow to shoot at the fleeing devil. Before you can nock an arrow, young Kelwin gives a strangled scream and falls from his horse with a black-feathered arrow through his throat.

Looking up at the canyon walls, you see they are lined with goblins arrayed in squads of archers. Quickly you realize that you have three options. You can try to fight it out with the goblins, your bows against theirs. Or you might try to lead what remains of your troop back out of the canyon. Finally, you could try to lead the troop up one of the sloping walls in an attempt to overrun one squad of goblins and engage them hand-to-hand, preventing their friends from shooting into the melee. With luck, you could slay one squad of goblins and scramble out of the ambush before the others could come to the aid of their comrades.

If you want to engage in an archery duel with the goblins, turn to **159**. If you want to try to flee back the way you came, turn to **147**. If you want to charge one group of goblins, turn to **29**.

104

Up the wall you go, silent as cats. When you poke your heads up over the battlements, you don't see a sign of the much-depleted garrison on that section of wall. Braggi starts to skulk off into the shadows, but you stop him and stand up straight.

"No need to skulk, my friend," you say. "I have as much right here in the castle as anyone. Walk with me as if you are a representative of your tribe who has come to confer with me of trade and other matters of importance."

Before long, you approach two guards who are watching the approach to the northeast tower of the castle. They call you to a halt, their spears pointing at your breastbones. With some feeling of relief, you recognize one as Garth, the son of the owners of the River Shining Tavern. Before either guard can speak, you say in a friendly manner, "Hail, Garth! It's good to see you with something besides a tankard in your hands."

"Hail, Kelson," returns Garth. "But didn't I see you in the tower behind me with Lady Bronwyn not a half hour

ago?" The other guard is a young militiaman, seemingly willing to follow Garth's lead.

"I was called away through the eastern door to the tower by a messenger. This is Lord Braggi Quickaxe, a High Moors chieftain with word from the Misty Forest. I am just taking him to see Lady Bronwyn."

"Then pass, Kelson, and I envy you the warmth of the tower, where the night bites less piercingly than it does out here on the battlement."

You enter the tower room by an entrance from the battlements, but you find it empty of anything but the munitions it was built to hold. From the stairs leading to the tower above, you can hear two voices, one male, one female.

Your luck holds. Both Blackeye and Bronwyn are inside the tower, and they're alone. Now is the best chance to rid Daggerford of the devil and save Lady Bronwyn.

You take a deep breath and start to sneak up on the pair. Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **179**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **112**.

105

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 22 or more, turn to **55**. If it is 21 or less, turn to **87**.

106

The air is full of arrows, and your other companions fall. Finally you are hit several more times and you, too, fall. As blackness washes over you, you hear a sudden flurry of human war shouts and goblin yells. Could help be coming after all? Turn to **75**.





107

You spot a group of orcs heading up the Duke's Way toward you. Duke Eltan says, "Moruene and I will handle these invaders. Get to the castle and see what can be done there."

You and Pwyll run up the steep slope toward the front castle gate and see a knot of figures fighting in the gate itself.

A fully armored human, backed by a few guards, is flailing a two-handed sword mightily, doing great carnage to the orcs. You recognize him as Llewellyn Longhand. He and a small group of guards are trying to hold off Jagurt Redclaw and a large group of orc soldiers. The castle gate lies open behind them.

The only way you can get to the castle is through Jagurt. Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **67**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **140**.

108

Desperately you unleash a series of blows at Jagurt that drive him back, though none do any particular damage. You realize that more orcs are joining the fight to aid their master. Looking about, you see Lord Llewellyn and a few of your followers still fighting near you, but the orcs still vastly outnumber you.

Suddenly you hear familiar human war cries right behind you. Braggi has arrived with his followers! Jagurt screams in rage and attacks, while his followers turn to meet the newcomers.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **62**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **89**.

The first goblins scream their piping battle cries and charge. Yelling to Braggi to follow you, you move to meet them, and he follows unquestioningly. You duck under a spear and split its wielder wide open. You avoid the chop of an axe and see Braggi's axe cleave the axe-wielder's head even as you block an orc's scimitar with your fighting dagger and chop off its arm. The fight is a blur of weapons and limbs. At first you seem invincible, but you soon realize that there are too many orcs and goblins.

You fail to block a spear, and it stabs into you. You cut off the haft of the spear as a javelin slams into your side. You stab an axe-wielding orc, but its fighting mate stabs you with a scimitar. Darkness sweeps over your eyes once more, and you fall, just as you did in the canyon. But this time Braggi falls at your side, and his tribesmen are nowhere near to help. Jagurt and Blackeye have won, and woe to the citizens of Daggerford! ✘

Blackeye is too absorbed in Bronwyn to realize that you are creeping up on him. When you are close enough, you reach out and tear him from Bronwyn's arms. "Turn, devil, and face the steel of the true Kelson Darktreader!" you yell, drawing your father's sword, which gleams as it always did when it confronted evil. You see Bronwyn take a step back from Blackeye, as if dazed. You realize that the devil must have been using magic to befuddle her.

Bronwyn opens her eyes wide and looks at you, then Blackeye. "Two Kelsons!" she cries in disbelief.

"Apparently, my love," answers Blackeye in a voice that matches your own. Apparently he studied you well while leading your expedition to disaster. "But I shall show you that this imposter is no match for the true Kelson." He draws a blade that is the twin of the falchion you now wear on your back.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 17 or more, turn to 135. If it is 16 or less, turn to 158. Remember that your father's sword adds 1 to your score.



111

If you have been wounded, Silverleaf stops the warriors long enough to do a healing ritual for the two of you. Roll two dice and add the result to your hit point total. Remember, your hit points cannot be raised above what they were at the start of the game. Besides healing you, Silverleaf makes no motion to help you, though she is clearly upset with Dowd's actions.

A dozen warriors lead the two of you to a crude corral made of brush and tree limbs. You watch as the tribesmen, many bearing torches, take places along the makeshift fence. They shove you through a hastily replaced gap in the fence. There is a dull clunking sound to your right, and you realize that they have tossed your hand weapons in after you. Braggi leaps for his axe and you calmly pick up your falchion and dagger. Apparently you are not merely to be held to be sold in Waterdeep.

In the center of the corral, a dark heap suddenly moves, and you are looking into two immense owl eyes. Another pair blink open, just under that set, and with a keening shriek, the dark mass in the center of the corral separates into two monstrous forms. You recognize the owl-like heads and ursine bodies of owlbears, a fearsome supernatural predator that is rather rare, but not unheard of, in the Misty Forest.

Without hesitating, the two creatures rear up on their hind legs and shuffle toward the two of you. Braggi looks at you for guidance. He has obviously never seen such creatures before.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **149**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **191**.

Blackeye seems absorbed in Bronwyn, but your anxiety makes you careless. Even as you curse yourself for stumbling, Blackeye turns and sees you. You know that his devil eyes are as keen as yours are in the dark.

“An intruder! Guards! Guards!” As he yells and releases Bronwyn, she spins and, quick-witted as ever, spots Braggi looming beside you. Before he can reach her, she speaks a word and moves her hand in a magical gesture. Instantly Braggi freezes in place.

Then you are on Blackeye. “Two Kelsons!” Bronwyn cries. “The doppelganger is among us!”

“Yes, my love,” says Blackeye, “and I shall soon teach him the folly of imitating me!”

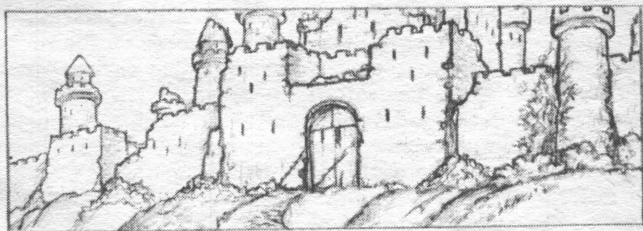
“Liar!” you cry. “It is you who are the imposter, and I shall prove it with your blood!”

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **21**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **196**. Remember to add 1 point to the total because you possess your father’s enchanted sword.

113

The next morning, you and Braggi set out toward Daggerford. Your trip through the forest is uneventful until evening, when you are surrounded by one of the thick fogs that gives the Misty Forest its name. The fog wraps you in its folds, but you are determined to continue your journey.

Roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **138**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **184**.



114

You are almost to the crest of the hill when you glance back at the goblin lookout. You realize that it is looking straight in your direction! Even as you look, it takes a reed whistle from its belt and blows hard. The whistle's piercing alarm shreds the air, and you hear the cries of orcs and goblins from beyond the crest of the hill. Every goblin in the forest will be upon you in minutes!

You can either run or fight. If you choose to run, turn to 53. If you choose to fight, turn to 143.

115

Try as you might, you can't free your hands from the horse's mane, nor your seat from its back. Suddenly the stream is in front of you, and the horse leaps into its icy depths.

The mane and back that grip you soften and swirl in your hands, and you feel as if you are now held by a water elemental. You can see the surface of the stream just inches above your face, but you cannot struggle free of the grip of this elemental demon. Finally you can no longer hold your breath. You are drowning, and your last thought is regret that you cannot warn Daggerford of the perfidy of Blackeye and the peril of Jagurt's orcs. . . . ✘

116

Grimly you begin to climb the stone facing of the tower. You have to pause midway to catch your breath, but you are climbing again in seconds.

When you reach the top, you raise your head cautiously over the battlement. You're at the foot of a short stairway leading to the tower roof. You see two figures on the roof, Bronwyn and the winged devil you remember earlier from the ambush. He is basically man-shaped, with vestigial horns, black-feathered wings, and goatlike legs. Apparently Blackeye masqueraded as you until now. Then, when he had no more need of that disguise, he switched to this form. Bronwyn is struggling in his grasp, but he holds both of her hands easily with one of his own.

"Struggling will get you nowhere, my dear," hisses

Blackeye. "The arrival of reinforcements will only prolong the struggle for the town a bit. Soon these intruders, too, will be destroyed by Jagurt's orcs."

"Don't be so sure," Bronwyn says.

"If I am wrong, I shall simply fly away with you. With your knowledge of magic, my masters at Dragonspear should be able to make good use of your services against the duke."

To try to sneak closer, roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **60**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **56**.

117

Jagurt swings a mighty blow at you. Even as you raise your sword to block it, you realize that your blade is too loose in your hand. Before you can correct your grip, it is knocked from your hand by the force of Jagurt's blow. You bring around your fighting dagger, but it's not nearly enough to stop the orc's powerful return blow, which smashes into your upraised arm, driving the dagger from your fingers as well.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **15**. If it's 19 or less, turn to **146**.



118

For the moment, at least, you have surprise on your side. The orcs are concentrating on the town and have no idea you are here. "Turn the boats broadside to the invaders," says Deldragor, "and we shall see how the orcs like our arrows."

The elf paddlers turn the light boats easily in the current to give every archer a clear shot. The boats drift silently down the river, the elves using their paddles only to keep their boats in position. Then, almost as one, the elves draw their bows, take aim, and loose their war shafts among the orcs. The elven arrows take a heavy toll. Every elf arrow has a target, and nearly every arrow hits.

You hear the orcs in the coracles shout in bewilderment, wondering where this deadly fire is coming from. Then you hear them yelling, "Elves!" Some try to return the fire, but their clumsy, round hide boats have little stability. Many orc archers tumble into the river before they can get off a shot. Other orcs turn and try to float downstream to escape the deadly volleys, but they almost immediately get caught in the shallows of the ford, where their clumsy craft capsize, providing more target practice for the elves. Still others paddle back to the opposite bank and flee for their lives. But something must be done about the orcs already on the beach and in the town.

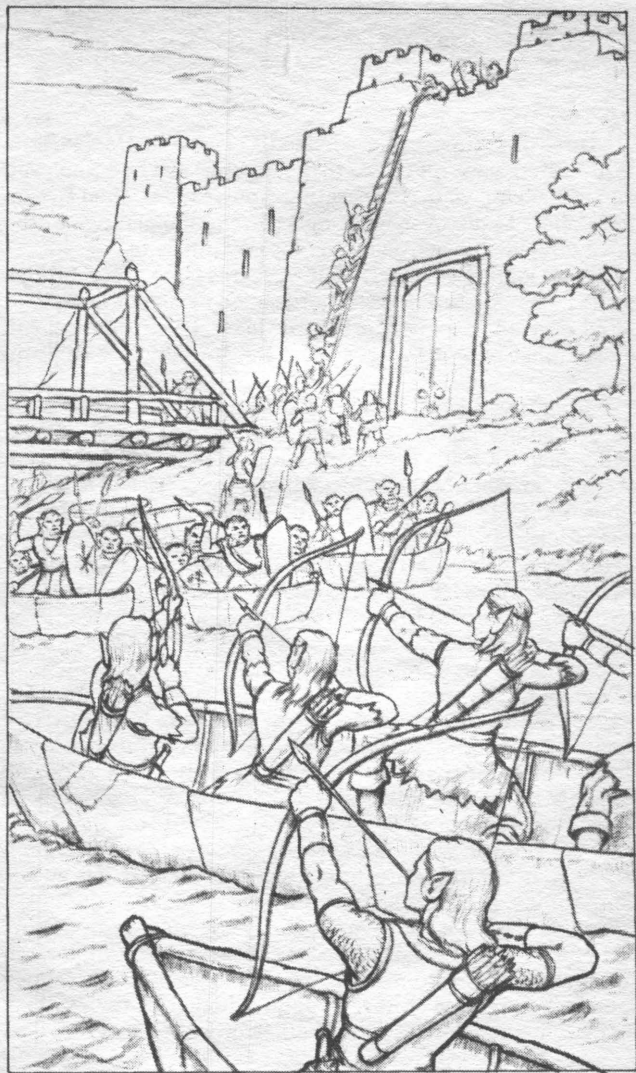
While Deldragor's elves keep up their withering fire on the orcs, you and Braggi and Drendin beach your boat and take advantage of the confusion to enter the town through the open River Gate.

Inside the town, you see that many of the Rivermen's Quarter houses are ablaze. Ahead of you, the town stables are also on fire, and you can hear horses screaming in terror. Knots of fighting figures are all over the town.

"Follow me!" you say. "We've got to see what the situation is at the castle!" You weave through the fighting, then race up the Hill Road toward the Duke's Way. You climb the slope toward the front castle gate and find a knot of fighting figures in the gate itself.

You see a fully armored human figure, Llewellyn Longhand, and a small group of guards trying to hold off a massive orc and a swarm of smaller orcs and goblins. You guess that the huge orc must be Jagurt Redclaw himself! The castle gate lies open beyond them, and there is no sign of anyone trying to close it.

One thing is obvious: The only way you can get inside the castle from here is through Jagurt.



Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 174. If it is 18 or less, turn to 202.

119

In three days time, you are healed. On your Character Stats Card, restore your hit points to the number you had when you started. During your recuperation, you've questioned Braggi in an effort to discover what he knows of happenings in the forest, and you've learned some interesting facts.

The orc leader, Jagurt Redclaw, seems to be assembling a horde in the Misty Forest, a horde such as hasn't been seen for a hundred years on the Sword Coast. His influence, you guess, must be a direct result of the influence of Dragonspear's devils.

Eliminating Jagurt Redclaw would probably eliminate the orc and goblin horde. Lore tells you that the loss of such a leader usually leads to instant backstabbing and infighting as one or another of the leader's lieutenants tries to seize the reins. You feel you are just the person to destroy this horde, particularly since the goblins think you are dead.

However, you recall that Blackeye said his next target was Daggerford. The havoc that shapechanger could do while the duke and his premier wizard are away would be enormous, and Lord Llewellyn is just thickheaded enough to be fooled by a smooth-tongued devil. You think of Bronwyn at the mercy of a Dragonspear devil and shudder.

Asking Braggi for advice doesn't help. "Ya be havin' two paths to follow, that be clear. Ya be owin' faithfulness to yar chief, which means ya should be tryin' to track down ol' Redclaw like ya be tellin' me he be tellin' ya to. Yet ya be owin' yar people back home a warnin' about this Blackeye, too. I fear I be na wiseman with sage advice fer ya. All I can be sayin' is we swordbrothers always be helpin' our sworn companions, so I be just followin' where ya go."

Your options are clear: You can try to track down Jagurt Redclaw and slay him, or you can backtrack to Daggerford and try to protect them from the influence of the Blackeye devil. If you choose to pursue Jagurt Redclaw, turn to 130. If you want to head back to Daggerford, turn to 113.



120

Something in the stranger's accent tells Braggi more than it tells you. He yells his tribal battle cry, "A Girondi!"

"Enemies!" yells the figure, and the cry is taken up by a dozen voices around you. You realize that you are completely surrounded by sworn enemies of Braggi's barbarian tribe.

You can fight or talk, but there is no way to flee. If you want to fight, turn to **64**. If you choose to talk, turn to **96**.

121

Before the devil-bear can recover from Bronwyn's attack, you are on it. The creature roars ferociously and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, and soon the devil-bear slips to the ground.

Even as its life ichor ebbs from its body, the creature dissolves into mist.

You look up to see Bronwyn looking at you with a combination of respect and fear. You know that she must realize now what has happened. She knows that the Kelson who romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. She is obviously grateful to the real Kelson for rescuing her from her mistake.

But she does not know what to do about her newly awakened feelings for Kelson Darkreader. The Kelson who had inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Before you can say anything, the guards sweep into the room, led by Lord Llewellyn. "What happened?" he asks as

he looks at you, Braggi, Lady Bronwyn, and the pile of dust that is all that remains of the imposter.

At first, Lord Llewellyn is confused by the story you tell of the devil that impersonated you. He seems sorry to realize that the Kelson he had begun to know and like in the last week was an imposter. Finally he has no choice but to believe your explanations, especially with Lady Bronwyn right there to corroborate them. "This is grave news, Kelson," he says. "His masters would not have sent an imposter here without reason, so you are undoubtedly right to suspect that Jagurt's orcs are on their way. Now that we are warned, we have a much better chance against them, but we are still sorely undermanned."

"I may be able to help," says Braggi. "There be tribesmen of mine about, and yar outlyin' villages must have some fightin' men still there. I be willin' to ride out on one of yar horses and gather what help I can."

Llewellyn has little choice, though he adds a few messengers of his own. You watch Braggi and the others ride off later that night, then join Llewellyn at making plans against the orcish invasion.

Turn to 37.



122

"Braggi," you say, "we have defeated the orcs, but there is still a devil loose in Daggerford. We must know what his plans are!"

"I be not killin' this one," Braggi says, hauling up one of the orc lieutenants he had merely stunned and is only now waking up. "I be thinkin' ya might be wishin' to question him 'bout his master's plans."

“Good work, Braggi. It was a fortunate day indeed when you nursed me back to health,” you say. Braggi is obviously pleased at your words of praise, and you realize that his pleasure gives you pleasure. You wonder if your relationships with humans could have been better all these years if you were as free with your praise as you have been with your criticisms.

As the orc’s beady eyes blink open and look into yours, you ask, “Who is the agent in Daggerford? Is it the devil who led my men into the trap a week ago?”

The orc’s eyes widen as it realizes who you are. It replies quickly, “Yes, that’s the one!” You frown, and it continues, eager to please. “He’s to open up the River Gate for us after we cross the River Shinin’ in our round leather boats—the hide boats some men call coracles.”

“You won’t be keeping that traitorous appointment now,” you say, showing the orc Jagurt’s body. “Go to your tribe and tell them Daggerford is now under the protection of Kelson Darktreader. Any who dare to attack my town will die!”

“Will ya be lettin’ it go?” asks Braggi, his eyebrows raised.

“Yes,” you say. “I want it to spread that message among its people. It might do more to bring some peace to this area than killing it ever would.”

Braggi is obviously unconvinced. He makes sure the orc has no weapons before reluctantly releasing it to run after its tribesmen.

Turn to 51.

123

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn’s attack, you are on it. The creature roars and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You duck under its massive claws and stab upward with your sword. The devil roars with pain and strikes your shoulder fiercely. You groan with pain, then withdraw your sword from the beast’s body and slice at the thing’s foreleg, inflicting a terrible wound. Blackeye screams with rage and suddenly lunges, grasping you in a bear hug. You struggle

with all your might, but the monster is just too strong. Faster than you would believe possible, it crushes the life from your body. Your head swims as you realize you are dying.

As the last of your life leaves you, you see the creature suddenly enveloped in blinding light and fire as Moruene flies over the tower roof to attack the devil with a lightning bolt. You know that Blackeye, too, will die, but you will not be alive to see it. ✠



124

“Hee-yah!” you yell and duck under the troll’s first swing as you yank sword and dagger from their scabbards. You are glad you carry a falchion, as its heavy blade is well suited for carving chunks out of a troll faster than the monster can regenerate them.

The monster catches your dagger arm with its next attack, and you counterattack by chopping at its arm. The heavy blade chops right through the creature’s leathery wrist and severs the hand of the troll from its arm. You watch in horror as the stump barely bleeds before it seals itself up. Worse, you can feel the hand still gripping your arm!

“Girondi!” yells Braggi, and his axe blade chops into the monster’s back. He barely gets it out again before the creature turns and strikes him with its stump. Braggi flies back several yards and strikes against a rock. He slumps to the ground soundlessly.

You take advantage of the diversion to race over to where the mist-sogged brush is just now starting to catch fire from the torch. Sheathing your sword, you snatch the torch out of the burning brush and hold it against the severed hand, still trying to crush your arm. There is a puff of

smoke, and the hand shrivels and falls away from you.

Award yourself 1 experience point for remembering that flame is injurious to trolls.

You immediately sheathe your dagger, transfer the torch to your other hand, and draw your falchion again.

Then you spin to face the oncoming troll, falchion and torch in hand. The monster stops and backs away fearfully. You advance, whipping the torch around to make it flame more brightly. The troll spies a loose rock nearby and scuttles for it, snatches it up, and hurls it at you. You duck away from the rock and advance closer.

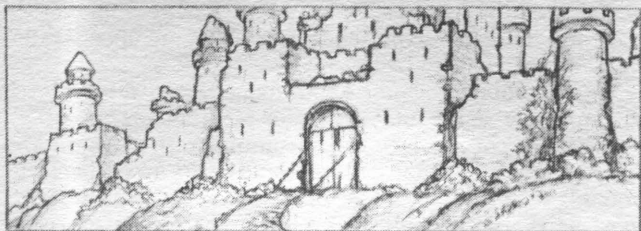
The troll roars and charges you. You straightarm it with the torch. It screams but keeps right on coming. Its remaining claw rakes along your armor, slicing a hole in the chainmail and cutting you deeply. You counter by jabbing the torch into its chest, then try to spin out of its reach, but the creature is too quick for you. Suddenly you are caught in its remaining good arm, and the stump of the other one swings over to help hold you.

The creature's mouth opens, and you are nearly gagged by its fetid breath as it starts to bite you. All at once its eyes pop open and its head twists at an impossible angle, helped by Braggi's axe blade, which has almost severed its neck. You barely keep your feet as it releases you and falls to the ground.

"Quick, swordbrother! Let's be puttin' this critter on to roast, or it will be back after us in no time," says Braggi as he tries to pull the massive body toward the burning brush. You lend your strength, and the two of you manage to move the creature into the fire before its neck can reknit. It awakens just in time to scream horribly before the flame consumes it.

Turn to 100.





125

Braggi is not happy about being underground, but he follows you into the tunnel. You have no idea where it might lead, but you have no choice.

The tunnel is old, but finely worked. You're forced to stoop as you go, for it was obviously built for dwarves, not men. There are no side tunnels. You suspect that you have stumbled on a former dwarven watchpost, perhaps established to watch the elves of the Misty Forest in days gone by, when both elves and dwarves were far more common in the land.

The floor of the tunnel slopes upward from where you started. In some places, you must climb, using hand- and footholds carved into the rock. You know that you are gradually climbing higher, toward the High Moors, directly away from Daggerford. You must find some way back to the surface.

Finally you find yourselves in another chamber, similar to the one you entered the tunnel from. Above you is another door. Another tunnel leads away from this chamber, but you know that you have no time for exploration, and Braggi is obviously eager to get back to the outside world.

You climb the ladder and listen through the door. You hear normal forest sounds, a sure sign that orcs are not present. At your signal, Braggi pulls the lever and the door creaks open. Then he climbs after you as you emerge into the outside world.

Like the door from which you entered the underground passage, this door is carved into the rock. Below the knoll on which the rock perches, there is a forest path.

Night has fallen. What's more, the fog is closing in. But you have lost too much time already, and Braggi is unwilling to reenter the tunnel. You set off on the path in the general direction of Daggerford.

Turn to 183.

126

Your first shot skewers your target, a tall orc who seems to be commanding one group of goblins. The goblins cry out in fear, and many drop their bows and run frantically up the slope. Grant yourself 1 experience point for succeeding with a difficult shot from a tossing horse.

Looking around for more targets, you realize that staying and shooting it out is the wrong way to go. Although you and your fighters are all better archers than the goblins, and Felis has already put one squad to sleep with a spell, the goblins have you outnumbered at least twenty to one.

The odds get worse as Brightstar and Derbon go down, both stuck like porcupines. Then you yourself are hit. Subtract 12 from your hit point total. You stagger, but somehow you find the strength to keep fighting. Your bow sings again, and another orc commander falls. Suddenly your horse drops out from under you, and you realize that your three remaining militiamen are all fighting on foot. The goblins have been shooting at your horses in order to keep you from escaping. Even Blackeye's horse is down.

You think about running out of the canyon, but you realize that your running skills are not going to be enough to get you to safety that way.

If you want to try to lead your men in a charge on foot against the nearest goblins, turn to 78. If you want to stay and fight it out with bows and arrows, turn to 43.

127

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn's attack, you are on it. The creature roars and

claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, until the devil-bear slowly slips to the floor. Even as its life ichor pumps out, the body dissolves into mist.

"Well done, Kelson!" Bronwyn exclaims. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

But she does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the real Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 30.



128

Thinking quickly, you tell the guard that you were inspecting the Caravan Gate, and he passes you inside.

As you enter the Riverside district of the town, you turn to Braggi. "He said he saw me enter just minutes ago. Do you realize what this means, Braggi?"

"Aye, swordbrother. Blackeye be masqueradin' as ya. But what can we be doin' about it?"

You can either go to the castle or scout out things in the town. If you want to go to the castle, turn to 97. If you want to scout things out in the town, turn to 39. In either case, Braggi goes with you.



129

"We're hopelessly outnumbered. We've got to get out of here!" you snap to Braggi and turn downslope. You run with the ground-eating lope that the rangers have taught you, and Braggi runs as his years on the High Moors have taught him. The short-legged orcs and goblins can't match your pace. Orc arrows shower around you, and two penetrate your armor. Subtract 10 from your hit point total. Slowly, though, you pull ahead of the archers and the pursuing orcs. As you move deeper into the forest, a thick fog begins to form as twilight approaches.

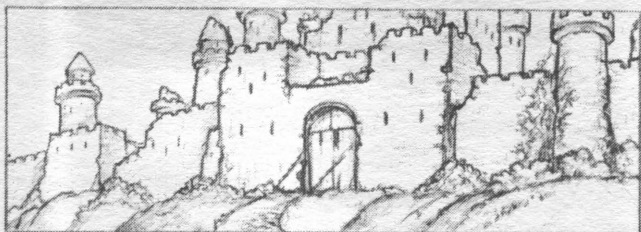
Turn to 183.

130

The next morning, you and Braggi set off to find the camp of Jagurt Redclaw. The cave in which Braggi nursed you back to health is very close to the blind canyon in which your comrades were slain. Their bodies are gone now. Braggi shows you where they were burned and offered to the care of the storm spirits his tribe worships.

Even after a week, the trail of the goblins as they fled from the barbarians is initially clear. But after an hour of tracking them through the woods, even your keen senses and those of Braggi are challenged to find the path taken by the goblin horde as its members split up into smaller bands and scattered. From the appearance of the tracks, you can see that it rained one day at least, and there is evidence that some goblins and orcs have returned to the area recently, perhaps looking for any loot the barbarians may have left behind.

Roll two dice and add the result to your sensory skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to 133. If it is 19 or less, turn to 194.



131

Picking your way carefully, you begin to climb, not daring to look down. The first story of the three-story tower goes relatively smoothly. Then weariness from the battle hits you. You can't seem to find any handholds. Halfway up the wall, you can go no farther.

Suddenly you feel yourself lifted from the wall and deposited on the tower roof! Looking down, you see Moruene finishing a magical gesture and waving at you.

You face Blackeye, who has assumed the same winged devil form that he assumed when he left you in the canyon trap. You can see now that besides his black-feathered wings, small horns grow from his forehead, and his legs are like those of a goat but end in an eagle's sharp talons. He holds the struggling Bronwyn tightly in his arms and is looking at you with hatred in his eyes. "So, you survived my little trap, did you? Well, I shall be your death this time, forester!" He lets go of Bronwyn and advances toward you, "My minions below will destroy your friends while I kill you."

Suddenly the devil's features begin to alter and twist. His entire body writhes and changes, until you face a devil with the body of a bear, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

Before you or Blackeye can attack, you see Bronwyn

make a gesture with her hand and speak a phrase in the arcane language of magic. A green dart forms in her hand and flies toward the devil-bear, wounding it seriously. "Now, Kelson!" she cries.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **148**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **123**.

132

"Hee-yah!" you yell and duck under the troll's first swing as you yank your sword and dagger from their scabbards. You are glad you carry a falchion, as its heavy blade is well suited for carving chunks out of a troll faster than the monster can regenerate them.

The troll catches your dagger arm with its next attack, and you counterattack by chopping at its arm. The heavy blade chops right through the troll's leathery arm, and its hand is severed from its arm. You watch in horror as the stump barely bleeds before it seals itself up. Worse, you can feel the detached hand still gripping your arm!

"Girondi!" yells Braggi, and his axe blade chops into the monster's back. He barely gets it out again before the creature turns and strikes him hard with its stump. Braggi staggers back several yards against a rock, then slumps noiselessly to the ground.

You attack fiercely, trying to keep the monster from finishing off your friend, but you suddenly realize you have gotten too close. The creature's good arm catches your sword arm, and its stump slams down on your dagger hand, knocking the dagger to the ground.

You struggle helplessly in its grip, kicking out and watching your feet bounce off its scaly hide. Then suddenly the troll lifts you even higher and hurls you down with terrible strength against the ground. Your last thoughts are of regret that you leave Daggerford unprotected against the evil that Blackeye and Jagurt will surely bring it. ✖

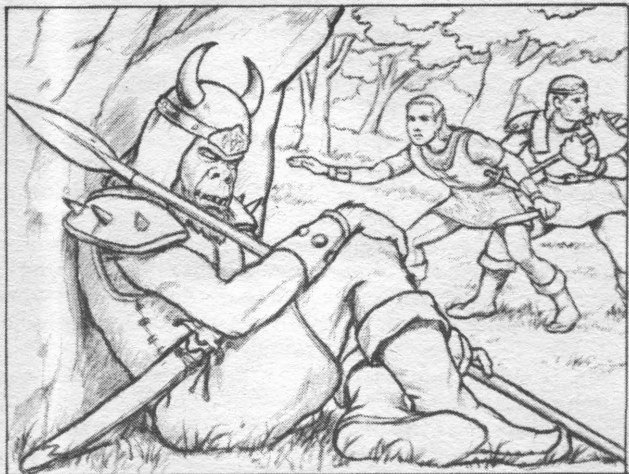
133

You realize that what remains of the old tracks and some of the newer ones share a common general direction. You

stop trying to pick up every little sign and just move in that direction for several hundred paces, then cast about for more tracks. You locate them again within the hour, and you are on the trail once more. The tracks are fresher than a week old, but the odds are good that they return to the same place the original ambushers retreated to.

Soon your keen elven eyes spot a goblin, obviously a lookout, at the crest of a hill, nodding sleepily in the shade of an immense boulder. It doesn't see you immediately, and you signal Braggi to follow as you try to sneak past the lookout to see what it is guarding. Fortunately it is still daytime, and goblin eyes aren't very good in sunlight, even when it is shielded by the trees of the Misty Forest.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 20 or more, go to **168**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **114**.



134

You run, dodging orcs on all sides. There are many orcs, and as some drop out of the race, others speed up and push you to your maximum. Soon you are nearly out of breath

and realize that the orcs will never give up. You'll have to make a stand. You see a knoll ahead with rocks arranged in such a position that you should be able to keep more than a couple of orcs from attacking at once. You run toward the knoll, a panting Braggi right behind you. As you reach the haven of rocks, you turn to face your pursuers. Braggi positions himself to your rear, facing the rest of the orcs.

You remember a saying of the barbarians. "Bare is brotherless back," you say.

"Aye, swordbrother," he answers. You feel pleased that he considers himself a brother to guard your otherwise bare back.

The knoll you picked is a jumble of tall rocks and brush. The orc archers have little chance of hitting you here. Instead, they must muster the goblins into columns and send them at you.

Roll two dice and add the result to your senses skill score. If the total is 20 or more, go to **69**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **98**.

135

The devil that stands before you may be a perfect match for you physically, but he does not have your years of training with the sword. In seconds, you have wounded him in three places. Only his demonic vitality keeps him going. In desperation, he hurls his falchion at you. As you duck under it, you see his features alter and twist horribly. His entire body begins to writhe and change, and you are suddenly confronting a huge bear-shaped devil, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

Before you or the bear can attack, you hear Bronwyn utter a phrase in the unknown tongue used only by magicians. A green dart of magical power forms in her hand and flies to the devil-bear, wounding it severely. "Now, Kelson!" she yells.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to **40**. If it is 15 or less, turn to **7**. Remember to add 1 for your father's sword.



136

You realize you have been dealt your death blow. As you fall into the black void, you see Braggi's axe buried in the skull of the owlbear. Now he will have to finish the fight without you. ☒

137

It is not in the nature of orcs to set such orderly campfires, and there is no one else along the river that you have any fear of harming you, so you decide to approach openly, hailing the camp as you do.

"Who be there?" comes the reply.

Immediately Braggi's face brightens, and he shouts, "Dykkon Trueblade! It be I, Braggi Quickaxe!"

The camp is suddenly aboil with men, and you are quickly surrounded by barbarians. Although you do not recognize them, they greet you as an old friend. They glance distrustfully at Drendin, who in return looks them over with unabashed curiosity. You realize that these barbarians are Braggi's former war band, the same ones who saved your life more than a week ago!

The war band invites you to join them at their firesite. There they ask you of any news, and you proceed to tell your story. It takes very little persuasion to bring these grim fighting men to your cause. As Dykkon says, "If the elves be too caught up with themselves to be helpin', we be showin' ya that the Girondi be ready to help against Red-claw's evil plots!"

Drendin takes this insult to her people with good grace, since she had already come to the same conclusion.

Turn to 71.

In the distance ahead of you, you hear soft, muttered voices. They sound human, but you can't make out any words.

If you want to call out to the voices, turn to **3**. Instead, you may try to sneak around them. If you want to try this, roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **58**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **184**.

The slope is too steep and your horses too weary. You can't reach your enemies in time. The goblins in front of you scamper away, while the others fill the air around you with arrows.

The horses are the first victims, cut from under you. Then the goblins surround you and attack, screaming their distinctive high-pitched war cries. In seconds, you fall, wounded in at least a dozen places. As blackness washes over you, you hear a sudden outburst of deep-throated human war shouts and goblin yells. Could help be coming after all?

Turn to **75**.

With a shout, you and Pwyll wade into the middle of the orcs. You cut down one who turns to meet this new threat. Another orc sticks its spear between your legs and trips you. You realize, too late, that you are badly outnumbered. You see Pwyll pulled down by several orcs even as other orc blades plunge into your body. You have come far, only to fail at the end. ✚

Dowd Bearslayer is tall and very strong, you learn quickly. His first blows drive your blocking weapons back against you. You sense, however, that he has relied on his strength and your father's sword for too long. There is little art to his fighting. In a series of feints, you draw his shield downward, out of position. As he attempts to protect his

bare knee from your sword, your dagger flicks over the top of his shield and slices toward his chest.

But you are too slow with the attack. His shield edge drives back up quickly, catching your elbow and knocking the dagger from your numbed hand. His sword snakes out toward your now unprotected left side and bites into your chain mail. Subtract 20 from your hit points. The powerful blow knocks you onto your back, and before you can rise, Dowd is standing over you, sword upraised.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to 153. If it is 19 or less, turn to 11.



142

Up the wall you go, silent as cats. You see no guards from the much-depleted garrison on that section of wall when you finally reach the battlements. Braggi starts to skulk away into the shadows, but you stop him and stand up straight.

“No need to skulk, friend,” you say. “Now we are in the castle, and I have as much right here as anyone. Walk with me as if you are an envoy from your tribe come to talk to me of trade and hunting matters.”

Shortly you approach two guards who are watching the approach to the northeast tower of the castle. They call you to a halt, their spears pointing at your breastbones. With relief, you recognize one as Garth, the son of the owners of the River Shining Tavern. The other guard is a young militiaman, seemingly willing to follow Garth’s lead. Before either guard can speak, you call out loudly, “Hail, Garth! ’Tis good to see you with something besides a tankard in your hands.”

“Hail, Kelson!” returns Garth. “But did I not see you in

the tower behind me with Lady Bronwyn less than a half hour ago?"

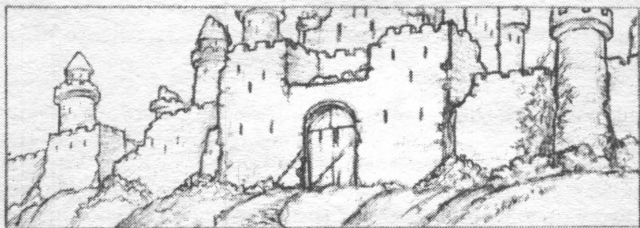
"I was called away through the eastern door to the tower by a messenger. By the way, this is Lord Braggi Quickaxe, a High Moors chieftain bearing an important message from the Misty Forest. I am just taking him to speak with Lady Bronwyn."

"Then pass, Kelson, and I envy you the warmth of the tower, where the night wind bites less enthusiastically than it does out here."

With luck, both Blackeye and Bronwyn are inside the tower, and alone. This is the best chance to rid Daggerford of the devil and save Lady Bronwyn from him.

You enter the tower room that is at the same level as the battlements, but you find the tower room empty of anything but the munitions it was built to hold. From the stairs leading to the room above, you can hear two voices, one male, one female. You approach the stairs and prepare to sneak up on the pair.

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **32**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **49**.



143

Dozens of goblins stream over the crest of the hill. They pull up short when they see you, then spread out and approach you and Braggi from all sides. Braggi plants himself behind you, facing the orcs approaching from that direction. "Bare is brotherless back, swordbrother," the big

barbarian says, readying his axe for the first attacker. You are proud that this man is ready to act as your brother and guard your otherwise bare back. You wonder at his willingness to die for you even as you ready your own falchion and fighting dagger.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **10**. If it is 18 or less turn to **109**.

144

You use all the horsemanship skill you have learned in your fifty-odd years among the horsemen of Daggerford. As you approach the stream, you realize that you are turning it away from its goal. The horse rears again, but again you do not fall off. In fact, you are stuck to the back of this monster! Your hands are now caught in the mane, your seat stuck to the back of the demon.

The creature continues to run, and you know that its plan now is to wear you out, so that the next time it wants to jump into a stream, you will be too weary to stop it. The trees and brush fly past almost too rapidly to distinguish one tree from another.

Every second of this ride takes you farther from Braggi. If you want to try to ride the creature until it tires, if it ever does, turn to **46**. If you want to try to slay it, turn to **72**.

145

“No!” cries the devil as you charge. He twists out of your way, releasing Bronwyn as he does. Then he hops into the air and flies straight at you, swiping at your head with the talons you now see at the end of his goatlike legs. You throw up your left arm, and the talons cut into your armor but only manage to bruise your arm. You swing your sword at Blackeye, and he realizes that it is glowing from magic. He tries to fly out of your way, but you are too quick for him. Your enchanted sword slides between his ribs, and he screams loudly.

He swipes at you with his clawed hands, but you avoid them easily and strike again. “I’ll kill y—” He falters, then slumps forward, his body turning to mist as he falls. All

that is left is a pile of dust.

"Well done, Kelson!" says a voice. You look up and see Bronwyn, looking at you with a combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to the real Kelson for rescuing her from her mistake.

She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who had inspired them is dead, but Kelson also was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 30.

146

Unarmed, you try to close with the orc before his next blow can land, but your wounded arm slows you. The edge of the scimitar smashes into your ribs, and you fall at the orc leader's feet.

Out of the corner of your eye, you see Braggi coming to your aid, only to be hit from behind by a javelin thrown by the other orc. The last thing you think of as the scimitar blade bites into your neck is of the doom your mistakes have brought to Daggerford. ☩



147

Wheeling your horse, you yell, "Back the way we came! It's our only chance!" Suiting action to words, you spur your mount toward the neck of the ravine behind you, passing the others, who are just turning their horses.

There is a strangled scream as one of your companions falls behind you. The other four race to keep up with you.

Just then you feel the sharp pain of a well-aimed arrow penetrating your armor. Subtract 3 from your hit point total. Suddenly your horse lurches and starts to fall.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the result is 16 or more, turn to **33**. If it's 15 or less, turn to **185**.

148

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn's magic-missile attack, you are on top of it. The creature roars and claws at you desperately, but its claws only scrape your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, until the devil-bear slowly slips to the ground. Even as the life ichor pumps out of its body, the creature dissolves into mist.

"Well done, Kelson!" Bronwyn exclaims. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

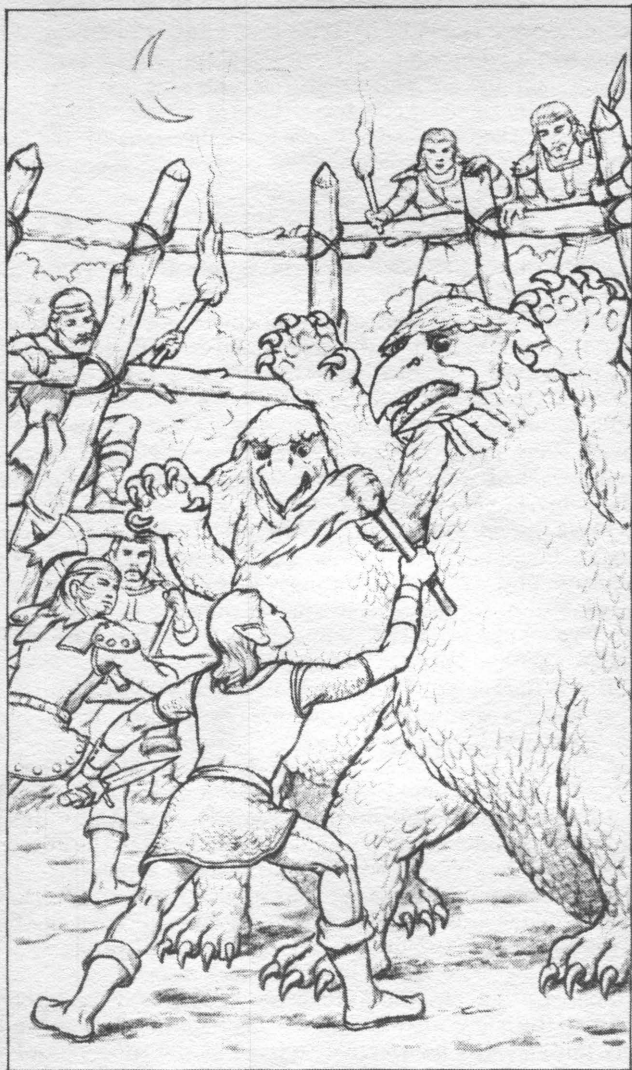
She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to **203**.

149

You know that these strange creatures are like owls in that they abhor intense light. As they advance toward you, you back away toward the crude fence surrounding the area. The monsters' deceptive shuffle is eating up ground faster than you would think possible, but you still have space to spare as you suddenly sheathe your dagger, turn, and race for the corral wall, where a barbarian holds a torch high.

Before he can react, you have the torch. You swing it about, the rush of air making it flare brightly. You speed back to Braggi's side and say, "They'll concentrate on me



now, because the light irritates them. Take them from the rear while I distract them.”

You run toward the creatures, stopping several feet short, and thrust your torch toward their faces. They screech at the light and advance toward you, half-blind but furious. You start to dance away, waving the torch as you retreat.

Suddenly one owlbear slashes out at you. It strikes your head and knocks you flying. Subtract 10 from your hit point total. If you have no more hit points, turn to **136**. Otherwise, continue reading.

You roll to your feet, avoiding another crushing blow from the owlbear. At that moment, the creature screams as Braggi's axe buries itself in its head. Braggi has climbed up on its gigantic back to brain it while it was distracted. You spin to locate its mate, but you see the second owlbear's body some yards behind Braggi. Your diversion tactics have worked well. Give yourself 1 experience point for devising the strategy.

From the sides of the corral, you hear the barbarians yelling, “Filvendorson! Filvendorson! Girondi!” They admire courage and cunning, toughness and daring, and you've shown all of these. Someone opens the gate to the corral, and you are carried in triumph to Silverleaf's firesite, where the druid awaits you.

Dowd Bearslayer is nowhere in sight, though you still feel you have unfinished business with him over your father's sword.

Silverleaf gives you each a herbal potion. “These be healing your wounds somewhat,” she says. Roll one die and add the result to your hit point total. Remember that your total hit points cannot exceed the amount you started the adventure with. As you sip the potion, Silverleaf speaks.

“You be slayin' the prize of our monster huntin', Kelson Darktreader, but in doin' so you be winnin' most of the tribe to your side. Now ah can be tellin' you the story of how Dowd's father gained your father's sword.

“Some nineteen winters ago, we be findin' your father lyin' in the snow, next to the body of an immense ice worm. My mother, who be servin' the tribe at the time as ah be

doin' now, be healin' him where he lay. When he be wakin', he be tellin' us that he be slayin' this monster and would now be searchin' for any treasure it might be guardin'." You smile to hear this of your father. It sounds just like him.

"In the beast's hoard," she continues, "he be findin' a sword. It be obviously enchanted, and be havin' a will of its own. He be pickin' it up and strappin' it on, discardin' his own sword at the same time. 'Ah be goin'," he said, and would be marchin' off through the snow but that my mother be catchin' him in a spell like that ah be catchin' you two in, and forcin' him to return to our village. In a week, he be fully healed, and she had to be lettin' him go on this sword-begotten quest. He be not speakin' of the quest, but he be sayin' that he be not returnin' to his home."

"But—but where is he now?" you ask excitedly.

"Ah cannot say, for we be not seein' him since that time. However, since he be not returnin' home, he be leavin' with us his old sword, to be returned to you. In payment for this favor, he be givin' us his claim to the worm's treasure."

You remember that your father's old sword was enchanted, though obviously not so powerfully as the sword he found in the ice worm's treasure. "But why wasn't the sword returned to me?" you ask.

Before Silverleaf can answer, Dowd steps into the circle of firelight. "Because my father be takin' it from Silverleaf's mother, and it be now my sword, and ah be not givin' it up!" he declares.

"Shame, Dowd!" Silverleaf chastizes. "The man be havin' a right to the sword."

"Not while ah be livin'," returns the chieftain.

"Then I challenge you, Dowd Bearslayer," you say. "I say you're an honorless thief, and I defy you to meet me in combat and prove your right to the sword you have stolen from me!"

Dowd roars and starts to draw your father's sword.

"Hold!" cries Silverleaf. Dowd stops drawing his sword, and you refrain from drawing your own. "Be stayin' your blades for the moment. Let us be preparin' a proper field for holmgang."

In minutes, the other tribesmen have beaten out a ring. You recognize it as the ritual dueling circle for barbarian fights, or holmgangs.

When the circle has been prepared, you step into it. The mist has cleared a bit, but the night is starless. However, several of the barbarians surrounding the circle have lit torches, making the light much the same for you and Dowd. You see that Dowd has been persuaded to forego using your father's sword for the fight. Instead, he holds a typical barbarian broadsword in his hand. You see your father's blade in the safekeeping of one of the barbarians watching the fight. Dowd bears a shield on his other arm. One of the barbarians offers you a shield, but you see that is a type you're not used to, and it would only throw you off. Besides, your armor offers some protection. You draw your long dagger and hold it easily in your left hand. The falchion in your right hand is shorter than Dowd's broadsword, but heavier.

Braggi steps from between two tribesmen who are nervously watching him and says, "Dowd Bearslayer, if the gods be givin' ya victory in this unjust fight, I swear ya be havin' Braggi Quickaxe to reckon with!"

You are startled by this show of loyalty. You never expected this kind of response from a human. You step over to Braggi, put a hand on his shoulder to stop him, and say, "Nay, Braggi. If I fall, you must continue on to Daggerford and do what you can to stop Blackeye and his evil plot." Braggi looks at you and nods, but you can see that if your barbarian companion succeeds in that task, he will hunt Dowd to the end of his days. The loyalty of this human gives you new respect for them all.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **165**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **141**.





Jagurt turns suddenly to bark a command, and your arrow just misses. Realizing that a master archer is shooting at him, Jagurt dashes for the safety of the alcove that covers the River Gate. Many of his followers are close behind.

You see Llewellyn gathering a force to open the River Gate and confront the orcs hand-to-hand. Cursing Llewellyn's knightly code that insists on fighting in close quarters with the enemy, you gather a group of militiamen and head toward the River Gate, arriving just as Llewellyn swings open the gates and charges the orcs.

Your group blends with his, and you form your combined troops into a human wedge, driving into the orcs. Even though you are outnumbered, the duke left the town well equipped, and your men are much better armored than your foes. The archers on the walls above are still keeping the orcs outside the alcove busy trying to find some cover on the bare riverbank.

In the confusion, you and Llewellyn find yourselves confronting a knot of larger orcs who surround Jagurt. Llewellyn immediately shouts his battle cry as he smashes into the midst of them, scattering the front rank and bringing him up against a massive orc, barely smaller than Jagurt. The orc swings savagely and bounces its heavy club off the older man's plate armor. Llewellyn staggers for a moment, then takes up his sword of war with both hands and wades back into the fray, driving the orc back with a flurry of murderous blows.

You snake your way through the opening Llewellyn has

made and find yourself confronting Jagurt himself!

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to **19**. If it is 19 or less, turn to **8**.

151

In the daytime, goblins and orcs must depend on their ears. You are apprehensive that Braggi might be heard by the sharp-eared creatures, but the young barbarian proves to be as surefooted as you are. You creep through the waist-high grass on your hands and knees without a rustle to show your passage.

All at once a goblin, obviously returning to his lean-to from some mysterious errand, suddenly stops and looks in your direction. "Who in grass?" it growls in a low voice. You freeze in place and remain silent. The goblin waits for what seems like hours, then Braggi makes a strange piping cry and shakes the grass to your right. The goblin licks its lips and starts to move in that direction, then stops, shrugs, and continues on its way, obviously more interested in sleeping away the rest of the day than in investigating strange creatures in the bush. You look at Braggi and grasp his shoulder in thanks. He grins bashfully and motions you to go on.

When you are within easy bowshot of the hut, Jagurt emerges from his hut again and shouts out a couple of names. Two other orcs, only marginally smaller than their leader, emerge from their nearby huts to confer with Jagurt. They stand under the shade of the tree that also shelters the leader's hut.

From here, you have a clear shot at the unsuspecting orc leader. If you want to try to bring him down with your bow and arrow, turn to **66**. If you feel that you would rather be sure of the job by attacking hand-to-hand, remembering that Braggi has no bow or other missile weapon, turn to **105**.

152

Picking your way carefully, you climb the stone facing of the tower, not daring to look down. Halfway up, you stop to

catch your breath from the exertion. When your breathing become regular again, you resume your climb.

When you reach the top, you raise your head cautiously over the battlement. You see two figures on the roof—Bronwyn and the winged devil you remember from the ambush. The creature is basically man-shaped, with vestigial horns, black-feathered wings, and goatlike legs. Apparently Blackeye had no more need of his Kelson disguise and switched to this form, which seems to be his favorite. Bronwyn is struggling in his grasp, but he holds both of her wrists easily with one hand.

“Struggling will gain you nothing, my dear,” hisses Blackeye. “These paltry reinforcements will only prolong the struggle a bit. Soon these intruders, too, will fall to Jagurt’s orcs!”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” Bronwyn says bravely.

“If I’m wrong, I shall simply fly off with you. My masters at Dragonspear will be pleased to enlist your magic against the duke.”

To sneak up closer, roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to 38. If it is 20 or less, turn to 57.



153

You realize you cannot block the blow and, summoning all of your willpower, you fight off the pain of the wound in your side and roll out of the way of the blow. The startled barbarian spends a split second too long realizing that his blow has somehow missed. You use that time to lurch to your knees and swing your falchion into his neck. He is

wide open, and you hear the groan of the barbarian spectators as Dowd's head leaves its shoulders and flies out of the range of the torchlight.

Silverleaf runs into the circle and puts a wooden cup to your lips. "It is a healing draught," she says urgently. "Drink deeply."

Roll two dice and add the result to your hit point total.

As Silverleaf looks down at you, you say, "I—I'm sorry I had to kill him, druid. He was a brave, if greedy, man."

Silverleaf replies, "He be also a braggart and a bully, and we be well rid of him and his claims to leadership. We be again in your debt, Filvendorson. Be leadin' us to your Daggerford, and we be helpin' you confront your enemies."

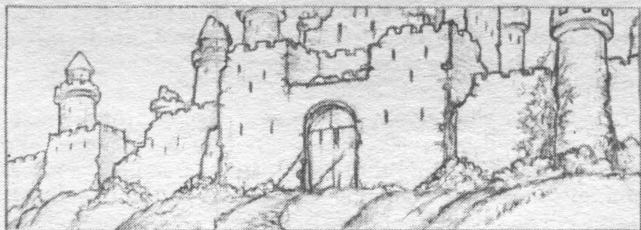
Turn to 24.

154

You and Jagurt circle each other warily. Suddenly Jagurt attacks, making wide, sweeping strokes with his scimitar. You can't block them with your flimsy dagger, so you duck away from them, but one catches you solidly. You groan from the pain of the blow but continue circling, looking for that one opening.

As you circle, you think you see a pattern in Jagurt's attacks, a pattern that may give you the opening you need. You duck another of Jagurt's swings and quickly dash in under his arm. Your dagger snakes out, but his fist is even faster. Before your dagger strikes, his blow lands on your chin, and you are rocked back on your heels. Before you can recover, his scimitar buries itself in your side. You slide into darkness, knowing that Daggerford may well be doomed, but you're unable—forever—to do anything about it. ✘





You search your memory of the Misty Forest for some recollection that might help. Finally you realize that the trail to the left joins with the path that leads to Daggerford. The fog wraps you even closer in its folds, but you are determined to continue your journey. Suddenly you realize that the trail is blocked by a human figure just ahead. "Who be there?" questions the stranger in the accent of the High Moors.

"Kelson Filvendorson," you answer, using your father's name because you know he made many friends among the barbarians.

"And Braggi Quickaxe, of the Girondi," adds Braggi, pulling his arm out of your grasp and reaching for his axe.

"Girondi!" cries the barbarian ahead of you, and his cry is echoed by several other voices around you. "Girondi!" Even in the fog, you can see that Braggi is both nervous and determined. You recall that the barbarian tribes of the High Moors are in a continual state of war among themselves, just as the orcs are.

"Girondi?" repeats a feminine voice from the shadows. "And what be bringin' a Girondi to the camp of the Belcondi? Particularly a Girondi in the company of the son of a famous father?"

"Rather ya should be askin' why a Belcondi blocks the rightful path of a Girondi!" responds Braggi darkly, ready to charge at any moment.

From out of the shadows comes a feminine shape with a

laugh in her voice. "Come now, Girondi! Let us not be draggin' our High Moors feuds down to the forest. Ah declare a hunters' truce. Step forward and be joinin' our camp for the night."

The two of you advance, Braggi still clutching his axe, until you find yourselves in a circle of barbarians who guide you to a firecircle in which the fire is barely alive. One of the barbarians adds some twigs to the fire and it flares brightly for a moment. In that time, you see that the woman who has addressed you seems young for her obvious calling as a druid, yet she wears the full traveling gear of that tree-worshipping sect. She is observing you just as obviously, though you would think that she would be more concerned with her potential tribal enemy, Braggi.

"Ah be called Silverleaf," says the woman simply, staring straight at you. "Please be sittin' at our fire and we can be exchangein' our stories. Ah be thinkin' yours will be interestin' me, and ah know ah have a story for your ears, Filvendorson."

As guests, you are allowed to tell your tale first. As you speak, Braggi obviously warms to these tribesmen, since despite their status as an enemy tribe, they are really much like him. When you seem to be cutting your story short, he takes over the telling, emphasizing your own bravery in the ambush and your slaying of Jagurt Red-claw. He pointedly plays down your foolishness in getting your troop caught in the ambush in the first place. It's an omission that bothers you, yet when you bring it up, Silverleaf seems uncritical, saying only that the guile of devils is well known and many tribesmen have fallen for them over the years.

When Braggi is finished with your tale, Silverleaf says, "Good it be to hear that the gatherin' of goblkind be stopped. It was our own task to be seekin' out the orcs and findin' out why they be abandonin' the High Moors. Sad it be that they will be comin' back, but at least it will not be as a united horde." She is obviously thankful, but suddenly her demeanor changes.

"You be placin' us under a debt, Kelson Darktreader—one that ah must be repayin' by tellin' you of that which ah

merely be hintin' at before. Our tribe been never seein' you before, but we been hostin' your father some nineteen winters ago. We be findin' him lyin' in the snow, the body of an immense ice worm be lyin' beside him. My mother, who be servin' the tribe at the time as ah be servin' it now, be healin' him where he lay. He be tellin' us that he been slayin' this monster and would now be searchin' for any treasure it might guard." You smile to hear this of your father. It sounds just like him.

"In the beast's hoard," Silverleaf continues, "your father be findin' a sword. It be obviously enchanted and havin' a will of its own. He be pickin' it up and strappin' it on, discardin' his own sword at the same time. 'Ah must be goin'," he said, and he would have been marchin' off through the snow but that my mother be catchin' him in a spell and forcin' him to be returnin' to our village.

"In a week, he was fully healed, and my mother had to be lettin' him go on this sword-begotten quest that be occuypin' him. He be not speakin' of the quest, but he be sayin' that he could not be returnin' to his home."

"But—but where is he now?" you ask excitedly.

"Ah cannot be sayin', for we be not seein' him since that time. Some of our brethren who be mercenaries in the Southern Kingdoms and the Dales say they be seein' someone like him, with a glowin' sword, down there. However, since he could not be returnin' home, he be leavin' with us his old sword, to be returned to you. In payment for this favor, he be givin' us his claim to the rest of the ice worm's treasure."

You remember that sword. It was also enchanted, though obviously it was not so powerful as this sword found in the ice worm's treasure. "I do not wish to seem ungrateful," you say slowly, "but why has it taken nineteen years for you to return my father's sword to me?"

Before Silverleaf can answer, a large male figure steps out of the fog. "Because it now be *my* sword, and ah do not be meanin' to give it up!" The speaker is tall, even for a barbarian, his face and head hidden in a dark beard and long, uncombed hair. His garb is a ragged bearskin, its head shaped to provide a helmet, so that he seems to look at

you with his own beady black eyes plus the empty eye sockets of the bear. Looking at his sword belt, you can see the familiar sapphire pommel of your father's sword hanging at his side.

"My father be chief of our tribe, and he be takin' that sword from Silverleaf's mother, elfkin. Then he be givin' it to me, Dowd Bearslayer, when ah be winnin' my man's name." He tugs at his bearskin as he says this. By its condition, it is probably the same one that gave him his name.

"It is ill indeed to steal a man's legacy when his father's treasure was given to your tribe to pay for your guardianship," you answer. You know that the barbarians value their strange honor above all things. You also know that respect to a guest stands high in their lexicon.

"A man be respected," Dowd says with a sneer, "but you be but half a man, and your father be no man at all! The sword be mine!"

Silverleaf and several of her followers gasp in disagreement with this statement, but none seems ready to come to your defense. As usual, humans support their own, despite what justice dictates.

Your mission weighs heavily on your mind. You know that you should simply ignore this outright theft and continue on your way, but you simply cannot bring yourself to let this swaggering barbarian continue to possess your father's sword. You tell yourself that its enchantment would be of use to you on your travels, but you know that you really just want this part of your lost father at your side. Having found it, you cannot let it go.

"I challenge you, Dowd Bearslayer!" you find yourself saying. "I call you an honorless thief and defy you to meet me in single combat and prove your right to that sword you have stolen from me!"

Dowd roars and starts to draw your father's sword. "Hold!" cries Silverleaf. Dowd stops, and you refrain from drawing your own sword. "Stay your blades for the moment. Let us prepare a proper field for holmgang!"

In minutes, the other tribesmen have beaten out a ring. You recognize this as the ritual dueling circle for barbarian fights, or holmgangs.

If you have been wounded, Silverleaf performs a healing ritual on you. Roll two dice and add 1 to the result. Add this total to your present hit points. Remember, your hit point total cannot exceed your original score.

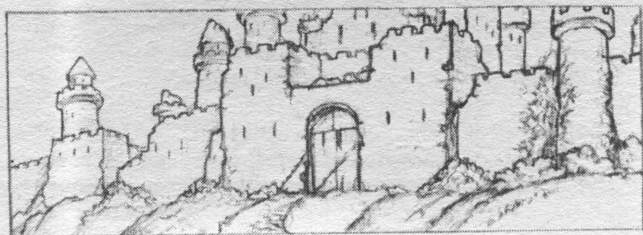
When the circle is prepared, you step into it. The mist has cleared a bit, but it is still nighttime. However, the barbarians surrounding the circle have lit torches, making the light much the same for you and Dowd. You see that Dowd has been persuaded to forego using your father's sword in the fight. Instead, he holds a normal barbarian broadsword in his hand. Your father's blade is in the hands of one of the barbarians on the outskirts of the circle. Dowd bears a shield on his other arm. One of the barbarians offers you a shield, but you see that is a type you are not used to. It would only throw you off. Besides, you still have your armor. You draw your long dagger and hold it easily in your left hand. The falchion in your right hand is shorter than Dowd Bearslayer's broadsword, but it's heavier.

Braggi steps from between two tribesmen and says, "Dowd Bearslayer, if the gods be givin' ya victory in this unjust fight, ya be havin' Braggi Quickaxe to reckon with!"

You are startled by this show of loyalty, especially from a human. You step up to Braggi and put one hand on his shoulder to stop him. You say, "Nay, Braggi. If I fall, you must continue to Daggerford and do what you can to stop Blackeye and his plots." Braggi looks at you and nods, but you can see that if Braggi succeeds in that task, he will hunt Dowd to the end of his days. The loyalty of this human gives you new respect for the species.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to **101**. If it is 18 or less, turn to **189**.





156

Roll two dice and add the result to your stealth skill score. If the total is 21 or more, turn to **50**. If it is 20 or less, turn to **83**.

157

The spear point leaps for your chest. You try to block it with your sword, but it's too late. You feel the length of the spear penetrate your body, and you know you've been dealt a death blow. Jagurt pushes you away from him and scoops up his sword again, raising it triumphantly to the sky. Suddenly his victory cry is silenced when he hears war cries behind him. As darkness steals the last of your life, you can see the glint of swords in the torchlight as Braggi and his reinforcements hit the orc rear defenses. At least you know that Jagurt will be destroyed and Daggerford saved. Then you know no more. ✕

158

The devil may be a perfect match for you physically, but he does not have your years of training with the sword. In seconds, you have wounded him in three places. Only his demonic vitality keeps him going. You move in close, binding up his sword with yours and stabbing with your dagger. But suddenly his body is covered with armor, and your dagger merely slides off! At the same time, his left hand forms into something resembling a sharp needle and drives through the links of your chain mail. You realize that it is a

death blow as you slip to the ground. As blackness descends, you take some comfort in knowing that Jagurt will not be meeting Blackeye here tonight. But what will befall Daggerford with the evil Blackeye in your shoes? Your only hope is that Braggi can somehow convince them of the deception. ☩

159

Roll two dice and add the result to your archery skill score. If the total is 20 or less, turn to **162**. If it is 21 or more, turn to **126**.

160

As you look at the stallion, you remember stories you have heard about demon horses that carry their riders off into the night and drown them. You call to the creature in your most gentle voice, and it looks at you longingly. It approaches the circle, but something seems to be keeping it from passing between the stones.

“Thank you, ancestors,” you breathe to the spirits of the elves who first set out this circle, then return to your watch. The stallion paces back and forth outside the circle for several more hours, then wanders off, still looking completely innocent. You are sure you made the right choice, but you still regret missing a chance to ride such a magnificent animal.

You notice that there are only a few hours until dawn, so you wake Braggi to take the last watch, warning him about the horse before you retire.

Turn to **14**.





161

"I'm truly sorry, Deldragor, but I cannot go with you. My duty is to the men and elves of Daggerford." Deldragor gets a contemplative expression on his face, and you continue. "Please consider this, Deldragor. To let Daggerford fall is to open the door for the orcs. Centuries ago, men came to this land to help elvenkind drive back the invading orcs. Would you have all the sacrifice of men and elves go for naught? If the elves move away from men completely, the orcs and their devil masters will gain an easy victory. Then no elf will be safe, no matter how deep the forests."

Deldragor seems almost convinced, and Drendin looks thoughtful. But Dendrach Highleg stands and says, "This is all very well, half-man, but we have lived for centuries in the forests. No orc has ever driven us out, and none ever will. I say the elves who depend on a human town are no elves at all, no matter the purity of their blood! There is no reason for us to risk our lives for these men and man-elves."

"The elves of Daggerford are as much elf as you," you reply.

"Oh, and are you proof of this, Filvendorson? You town elves have lost all the abilities that mark the true elf. I'll wager you cannot use that bow you bear with the skill of the true elf."

"And what is your wager, Highleg?" you respond quickly. "Will you give Daggerford your assistance if I can prove my archery is the match of yours?"

"I think that fair," puts in Deldragor. "In fact, I say that all who would continue to follow me will go with you, Kelson, if you can defeat Dendrach with the bow."

Drendin seems much caught up with the idea as well, as do the other elves. You know from your little experience with the elves of the Daggerford area that they often have a fondness for wagers that can offer some variety to the humdrum of their normal lives. Apparently wild elves have a similar inclination.

The elves set up a series of eleven sapling wands at extreme bow range. Deldragor states the rules. "The archer who can split the most wands in the least time will win the contest." You wonder at the lack of difficulty of the contest. Even some human archers of your acquaintance would have a good chance of winning here. Then Deldragor raises an arm and incants a spell, and you see a magical wind begin to move the wands back and forth irregularly. This is truly a contest worthy of an elf! As you admire the contest, you see Dendrach nock his first arrow. It's time to start shooting!

Roll two dice and add the result to your archery skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to 16. If it is 19 or less, turn to 41.

162

As your opening volley of arrows lands far astray from the well-concealed goblins, you realize that your chance of hitting a target from your frightened horse is next to impossible. Staying here in the open and shooting it out could be disastrous. You and your fighters are better archers than the goblins, and Felis has already put one squad to sleep with a spell, but they still have you outnumbered at least twenty to one.

The odds get worse as Brightstar and Derbon go down, their arrow-riddled bodies looking like porcupines. In turn, several arrows hit you. Subtract 12 from your hit point total to represent the damage from the arrows. Somehow you find the ability to keep fighting. Most of the arrows have stuck in your armor, and you wrench out the ones you can reach, gasping from the pain.

Suddenly your horse drops out from under you, and you realize that your three remaining militiamen are all fighting on foot. The goblins have been shooting at the horses in



order to keep you from escaping. Even Blackeye's riderless horse is down.

If you want to try to lead your men in a charge on foot against the nearest goblins, turn to 78. If you want to stay and fight it out with bows and arrows, turn to 43.

163

Your arrow flies true through the night air and strikes home, staggering the huge orc leader. He tries to retreat outside the circle of light of the burning torches, but your elf eyes follow him. Again and again you fire, until finally Jagurt falls. The orcs at the gate set up a howl of dismay that is echoed by the following goblins. Frustrated by the death of their leader, the closed River Gate, and the arrows raining down on them from above, the orcs break and run for the coracles.

As they scurry for their hide boats, you watch a flotilla of canoes, rafts, and other rivercraft slide down the river and smash into the coracles. In one of the riverboats, you see Braggi, shouting a battle cry as he strikes out with his axe. In the boats, you see a motley but effective mixture of barbarians, farmers, and even some men who look like wandering mercenaries whom Braggi has persuaded to contribute their help.

The panic of the leaderless orcs is complete. Some manage to escape by jumping into their coracles and letting the river current take them over the ford, though many more are caught in midriver and slaughtered. Others run in every possible direction.

The invasion of Daggerford is over almost before it began.

Turn to 77.

164

In the course of the struggle, you have managed to gain a position among low brush and rocks, where you make a poor target for archers. Instead of ordering a fruitless attack with bows and arrows, the orcs muster the goblins into columns and send them at you. You block the first one's blow, then slice off its arm and kick it away, to fall at its

comrades' feet. You greet the next one the same way, and the next, but the weariness of the long fight is telling on you. You fail to block a spear, and its sharp point stabs into you. You cut off the haft of the spear just as a javelin slams through your armor and into your side. You stab an axe-wielding orc, but its fighting mate stabs you with a scimitar. Darkness comes over your eyes again and you fall, just as you did in the canyon, but this time Braggi falls at your side, and his tribesmen are not near to help. Jagurt and Blackeye have won, and woe to the citizens of Daggerford! ✘



165

Dowd Bearslayer is tall and strong-looking. His first powerful blows drive your blocking weapons back against your chest. But you soon realize that he has relied on his strength and your father's sword for too long. There is little art to his fighting. In a series of feints, you draw his shield down low. As he attempts to protect his bare knee from your sword, your dagger flicks over the top of the shield and slices through the bearskin and into his chest. He quickly moves his shield back up to eye level and chops at your dagger arm with his sword, but you drop your dagger and grab the bottom edge of his shield, forcing the top back into his face. Before he can recover, your heavy falchion caves in his exposed ribs.

Dowd swings a dying blow at you, then falls at your feet, dead before the druid can reach him to heal him. As she looks up at you, you say, "I'm sorry that I had to kill him, druid. He was a brave, if greedy, man."

Silverleaf says, "He be also a braggart and a bully, and we be well rid of him and his claims to leadership. We be again in your debt, Filvendorson. Be leadin' us to your Daggerford, and we be helpin' you confront your enemies."

If you come from slaying Jagurt, go to 35. If you have avoided Jagurt and are on your way to Daggerford to stop Blackeye, go to 24.

166

A sound from somewhere near the limit of your hearing range makes you turn around to see the approach of a half-dozen large, shaggy goblinoid shapes. "Bugbears!" you yell loudly. You yank out your weapons, now holding the magic sword in your right hand and the falchion in your left, in place of your fighting dagger. Braggi spins and readies his axe.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 177. If it is 18 or less, turn to 79. Remember that your magic sword adds 1 to all of your fighting skill rolls.

167

Striding up Hill Road to the Duke's Way, you turn at the temple to Lathander and march to the gate to the duke's castle.

The gate is open, as it usually is, and the portcullis is drawn. Two guards stand before it, leaning on their spears in the gateway.

As you approach, the guards snap to attention, their eyes focused initially more on Braggi, because of his strange dress, than on you. When one's glance finally turns to you, his eyes widen and he lowers his spear to ready position.

"Halt!" he cries. As you stop before him, he adds, "Do my eyes deceive me, or are you Kelson Darktreader?"

"I am he," you reply, annoyed by his questioning of such a well-known resident of Daggerford. You have seen this man before, but you've never bothered to learn his name or position. You realize now that this might put you at a disadvantage.

"You lie!" cries the guard, "Kelson himself passed through this very gate only minutes ago, and he has not left again. You will talk to the Lord Llewellyn!"

The guard then cries, "Captain of the Guard!" and you realize that your forthright approach is about to get you

thrown in the dungeons of the castle. It could be days before you can prove that you are who you say you are and Blackeye is the imposter. Who knows what damage the devil might do in that time?

You don't want to harm these guards, so your only alternative is to run. Without giving the guards time to react, you spin and run down the Duke's Way, with Braggi right at your heels. Since much of the population is gone with the militia to Dragonspear, the road is empty. In a short time, you and the quick-footed Braggi have left the guards far behind.

Several minutes later, you are in the Rivermen's Quarter of the town, a notoriously rough area that guardsmen generally avoid. The guards have apparently given up their pursuit, no doubt to organize a search for you. For the moment, you seem safe enough, but now what?

Turn to 42.



168

A step at a time, making absolutely certain not to make the slightest noise, you make it safely past the goblin sentry. Once over the crest of the hill, you can see an immense goblin camp spread out before you. It occupies the bottom of an entire blind canyon larger than the one your expedition met its doom in. Someone, or something, seems to have brought many different tribes together. The various campsites are separated from one another, and there are frequent copses of trees shielding one spot from another. Even under the leadership of the charismatic Jagurt, you're sure that old goblin and orc rivalries cannot be fully forgotten.

At the moment, the site is quiet, with just a few goblins and orcs wandering about. It's daytime, and the goblin folk would rather do their work at night.

In the center of the encampment, you see a crude, savagely decorated brushwood hut. Two similarly decorated smaller huts stand nearby. From a standard at the door of the largest hut hangs the red-painted, severed paw of some monster. "That be the Redclaw tribe standard, that be," whispers Braggi. "I reckon that be Jagurt's own council house."

Even as he says this, you see a devilish shape fly over the rim of the far canyon wall. You and Braggi duck out of sight, then cautiously peer over the grass. It is not some sentry creature that has spotted you. Instead, as it hovers in the air above the hut, you see that it is some form of bat-winged devil, much larger than the one Blackeye turned into in the ambush.

"Jagurt Redclaw!" the apparition cries in the same dialect of Blacktongue you have become familiar with in other encounters with orcs. "Jagurt! Come forth and learn your fate!"

From out of the hut steps one of the largest orcs you've ever seen. He stands several heads taller than you, and weighs at least a hundred pounds more. This must be Jagurt, an obvious leader among the orcs, where the strongest arm is usually that of the chieftain. There is a studied swagger in his step, enough to show that he is confident but not enough to anger his visitor.

"Aye, master. What would you have of me?" responds the orc leader with little grace. He obviously does not like the idea of calling anyone master, but he is far too prudent to defy a devil.

"Tonight you must leave for Daggerford! Our agent will open the river gates for you one week from tonight! Be there with your followers, or feel the wrath of Dragonspear!" You can see that many sleepy-looking orcs are coming out of their huts and lean-tos to see what this conversation is all about.

"One week to Daggerford, master?" questions Jagurt. "For such a force as I have assembled here, to reach Dag-

gerford in one week will be almost impossible. And there are few trees or caves to shelter us in the plains between the forest and the town."

"One week, Jagurt! We know that you shall manage somehow." The devil breaks into snarling laughter that sends chills down your spine. "We know that you realize the penalties to yourself and your followers if you should fail!"

With that, the devil flaps its great batwings and flies back the way it came, its awful laughter still echoing through the canyon.

You consider shooting the creature with your bow, but many of these fell monsters can only be affected by magic, and you have no enchanted arrows. Furthermore, the camp would be on top of you in minutes.

Turn to 86.



169

"No!" cries the devil and twists out of your way, releasing Bronwyn at the same time. He rises into the air and flies straight at you, swiping at your head with the razor-sharp talons at the end of his goatlike legs. You raise your left arm quickly, and the talons slice into your armor but fail to penetrate your skin. You swing your sword at him, and he starts when he sees its magical glow. He tries to fly out of your reach, but you are too quick. Your enchanted sword slides between his ribs, and he screams in pain.

He swipes at you with his clawed feet, but you avoid the blow and strike again. "I'll kill y—" he begins, then falls to the roof, turning into mist as he descends. All that remains is a pile of dust.

"Well done, Kelson!" Bronwyn exclaims. You look up and

see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 203.

170

Dowd Bearslayer is tall and very strong, you learn quickly. His first blows drive your blocking weapons back up against you. You sense, however, that he has relied on his strength and your father's sword for too long. There is little art to his fighting. In a series of feints, you draw his shield low and out position. As he attempts to protect his bare knee from your sword, your dagger flicks over the top of his shield like lightning and slices into his chest. He draws his shield back up to eye level and cuts at your dagger arm with his sword, but you let go of your dagger and grab the bottom edge of his shield, forcing the top back into his face. Before he can recover, your heavy falchion caves in his exposed ribs.

Dowd aims a dying swing at you, then falls at your feet, dead, before the druid can reach him to heal him. As she looks up at you, you say, "I'm sorry that I had to kill him, druid. He was a brave, if greedy, man."

Silverleaf says, "He be also a braggart and a bully, and we be well rid of him and his claims to leadership. We be again in your debt, Kelson Filvendorson. Be leadin' us to your town of Daggerford, and we be helpin' you confront your enemies."

Turn to 24.

171

You turn and run, Braggi following close behind. Goblins and orcs are popping up from all over, but most are com-

pletely confused. Most have no idea that Jagurt has been wounded, or who these running figures are. As you run, you notice a thick fog beginning to form at the edge of the forest as twilight approaches.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to **183**. If it is 17 or less, turn to **134**.

172

You shrug off the pain from your wounds and spit another goblin on your sword. Your horse screams in agony and falls, the victim of goblin spears. As you step out of the stirrups and land on your feet, three goblin weapons strike into your armor. Subtract 12 from your hit point total.

Turn to **36**.



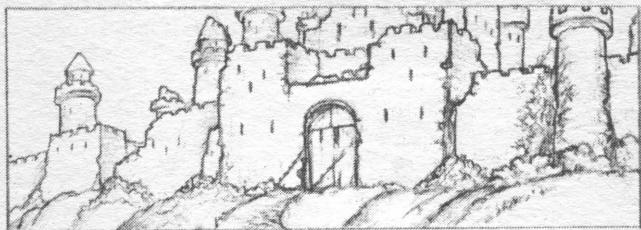
173

The first attacker is tall and raw-boned, armed with axe and shield. You duck under his first blow and chop at his knee, dropping him to his knees in front of you. The first screams in pain as you catch the next barbarian's spear haft on your dagger crossguard and slice into his arm, and he staggers off, howling. The others back off for a moment, obviously thinking about your unfamiliar fighting style and how best to oppose it. You can see that Braggi has already dropped one opponent, and several others are backing away warily from his spinning axe.

Braggi looks at you and grins. "They be not such great warriors, the Belcondi!" he says. You grin back. You're glad to have such a warrior for a friend, and you realize that it matters not whether he is human or elf—the important thing is to have the friend.

You steel yourself for the next assault, but suddenly you hear a female voice utter an indecipherable phrase. You feel the unmistakable tingle of magic over your body, and you can do nothing as you and Braggi fall, paralyzed, to the forest floor.

Turn to 44.



174

You, Braggi, and Drendin wade into the middle of the orcs. You cut down one who turns to meet this new threat. Another orc sticks its spear between your legs and tries to trip you, but your sword shatters the spear haft. Then Braggi shatters the skull of the orc.

Drendin hangs back to take advantage of her elvish archery skill, sending shaft after shaft into the orcs. Ahead of you, Llewellyn falls before Jagurt's swinging scimitar. "Jagurt!" you yell. "Turn and meet your doom!"

The surprised orc leader turns to meet you. Beside him, you can see a smaller orc holding a standard, from which dangles the severed claw of some monster—obviously the totem symbol of Jagurt's clan. Suddenly Jagurt roars in defiance and takes a healthy cut at you that you manage to duck under.

Jagurt is strong and fast, but he shows very little art with his weapon. He swings his scimitar at you again, but you deflect it with your dagger. Before he can bring his clumsy weapon around for another swing, you move in close, your dagger catching the scimitar on the backswing and your enchanted sword stabbing for his ribs. He

attempts to kick you away, but you avoid it. Your sword bites deep through the orc's scaled armor, but not quite deep enough. Jagurt roars and spins away from you, gathering his wits before you can follow up.

Suddenly he hurls his scimitar at you and snatches up a spear from a fallen fighter while you are busy ducking the sword.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 19 or more, turn to 54. If it is 18 or less, turn to 22.



175

Deciding to discover whatever gossip there is in the town before confronting the imposter in the castle, you go to the best place you know of for that sort of thing—the Lady Luck Tavern, gathering place for every adventurer for a hundred miles around.

As you enter the tavern, you are hailed by Owenden Darylson, the owner. “Hail, Kelson! We haven’t seen much of you since you got back from the forest.”

Your reply is cautious. “I thought I’d introduce you to my friend, Braggi Quickaxe, who I met in the woods and who comes to Daggerford with a dire message for me.”

Looking at Braggi, Owenden says, “Despite Lord Llewelyn’s newfound liking for you, Kelson, he still isn’t quite ready to welcome a High Moors barbarian as a guest at the castle. . . . Welcome, Quickaxe. Any companion of Kelson’s is a brother to us all.”

Owenden’s words would seem insulting at any other time, but now you find them welcome. You order a tall mug

of ale and arrange for a room for Braggi, then continue to engage Owenden in conversation. Since nearly everyone aspiring to adventurer status has been conscripted into the duke's army and led off to Dragonspear, he has plenty of time to talk.

After an hour of gossip, you and Braggi leave the tavern again, ostensibly to obtain some equipment for Braggi from your quarters in the castle.

"It seems that my double has completely taken my place in this town. At the same time, he has managed to make friends in the castle that I never have. Exposing him will be a difficult task."

"The worse for ya, swordbrother, that he be seen much with the duke's daughter." You suck in your breath and curse silently at Braggi's canny perception of your reaction to this bit of news. Not only elfkin are keen-eyed.

Braggi nods at this confirmation of his fears. "I be thinkin' this devil be in the best possible place to be lettin' them orcs in if they attack Daggerford. We better be stoppin' him now, before Jagurt be bringin' the orcs here to be backin' him up."

"Suggestion, my friend?" you ask.

"There be more than one way to be gettin' by a castle wall. My father be tellin' me the best way is to get over a wall when ya can't get through it."

Turn to 73.



176

The camp is in an uproar. No one is really sure what has happened. You can hear the orc and goblin chiefs screaming at their followers to form hunting packs, though the

object of the hunt seems to be different with each chief's command. In a brief minute, you hear yourself described as a "halfling thief," an "elven war party," and a "traitor goblin."

You can already hear the clash of weapons as some orcs and goblins attack each other, each convinced the other is the traitor. You also hear a cry of "The barbarians again!" You translate this to Braggi and he grins, proud to know that his comrades have already gained a reputation among these orcs.

Before the orcs can calm down and begin an organized search for their leader's assailants, you and Braggi creep through the tall grass toward Jagurt's hut. From the cries you hear, no orc expects the attackers to penetrate farther into their camp. You can tell by the cries of the more efficient leaders that the searchers are concentrating on the routes that lead out of the camp.

With typical orcish lack of foresight, the orcs have cleared an open space in front of Jagurt's hut, but tall grass grows right up next to the back of it. You sneak up to the back wall of the hut, Braggi moving like a shadow behind you. The wall is unbroken by either door or window, but you can hear Jagurt's cry as one of his deputies pulls the arrow from his arm. You must attack now, while Jagurt is relatively distracted.

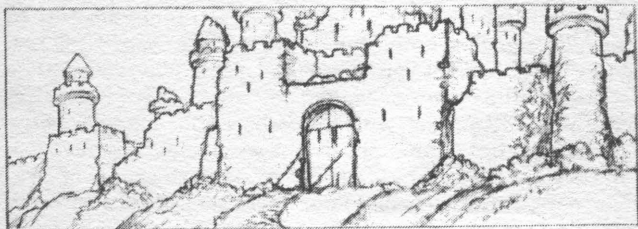


As you search for a way inside, Braggi grins and says, "This be my job, swordbrother." Before you can say a word, his heavy axe twirls as light as a feather in his hand and crashes into the side of the shoddily built hut. The axe blade buries itself into a tree trunk, but Braggi does not try to pull it free. Instead, he puts all of his muscle into dragging the entire trunk out of the wall! You watch the sweat

on his brow bead for an instant before the entire trunk and most of the building on each side pull out of the wall with a loud crash. "Haaroo!" Braggi calls, leaning his head back. "Beware, Redclaw! The Gironi be amongst ya!"

You slip into the hut through the large opening in the wall. Jagurt is neither foolish nor a coward. Before his followers even begin to realize what is happening, he snatches up his orcish scimitar in his left hand and rushes to meet you, his right arm still bleeding from where your arrow has been pulled from the wound. The two followers in the hut with him are only slightly slower. One of them leaps to protect its leader, but Braggi grabs one of the tree trunks and smashes the orc against the opposite wall of the hut. The other orc roars a fierce battle cry and charges toward the barbarian, who meets it with a gleeful laugh, his axe a blur in the dark hut.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to 13. If it is 17 or less, go to 117.



177

The first bugbear swings a powerful blow at you, but you duck under it and close with the creature. Your magic sword seems to move of its own in your hand as it pierces the creature's heart. As it falls, you look around to see that Braggi is hard pressed by two of the beasts and that three more are advancing on you. Your chances of surviving against all of these monsters look slim, but you ready yourself for the fight.

Suddenly the rearmost bugbear screams and falls, skewered by a half-dozen arrows. In moments, the air is full of arrows! The bugbears try to run, but they can't escape the deadly barrage. In minutes, all lie dead.

From the woods step a band of wild elves.

Turn to 88.

178

You turn toward the distant campfires, which you realize are now being extinguished. But before you can do anything else, you feel the brush of a missile pass by your shoulderblades.

You immediately hit the dirt, hiding in the knee-high grass. In a matter of seconds, you hear the sound of human voices approaching, wondering whether their crossbow quarrel killed you.

You have a strong idea of just where you are. You are probably safe in identifying yourself. "I am Kelson Darktreader, huntsman to the Duke of Daggerford," you say from your place of concealment in the grass.

"If you be truly with the duke, then you'll not hesitate to rise and keep your hands where we can see them." You recognize the accents of Waterdeep and rise slowly, your hands extended out at your sides. You see two soldiers in the livery of Waterdeep, each with a crossbow aimed at your belly.

You know that your suppositions were true. You have ridden through the entire Misty Forest, and the ruins of Dragonspear Castle are before you. These soldiers are with the besieging armies.

Turn to 25.

179

You creep up the stairs, with Braggi right at your heels. At the top of the stairs, you peer around the corner and see two figures standing in the otherwise empty room, looking out at the hills to the northeast. As you creep closer, you realize that they are Bronwyn—and you! Blackeye has assumed your shape for his mission of deceit!

As you creep nearer, you see Blackeye take Bronwyn in his arms. The devil in your shape has taken advantage of



the affection for you that the duke's daughter had hinted at two weeks before when you last saw her.

Now, when Blackeye can be confronted with a minimum of confusion, is the best time to put an end to this charade! Besides, the sight of this imposter taking Bronwyn in his arms is too much to bear for another minute.

You leap at Blackeye, knocking Bronwyn out of his arms. Braggi follows, grabbing Bronwyn. The imposter manages to keep his feet and sneers at you. Then, as he pulls an exact duplicate of your own falchion from his scabbard, he says, "So, the doppelganger has managed to follow me here. Now, foul creature, you will die and show your true nature at last!"

"Liar!" you scream. "It is you who are the imposter, and I shall prove it with your blood!"

Grinning, the creature advances toward you, falchion at the ready.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. Remember that your father's enchanted sword adds 1 to any fighting skill roll. If the total is 18 or more, turn to 21. If it is 17 or less, turn to 196.



180

The devil may be a perfect match for you physically, but he lacks your years of training with the sword. In seconds, you have wounded him in three places. Only his demonic vitality keeps him going. In desperation, he hurls his falchion at you. As you duck under it, you see his features alter and twist horribly. His entire body begins to writhe and change, and you are suddenly confronting a huge bear-shaped devil, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

Before you or the devil-bear can attack, you see Bronwyn break free from Braggi's grip. She gestures with her hands and speaks a phrase in the arcane language of magic. The green, dartlike shape of a magic missile forms in her hand and flies to the devil-bear, wounding it. "Now, Kelson!" she yells.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 16 or more, turn to 121. If it is 15 or less, turn to 45.



181

You are dragged, trussed up like swine to the slaughter, before Jagurt Redclaw. The huge orc leader sneers. "So, human intruders. We shall make you pay dearly for spying on us!"

"Brave talk from an orc who attacked a mere seven men with a whole army from ambush a week ago," you taunt him. "Are you sure you have enough advantage this time?"

Jagurt looks at you more closely. Recognition dawns in his beady eyes. "So, the brave huntsman was not killed, as my followers reported, after all." He turns to Braggi. "And this must be one of those barbarians who interrupted us before we could be sure of your death." He looks back at you, then makes a decision.

"Cut this one free," he says, pointing at you. "If my followers were not successful in slaying you the first time, then I must do it myself!"

You are cut free. At Jagurt's order, your guards take away your armor and weapons but give you back your fighting dagger. Then the orcs form a circle, the trussed-up Braggi among them. Jagurt has disappeared momentarily, but now he returns, swinging a long, menacing orc scimi-

tar. "Now, elfkin, we shall see how you fare against a true orc champion!" He mockingly salutes you, and you return his salute halfheartedly. You know that this is the only chance you and Braggi have to survive. Using only a knife against Jagurt's scimitar, you must kill the huge orc leader now.

Roll two dice and add the result to your fighting skill score. If the total is 20 or more, turn to 4. If it is 19 or less, turn to 154.

182

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn's attack, you are on it. The creature roars and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You duck under the massive claws and stab upward with your sword. The devil roars in pain and strikes a powerful blow to your shoulder. You wince at the pain as your armor parts and your skin is sliced open, but you manage to keep your feet.

You withdraw your sword out of the creature's belly and slice at its foreleg, inflicting a terrible wound. Blackeye screams with rage and suddenly lunges, grasping you in a bear hug. You struggle and squirm, but the monster is too strong for you. Faster than you would have believed possible, it crushes the life from your body. Your head swims as you realize you are dying. As the last iota of life oozes from your body, you see Braggi's axe strike hard. The creature staggers, and you are sure it will die. But you will not be alive to see it. ✘



The fog for which the Misty Forest is famed closes in around you like a blanket. Even your elf-sight is nearly useless, and your only guide is to go where the brush seems less dense. In minutes, you lose the path you were following, then strike out on another. Hoping that it, too, leads toward Daggerford, you blunder onward.

Suddenly your path crosses yet another path, leading up and down. You know that going up leads to the High Moors, away from Daggerford. However, it has a better chance of getting away from the fog. Going down is more or less in the direction of Daggerford, but you'd probably be moving even deeper into the fog. Of course, you can always stay on the path you are already on.

If you choose to go up, turn to 28. If you choose to go down, turn to 184. If you choose to continue straight ahead on the same path, go to 61.

Suddenly you realize that the trail ahead of you is blocked by a human figure. "Who be there?" questions the stranger in the accents of the High Moors.

Turn to 120.

Your foot gets tangled in the stirrup as you try to kick yourself free from the falling horse. Your last conscious memory of the ambush is of the rock lying on the side of the path, which seems to be zooming upward directly at your head.

Turn to 75.

At the last minute, Blackeye turns aside, and your blade merely glances off his skin. He releases Bronwyn and hisses, "You! You are supposed to be dead! I'll make sure of it this time!" You see his features alter and twist horribly. His entire body begins to writhe and change, and you are suddenly confronting a devil in the shape of a bear, with ichor dripping from its fangs. "Now, little half-elf, let us

see how you fare against your betters!" it growls, its words barely distinguishable.

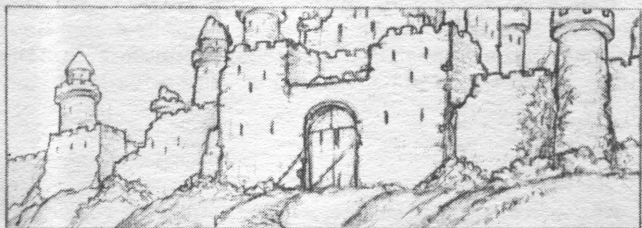
Before you or Blackeye can attack, you see Bronwyn make a gesture with her hand and speak a phrase in the arcane language of magic. A shimmering green dart forms in her hand and flies toward the devil-bear, wounding it seriously. "Now, Kelson!" she yells.

Before the devil-bear can recover from the surprise of Bronwyn's attack, you are on it. The creature roars and claws at you, but its claws only scrape off your armor. You stab and block, stab and block, until finally the devil-bear slowly slips to the floor. Even as the life ichor pumps out of its body, its form dissolves into mist.

"Well done, Kelson!" Bronwyn exclaims. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a strange combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who had romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you, the real Kelson, for rescuing her from her mistake.

She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the true Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 203.



187

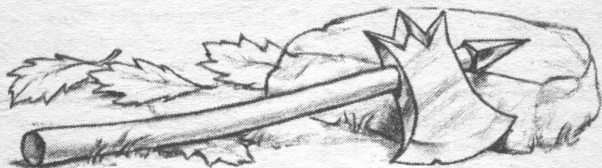
The first bugbear is on you before you can even draw your sword. Its club smashes down on your back. Subtract 8 points from your hit point total.

Despite the pain, you manage to draw your magic sword,

and you stab out at the creature, running it through. It dies at your feet, but three more advance toward you. You can see that Braggi has two foes attacking him simultaneously. Already bleeding from bugbear claw wounds, he is hard pressed to defend himself.

You realize that you may be doomed, and you resolve to sell your life as dearly as possible, when suddenly the air is full of arrows. Two of the bugbears in front of you fall immediately, and the third is struck down as it tries to run. One of those attacking Braggi dies instantly from the arrows, while the other is already dead from a fierce strike from Braggi's axe.

At that moment, from the woods around you step a band of wild elves. Turn to 88.



188

Trying to both avoid the path of the orcs and remain silent proves too great a challenge. In minutes, you realize the keen-eared orcs have located you. "Run, my friend!" you cry, and the two of you race away, putting your longer legs to work.

Had Braggi been alone or with his own people, he would undoubtedly have been dragged down, but your elf eyes serve you well, and you pick your way through the forest without slowing.

The pursuing voices grow fainter and fainter, but you can still barely hear them when you realize you are racing on a somewhat overgrown, spiraling path of stones set into the earth. Something about the stones seems vaguely familiar. You follow the spiral trace of stones around and around a hill, while the voices of your orcish pursuers fade till they are gone. The orcs have lost the trail.

You slow down and continue to follow the path, more out of curiosity than from need. Finally you reach the top of the hill and discover a circle of standing stones. Each stone is more than three men can move. Your elf-vision picks out a faint nimbus of power about each stone that seems to connect with the stone on either side of it.

"Why, it's a sanctuary!" you say. "I remember my father telling me of these places. They were established eons ago as sanctuaries against the forces of evil. Most have fallen ages ago."

Braggi looks about curiously. Then his barbarian practicality comes to the fore, and he begins to set up a dry camp. "There be some of these places on the moors, but I never be seein' one before with all the stones still standin'."

You eat some of your dried provisions, then set watches for the rest of the night. You tell Braggi to get some sleep first, and you will wake him before morning to take the watch.

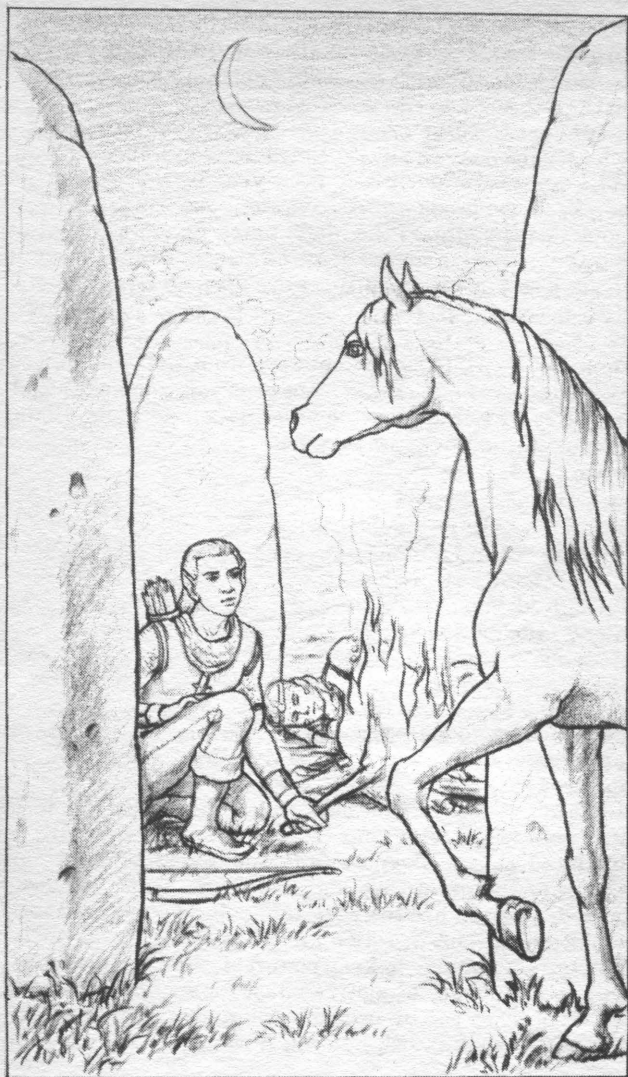
An hour later, Braggi is asleep, though you know that even as tired as he is, his sleep is light and will be broken at the slightest sound of danger. As you watch, you notice that the fog gradually clears from the forest. When most of the fog has lifted, you see a white horse move into the cleared area just outside the strange standing stones.

The horse is a stallion, proud and free, and its white coat is like silver. Even though you prefer walking, you realize that this is a mount the like of which you have never seen and that it is the very thing you need to return to Daggerford immediately.

Turn to 197.

189

Dowd Bearslayer is tall and obviously strong. His first blows are powerful and drive your blocking weapons back against your chest, but you realize that he has relied on his strength and your father's sword for too long. There is no art to his fighting. In a series of feints, you draw his shield down low. As he attempts to protect his bare knee from your sword, your dagger flicks over the top of the shield and slices toward his chest.



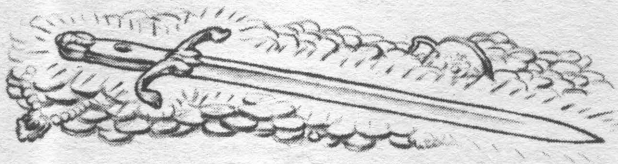
But you are too slow with the attack. His shield edge drives back up, catching your elbow and knocking the dagger from your numbed hand. Instantly his sword snakes out toward your now unprotected left side and bites into your armor. The blow is powerful and knocks you onto your back. Before you can rise, Dowd is standing over you, sword upraised. Your block with your own sword is not enough, as the broadsword drives for your head.

Your last thought as the blade takes your life is that at least Daggerford is spared Jagurt's attack. Braggi may yet get there to warn them of Blackeye's treachery. . . . ✕

190

Your head swims as you collapse from the wounds you have taken. As blackness washes over you, you hear a sudden flurry of human war shouts and goblin yells. Could help be coming after all?

Turn to 75.



191

You advance to meet the owlbears, Braggi matching you step for step. With a war cry of "Filvendor!" you charge the creatures.

Ducking under the first blow from the monster you face, you stab upward with your dagger, only to feel it turn in your hand as it strikes a sturdy rib. Your falchion chops down into the creature's leg, but the owlbear is barely affected, and you are too busy retrieving your weapons to avoid its return blow, which knocks you reeling.

You barely manage to keep your feet, then turn to face it again, but it moves deceptively fast for such a huge monster. It snatches you up into a bear hug. You flail at it with your dagger and sword, but you have no room to use the

weapons. Your blows have no power. All at once, the breath whooshes out of your lungs, and you can see the beak of the monster readying itself for the stroke that will split your head like an overripe melon. The last sound you hear is the laughter of the watching barbarians. ☒



192

The spear point seems to leap for your chest, but you quickly knock it away with your sword and spin along its length, ending up next to Jagurt, your dagger in his belly. Jagurt yanks himself away from you and tries to bring up the spear again, then stops, stares somewhere off in the distance, and falls.

Moving swiftly, you glance about at the orcs. They're in a state of shock at seeing their leader fall. One of them is carrying a standard—not in the form of a banner, but instead the severed claw of some monstrous animal. You hurry over to the orc holding the standard and wrest the pole away from it. It tries to resist, then stiffens and falls as Llewellyn pulls his sword from the standard-bearer's back. You yell loudly in Blacktongue that Jagurt is dead, then dash the standard to the ground, grinding it under your boot.

As the orcs try to absorb this shocking turn of events, cries from the river announce the arrival of Braggi and his ragtag crew of barbarians and farmers! In a state of panic, the orcs break and run. Some manage to jump in their coracles and let the river current sweep them over the ford to safety, while others are slaughtered before they reach midriver. Still others flee in every possible direction. Not

all can be caught and killed, but there is no more orc horde to menace Daggerford.

Turn to 77.

193

You make it safely past the enemy hunting party, and by the next day, you are out of the forest. A day's travel takes you to a small village called Tosti's Tower, named for the fortified tower built hundreds of years ago when the land was first scoured of goblinkind. Recognizing the brassard that identifies you as the duke's huntsman, the local headman gives you food and lodging for the night. You warn him of the possibility of an orc raid from the forest, and he replies that his people will either take refuge in the tower or follow you to Daggerford. He even has horses to lend you, and though you and Braggi normally would rather walk, you welcome them as your best chance to avoid being overtaken by an orcish horde, if indeed one is heading toward Daggerford. The next morning, you set out.

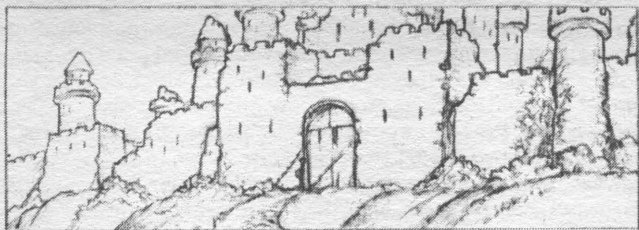
Three days later, you reach Daggerford. All seems peaceful. You cross the ford that gives the town its name and approach the River Gate. "Halt! Who goes there?" cries the militiaman on guard.

"Kelson Darktreader and friend," you answer, and the guardsman opens the gate for you. As he does, he looks at you confusedly. "Is there trouble, my friend?" you ask.

"Forgive me, Darktreader, but did you not just come through this gate on foot? Did you leave again by some other gate?"

Turn to 94.





194

Using all of your tricks of the trail, you still cannot make out the goblin trail after a week of weather and other creatures' traveling over the same ground. On this particular day, you have journeyed deep into the woods looking for signs. Now, night is beginning to settle and a thick fog is rolling in.

Turn to **61**.

195

As quickly as your aching body will allow, you clamber up the final feet and onto the tower top. As you rise to your feet, you see Blackeye fling Bronwyn aside and pluck Braggi's battle axe from his body. You can see that he is hurt, but not mortally.

You draw your magic sword and approach the devil, who has assumed the same winged shape you remember from the ambush in the gorge. You can see that he has vestigial horns, goatlike legs ending in talons, and black-feathered wings.

"We're not defeated yet!" he cries. "My masters at Dragonspear will destroy you all!"

He flaps his wings and starts to rise from the rooftop, but suddenly his body is covered in a mass of sticky strands and he can't move his wings! You see Bronwyn lower her hands as she finishes making a magic gesture.

The monster tries to claw his way out of the web as you advance to slay him.

"No!" cries the devil, and he strains his wings and limbs, stretching and finally breaking the webbing that contains him. But now you are beside him, your sword poised for the final stroke. He swipes at your hand with the talons at the end of his goatlike legs. You throw up your left arm for protection, and the talons cut into your armor but barely reach your arm. As you start to swing your sword at the devil, he realizes that it is glowing with magic. He tries desperately to crawl out of your way, but you are too quick. Your enchanted sword slides between his ribs and he screams loudly.

He staggers to his feet as you pull back the sword, swiping at you with his clawed hands, but you avoid the blow easily and strike again. "I'll kill y—" he begins, then falls, turning into mist as he does. All that remains is a pile of dust.

"Well done, Kelson," says Bronwyn. You look up and see Bronwyn looking at you with a combination of respect and fear. You know that she now realizes what Blackeye had been doing to her. She knows that the Kelson who romanced her and magically enchanted her in the last week was not the Kelson she thought it was. Yet she is obviously grateful to you for rescuing her from her mistake.

She does not know what to do about her feelings for Kelson Darktreader. The Kelson who inspired them is dead, but the real Kelson was the one to rescue her.

Turn to 30.



196

The devil may be a perfect match for you physically, but he does not have your years of training with the sword. In seconds, you have wounded him in three places. Only his demonic vitality keeps him going.

You move in close, binding up his sword with yours and stabbing repeatedly with your dagger, but suddenly his right side is armored and your dagger merely slides off! At the same time, his left hand forms into a sharp needlelike appendage and drives in through the links of your armor. You realize that it is a death blow. As you slip to the ground and blackness descends, you despair for Daggerford. With Blackeye in residence and Jagurt about to invade, they are doomed unless Braggi can somehow convince the people of Daggerford of the danger. There is nothing more you can do. ✘



197

You call softly to the horse, and it pricks up its ears and looks at you. Its eyes are wise and gentle, but the beast has an appearance of sheathed power that thrills you. The silver stallion nickers and continues to look at you. There is something about this horse that draws you. You feel as though you were fated to sit astride this animal. It seems right for you.

If you want to leave the circle to approach the horse, turn to **200**. If you decide you'd rather not approach the horse, turn to **160**.

198

The goblins surround you, screaming their distinctive high-pitched war cries. Spear points and axe blades stab at you from every angle. There are just too many of them, and you are too wounded and tired. In seconds, you fall, wounded in a dozen places. As blackness washes over you, you

hear a sudden flurry of human war shouts and goblin yells. Could help be coming after all?

Turn to 75.

199

Halfway up the wall, your foot dislodges a stone. Several seconds later, it strikes the pavement below with a sound that echoes throughout the quiet town.

“Quickly,” you say. “We must be on top of the wall before they see us!”

But it is too late. You see heads appear along the edge of the battlements and hear the orders to fire. You try to cry out, to tell them that you are Kelson Darktreader, but to no avail. The arrows knock you from the rope, driving into you as you fall to the pavement below.

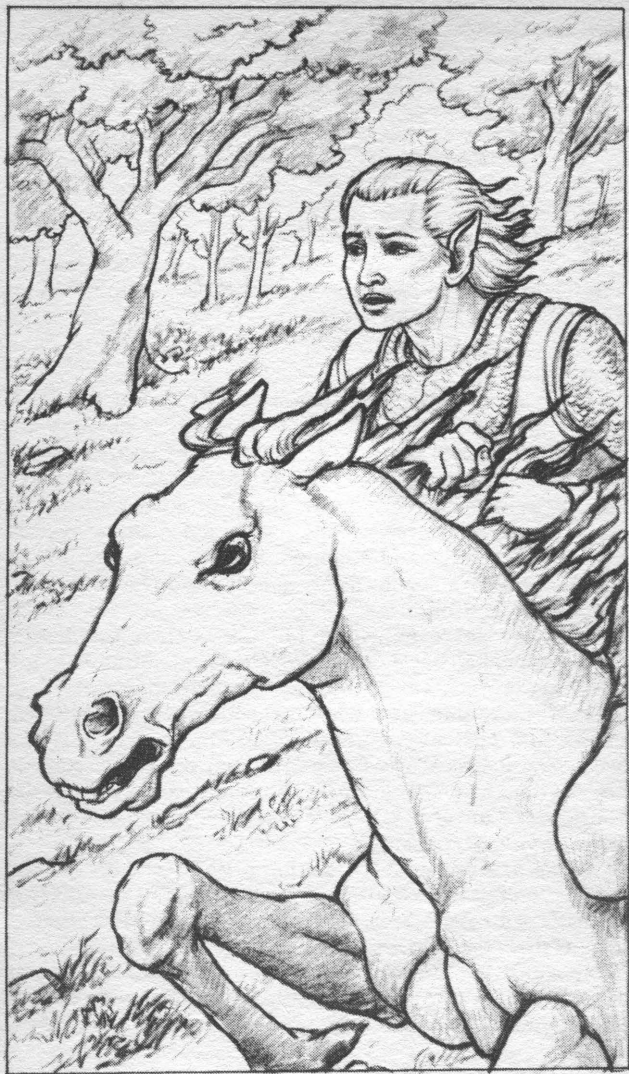
As you die on the cobblestones, you hear a laugh that sounds remarkably like your own. You know that Black-eye’s plots will probably bring doom to Daggerford, and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it—not anymore. ✕

200

You step outside the circle and walk quietly up to the horse. It waits for you patiently, as if this meeting were foreordained. Grabbing a handful of its mane, you swing astride the broad back. Immediately it rears up, though you feel no fear of falling off, and charges off through the woods. You exult in its speed and power, barely hearing Braggi calling your name from the circle.

Soon you decide you should turn the horse and gallop back to Braggi, if only so you can show him the magnificence of this creature that seems to have chosen you for its master. You apply pressure to the sides of the horse with your knees and heels and tug on the mane, but the pliant sides of the great steed are suddenly as hard as rock. The mane cuts into your fingers. You have no control whatsoever over this animal!

The horse seems tireless as it gallops through the forest. You realize that you are heading downhill, toward a deep stream, and you realize with a shudder that this is the



fabled demon horse, who lures men to ride it, then drowns them.

Roll two dice and add the result to your physical prowess skill score. If the total is 18 or more, turn to 144. If it is 17 or less, turn to 115.



201

You strain mightily. The door is stubborn, but you hear the grinding of small particles of dust and rock that are stuck in the works. Finally it gives slightly, and as you renew your grip and give a mighty heave, the door creaks open, spraying the two of you liberally with the dust of ages. You can hear orcs yelling as the more sharp-eyed of them realize what has happened, but you snatch up your weapons and dive through the hole behind the door, with Braggi close behind.

You fall several feet through blackness, then land heavily on hard-packed sand, knocking the wind out of you. You don't have time to draw another breath before Braggi lands on top of you, and you black out momentarily. You awaken to find Braggi standing over you, peering around the dim room, lit only by the small amount of light coming from the doorway above. From that doorway, you hear the screaming of an orc. "Here! They have entered the rock here! I have found them!"

Braggi's axe moves from his hand like lightning to the opening you fell through. The orc screams, and its hurtling body falls at Braggi's feet. Looking about, you see a lever in the wall directly below the opening. You leap up and grab the lever, pulling it down. You hear the creak of the door as it shuts tight, then the much fainter screams of the orcs still outside. Now it is really dark in the room.

Braggi cannot see at all, but your heat-sensing elf-sight reveals him and the outlines of the room. The chamber is about twice as long in both directions as you are high. Braggi fumbles in his pack and draws out a torch. You shield your eyes as he takes out flint and steel and manages to light the torch. Gradually your eyes adjust to normal vision.

You can see that the chamber you are in was carved from the rock by a master craftsman. "Dwarf work," you comment, and Braggi nods agreement. Aside from the lever in the wall and the steps carved into the wall that lead to the doorway above, there is nothing else in the room. Besides the outside door above, there is another archway leading to a tunnel.

"Shall we be waitin' here for the orcs to leave, swordbrother?" asks Braggi nervously, obviously uncomfortable so far underground.

"No. Knowing the orc temperament, they'll probably camp for days outside, waiting for us to come out. We haven't the time for such a siege. We've got to follow the tunnel and hope that it will lead us to a more hospitable environment."

Turn to 125.

202

Together you, Braggi, and Drendin wade into the middle of the orcs and cut down one who turns to meet this new threat. Another orc sticks its spear between your legs and trips you. You realize, too late, that you are grossly outnumbered. You see your friends pulled down by the orcs even as their blades penetrate your body. You have come far, only to fail, but this is the end. ✕

203

You turn to survey the fight in the town. You can see from the battlements that Eltan and Moruene have been pushed back almost to the castle gate, though they seem untouched and bodies of orcs are strewn about them.

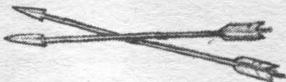
You can see the river from where you are, and you see that the orcs are now being attacked by barbarians in dug-

out canoes. Braggi has arrived with his clansmen! He must have gone after them when you disappeared from the circle of stones.

"There will be a great deal of rebuilding to do," Bronwyn says as she moves up beside you and holds your arm. "You and your allies can be of much help." She looks at you, a troubled expression in her eyes.

"I was enamored of the false Kelson," Bronwyn confesses. "Perhaps he used some devil magic on me. But I think I see enough in the real Kelson to know that I want you here, with me, to help with the rebuilding."

You look at her and realize that, even if you never find a trace of your father and the elves of Daggerford continue to disdain you, you have a place in this town. ❧



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