

THE LONG AND BLOODY ROAD .

Chapter 1 ELVES LIGHT AND DARK

The workers on the Altdorf dock stared in wonder at the sight coming up the River Reik. Very few had ever seen anything like the glowing, sleek eleven ship speeding up the river, the early morning sun glaring off its wide spread sails. As the ship neared the docks, the sails were lowered in inhuman quickness and just as the men on the dock thought the ship would smash itself against the dock, the ship veered hard. Majestically, it turned and glided up to the dock, where it stopped just barely kissing the hard wood.

A customs man and a squad of the dock watch forced their way through the crowd that had formed almost instantly before the docked ship. They were waiting at the base of the gangplank when two elf lords descended from the ship. Before the customs man could speak, the leading lord, whom was dressed in dark blue star spangled robes and carried a tall staff, handed him a large crystal pendant. The man looked at the pendant in curiosity and after a few minutes of shocked study handed the pendant back to the elf, bowed deeply and waved him on.

As they watched the elves make their way through the crowd, the watch sergeant asked, "What was that all about?"

The customs man gave short laugh and replied, "There's an imperial warrant preserved in that pendant."

"An Elf with an imperial warrant, that's unusual."

"Unusual, I should say so, but it is much more than unusual. It says, the bearer has the right to command in my name any imperial resources and is signed by Magnus Imperatus, Restorer of The Empire." said the customs man as he stared after the elves.

"Magnus the Pious, that warrant is over 200 hundred years old. How did that elf, get such a thing?" asked the sergeant.

"Think man, that elf received it from the hand of Magnus himself for saving the Empire, that's Teclis, the high Elf Mage."

"Teclis"

"Yes Teclis, and I wonder what horror walks the earth to bring him here now?" said the man a tremble in his voice as the full implication of the event hit him.

"What horror indeed," thought Teclis as he led his companion Eltharion through the crowd way from the dock, "Gods I'm not sure that even I know all the horrors involved in my mission."

The two elves walked away from the dock and glided their way toward the center of the city. As they moved away from the dock, they soon developed a tailing crowd of street urchins. The kids followed them staring in wonder at the tall elves. Pointing at the tall wizard's staff Teclis carried. Whispering amongst themselves about the strangely glowing rune blades strapped to their sides.

"Gods, there are so many of them" Exclaimed Eltharion, staring back at the dirty faced boys and girls, a slight smile of delight on his grim face.

"Yes there are. I have forgotten just how much a shock it is to see so many children in one place," said Teclis with a laugh.

Teclis look over at his friend and though, " Its good to see you smile old friend. You have not done that much since Grom killed your father and brother, and Altdorf is such a shock after the half empty cities of Ulthuan."

Eltharion Lord Protector of Tor Yvress

As the parade of children lead by the elves made its way further into the city, Eltharion asked, " Are we going to see the Emperor directly."



"No," answered Teclis with a shrug. "Even with the warrant it could take days to see the Emperor if we went directly to the palace. There is always some petty bureaucrat, who will cause delays in order to get a feeling of power. No, we are going over to the collage of magic. The Supreme Patriarch, is an old student of mine and I am the founder after all."

So Teclis and Eltharion walked on through the busy city toward the college of magic followed by an ever changing mob of children and if the thieves or cut throats of Altdorf had any thoughts of robbery or murder, one look at glowing rune sword carried by the tall grim Eltharion or the sight twisting staff carried by the sligher Teclis, made them think better of it.

When they arrived at the collage, Teclis walked up to the main gate and asked a young clerk at the gate for entry.

"There is no entry without an appointment," sneered, the young man from behind the gate. Before Teclis could reply, an older man dressed in deep blue robes grabbed, the young man by the collar and jerked him out of his chair. "Morgator, you are a fool, don't you know who this is. You walk by his statue every day. I sure hope you have a lot of talent because you sure don't have the brains to be a wizard."

Morgator slunk away, while the older man opened the gate and waved the Elves through, closing it behind them, shutting out the pursuing mob of children.

"I'm sorry Master Teclis, young people these days; I should have gotten to the gate earlier" Said the man.

"Talk about young people, Guntrus," said the Elf Mage, "you all are young people. You were just an apprentice last time I was here.

"That was over 20 years ago, I'm a master Celestial Wizard now." laughed Guntrus. "I hoped to get to the gate before you got here but even the stars are not infallible."

"You must be good to predict my arrival this close," said Teclis.

"Not really," laughed the Celestial Wizard, "we have an apprentice down on the docks working with the watch and he sent a rider back when he saw you get off the ship. As soon as the Supreme Patriarch heard of your arrival, he sent me down to greet you and to save you from the indignities of petty minds."

"How is Thyrus?" asked Teclis, as he and Eltharion followed Guntrus toward a set of high flame topped towers.

"Better now that you're here, there have been signs and portents of great trouble brewing in the south and an unsettling taint on the winds of magic from the Northwest. He has been worried and our wizards have been searching without success for answers as to what has been going on."

"I know something of what's going on, but not all, the black Elves are up to something, maybe I can shed some light on all this when I talk to him." said Teclis looking grim.

At last Guntrus led them into a large office. As they entered, a tall thin man with fiery red hair and beard jumped up from behind a wide cluttered desk to greet them. As he bowed in greeting, his bright red and yellow garments flickered like flame. "Teclis, I'm happy to see you, but I wonder if I should be, for you to come unannounced to Altdorf, usually means something horrible is about in the world." said the man as he motioned his guest to be seated.

Teclis laughed grimly and said, "Be happy Thyrus, because as you know, I do not make the trouble, I only follow it."

"So there is truly something evil brewing on the winds of magic," asked the Bright Wizard.

"Eltharion and I have pursued a group of Dark Elves from where they landed on the east shores of Ulthuan. We chased them until they made a landing about 20 miles down the Reik and stole two riverboats after looting the town and burning the docks. I am afraid that they slipped past Altdorf during the night and are making their way up river.

"What's so important about some Dark Elf raiders that you would pursue them this far?" asked Thyrus. "I could see a sea guard captain chasing them this far, but not lords of your importance."

"They have that murdering Goblin with them." growled Eltharion, hate flashing in his eyes.

"You must forgive Eltharion, but the Lost Ones have brought Grom the Fat, the goblin warlord back with them to the Empire and Grom killed my friend's family."

"Grom the Fat!" Thyrus's eyes widened in surprise, "He razed the Empire and sailed to the west over ninety years ago. How can he be still alive?"

"Time flows strangely in Ulthuan, and to tell you the truth, I have no idea how long a goblin lives any way, they never survive long enough to die of old age." said Teclis with a grim smile.

With this revelation, Thyrus sprang to his feet and placing his ornate miter of office on his head strode quickly from the office. "Come along, we must see the Emperor at once."

They followed the quickly moving Bright Wizard to a small room at the rear of his office from which they descended a long spiral staircase. The staircase ended in a low roofed narrow tunnel. "This tunnel connects the school with the imperial palace," said Thyrus as he quickly ushered them through the tunnel, a red glow from his staff lighting their way.

After a long brisk walk the tunnel ended in another small room where they found another spiral staircase, which they quickly ascended. They left the staircase and entered a small antechamber. There a guard in the black armor of the Reiksguard and a clerk behind a small desk looked at them in shocked surprise when they entered the room through the seldom-opened door.

"What's this?" asked the clerk.

"We must see the Emperor," said Thyrus, fire dancing in his eyes and along the hairs of his beard.

"He can not be disturbed, he is in conference," said the clerk his demeanor taking on an air of arrogance.

The guard looked at the clerk and with a laugh opened the door to the conference room beyond.

"We will see him now," said Thyrus fire leaping from his hands consuming the mustache of the clerk. The clerk looked to the guard for help and his eyes widened in shock as he saw the guard usher them into the room.

When the guard came back he asked, "Who are they?"

"Who are they? Let me tell you." said the guard, as the door slammed shut behind him.

Hearing the door slam the four men and one woman seated at one end of the long conference table looked up to watch Thyrus and his group enter the room.

Seeing Thyrus, the man, seated in the middle of the group at the table, stood up and came forward to meet them. The man appeared to be in his middle thirties about six feet tall, with a broad strong handsome face and body. He was dressed plainly, his only ornamentation a silver seal that glowed from a chain around his neck.

He smiled as he approached and extended his hand to Thyrus. "Your arrival is most fortunate; we were just about to send for you." "Who are your friends?" he asked, as he looked over the rest of the group.

"By Sigmar! It's worse than I thought." He exclaimed, as he recognized Teclis and grasped his hand and led him toward the table.

"Emperor, I am beginning to feel that all of you think my arrival is a foretelling of doom." laughed Teclis, as he followed the man to the table.

"No, but the last time you were here on other than a crisis, was when you stayed that one year in my youth, to tutor me on Elven history and the powers of magic, twenty years ago." He smiled fondly as they approached

Karl Frans, Emperor, Prince of Altdorf



the table. "I hope, I can talk you into doing that again for my son. He just about the right age, and I think Thyrus would love for you to teach at the School of Magic again."

Over hearing this last exchange, Thyrus smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

"We well discuss that when the crisis has pasted," said Teclis, with a smile. "Now introduce me to your companions."

So Karl Frans, Emperor, Prince of Altdorf and Elector Count of The Reikland, introduced his old teacher to the others seated at the table, who rose and greeted the elf as they were introduced.

Karl first introduced the woman. "Teclis, may I introduce, Her Highness, Katarin, Tzarina of Kislev."

The Tzarina arose and presented her hand to Teclis. He grasped it, and nearly gasped at the intense cold that radiated from her flesh.

"Your highness, yours is one of the few types of magic, I have never been able to command." He said as he released her hand.

"Call me Kata." smiled the Tzarina, who was tall and slender with obsidian black hair, snow-white skin and ice blue eyes. "My father the Tzar, speaks highly of you."

Then Emperor introduced the others at the table in turn.

A tall, shaved headed, man in priest robes with a carved jade griffin on his chest. "Grand Theogonist Volkmar, High Priest of Sigmar."

A broad chested man, with a long flowing black mustache and even in these peaceful surroundings a long heavy black bow, on which glowed strange red, blue and green runes. "Valmir Von Raukov, Elector Count of Ostland."

And finally, a tall whipcord thin man dressed in the black armor of the Reiksguard "Captain Kurt Helborg, Reiksmarshal."

Teclis then introduced Eltharion as Karl Frans motioned for every one to be seated.

Valmir Von Raukov, Elector Count of Ostland



Once every one had settled in and had gotten to know each other, the Empire asked Teclis what had brought him to Altdorf.

"Sire," began Teclis, "our mission began when, I sensed a strange stirring in the winds of magic in the north over the land of the dark ones. Then a Black Ark was sighted off the East coast of Ulthuan and a number of raiders landed in Yvress. Feeling the evil smell to the winds of magic, I left the tower of Hoeth and hurried to Tor Yvress to find out what was happening."

At that point Eltharion took up the story, his face grim with remembrance. "By the time Teclis had arrived, I had called up the guard and was making ready to go and meet the raiders.

Before leading out the troops, I went scouting on the Griffin Stormwing, but instead of heading for the coastal villages as the dark scum are usually wont to do, they headed inland away from any inhabited regions towards the mountains. I followed them inland hoping to discover where they were planning to attack. Imagine my surprise when they lead me to a group of caves in the edge of the Annuli Mountains. Of even more of a shock, was who they met when they arrived, for out of the caves, came a small band of goblins led by the most enormous goblin I had ever seen. Seeing him, I flew into a rage and swooped down on them from above because the goblin boss was no other than Grom, the foul beast that had killed my father and brother.

"Down Stormwing and I plunged, through the hissing shafts of the black elf and goblin bows. We fell upon them before the caves and many died before slashing sword, rending beak, and ripping claw. But there were too many of them and we were driven off with many deep wounds before I could kill, the green devil." with this Eltharion had to stop as his voice trembled with the hate and anger from the confrontation.

Teclis continued the story. "When I arrived at Tor Yvress, I found him, wounded and half dead, rounding up his men to go after them. When, I heard what he had found, I healed him up and we started out after them. But we were too late and they made it to the coast before us." He shook his head in disgust. "The dark ones had gotten the green toad aboard the Black Ark, and were sailing away. We gave chase with some dragonships and caught the Black Ark just off the mouth of the Reik. There we sank the Ark with the loss of two of our three dragonships, but some of the evil ones escaped in a coastal raider with Grom the Fat. After rescuing our survivors, we gave chase, but lost them in the fog at the mouth of the river. After the fog cleared, we tried to pursue them up the river, but those fools at Marienburg made us stop and explain, giving the dark ones more of a lead. We have been trying to catch up to them ever since. We can't follow them any further up the river because our ship draws too much water to get past your blasted Altdorf mud flats."

"So they have brought Grom back to the Empire, I thought that, that old creature was long since dead." said the Emperor. "If the Black Elves were in a coastal raider how did they get past my fine mud flats, we have left them there just to prevent such an occurrence." Karl Franz, smiled slightly at this.

Teclis just shook his head and explained, "They raided a small river town about a day down river and captured two large river boats. They must have slipped by the city last night."

With this last bid of information, the Reiksmarshal spoke up, "Sire that was one of the strange things I had to report this morning. The signal reported this morning that strangely dressed pirates had attacked Signaburg, stealing some boats. This explains a lot about that raid. Because the report said that the pirates had burned their ship and it was a mixed band of Elves and Goblins, and something about the biggest goblin they had ever saw.

"That might also explain a lot of what the Tzarina and I have been seeing up north" said Von Raukov.

"Strange things have been occurring in Kislev and Ostland also?" asked Teclis.

"Nothing as big as Grom's return to the old world, but that might explain what is going on. A large number of the small goblin and orc tribes have been seen moving out of the Middle Mountains and the Forest of Shadows and drifting south." Valmir explained.

"Even more have crossed out of the troll country and have slipped through Kislev, the strange thing is there has been almost no burning or looting and they have only fought when they have been harassed or cornered, not like orcs at all." said Kata with a look of wonder.

Katarina, Tzarina of Kislev



I ran into on such band a few weeks ago when I was riding the frontier between Ostland and Kislev. I was out with a patrol of my household rangers and Jeremy a young bright wizard, when we spotted a band of Savage Orc Boar Boys, the Tzarina hard on their heels with a band of her horse archers. We played cat and mouse with them for a few days, shooting them up with arrows and giving them a taste of the dragon's fang"

The Count patted the bow at his side. "And fading back into the woods before they could get closed enough to charge."

"Mostly, they kept trying to get away to the south," said the princess. "Which is unusual, because I have fought these Orcs before, they are led by Harf Head Taker and the Shaman Ratkiller and usually they are itching for a fight."

"Just before they crossed into Talabecland, they were joined by a large band of Goblin Wolf Riders. At first we didn't think much of it, other than to curse our luck, because it's much harder to play tag with something as fast as a wolf, but these riders were much more aggressive and braver than any goblins I have ever had to deal with before. I think it must have had something to do with that odd banner they were carrying."

"Any way the wolf riders caught us in the open, were we couldn't get out of their way and pressed their charge home. We shot them full of arrows, killing enough of them to make any normal goblin unit break and run, but they kept coming and when they hit our line a green flame shot out of the banner and Jeremy's head exploded, splattering me with his brains. I ripped out my Rune Fang and started into them, and then they turned and ran. Those wolves were faster than my armored horse or my rangers' legs. When they were out of range, the little buggers stood up on top of their wolves and jeered us. Then they started after Kata. Seeing what that banner had done to Jeremy, my rangers, her horse archers and I, tried to keep ourselves between them and her. We would ride between them and her, and I would keep picking them off with the black lady and they would never charge us, but kept trying to get around us to her, all the while the boar boys were also trying to get into position to charge in."

Kata smiled at Valmir and took up the story. "And there I was trying to stay away from these crazy wolf boys, with almost every spell I cast at the riders fizzling away in a shower of green sparks. The only luck, we had in the whole thing, was that Val had killed enough of the boar boys early on with that bow of his that Ratkiller could not get up enough power to cast any of his spells. Funny thing too, even though there were enough goblins in that mob of wolfriders, he didn't seem to want to get his Gray Seer skin covered backside any closer to that banner than I did. This went on until night fall when, the green scum slipped away and swam the river into Talabecland."

"We followed down the side of the river, until I came to one of my river garrisons and boarded a river boat to come and report to you, Sir." Said Valmir. "Funny thing while we rode down river and after we caught the boat, there were a lot of orc sign entering the river from the north and going south, but there were no sign of them moving the other way. Also, there were a lot of forest goblins out on the river at night in their dugouts fairing the green skins across the river."

"By Sigmar!" exclaimed the Emperor, "The Dark Elves have brought Grom the Fat back to the Old World, and ever Orc and Goblin in the Northlands knows about it and are moving south to meet him, this has the makings of the biggest Waaa we have ever seen."

On hearing this Grand Theogonist Volkmar, look even grimmer than he did before and spoke up, "This makes my news even grimmer than I first believed. I just learned two surprising things this morning."

"First, the Orcs have attacked our warrior monks at the monastery at Black Fire Pass and have driven them off. The surviving monks report that the night goblins are moving back into the old warrens in the mountains. There are rumors that the Orcs and goblins were led by two of the most notorious warbosses in the south lands Morglum Necksnapper and Skarsnik."

"Sigmar help us!" exclaimed the Emperor making the sign of the hammer. "Those two working together, they have always fought amongst themselves. That is the one thing that has kept the Orcs and Goblins of the Bad Lands from over running us."

"But that is not all," said Volkmar, "last night someone or something broke into the deepest vaults of the temple and stole the Crown of Sorcery."

"The Crown of Sorcery did not you and Blucher take that from Azhag the Slaughter a few years ago?" asked Karl Franz.

"Yes we did." replied the Grand Theogonist. "And after studying the crown, we found it was even a more dreadful thing than we first believed, for I believe it to be the Crown of Nagash. One other thing that bothered me after the battle, for when we went to burn the bodies of the orcs, we did not find Azhag."

"So the crown of the father of the undead is once again free in the world," said Thyrus; tiny flames dancing in his beard. "I think I see Nagash's bony hand in this. We have had message birds from some of the Gray wizards wondering in the south, that they have seen massive armies of the dead marching up from the south led by Arkhan the Black, Nagash's chief war lord. Also all of our wizards have felt a great evil stirring in the winds of magic as if some great evil magic has been performed."

"So the black one stirs again and calls his crown to himself and in this he has the help of the dark elves." said the Grand Theogonist, "but what do they gain from this."

"What they always want," said Teclis in a grim voice. "Death and destruction and more blood for the god of murder and our trade with you has made us stronger, which they resent."

The emperor set grim faced, as he set thinking on everything that had been said. Every eye was upon him as he thought, himself staring into the faces of his old friend and teacher. "I think there is only on thing we can do, we must try to catch these dark elves before they can meet up with the Orcs and Goblins, or failing that, meet the green scum at Black Fire Pass before they can mass and drive further into the Empire."

Following this there was a flurry of activity, as everyone agreed with the Emperors plan and messengers were called for and sent with orders to make ready the expedition. Some were sent to the docks to the harbormaster to get ready the imperial river fleet and to notify the river wardens to be on the look out for the dark elves. Another messenger was sent to the Engineering school to request that engineering crops make ready to travel, and to request Eric von Diesel, the Master Engineer, come meet with the Emperor. Orders were also issued for the mustering of the Reiksguard and the imperial artillery corp.

The Emperor asked if Valmir and Katarina would accompany him on this expedition, or did they think they were needed at home.

They laughed and Kata explained for both of them. "I think we will go with you because there are almost no orcs or goblins left in the north and with the increased activity of the undead our northern border should be well protected against the forces of chaos."

Karl Frans looked at her questioningly at her last statement. Then shook his head and laughed as he remembered to story of Bolgasgrad and the undead legion. "So you father never cleaned that place out?" he asked.

"No." she replied with a shack of her head. "After losing two expeditionary forces it was decided that the city and its undead warriors made an excellent defense against chaos."

"I see," said the Emperor, and then he smiled at his two companions. "You help on this expedition will be greatly appreciated."

Then the Emperor turned to Captain Kurt Helborg, the Reiksmarshal and over his arguments to the contrary ordered him to stay in Altdorf to order the defense of the Empire. He also told Kurt to send messages to Graf Bors at Middenhein to watch the north coast for possible landing of more dark elves and to order out the imperial fleet at Marienburg to increase patrols for further Black Arks. They sent additional messages to Countess Emmanuel at Nuln to watch the river and to Marius Leitdorf Count of Averland to muster his forces.

All during that day and on into the night while the troops were mustered and the equipment loaded onto the riverboats. The Emperor set with his advisers planning the defense and governing of the Realm in his absence.

The next morning found them all down at the docks ready to board the riverboat fleet, when a shout went up and another elven ship was seen sailing up the river. Teclis was quite surprised by who, when after it docked, descended the gangplank. Forgetting all of his dignity as a high elf mage, he ran forward and hugged the tall golden armored warrior, who came off the ship.

"Brother, what are you doing here." asked Teclis, "Your place is with the Everqueen."

"She sent me to you" answered Tyron, who despite the contrast of his bright golden hair and sunny complexion was the brother to the smaller sickly mage. "She said that your quest is much more important than you believe and that my presence here would be more important than if I stayed in Ulthuan."

"By the Flames of Asuryan, what are those spawn of the god of murder planning." said Teclis worry on his pale face. Then he smiled and looked into his brother's face. "What ever it is Tyron, I am glad your here." He then turned and introduced his brother to the Emperor and his other companions.

Another two riverboats were found and the warriors and horses from the eleven ship were quickly transferred to the boats and the river fleet left the docks and started up the river Reik.

The fleet was led by the Emperor's own boat, Deathclaw, named after the Emperors griffin, which had saved him at Breakheart Pass. This boat was unlike any of the other boats in the fleet because unlike them it had no sails but only a small stack near the stern of the ship. The Emperor stood on the deck, talking to Eric von Diesel, the Master of the School of Engineering, keeping one eye on the two griffins eyeing each other over the steam tank parked near the front of the boat.

"Sorry Sire, but we could only take one stream tank on this expedition, I am afraid your boat is the only one in the city capable of transporting it and off loading it." said the von Diesel.

"I know," said Karl Frans, "but this boat was so expensive and it's hard as pulling teeth to get Swen to build another engine."

"I heard that, you ungrateful whelp" called a gruff voice from below decks, then a old dwarf with a singed beard made his way up from down below carrying a bottle of clear liquid and three glasses. "Here have some of this to wet your whistle," said the Dwarf as he poured the liquid into the glasses, handed two to the two men and tossed his back and poured himself another one.

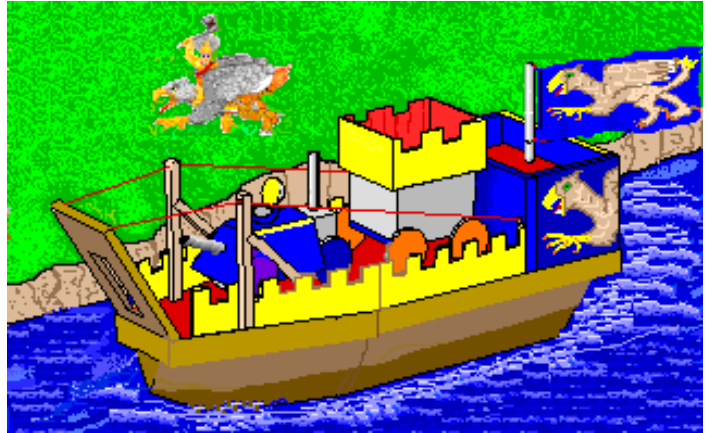
The emperor took a drink and choking, blew it out of his mouth on to the deck. "Gods, Swen how many times do I have to tell you not to drink the boat's fuel." said the Emperor his eyes streaming tears.

"And why not Karl," said the Swen, "It is only 180 proof alcohol after all. But, I did forget how weak your human stomachs are maybe you better dilute it with this." The dwarf laughed as he handed the two men a second bottle full of water.

Eric looked across the top of the dwarf's head to the Emperor as if to ask why he put up with such treatment.

Karl Franz laughed, and poured some of the water in his and von Diesel's glasses. "When it comes to my engineers I put up with a lot, just as long as they produce results." The all three laughed and clicked glasses as they toasted. "To results."

So the Emperor's boat chugged up the river followed by the river fleet and little did they know the long and bloody road that awaited them.



Chapter 2 OF DWARFS AND VAMPIRES.

Felix Jaeger stabbed down with his sword and speared the green hand grasping at him from the ground and flung it still twitching into the bonfire, tended by dwarfs in the center of the village.

Watching it burn, he cursed to himself, and wondered why he was here following a crazed dwarf slayer around in the wilderness instead at home at his father's house in Altdorf trading in wool. Watching as the dwarfs carried the still moving body parts of the zombies, Felix brooded on this his latest adventure with Gotrek, starting with the reanimation of the vampire Mannfred von Carstein, at castle Drakenhof. They had at last driven the Vampire from the castle when they had followed a village girl back to the castle after they had saved her from the count the first time. Just as the vampire was about to plunge his fangs into her neck, Gotrek had struck him with his rune ax wounding him gravely.

Mannfred had changed into a mist and fled from the castle. Gotrek had stroked his rune ax and it glowed with a pale reddish light and seemed to pull them north. When Felix asked Gotrek about this he had laughed and said, "Once she had tasted its blood, the ax can find any monster it had wounded.

So they had followed Mannfred north to the ancient battlefield of Hel Fen where the dwarfs and Empire had defeated him in the past. There they had found him raising the dead of the battle, trying to bring back his undead army.

Felix shook his head and gave thanks to Sigmar and Grinnir again that some orcs had slipped through Peak Pass and Ungrim Ironfist, whose dwarf hold Karak Kadrin guards the pass, had felt honor bound to destroy them and had pursued them, with a band of Slayers and Bugmans Rangers. Ungrim had finally caught the orcs on the edge of the fen. Hearing the sounds of battle and the war cries of the dwarfs, Gotrek had run toward the sound of battle. Felix had followed after wondering at his sanity running toward a battle and not away from it. Rushing to the battle, they came upon the orcs from behind and Gotrek had cut his way through them to Ungrim, who in the midst of battle greeted his old friend and then they both turned and with their rune axes destroyed the remaining orcs. After the fight, Gotrek told Ungrim and Josef Bugman about their pursuit of the vampire and the hardy dwarfs had agreed that the monster must be destroyed and joined the pursuit.

That night they had found Mannfred on the old battleground, a small army of undead around him. The dwarfs charged in and their axes had made quick work of the shambling skeletons and the rune of Valaya on Ungrim's Battle Standard dispelled Mannfred's magic. Losing the battle, the vampire had again fled this time toward the south and the Dwarfs had pursued,

Gotrek's ax leading then on. South through Sylvania, then west along the River Aver and South again were he crossed the river at the old dwarf road.

At first, the only problems they had encountered were the occasional small bands of orcs and goblins who also seemed to be moving south, which quickly turned way from the grim band of dwarfs after a taste of slayer ax or ranger cross bow bolt. But after crossing the river things had changed. After slipping past Averhheim at night, Ungrim had said he did no want to have to deal with the mad count, they had found this village of the dead.

What they had found was a village empty of life but full of zombies. Most of the zombies appeared to be freshly dead villagers, but sprinkled amongst them were some orcs and goblins, but what they found even more unusual were that some of the zombies were dark elves as evidence by the occasional half naked tattooed witchelf zombie.

Gods what a fight, thought Felix as he speared another still living body part and limped over and flung it into the fire.

"Here boy have some of this," said a white bearded dwarf, who handed Felix a large tankard full of ale with a glowing red B on its side.

"Now Josef, save that for the wounded," said Felix as he stabbed a biting goblin head and flung it into the fire.

Josef laughed and pressed the mug full of glowing ale into Felix's hand. "Now lad," he said, "all of the wounded have had a drink and you need it. For a human you're all right, Felix and I would want your sword at my side, but boy, you have ran nearly 300 miles at top speed with a bunch of dwarfs and any other man would be died by now, so drink up.

Felix knew it was impossible to argue with the old dwarf and smiled and said "Thank you." when as he drank the ale he felt its magic flow through his body healing all the small aches and pains and draining away the fatigue.

"Don't thank me," said Josef," and don't feel ashamed for you are not the first one on this run who has had a drink only because he was tired." The dwarf smiled up at the human, and then as Felix handed the Mug back to him they both laughed.

As they stood there laughing, another two dwarfs came over to them dragging the massive jerking torso of a black orc and flung it on the fire. The dwarfs looked the same in some ways and quite different in others. Both were massive nearly as wide as they were tall with huge

Ungrim the Slayer King and Gotrek Gunderson



shoulders and more startling was their hair. It was dyed bright red and glued up into huge mohawks and they had long red dyed beards. They both also had huge rune axes strapped to their backs. But that was where the resemblance ended, one, Gotrek was stripped to the waste and covered with strange tattoos, with only one eye. While the other, Ungrim, the Slayer King, was dressed in heavy armor and a heavy dragon skin cloak.

"By Grimmer, that is the last of them. Do you any more of that ale Brewmaster?" asked Gotrek as he turned to the two at the fire.

"That was the last healing drink from the mug for today, but I do have some more ale." Said Josef, as he picked up a small cask and poured ale into the other dwarfs out stretched mugs.

"Well since all I wanted was the ale, this will do quite nicely." Grinned Gotrek as he took a drink.

The four friends stood looking at the fire, sipping their ale lost in their own thoughts.

At last Felix shook his head and said, "Have you guys thought on the implications of these zombies."

Ungrim looked grim and spat into the fire then said, "I have and I do not like it. It appears that the vampire has fallen in with a raiding party of Dark Elves and green skins. After they raid a village, that cursed Mannfred raises the dead as zombies and leave them behind waiting for us."

"By Grimnir, what are dark elves doing so far inland with the green scum and why would they let a vampire join them?" ask Gotrek.

"Who knows, but maybe we can ask them when we catch them." said Ungrim with a grim laugh.

Just then two dark shadows past over them and they heard the rush of wings. Then the shapes plunged down from the sky at them. The dwarfs freed their axes and Felix raised he sword. The rest of the band came running the slayers readying their axes and Bugman's Rangers readying their bows.

"Don't shoot," yelled Felix, "that is Deathclaw the Emperor's Griffin"

The Emperor on Deathclaw



Down came the two griffins, and then they pulled up suddenly and landed in front of fire when the riders saw it was dwarfs and not orcs around the fire in the center of the village.

"What are you doing to my villagers?" asked the man in ornate golden armor on the first griffin.

"Burning them, what do you think." snarled Gotrek, using his axe to flick a burning hand back into the fire.

"Burning them?" said the man, his voice rising in anger and with it the huge hammer that glowed in his hand.

Felix quickly stepped in front of the dwarfs and said, "Sire, what else would you do with Zombies."

"Zombies?" said the man, whose eyes widened as he recognized the man before him. "I know you, you are the man who stood up the wyvern at Hauptmansburg."

"Yes, I am." said Felix with an embarrassed grin.

The Emperor dismounted his griffin and approached the group and said with a laugh, "Don't feel ashamed at least you waited until after the danger was past to faint."

"Fainted, you didn't say anything about fainting." chided Gotrek.

"Not now." whispered Felix as he started to bow the Emperor.

Karl-Frans laughed at this interchange and extended his hand to Felix, who stopped in mid bow to take it and stood there wondering what to do with it. The Emperor laughed again and grasped Felix's hand firmly and shook it. "That was still one of the bravest things, I have ever saw." he said," but in the heat of battle I never got your name."

Felix quickly introduced himself and the dwarfs.

When King Ungrim was introduced to the Emperor, Karl-Franz flushed with embarrassment and offered his hand to the king. "I am sorry; I did not expect to find you here Sire."

Ungrim took the Emperor's hand and said, "Why should you, I should be in the mountains to the north setting on my throne and not in the southern part of your empire chasing a Vampire Count."

"A Vampire Count? I am chasing a band of dark elves who have brought Grom the Fat back to the Empire." said Karl-Frans.

Hearing the name of Grom mentioned, the second rider dismounted his griffin and moved forward into the light of the fire. Seeing him approach the dwarfs fingered their axes and glowered at him, for he was an elf and dwarf memories are long and bitter.

Seeing the dwarfs' reaction, the Emperor frowned then introduced Eltharion. "This is Eltharion, he lost his family to Grom and has pursued him and the dark elves from Ulthuan. He is a great slayer of goblins."

Hearing this, the dwarfs lost some of their mistrust and greeted Eltharion. Josef even offered Karl-Frans and Eltharion a drink.

Karl quickly took a mug and laughed at the dubious elf as he took a sip. "Bugman's best, I used to drink this all the time, why don't you ship this down the river any more Josef."

"That's a long story, Sire, leave it to say, I'm killing goblins these days and not brewing ale." said Josef grimly.

The Emperor took another sip of ale and said, "Now tell me why you're in one of my villages burning my villagers."

Felix then told him the story starting with his and Gotrek's discovery of Count Mannfred and ending with their suppositions about what the mixed batch of zombies meant.

The Emperor then told of what he knew, of how the dark elves had brought Grom from Ulthuan and of the movement of the orc and goblin tribes from the north and how the orc and goblin warlords had taken Black Fire Pass and seemed to be massing there preparing to invade the Empire.

As they stood talking, a band of wild horse archers came cantering up the road and surrounded the dwarfs and the Emperor; the rest of the Emperor's army soon joined them. With the arrival of the army and the introduction of all of the leaders plans were made for the pursuit of the dark elves and everyone retired for the night.

Chapter 3 OF DARK ELVES AND ORCS OR HOW THE POWER FLOWS

Harf Headtaker set next to the blazing campfire and watched his friend, the shaman Ratkiller, as he set dreaming, the drool caused by the magic mushrooms running down his chin.

Ratkiller clutched himself and moaned as a vision came to him. First he saw the great Orc gods Mork and Gork. They were head butting each other and doing other orcish violence to each other when they noticed Ratkiller's arrival on the spirit plain. Seeing him they smiled, great fangs glowing, then came up to him and towered over him.

"Ratkiller, you we like. Made Horned Rat mad, we laugh. Have god dat we want you to see. Help him. We like plan."

Another god appeared between Mork and Gork, he had a pale elfish look. Blood dripped from the nails of his hand and the corners of his mouth. He smiled showing bright sharp teeth. Ratkiller shook as he looked into the god's red eyes for he was Khaine the god of murder.

Khaine laughed at his fear and the Orcish gods frowned as the murder god reached out and grasped Ratkiller and brought the kicking shaman up toward his mouth. Mork and Gork grasped their clubs and glowered at Khaine, who only laughed again. Then the god whispered into the shaman's ear like a child whispering to a doll. "As I have told you before, and as I have told the other shamans, you will help my children in their plans and together you will destroy the humans."

He then dropped Ratkiller, who fell from the great height and awoke with a start to find himself before the fire in the Orc and Goblin camp. Ratkiller shook and spoke to Harf. "He's there, Mork an' Gork say help him, he says help the dark skinnys."

Harf shook his head and groaned, for this was the same message that the gods had given the shaman since the first one, from before they left the Troll country, when the gods had told them to go south to Blackfire Pass.

He looked over to the next fire where setting with the leaders of the dark elves were figures out of Orcish legend. Seated around the fire were Grom the Fat, Azhag the Slaughterer, and Morglum Necksnapper.

Grom the greatest goblin warboss ever had been brought back from Ulthuan, where he had disappeared over 90 years before, by the dark elves.

Azhag had flown in with the shaman Rotbreath and the Big Boss Bloodfly on their Wyverns, the night before. Harf had been shocked to see Azhag because he had seen the Warboss struck down at the battle of Osterwald, when he had followed him down from the Troll country a few years before. When he first arrived at camp, Azhag did not seem to have the aura of power that he radiated during the old days, but when he met with the Dark Elves, Shadowblade the Assassin had presented the Warboss with a skull-covered crown. Now, even though his voice had a low hissing quality caused by a wound to his throat, he again radiated the power that had attracted the majority of the orcs and goblins in the north county to his standard.

Morglum had joined the band that day, when they had met the Black Orc Warboss with a party of his warriors as they moved south on the road. Harf fingered the ax at his side in wonder. He still could not believe that Morglum had given it to him earlier that evening. Morglum had come to the fire where he and Ratkiller were setting and handed Harf the ax. "This Ax, Morgor the Mangler, ride with me, I give." grunted the warlord. Harf could only shake his head "yes" in shock as the huge Black Orc had turned and walked back to the chieftain's fire.

Just as Harf started to turn back to the fire and Ratkiller, Morglum looked up and motion for the pair to come over. Harf stood up and helped the Shaman to his unsteady feet and swaggered over to the other fire trying to look braver than he felt.

As they came up, Morglum smiled and made room for Harf by the fire. Harf set down looking nervously fingering his new ax.

"Well Harf, so that's the way it works out, is it?" rasped Azhag. "After all we have been through in the past; he can get you to ride with him with just an ax."

Harf fingered the ax and stared back at Azhag.

Azhag was wearing the Crown, and the cold intelligence that glittered out of the warboss's eyes wasn't all his own.



Harf cleared his throat and said, "Dat was then, dis is now. I saw you go down beneath the swords of the Cat Knights. I barely got boys back north after battle. I never heard from you." Harf looked from Azhag over to the hulking Necksnapper and continued. "He's got dead hard rep and rides boar. He'll fight beside I and not fly off on some big snake."

Azhag laughed and smiled a long fanged smile. "Harf, you were always one of my best bosses and you're right, you would be better off riding with old Dwarf breath. By rights, I should be dead, if it wasn't for some residue power of the crown that allowed me to drag myself away from the battlefield. There, Rotbreath found me and nursed me back to life. Without the crown I had no desire to lead a Waa again and was content to live out my life in the hills raising my Wyverns." Azhag looked about the fire at the other warbosses and the dark elves and laughed at the unbelieving looks on their faces. "I know you don't believe an old boss could be without ambition, but then you have never worn this thing," he said touching the crown. "But here I am again, Rotbreath had the dream" he looked significantly at Ratkiller, who shuttered," and we flew here to meet you all." Azhag laughed again and reached out a tore the leg off of the corpse roasting over the fire and handed it to Harf. "Ride with Necksnapper and I wish you luck."

Harf took a bit of the leg and nearly choked as Morglum slapped him on the back. "It's good you ride with me." The black orc laughed.

Harf looked about the fire and basked in the grinning faces of the warbosses, but the amused smirks on the haughty elves faces made him nervous and he wonder to himself what trick was Khaine playing on Mork and Gork, for theses elves thought to much and took to much joy from the inflicting of pain and death. Sure an orc liked a good fight, but these elves liked death much too much. Then he took a bit out of the leg and stopped worrying about it.

At a close by fire a black orc started pounding a drum, "Boom, Boom". One of Harf's boar boys soon wondered over and started blowing on his horn. Soon the other orcs were up and dancing to the noise. Slamming into each other, shaking weapons circling the fire yelling and screaming. As the boys danced and carried on a green glow began to form around Ratkiller's head. As the power of the waa built, Ratkiller shook off the lethargy caused by the mushrooms, seeming to stand taller and prouder.

With little sparks of green fire skipping down his arms, the shaman set down beside Harf, bumping into and forcing over Lilita, the white haired, dark elf sorceress who shared the log with Harf.

Lilita, Dark Elf Sorceress



Lilita glared and snarled at him. Ratkiller paid her no mind and reached out to take a piece of the corpse roasting in the fire. The sorceress reached for it at the same time and stared in shock when he grabbed it first. When she stretched out her hand to him to demand the chose bit of flesh, Ratkiller just laughed and took a bite. Angered at this disrespect, Lilita leapt to her feet and started to cast a spell. Ratkiller grinned and with short chopping motion

of his hand cut her spell short. Then as she stood there still confused, he seemed to reach for her, as he did a large green hand formed from the air and grasped her about the waist. The shaman grinned and the hand lifted the shocked sorceress from the ground. She glared and struggled to break free. Ratkiller just laughed and started to move her feet toward the fire.

Shadowblade the Assassin started to draw a dagger, seeing this Harf's new ax leap to his hand. Before any damage could be done Lord Valk the Dark Elf Captain and Morglum put restraining hands on their warriors.

Ratkiller stopped her short of the fire and just held Lilita in the air, shaking her lightly. "Girly," he said shaking his Skaven skin robe at her. "Do ya know, what this is? It skin of Grey Seer strongest Rat Shaman. I killed him. Exploded brain. I like your hair would make good fringe. I'd kill ya, but Gork and Mork say help, don't try spell again." With that the hand opened and the sorceress drop to the ground.

She stood up and glared at him. Ratkiller looked hard at her and she slunk over and set between Lord Valk and Shadowblade.

Azhag laughed grimly and spoke to Lord Valk. "Like Ratkiller said Gork and Mork say to help you, but remember we are not your cold country slaves." He rasped, "I'd keep a tight leash on you sorceress, Ratkiller is one of the most powerful shamans I have ever known and her scalp would go well with that seer skin cloak.

Lord Valk looked around the fire and wondered when the power had shifted from him to these savages. Azhag was right these were not the cowering orcs and goblins of Narraroth and he was not used to the arrogance of these bosses. One on one he had been able to control Grom, but after the wolfriders had joined the raiding party with that strange banner, the old goblin seemed to become more opinionated and harder to control. When Azhag came in he seemed to be controllable, and then they gave him the crown. The scared warboss had grimaced, then planted it on his head and walked away from the fire and not looked back. Then today as they had moved south they had met Morglum, who was riding north to meet them with the news that he and Skarsnik had taken Black Fire Pass. The black orc had greeted Azhag and Grom as equals and had given Valk hardly a glance and now this shaman had shamed his sorceress and all he could do was swallow the insult. "When this is over Shadowblade and I shall torment them all to death" He swore to himself. Then he smiled and agreed with Azhag.

After the excitement had calmed down, the leaders set around the fire and discussed the plans for the coming days. Just as they were preparing to leave the fire and settle down for the night, a man suddenly appeared at the edge of the firelight. Seeing a man materialize in the

middle of the camp, Grom yelled for his wolfriders, who jumped on their wolves and with their battle banner in the fore, charged toward the man.

Seeing what was happening, Azhag yelled, "Keep that damn thing away from him, I want him alive."

Hearing this, the riders pulled up short of the man and glared at him.

"Come and join us, von Carstein for we want to talk to you." said Azhag in a strange voice, as his crown flickered with a sickly purple light.

The vampire limped toward the fire; his hand clasped to his side a slow trickle of black blood welling through his fingers. Moving into the firelight, he surveyed the collection of faces about the fire in wonder. "Dark Elves and Orcs camped together in Averland, there must be a tale behind this." He collapsed onto one of the logs and looking at Azhag continued, "You sir have me at a disadvantage, the voice sounds familiar but I can't place the face." The vampire smiled showing fangs as he set gasping. "And I sure don't want to think about the last time I saw a crown like that."

"And why not Mannfred didn't you have fun when you visited, my little mountain." asked Azhag in a strange cold voice, his eyes glowing with purple light.

"Nagash! How can that be?" The vampire looked at Azhag questionably.

Azhag shook and seemed to come back to himself, as the purple glow faded. "This was his first crown, and some times, he can reach through it and talk to me and it seems to you."

Mannfred looked at the scarred Orc Boss in pity. "Gods how do you stand it, it was horrible enough to meet him, let alone to have him speaking in you mind."

Azhag smiled grimly and said, "It can be bad, but it does have, its rewards."

Mannfred just shook his head and set there holding his hand to his side.

Azhag moved over to him and looked down at the blood welling through his fingers. "What happened to you, I thought vampires healed almost instantly."

The vampire grimaced and spat, "We usually do, but this thing keeps opening up, it must be that damned dwarf rune ax." He pulled away his hand and Azhag could see the wound in his side from which glowed a golden light.

Azhag grabbed one of the Orcs that had crowded around the group at the fire. "Go find the Shaman Rotbreath and tell him to come here with his kit." he said as he gave the orc a push

to get him started in the right direction. The orc started to run to where the wyverns were tethered for the night, some of the other boys trailing after to see the fun. Azhag turned to the vampire, "Rotbreath isn't much for battle magic, but he's the best healer, I know, and I should." He said pointing to his neck. Then he asked, "How did you get that thing."

While they waited for the boys to return with the shaman, Mannfred told them how Gotrek and Felix had driven him from the castle and how they along with Ungrim had pursued him from the north.

The orcs all flinched when they heard Gotrek's and Ungrim's names, for they were such great orc killers that their names were often used to scare the cubs.

Azhag and Lord Valk then explained to Mannfred, how the Orcs and goblins had taken Black Fire Pass and even more were massing there. They also explained how Arkhan the Black was leading an undead army up from the south and how when it arrived the armies would burst into the Empire to destroy it.

Hearing this Harf shook his head and shuttered because he hadn't heard the part about the undead before and the very thought gave him the creeps.

"The only problem", said Azhag, "is someone got careless and the Emperor and his army and a bunch of elves are chasing us and to top it off you have brought the dwarfs into this mess, I sure hope you are worth the bother."

The vampire smiled showing his fangs. "I should be some help, I nearly destroyed the Empire in my day and I'm no slouch as a Necromancer either."

"Good, I think we should be able to work together," said Azhag, looking at the other warbosses and Lord Valk, who nodded in agreement.

The dark elf Lord was seething inside at this usurpation of the leadership of the group, but maintained a calm if haughty demeanor. Morgulm grinned at the lord, showing fangs, one large hand stroking his ax and then he had the gall to wink at him.

Finally, the crowd of boys surrounding the group at the fire parted and orc with a demon head stick fetish and a large bag staggered into the group. Azhag motioned him over to the vampire and stood back as the shaman examined the wound. He reached down and spread the wound open with his hands, ignoring the vampire's flinches. Mumbling to himself he probed into the wound and eyeballed the glowing flesh. Moving away from the vampire he pulled a sharp steel dagger from his bag and passed it through the flame of the fire. "Dat stunnty ax, some dead hard magic. I've gotta carve out all bad meat before ya'd mend. You vampire ain't ya, cause dis kill humie or orc."

"By Nagash, just do it," groaned the vampire through clenched teeth.

Rotbreath continue to heat his dagger and turning to Ratkiller said. "you'd better grab him with dat hand of youes cause none of ya'd strong nough to hold him."

Ratkiller nodded and made a motion as if to grasp the vampire, the large green hand formed again and reached out to grasp Mannfred. Once the vampire was in hand, Rotbreath removed the blade from the fire and proceeded to carve out the glowing flesh, from the screaming vampire, ripping it out in chunks and throwing it into the fire before the flesh could heal behind the knife. At last he was done and he pressed the sides of the wound together and now that the powerful magic eating the vampire's unnatural flesh was removed, the wound quickly healed.

After Rotbreath step back from the vampire, Ratkiller removed the spell and the vampire fell to the ground. He lay gasping on the ground and only managed to gasp out on word, "blood".

Hearing this, Valk motion to one of the witch elves in the crowd, who ran to where they kept the human captives that they, had not yet killed. She brought back a young girl and threw her to the vampire and laughed as he sank his fangs into her neck and drained her dry. After he finished, the vampire stood up looking strong and fit. Taking his sword, he cut off the child's head and threw it and her body into the fire, saying, "We don't want her coming back now do we." Then turning to Azhag, he said, "Now let us discuss how we can help each other with our problems."

The next morning found the army on the move again. Harf rode up front with his boar boys. Beside him rode Morglum on his great boar. There beside the great warboss Harf's chest swelled with pride. The army that proceeded down the road was a mixed group. Grim dark elf warriors, silent deadly scouts, screaming half naked witch elves and the coldone riders marched along with the squabbling forest goblins and goblin spearmen who had joined the group as it came south, between the goblins marched Morglum's black orcs, who quickly kicked any goblin that got to unruly back into line. Grom rode beside the Boar boys in his massive red chariot drawn by three wolves, while his wolfriders scouted out front. Toward the evening the wolfrider big boss rode up to Grom and stated jabbering about a village up ahead. The village didn't have any walls, but there were a number of Knights Panther in the town who had formed up on the main road.

The other leaders rode up and plans were quickly made. The main worry for every one was the charge of the panther knights. Everyone felt that the villagers themselves would not put up much of a fight, so it was decide to send the wolf riders down to see if they could get the knights to charge them in order to draw them out of the cover of the village and to set them up for a charge from the boar riders and the coldones.

The wolfriders rode down to the village stopping when they were just in charge range of the knights. The boar riders and the cold ones moved up behind them and stopped leaving enough space between the units to let the fleeing wolfriders through. Grom positioned himself behind the boars where he could rally boys as they fled through. As this happened, the rest of the army crept around the sides of the village and prepared to rush the buildings. While this was happening Azhag and his riders rose to the sky on their wyverns in order to drive any of the village archers from the top of the buildings.

The goblins rode up and down before the village, ignoring the occasional arrow that came their way, yelling obscenities at the Knights. The knights just sat on their horses and yelled back at the riders telling them to come on.

Finally Morglum shook his head and yelled for the wolf boys to come back. After sending them south to come at the village from the other side, he turned to Ratkiller, "I guess we'll work this out de hard way. D'ya think ya can get Gork to lend hand."

Ratkiller, Savage Orc Shaman Lord



Ratkiller smiled, the green waa power, that had built up as the wolf boys had taunted the Knights, glaring from his eyes and then he laughed as he yelled "Here we go" and the power flowed from him. The boys took up the yell as a great green hand formed and carried them into the startled knights.

"I'll take der boss" Morglum yelled just before they hit.

Hearing this Harf struck out with his ax, its magic driving it faster than the startled knights could respond. Six times he hacked at the knights, twice he missed and a third glanced away from a well turned shield, but three knights fell the ax cutting through their armor like paper.

Seeing this Morglum roared with laughter and attacked the Knight Panther Master. His two axes danced as he rode up under the knight's lance, two of his blows slashing great rents in the knights armor wounding him gravely. The Knight slashed back with his sword and Morglum laughed at the febleness of his blows.

Ratkiller cursed as all of his blows rebounded off the armor of the knight he was fighting. The standard bearer and the horn player had the same luck. The remaining knights struck back to no effect. Seeing three of their fellows go down beneath Harf's ax and their hero swaying wounded in the saddle, while they had not even wounded the boar riders, the knights' nerve broke and they turned to flee. The squealing boars charged after them and cut

them down in the street, except the hero whose horse was cut out from under him, sending him tumbling to the street where he lay trapped by his heavy armor and the weakness from his wounds.

Seeing the knights go down the rest of the army attacked. The dark elf scouts who had crept up to the edge of town used their deadly cross bows to kill any villager, who tried to shoot from the upper story windows, while the witch elves howling with blood lust charged the trough the town killing anything that moved.

Azhag came hurtling out of on high on his wyvern followed by his two friends. They landed on top of the flat-topped town hall that stood like a small fortress in the center of town. The villagers defending it screamed in terror and tried to run.

Harf and the boys sat on their boars in the middle of the square surrounding Ratkiller, their magic tatoos flaring as an occasional arrow bounced off them. Morglum and Ratkiller set on their boars close together, Morglum directing the shaman as he called down the giant foot of Gork on houses where strong resistance was met.

As night fell, the fighting was done and the only humans left alive were the ones the witch elves had captured for the slave train. After the fighting was over the leaders met in the square. There the second part of Azhag's and Mannfred's plan was carried out. Mannfred arrived in the square, mouth and sword dripping blood, seeming to glow with power. First he had the Master of the Knights Panther brought to him. Smiling he stretched forth his hand, and the man screamed as the last of the life was sucked from him. Then his flesh fell away as dust and only a skeleton was left standing in the armor of a Panther knight. Vampire laughed as the wight, for that was what the knight now was, raised its hand in salute. Turning to Azhag, Mannfred said, "We'll bind the zombies to him, that way one of us will not have to wait here with them. The spells will not hold long without my presence but the zombies should last long enough for our purposes."

He then turned and started casting spells on the bodies that the elves and goblins were dragging out of the surrounding buildings into the square.

Harf started to complain when he saw that some of the bodies to be reanimated were Orcs and Goblins, but Morglum laid a quieting hand on him and said, "Dead's Dead, da lads got no more use for der bodies, we do." At this Harf shook his head and kept quiet.

After the vampire tired Azhag raised the few remaining bodies. When the last body was raised, Mannfred spoke to the wight, "Stay here with these, kill anybody who comes down the road, who doesn't have green skin, stay back and don't get your self destroyed."

"Yes Master." groaned the wight, who led his zombies into the houses along the road. Then the army rode out of the village and into the night. Four days and three villages later they

arrived at the monastery before Black Fire Pass. The army was much larger than it was as many orc and goblin tribes joined them during the march.

As they rode into the monastery, a black robed night goblin caring a huge squig prodder and with a giant smelly squig chained to his leg, came out of the chapel to meet them.

As Morglum, Harf, and Ratkiller dismounted their boars, Morglum spoke to them in warning. "Dat's Skarsnik, he's de oldest and craftiest Night Goblin I know and dat squig his pet Gobbla. It bites, keep Skarsnik between Ya and it."

When all of the leaders had gathered before the chapel, they told Skarsnik about the Emperor and his army following them and he told them that an army of dwarfs from Karaz-a-Karak was advancing up the Dwarf Road from the south.

Skarsnik looked at the dark elves and then at the other warlords and expressed the opinion held by all. "I hope that this is worth all this, I left my territories to the south and brought all of my boys north as did Grimfang with his orcs leaving the stunties with free run of the mountains. I hope your bloody god is not just playing with us."

Lord Valk stared back at the Warlords watching him and said as he nimbly avoided being bitten by Gobbla. "Arkhan the black will be here in a week, we only need to hold out until then."

Azhag touched his crown and laughed his grim hissing laugh. "And then humies, skinnys and stunties will be here in three days, so once again Black Fire Pass will be the place were the fate of the races will be decided. Well let's get ready for them."

As Morglum and Harf walked away from the meeting they were joined by Azhag. Morglum just grunted as the scared warlord came up, but Harf looked over at him and said, "Boss it worry me, when ya talk like dat, fate de races an' all."

"I know, but this crown has opened my eyes to many things, I want you two to watch the dark elves, they may try to break away before the stumpies close the pass to the south. I'm afraid we may just be pawns in the dark god's game but the greatest warlords are all gathered together here with their boys, and now is our best chance to destroy our enemies," said Azhag before he moved off to talk to the goblin warlords.

Chapter 4 WIZARDS AND ZOMBIES

The day following the meeting of the Emperor and Ungrim found the combined forces moving down the old Dwarf Road toward Black Fire Pass. About noon they encountered the next zombie infested town. The Dwarfs shuddered remembering the hard fight the day before when they had cleared the last town, but grimly began to spread out and prepared to rush the town. Karl-Franz shook his head no and rode up to Ungrim where he was directing his dwarfs for the attack. "Hold your dwarfs back, just have your crossbowmen provide cover let us see what the wizards can do about this." said Karl.

"Wizards, what can wizards do that good dwarf steel can't do better." growled Ungrim, as Gotrek standing beside him grumbled and ran his thumb along the blade of his ax, leaving a smear of red. Felix who was standing on the other side of Gotrek, looked at the Emperor over the heads of his two friends shrugged and mouthed the word "Dwarfs".

Just then Valmir rode up with his rangers and dismounting they formed up along side the dwarfs. Valmir took his great bow out of is case and came to stand beside the Emperor. "She's going in with him, I hope this Elf is as good as you and Thyrus say he is." said the Elector Count as he sent the first arrow into the town pinning a zombie to a wall.

"You see", said Karl, "here they come now, watch this and keep those bows firing, don't let any one get close to them."

Just then a party of Kislev horse archers rode pass them, accompanied by the Tzarina, Thyrus and Teclis. They were followed by Tyron and the Sliver Helms. Along side then rode von Diesel and the engineer outriders, who rode up to the edge of town and let loose a volley of shot at a group of zombies forming up to charge.

As the wizards approached the village, a simmering shield of ice formed about them and a layer of frost formed as they moved forward. Arrows rebounding from the shield, they advanced on the town. Drawing closer, Teclis raised a might shout, "BE GONE, I BID YOU BE GONE." A wave of power seemed to radiate away from Teclis, moving out from him, it overwhelmed the zombies, who crumbled to dust. At last the power dissipated and the zombies began to rush toward the wizards.

"Keep those bows busy, we have to give him time to recover for the next spell." said the Emperor as he urged Deathclaw to the air and flew to where he was between the on coming zombies and the wizards.

Ungrim cursed under his breath, told Josef to keep his boys busy and started running with his slayers toward the fight trying to keep out of the way of the archers.

In the village, Thyrus sent bolts of raging fire into the zombies, causing many to burst into flame. Seeing the Emperor land before them, he cursed, "Damn, Karl why do you have to be so damned brave?"

"That is part of what makes him the greatest Emperor since Magnus," said Katarina, as shards of ice flung from her hands ripping the zombies to shreds. "How much longer?" she asked of Teclis.

"Not long, but we have to move forward our friends are doing a good job at keeping them off us." said the Elf Mage, as he pulled down glowing bands of power from the sky. As they rode forward toward Karl, they saw his hammer flash as in one great blow he shattered three of the shambling horrors before him. Deathclaw screamed as he ripped a further four zombies apart. The remaining zombies in the band attacking the Emperor crumbled to dust, the magic holding them together destroyed by the destruction of the other zombies.

A wight charged the Emperor, the blade in his hand radiating death. Before it could attack, Teclis recited the spell of banishment. Once again a wave of power rolled out from the Mage and the zombies collapsed to dust in an ever expanding ring. When the power reached him, the wight exploded in a flash of light. With the destruction of the wight the remaining zombies collapsed and stopped moving.

The wizard rode up to Karl-Franz and Deathclaw. After they arrived, Teclis poked the remains of the Wight with his staff. "I believe the spell binding the zombies were tied to this thing. That way the Vampire does not have to stay around himself to keep them animated."

The rest of the day was spent burning the bodies of the poor villagers and cleansing the town. After the Grand Theogonist said a blessing to Sigmar for the departed, the army moved on down the road to camp in an open field in order to escape the stench.

Chapter 5 GRIFFINS AND WYVERNS, A FIGHT IN THE NIGHT

That night Karl-Franz had to speak sharply to Marius Leitdorf the Elector Count of Averland, who raged about the camp at the deaths of his people. Karl told the Count to calm down and get a hold of himself, and such was Marius's respect for his old friend that he managed to control his madness and sit fidgeting by the Emperor as plans for the next days were discussed.

Soon after a yell came up from the edge of camp and one of the sentries came running. The man quickly gasped out what he saw, a Pegasus had been seen flying in from the south and three wyverns and a black Pegasus were pursuing it.

Hearing this Karl-Franz and Eltharion ran to their griffins and Tyron ran to were Elmeran kept his pegagus after a short argument with the Elf Hero, Tyron mounted the pegagus and all three of the heroes rose to met the pursuing monsters.

The lead wyvern was starting his attack dive on the pegagus rider when Eltharion, came into range with his bow, quick as light his hand blurred and the arrows flashed out, striking and wounding both Azhag and his Wyvern.

Ludewick, the pegagus rider, seeing that help was coming turned back to face his pursuers, in doing so he turned under the strike of Azhag's wyvern, which with its wounds could not turn fast enough to catch him. Leaning into his lance, Ludewick rose to meet the next wyvern rider, Blodfly. The momentum of the wyverns dive drove the lance through the Orc Boss's shield, into his body and flung him from the saddle. The only thing that saved the boss from hurtling to earth were the straps tying him to his mount. Screeching its hate at its riders attacker, Blodfly's wyvern continued its dive and nearly tore Ludewick from the saddle. The pegagus slashed at the wyvern with it hooves doing no damage but it managed to break free and hurtled down carrying its unconscious rider to the camp below.

Lilita the Dark Elf sorceress and Tyron the High Elf prince closed quickly, their hate for each other fueling the rage of their meeting. Tyron struck first, but missed, his inexperience on the pegagus telling, she struck back and only his magic armor turned her sword, which screeched as it drained the magic from Tyron's blade. Her black pegagus fared better wounding Tyron's pegagus

Azhag continued his dive crashing into Eltharion, who parried one blow with his rune sword. Another blow struck home wounding the elf. Then the momentum of the fight tore them apart and they wheeled to come at each other again.

Karl-Franz rose to meet the final wyvern rider, Rotbreath, who dived to meet him. Coming up from below, the Emperor could not strike the Shaman and struck out the Wyvern instead, two great smashing blows of his hammer wounding it gravely. Then after finding off Rotbreath's ineffective blows, he was passed the rider. As he flew past, Karl saw something that made him give thanks to Sigmar that he had attacked the serpent and not the rider, because of the black amulet glowing evilly at the Shaman's throat.

His wyvern badly wounded and fearful of facing the Hammer Of Sigmar again Rotbreath fled and Blodfly's wyvern followed after the body of its rider dangling from the saddle straps.

Seeing the shaman flee, Azhag cursed, and then he tried to bring his wyvern around before Eltharion could turn his griffin. Stormwing proved to be faster than the wounded Wyvern and before Azhag could attack the Elf's arrows slashed in bouncing from Azhag's Armor, but wounding his beast to the point it could barely glide and Azhag had to turn away and flee into the night, staring helplessly back over his shoulder as Lilita faced some of the worlds greatest heroes alone.

Lilita turn her black pegagus desperately seeking to gain altitude. As she turned she reached out with her mind and began to draw the winds of magic to herself, as she did she could also feel Azhag doing the same, as he at least tried to give her a little help. The power within her grew and grew and when she finished the turn, she started to release the power at her hated foe, but just as it started to flow from her outstretched hand great flashes of strangely colored lighting flashed from the sky into the up raise hand of Teclis on the ground below. As more and more struck the high elf mage, Lilita felt the power drain from her until it all slipped away.

Azhag, too felt the power slip away and cursed Teclis and his ability to drain magic, and he cursed his inability to help, the brave, if arrogant Dark Elf.

Once again, Lilita and Tyron came together and once again the supple sorceress managed to avoid the great Elf Lords blows. Then she was past him, and Karl-Frans and Deathclaw swooped to meet her. The great hammer flashed in the moon light and struck her in the stomach, driving her into the back rest of the saddle where she slumped seemingly lifeless. Screaming the dark pegagus turned and fled, voiding its bowels as it did so, temporarily blinding Deathclaw and the Emperor with its dung and thus escaping with its rider's shattered body.

Karl-Franz and the Elves broke off the chase, figuring that the Pegagus rider was more important because the man had been one of the messengers sent to the Dwarf High King days before.

They quickly landed, the frightened pegagus carrying its wounded rider following Tyron's winged horse down. After they had landed, the skittish pegagus, would not let anyone approach until Karl- Frans who had given the winged horse to Ludewick arrived.

Karl quickly cut Ludewick from the saddle and lowered him from the horse. Moaning the man, said two words then passed out, "They're Coming." The Empire lowered the man to the ground and tried to stem the flow of blood from the rents in his flesh, where the wyvern clawed him. Thyrus and Katarina soon arrived carrying Teclis, who could barely stand between them; the act of draining magic from such a large area had drained him.

Karl looked at him and the other two magic users. "Can you, help Ludewick? With out help he will die soon."

Teclis shook his head no and said, "I am too drained from that last spell to do anything more tonight". The other two just shook their heads and looked grim.

"Sigmar save us from battle wizards," said a tall gaunt man, dressed in the traditional big hat and brown gray cloak of the wizard adventure, as he advanced on the group around the pegagus, "they could burn him or freeze him, but it was beneath them to learn how to save him. He came up to the Emperor and knelt down beside Ludewick. Behind him came three others, a man dressed like a noble of the Empire, a scared and tattooed Troll Slayer and an Elf Ranger. Kneeling by the hero, the wizard pressed the edges of the wounds together and as he did a red glow formed around his hands and the wound, which closed up as his fingers passed. All the while as he did this he continued his tirade, "Hedge wizard, they call me and turn me away from the doors of their precious collage. I'd like to see them down in the goblin warrens, sword in one hand and staff in the other, trying to keep themselves and their friends alive as the goblins and trolls press around them. Let some one get injured and they yell fast enough."

Finally, the wizard slowly stood up using his staff and made his way over to Teclis. "That was damned hard, all the power had to come from inside, thanks to old pale and trembly here." He said reaching out to touch the pale Elf Mage

The princess started to reach out to stop him, but Thyruus stopped her saying, "Let him go ahead, this is Virfir, I've known this complainer for years." The turning to Virfir with a grin he said, "And you are welcome at the collage any time old man."

Virfir just grunted at this and continued his study of Teclis; at last the wizards felt the power flow from him into the elf, who soon could stand unassisted. The wizard dropped his hand, and stood tiredly leaning on his staff and said as he peered out from under the brim of his hat at Teclis, "I'm sorry but I can't do much more for you, that weakness was born with you and is as much a part of you as the color of your hair and my healing follows the pattern written in your flesh."

"Don't be sorry, I know what you say is true." said Teclis with a slight smile and a nod to his two friends, "but usually I cheat and use magic to hide the fact, but tonight I used that power to drain magic from the sky." The he motioned the other three wizards to follow him back to the Emperor's tent.

Behind them Karl and the Noble helped Ludewick to his feet and as they helped him up, the noble said, "Cousin, we have to talk."

Karl looked at the man and was about to rebuke him for his liberties, and then he laughed because the man was his cousin. He was Leopold the third son of his mother's sister. "We will

after we have heard what this man has to say, come along and bring your friends," said Karl-Frans guiding Ludewick toward his tent.

They reached the tent about the same time as the dwarf leaders, who were hurrying up from the south after setting the sentries. When the Troll Slayer saw Gotrek, he rushed forward to meet him, "Gotrek, you old goblin killer, how are you, that manling still following you around."

"Snorri, you old tunnel runner, you still hanging out with wizards and elves." said Gotrek as he slapped the troll Slayer on the back.

Snorri had some witty retort on the tip of his tongue on which he choked when he saw who was coming up the trail behind the one eyed Slayer. Turning to the approaching figure he bowed and said "Your Majesty."

"Enough, already." said Ungrim, "We don't have time for all of this." as he stomped into the tent. Gotrek laughed and push Snorri into the tent before him.

Felix who was following behind the dwarfs, looked around to see if he could find the rest of the adventure team because if Snorri was there then the others could not be far away. He saw that Virfir was already deep in conversation with the other wizards and Leapold was talking to no less than the Emperor, but the Elf Ranger just stood in the doorway and stared as if he was seeing legends brought to life. Felix walked up to him and greeted him. "Arlawn, how are you doing"

The elf turned to Felix with a haughty stare then smiled broadly when he saw that it was Felix because even an elf is happy to see a man who had stood over him in the dark tunnels fighting off the raging orcs.

Still smiling he look about himself and said, "How should I feel, with the legends of my youth in the tent before us, the high elves may have abandoned us, but these are among the greatest heroes of our race."

Felix laughed and led his friend into the tent and around to a small table off to the side. "They made me the official historian of this little excursion, it seems that some people have been reading my little tales of our adventures."

"I hope you haven't included me in your stories." said the elf.

The young man laughed and said, "You haven't been to Altdorf lately have you."

"No, why?" asked Arlawn, suspiciously.

"Half the young ladies be they human or elf are carrying a small locket with your picture and many of the young boys are charging about with wooden swords and defending the bridge at Krarak Varn."

Arlawn groaned and sat down beside his friend, "Felix, I'll get you for that."

Then they both laughed and turned to watch the goings on in the tent.

Chapter 6 BETRAYAL AND GRATITUDE

Further south, another group of wounded fighters returned to the monastery before the Black Fire Pass. They come limping out of the north and landed. Two of the riders hung limp in their saddles, luckily their mounts had followed the others home. Azhag's wyvern barely made it to the monastery barely gliding over the wall before collapsing in the yard. Azhag sprang from his mount and rushed over to Bloodyfly and with the cringing Rotbreath's help cut him loose and lowered him to the ground. The Orc Boss had a nasty wound in his side that still dripped green blood. But he was strong and as Rotbreath began his chant, the wound began to heal. Seeing that his boss was in good hands Azhag started over to where Lilita hung in her saddle.

The Dark Elf Lords Valk, and Shadowblade reached her first, seeing that she appeared to be dead, they cut her out of the saddle, flung her to the ground and led the Pegasus away, arguing over who would get her mount and things.

Azhag ran up to her and stood over her raging at the elves, telling them that she had fought the Orc slayer Tyron to a standstill and had only been brought low by Skull Splitter wielded by the humie Emperor. The dark elves just laughed and said, "She's worthless to us, she failed, let Khaine have her."

Azhag cursed and spat in their direction, then knelt down, despite the pain of his own wounds, beside the slender form of the elf woman. She lay crumpled on the cobbles, a huge purple bruise covering her stomach. Azhag reached out to close her eyes when she moaned softly. Azhag who had heard the dead make noise before, placed one of his armbands before her mouth and to his surprise a fine mist formed on the gold. Standing stiffly to his feet and cursing the crown which had made him see beyond the simple orc ways of looking at fighting and dying, and would allow him to reanimate the dead but not heal the wounded, he stooped to pick her up. Before he could move her, Ratkiller ran up yelling "No move, back could'f been broken"

Along with Ratkiller came Harf, who looked down at the sorceress and then spat after the other dark elves. His dislike for them growing greater, because even as an orc big boss, he knew that you had to help your boys if you wanted to keep a fighting force. You could break

their heads to keep them in line because no one would follow a weak boss, but you never killed them or abandoned them.

Ratkiller set down beside her on the ground, and shook his skull rattle. "She bitch, but brave, don't deserve this, Skull Splitter did that." he ran a hand over her bruised stomach and turned to Harf. "Get boys, bring drum, need big dance." Then he looked up at Azhag, showing grim fangs and said, pointing at Rotbreath who was still working on Blodfly, "No like him, don't know humie shaman heal magic, need boys. Her back cracked, bleeding inside, will die soon, if not helped. Khaine bad god, don't trust skinnies"

"By Mork and Gork, I wish you two would stop that around me." said Azhag.

"Stop what", asked Ratkiller trying to look innocent.

Azhag looked down at the skaven covered head of the orc shaman and shook his head, because he knew the sharp brain the hid behind that thick skull, then he said, "You and Harf have been playing the dumb orc bit, to the hilt and I know better."

Ratkiller shook his head and using the small amount of power generated by the warlord's irritation healed a small part of the internal bleeding. "Boss, we have to keep it up, the boys don't trust anyone who they think is too smart, and you sure don't want the dark ones knowing that they have to worry about us."

Before Azhag could reply, Harf arrived followed by a group of boys, but he smiled when he saw Harf do a quick count and run off to grab another orc when he came one short of the ten needed to power the waaa. The old story being that no orc could count pass three. Harf started pounding on the drum and soon had a hard slamming dance going.

Ratkiller smiled as the power began to build then he let it flow from him into the girl. Slowly the bruise faded until her stomach, which rose and fell with her breathing, was pale and white with just a slight pink blush. He poured more of the green waaa power into her and she came to and smiled up at the scared warlord and whispered, "Thank you."

At this Ratkiller and Azhag exchanged shocked glances because this was the first time she had said anything nice to anyone or had smiled for any other reason than someone's pain.

The boys were still dancing and the power was still flowing, so Ratkiller reached out and pulled the arrows from the warlord healing the wounds as he removed the points.

Azhag reached down and picked up the slight body of sorceress and said, as he started walking toward the chapel, "You are one of mine now, the dark souled beast discarded you, we will go get your mount and equipment in the morning."

Lilita smiled up at him and laid her head against his broad green chest, and to her surprise she was happy and content to be where she was. For the first time in her life, someone had done something for no other reason than he had taken a liking to her. He hadn't saved her, because he wanted something from her and even now she could feel that his telling her that she was his was not a demand but an offer. She looked forward to tomorrow when they would beard Lord Valk in his tent and get her horse back. Snuggling against his chest, she looked up at the Warlord and said, "And when we go, the boys should be dancing, and Ratkiller and Harf should come along with his ax and ask the vampire along just in case." then she laughed into his chest, and was comforted by the deep rumble of his laugh.

Azhag looked down at her and smiled, "and Morglum will be there to glower at them all."

She laughed again, and it was high and sweet as much from the humor of it all, as from her enjoyment of the coming discomfort of the ones she now considered her enemies.

The sound of her laughter carried over the sound of the drum and down into the camps and it meant different things to all that heard it.

Ratkiller smiled himself as he used the power flowing from the boys to heal Azhag's Wyvern, then signaled to Harf to stop the dance and bled the last of the power off to form a huge foot that hovered over the dark elf encampment before he let it shred into the wind.

The vampire, who stood in the darkness of the desecrated chapel watching Azhag approach, smiled as he heard it. He found himself liking the scared Orc and wondered what the original owner of the crown thought of the changes it had evoked in the warlord.

And in the dark elf camp, Lord Valk and Shadowblade stared at each other over the back of the Pegasus and wondered if they had made yet another mistake. And as the giant foot formed over their heads, they knew that the power had sifted even further away from them and into the hands of the scarred Orc warlord.

Chapter 7 OLD FRIENDS AND PATHS UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

The emperor and his cousin helped Ludewick to a camp chair near the center of the tent, helped him sit down and tried to make him comfortable.

Josef seeing how badly the man had been wounded, offered the man a drink from his stein. Ludewick took the mug and drank the ale and sat up straighter as the drink worked its magic. Gathering his strength he said to the Emperor and the others gathered in the tent. "The Dwarfs are coming, when I left them they had just started up the back side of Black Fire Pass and should reach the Narrows about three days from now."

"What force approaches?" asked Karl-Franz.

Ludewick smiled a grim smile and said, "Since most of the Orcs and goblins have left the southlands and came here, the High King Thorgrim Grudgebearer, thought it was safe to bring most of the forces of Karaz-A-Karak with him and has also called on all of the small holds in the Black and Southern World Edge Mountains to him. The dwarfs of Barak Varr and Karak Azul are trying to hold the undead army at Blood River. Torgrim thinks they can hold it for at least another week, because the Barak Varr gunboats hold the crossings on the lower river and King Kazador can hold the fords in the mountains."

"So we needed to be at the mouth of the pass in at least three days ourselves." Said the Emperor.

"That is what Thorgrim, told me to tell you, he hopes to attack on the third day at dawn and to crush the green scum between us." continued Ludewick.

Hearing this, Ungrim looked grim and said, "As much as I respect you people, I wish I could stand by my kinsmen in the coming fight, but there is not any way across the mountains that is not to well guarded."

Hearing this, Snorri broke off talking to Gotrek and said to Ungrim, "There is a way across the mountains, we just crossed the other day."

"How and were did you cross?" ask Ungrim.

"We went under, along the old Dwarf under way." answered Leopold, for Snorri. " That is part of what I want to talk to you about, Karl."

The Emperor finished making Ludewick comfortable and finally sitting down himself said, "Cousin this has the sound of a long tail, perhaps you would care to tell it to us all."

Leopold nodded his head yes and started to tell the tail. "As you know," he said looking at the Emperor, " my mother did not marry quite as well as yours did." Karl-Franz chuckled as his cousin continued. "Father is a minor noble in the Reikland and the family holdings are small and such as they are they will all go to my oldest brother, the second brother took service with the Reiksgaurd and now commands one of the river forts for you. That left me as the third son with two choices, the priesthood or adventuring and having little liking for ritual, I chose adventuring."

The Emperor laughed and shook his head for there was much more to the story, than his cousin told, but he kept his mouth closed and let Leopold continue.

"When I first started, Virfir and I along with a pit fighter and a Priest of Sigmar had a long series of adventures where we confronted the Dread King, as a result of which we have

mainly did our adventuring against the undead. After the other two adventures retired and we joined up with Snorri and Arlawn we continued to do most of our exploring in the lands of the dead, with occasional expeditions against the Orc and goblins, such as the one to Craymere, where we first met Gotrek and Felix."

Hearing this many in the room laughed because they had read Felix's account of the adventure and now could put names to these adventures. Grinning, many turned their gaze to Arlawn. Who blushed and said to Felix, "I will get you for this."

Felix, laughed and asked, "How is Loryanna?"

Arlawn blushed deeper and turned away from Felix back to where his partner was talking.

"Two months ago we crossed the blood river and started into the bad lands. After journeying for some weeks we came to Morgheim. There had been some rumors of increased undead activity in the ruins of that city and The Dwarf Lords a Bark Varr were offering a reward for information.

We approached the city carefully and it was a good thing we had because to say that the undead activity had increased was an understatement. Skeletons and zombies were repairing the old city walls. We watch the city for three days trying to find out what was going on, it being too well guarded for us to enter. On the third day a great undead army shambled out of the South, led by a lich on a great undead winged chariot, drawn by four horse skeletons. From the descriptions of the old storytellers the Lich was Arkhan the Black. The next day the army started north and we fled before it.

As we moved north we had no trouble staying ahead of the slow moving undead army. But the journey was difficult because all of the goblin and orc tribes in the bad lands were also moving north ahead of the undead army. At last we came to the Blood River and managed to flag down a gunboat out of Bark Varr.

After speaking to the Lords, we started north in order to bring word to the Empire. We creep through the bad lands and at last made our way to Blackfire Pass. As we started into the pass, we found more and more goblins, until near the narrows we came upon a vast camp of orcs and goblins. Luckily Snorri remembered some tails about old tunnels that led under the mountains. We entered the tunnels two days ago, and after a lot of hard fighting and running in the dark, emerged near the head waters of the Reik and followed it down from the mountains and met you here."

After Leapold finished, he and his friends were questioned about the undead army and how long they thought the Dwarfs could hold the river. The Dwarfs were excited about the tunnels through the mountains and after a long discussion it was decide that the four adventures

would lead Ungrim and his Dwarfs back through the mountains, so they could meet up with the main dwarf army.

After this was decided the meeting broke up. As Leopold stood up to leave Karl-Franz beckoned to his cousin to stay and they talked long into the night.

The next morning found the armies ready to march, the elves and humans to Black Fire Pass and the Dwarfs through the mountains to stand beside their kinsmen in the coming battle.

Following the four adventures, the Dwarfs left the old Dwarf road and moved south toward the River Reik. The adventures led them to the river and then up stream into the mountains. At the end of the day they came to a place where a small stream flowing out of a steep sided canyon joined the river. They then followed the stream back into the canyon, at last they came to a point where the creek emerged from a small cave in a cliff face. There, the Dwarfs stopped and made camp planning to enter the tunnels in the morning.

As they set up their camp, eyes watched them from within the cave and messages were sent by runner and drum back through the tunnels to let the Big Bosses that the Dwarfs were going to invade their realm.

The next morning Leopold and Snorri lead the group into the mountain. As they passed from the sunlight to the darkness of the cave Felix shivered and asked Arlawn and Virfir, "Why do we follow crazy dwarfs, into these things."

Arlawn shrugged and Virfir just smiled as they followed the Dwarfs into the depths.

[The journey will be mapped out in a game of Warhammer Quest]

After the dwarfs left the road, the men and elves continued down the old dwarf road. They marched for two days, cleaning out two more villages of Zombies on the way. That night found them before Blackfire Pass

As they made camp, horses were heard to the north and a regiment of White Wolf Knights and one of Knights Panther rode into the camp.

The Grandmaster of the White Wolves rode up to where Karl-Franz was talking with Teclis and handed him a number of dispatches.

The Emperor quickly scanned the reports and paled with what he read.

"What is it", asked Teclis, "has something else happened"

"Its not all bad." said the Emperor, "Lets call everyone together and I'll explain."

After everyone had gathered together, the Emperor spoke to his friends. "I have just received a number of dispatches from the north." He said, "A Black Ark landed in Nordland and a large dark elf raiding party moved south to attack Salzenmund. Graf Boris met them before the city and after a day long battle drove them from the field, but not until after suffering nearly 50 percent losses. Two more black Arks were met by the imperial navy near Marienburg. They were finally sunk but only after the destruction of most of the fleet stationed at Marienburg. The great ships Altadorf and Sigmar were lost with all hands, along with over ten wolfships and all of the hellhammers and wargalleys in the fleet. Over two thousand of our brave sailors gave their lives to stop the black hearted devils."

Hearing this Teclis spoke up. "I know that this sounds like a great disaster, but it was a greater victory than you know. Your fleet destroyed the equivalent of two armies of dark elves and the number of black arks is limited and even more important they can not be replace. You have damaged the evil ones greatly.

The crowd around the Empire looked a little happier with this statement, but the Emperor still looked grim.

"Else where the news is even more grim," said the Emperor, "the lands behind us are filled with small tribes of orcs and goblins and the only thing that keeps them from become a great Waaa is that there is no warlord to pull them all together. We must contain the warlords here because if even one of the them escapes a great mob will form around him."

Karl shook he head and continued. "Word has also come from Bretonnia that an army of undead lead by The Lichemaster has descended from the Grey Mountains and has destroyed Parravon. They then tried to move south but were stopped by the elves out of Loren so now they are making their way north along the edge of the mountains towards Gisoreux and the pass to Marienburge. Also a massive fleet of undead has been raiding along the Bretonnian coast."

The Emperor continued to read the dispatches to the assembled group revealing even further grim news at last he finished and looking out over the downcast faces of his friends and troops said, "I know it all sounds overwhelming and hopeless, but we do have the green scum bottled up in the pass and the dwarfs have cut off their retreat to the south, we are a great army and tomorrow we shall destroy the orc and dark elves and be well on are way to ending this threat to our peoples."

With that the crowd let out a ragged cheer and then dispersed to set up camp.