

# Journal of Karbine Soze

## Holy Priest of Kord



## Chapter 1:

Well, finally made it to the Mountain Pass Inn and a right little hole it is too. The only patrons are a few other deadbeat wanderers and an old incontinent human. He sits there all day gibbering inanely to floating a ball of light, I guess everyone should have a hobby - I think that he has just cast one spell too many. In any case I have not yet been recognised.

I have accepted an invitation to join a small party travelling through the pass. Three humans with some elves slinking behind us, for some reason they remind me of that spicy foreign jerky I tasted once?? Before we left the old man picked up and spouted some babbling nonsense, it seems that wherever you go nowadays you run into this sort of trash. I said a prayer for him in the hope that maybe Kord will treat him kindly when he passes beyond.

I am travelling with a paladin by the name of Lady Catherine Wyatt, apparently no relation to the real Wyatt. She appears to be foreign and has a curious turn of archaic speech; at least this doth piss off the elves.

The other human is a fighter by the name of the Gareth. A typical fighter - more concerned with how big his sword is rather than doing anything useful with it. He seems enamoured with the Lady Catherine; however I am not sure if this is because she is female or just that she stands upright. I must remember that Kord does teach patience - of a sort.

Of the elves, what can be said? One is a faithless, whining arcanist who seems to be addicted to the glory of self preservation. He has a servant that calls itself "Munck"?? Kord only knows what use that is supposed to be.

The third is a female by the name of Regina Falange, an inept thief who nonetheless has since proven useful for setting off traps well ahead of the party.

Toward the end of our first day travelling we came across the carcass of a dead titan frozen in the snow. Luckily with the cold it had not yet begun to stink, nothing that you could smell over the elves anyway. Pieces of paper lying nearby allowed us to discover two things; the Gareth can read, and the titan had an ego problem - "Guardian of the South Gate" my ass,

more likely a tin pot local guard that got tanked and wandered off one night.

In any case, some of my companions seemed to believe that this was a momentous discovery and decided to spend the night in some nearby caves. The next morning found ourselves exploring further into the caves, they seem to lead into an area that has been excavated by some creatures - corridors, passages and rooms, curiously like a dungeon. It looks like a complete waste of time to me, we really should have continued on while the pass was open. At least these caves are unlikely to be extensive (it's very hard work digging), soon we should get to the end and be able continue on our way.

The elves appeared to be slinking after some trail, likely some heathen animal in heat, always jabbering to themselves and wandering off on their own. I shall pray for guidance, maybe they are evil and need to be cleansed?

We found a hidden door; unfortunately it seems to allow passage in one direction only. Behind it however were some rude orcs, they have since learnt the value of Kord's wisdom and are now facing the dubious mercy of their own god.

The passages seem to form some sort of maze, with secret rooms, locked doors and traps. Others attempt to map the twists and turns as they go but I feel that there are better uses for soft paper, I shall allow Kord to lead me. The Gareth in particular has a sophisticated and infallible notation that gets us lost with great regularity.

Swarms of diseased rats abound, the wheezy elf arcanist has shown its mettle by fleeing at the earliest opportunity - at the same time locking several of us in a room to battle the rats. Unfortunately Kord did not bless me for the battle, refusing to aid my sword and later refusing to bestow the divine gift of health to the holy paladin. I shall pray for further guidance.

## Chapter 2:

Kord has spoken! With a blinding flash of divine radiance the elves have gone! - even the wheezy arcanist has been banished, surely to the darkest planes of hell. Suddenly the air seems cleaner, the water sweeter and the rations spicier. In celebration I have cast the blessings of Kord to heal our hurts, the challenges ahead will now assuredly tremble at our approach.

The rooms we explore are a mess, containing little other than ransacked belongings and rat-gnawed skeletons we find little of value. As predicted, the pitiful creatures who stand in our way are easily dealt with. The only factor that hampers our progress is revealed to be the Gareth and his attempt to map the maze of corridors.

An attack by some form of godless bat has left members of the party drained of their very life essence. I shall need to instruct them on the importance of divine devotion to overcome such cowardly heathen attacks.

One room turns out to be some form of beast privy, with crude stained holes in the floor and a stench that only an elf could love. Reluctant investigations however reveal that the elves are not here at all, despite the odour.

Once again the Gareth proves his usefulness to this party by setting off a fire trap. In the light of this discovery we now require rest and the practice of divine healing arts to recover. This we accomplish in a sealed store room, allowing me to tend our wounds and petition Kord at the rising of the sun.

The next mornings explorations begin poorly as the Gareth repeats his act of mental obtuseness and sets off the same fire trap. Kord does teach patience towards this form of idiocy, after a fashion.

A small, talking ball of light has appeared, investigations reveal that it does not appear to be evil. It is obviously some simple pet, loyally looking for its lost master. As it appears to be male I have decided not to call it "Tinkerbell" and instead present it the name of "Mickey". In a fit of obstinacy it insists on being called "Alfus", such a temper tantrum for a little ball of light! Fortunately I recognise that one must be firm but

patient with young pets, in time Mickey will come to recognise his true name.

Mickey tells us that we may find a way out of this maze to the Northeast, he also supplies us with some food and lamp oil, at the same time revealing a cunningly hidden coin-slot. He is starting to remind me of a talking piggy bank. Poor Mickey (now slightly richer) then travels off in his continued hunt for his lost master.

Travelling now to the Northeast, we come across a room populated with evil beasts, one of them being a foul arcanist. The attempt by this beast to trap us in a web fails, instead ensnaring only the faithless the Gareth. In the mighty battle that follows we burn the web from our companion. Once free the Gareth is frightened by a fearsome wolf and flees from the room, however the foul beast is soon put to its end by the Greatsword of Kord. Not to be outdone, the holy Lady Catherine delicately chops her way through the evil arcanist beast, the remaining heathen creatures giving little resistance to our combined divine might.

After the retrieval of the Gareth and dispensing the blessings of Kord, we are ready to travel on. Eventually exhaustion finds us exploring huge rooms, curiously unoccupied.

### Chapter 3:

Kord speaks again! In a blinding flash of divine radiance He has returned 2 of our wayward elves (not the wheezy one) and taken the Gareth. I feel this is somewhat of a mixed blessing; however I am reminded that such chaos is the divine order of the universe. The elves appear to be unmarked and in good health, they carry no memory of their experience.

We travel to find ourselves in a large room with a strange green crescent on the floor, clearly a sign of great evil. The munck elf promptly moves to stand on this symbol and disappears. In a fit of compassion, the Lady Catherine selflessly follows the misguided creature. Soon they both reappear, the elf returning to the evil crescent several times to steal equipment from whatever tainted place it travelled from.

In memory of Gareth the absurdly missing I agree to carry a set of tainted full plate for his use, in the hope that he may return to claim it.

Our further explorations lead us to the lair of a great, multiheaded beast. Obviously a creature of great and malignant evil - I have challenged it to surrender and receive the absolution of Kord. Unfortunately my companions reverted to their baser instincts and fled the presence of the beast. Duty means that I must follow them, they must be reassured that the divine blessings will protect their craven flesh from the greater evil. Leaving the beast with a stern warning that will surely penetrate to the core of its foul heart, I return to my companions.

With a crack and a thud the wheezy elf has returned, chaos at work again. In partial recompense I feel blessed, suddenly more capable to receive and dispense the blessings of Kord.

We find a large red gemstone - an incredible six feet high. Surely this is a gift from Kord, however it resists our touch. Perhaps only the purest may to receive this blessing, I must pray for guidance.

A trap is this time triggered by the paladin, she absolves her error however by fighting and killing another swarm of disease-ridden rats.

We have discovered a secret room that has the elves in a barbaric frenzy; this may be the secret that they have been searching for. It is a

large, pillared room with what appears to be an arcane portal opened at one end. Through this portal enters a great evil beast - with the body of a bear but the head of an owl the abomination must be slain, I pray for strength. It is the holy paladin who finally slays this beast after receiving (several times) the blessing of Kord through my hands.

During the battle we glimpse the evil arcanist who surely must be responsible for this outrage, however like most of its kind it will only fight with its filthy magics. We also learn that the wheezy elf arcanist can cast a spell in its own, pitiful fashion. This it has done so to almost complete ineffect, leaving it gasping and whining for the purity of divine healing. I must have patience with this one, Kord will not accept it in such a weakened state.

## Chapter 4:

With a flash of divine brilliance, Kord has once again performed a holy miracle. The elves (even the wheezy arcanist) have been removed, no doubt to receive the divine tutelage that will mercifully put armour into their weakened, faithless spines. In response to my prayers Kord hath returned the Gareth, thus gladdening and emboldening the party.

Mickey has returned, shedding his sad, soft light over this blessed reunion. Although initially testy, Mickey has agreed to identify some of our rightfully-earned artefacts. Thankfully he then agrees to swap a wand spouting faithless arcanist magics for some potions of divine healing. Such a selfless act can only hasten his deliverance from this dank misery, maybe I can teach him to do some tricks? Fetch would be a good one to start with; I hope he has had all his vaccinations; maybe I could get him a collar with a little bell....

Mickey has raised me from my reflections by asking that we close the nearby portal connecting this room to the depths of darkest evil; such a cute little bugger with his faintly wispy voice, he reminds me of a singing budgie we had once - till it died of advanced beak rot....

Mickey feels that the portal may be closed by application of advanced magics; unfortunately these are beyond our mortal powers and thus he flees in despair, a pity that he must learn the truths and limitations of life at such a young age; I wonder if I can get a breeding pair - I could start a kennel business....

A nasty owl-headed bear has appeared in the portal, interrupting my musings at a critical juncture. Unfortunately Lady Catherine and I are grievously exhausted from our previous lengthy battles in this very room and can do little to prevent its rage. The Gareth, his head clearly full of the mighty blessing of Kord, attempts to do personal battle with this fearsome beast but does not prove worthy. Stopping only to retrieve the near-corpse of the Gareth we perform a tactical retreat to safety.

We rest and I petition Kord for divine healing when I am able. In mighty prayer I am able to channel His blessings and so restore all to full health.

We decide to wander aimlessly in the hope that a solution to Mickey's problem may be found, he seems so preoccupied with that portal - it's not



good for the little fellow to be under that sort of stress, I could make him a toy mouse, he might like that....

We discover a room with a mighty throne, but evil creatures lurk nearby. In a succession of battles we fight darkness-loving creatures that drop on us from above, they are a little like drop-bears only smaller, leathery, and with lots more legs. We smite these cowardly creatures, along with some more disease-ridden rodents.

Rubble-filled rooms hamper our explorations; a stuck door earns the wrath of Kord.....

.....

.....

.....my head hurts, my pack feels lighter, where are we?

.....who are we?

A room is populated with skeletons frozen in grievous torture, their mute agony plain to see. The paladin is so overcome she is frozen in place by the horror of the scene, much later she admits to being deeply shaken by the memory. I pray for their souls.

Two orcs are spotted in the distance, cowardly creatures they are and they flee - forcing us to give chase. We corner them in a room with others of their bestial kind, nine in total. In grunting, faithless voices they beg to surrender to our divine mercy. Only Kord can judge their worth however, and we declare to arrange an audience for them. Once again the divine blessings are channelled through my humble hands and into the greatsword, mighty symbol of His power. The beasts readily fall asunder in the provenance, such is the judgement.

## Chapter 5:

With a pop, flash and a slither the elves have returned, however Lady Catherine has vanished. The Gareth looks broken, like somebody stole his lollypop; such are the lessons in the world of chaos. Try as I might, I do not feel this party is an improvement - but the ways of Kord are not meant to be unravelled by mortal servants such as I.

The elves are babbling excitedly in their heathen tongue, gesticulating like broken puppets as the nature of their predicament sinks slowly into their simple minds. I pray that Kord has exorcised the craven demons from their frail and timorous bodies.

The munck at last begins to show some spine, leaving the group and slinking off - no doubt it has something to steal. The wheezy arcanist appears to be poorly improved, muttering to itself in the corner - something about casting spells and firing an arrow.... lost in its own fantasy world.

Munke returns and waves, I humour its child-like intellect and wave back. But it has actually discovered something; in the next room is the biggest Orc I have ever seen. It seems to be little threat, lost in its own pagan meditation. We cautiously surround it while the Gareth liberates its primary weapon from the ground nearby - a large axe. In honour of the true principles of chaos we leave the beast untouched, mayhap we shall return.

We decide that rest is required, with the help of the wondrous map tirelessly drawn by the Gareth we decide on a nearby room. On our way the munck traces its own rude sketch with primitive implements. Despite our warnings the munck ventures into the room of tortured skeletons, it is severely shaken by the horror of the vision through the door. I pray that maybe next time Kord will implant some sense as well as spine to this poor creature.

Before we rest, the Gareth decides to open a jammed door with his new axe. He nimbly leaps aside from the resulting cascade of masonry (all 425 pounds of him), Regina is not so quick. Now sorely injured we make to rest, however clutching its paper and pencil the munck goes off to explore on its own - when will it ever learn?

During the night the Gareth is woken by a distant rumble, I however hear nothing and am certain that it is not important. The munck returns later in the night, still shaking shattered masonry from its garments.

The morning arrives and, with the blessing of Kord, my hands are able to deliver the healing the party needs. We aimlessly explore further.

One room is full of rotting supplies, the foolhardy munck narrowly avoids the spores that shoot from the mouldy foods. A trap is sprung by the Gareth, to prove that it this not a coincidence the munck then sets it off again - knocking itself unconscious. In a fit of chaotic mercy I overcome my distaste and heal the shattered bodies of human and elf, unfortunately I can do little for the idiocy that rules their minds.

Soon after another trap is sprung, this time releasing a fireball that engulfs the party. Only Regina and the munck are left standing, I feel on the verge of passing out but can still manage a single action - a quick prayer to Kord is enough to revitalize my spirit. We drag the near-corpses out and to safety; the wheezy arcanist was so close to death that it almost had to face the mighty judgement of Kord.

We rest as a matter of some urgency; in the morning I am able to channel the divine energies into their broken bodies. Such is the chaotic power of Kord that the Wheezy arcanist is healed thrice over. The Gareth decides to celebrate by once more attacking the jammed door with his axe.

After healing the party from the fallen masonry (Kord does teach patience, I pray that I will remember in times like this) we enter the room. It contains empty chests - except for one. We discover 5 rods of continual flame that must truly be a divine blessing.

Another room contains a stench that overwhelms even the stink of elf, I feel sick. We are attacked at this inopportune moment by 3 swarms of stinking rodents, but they are killed without further issues. We leave the area.

We find a room with a solemn pedestal, 5 feet high it contains a crystal sphere embedded in its top surface. Balanced on this sphere is an ivory tusk shaped to the form of a weapon. Regina bravely enters the room, searching for the trap that it will obviously contain.

In a blink all light is snuffed out, the only sound is that of the wheezy arcanist slinking to the rear of the party. The lights return and the Gareth enters the room to the sounds of pitched battle. Arrows are fired into the battle as I follow the Gareth, now clearly seen struggling with a drop-bear encasing his head. Although I am able to channel the divine healing into the weakening the Gareth, a foul creature turns and attacks me. Once again the lights are extinguished as I stagger out of the room, only to be groped by the unclean hands of the munck and Regina.

Failing in their sordid fumbling (for I am pure of heart), I manage to bash the evil beast from my helm using the hilt of Kords' mighty greatsword. Such is the versatility of the chosen weapon of a God.

In acknowledgement of its true nature, the greedy munck than attempts to steal the ivory weapon, setting off the inevitable trap that intelligence dictates must be present.

## Chapter 6:

Lady Catherine has not yet returned, the truth of Kord is that chaos must reign and so shall be it - despite the protests of the Gareth.

The morning dawns bright and cheerful, with birds trilling and a soft breeze rustling the leaves - somewhere in the world I am sure..... Here however it is dank, cold, dark and full of stinking elves. Despite this the grace of Kord will know no defeat and I heal myself and the Gareth to full vigour. The munck and the Gareth compare maps, lost in the wondrous intricacies of drawing lines on paper - the rest of the party watches on in rapturous apathy.

With a lurch we finally begin our aimless wanderings for the day. A room is discovered with a mysterious box astride an ornate pedestal. Amid much applause Regina is able to disable the obvious trap and open the box, the contents however would appear to have given her the slip.

Another room emits an evil green glow, so evil that the elves cannot help themselves and are drawn to it immediately. Small furnaces are found in the room, along with a number of flying, blood-sucking freaks. We retire to plan a new offence against these creatures.

As we return to rest, the elves foolishly debate and dispute the existence of little Mickey. In the confusion of their primitive minds they refuse to believe the existence of what they have not yet seen. I hope he is not getting hungry; he is a tiny fellow and needs to keep his strength up.

We rest, waking up to find the blessings of Kord have restored us to full health overnight. The elves begin some excited babbling between themselves; Regina soon loses interest and begins doing her nails - flicking the accumulated scum around the room.

With no plan in sight we return to the room with the green glow to begin a full frontal assault. As the evil blood-sucking freaks attack, the blessing of Kord is once again called upon. During the ensuing battle, Regina begins the age old elven tradition of serving "Elf Surprise" in the middle of combat. These are balls of elven icing surrounding gluten-free emptiness, with a surprise however I found some cake in mine - Regina apologised profusely.

As the battle continued the wheezy arcanist struggled for the breath to cast ineffective trivialities, such is the fate of the faithless. Eventually however his true colours returned and the panicked retreat surprises nobody. Despite taking serious damage and feeling greatly weakened we have managed to prevail against the evil creatures. The elves are immediately drawn to the evil green glow.

As I pray to more clearly discern the evil in the room I realise that it is the rude munck that is being influenced by evil, clearly embodied in an ivory artefact that he has appropriated. When challenged the munck denies that it is evil, preferring to disbelieve a cleric of Kord - clearly he has already been overcome by the dark power of the item. I pray for an opportunity to destroy it, it must be done quickly before its hold over the elf (and perhaps others in the party?) is complete. Already evil thoughts have invaded even my mind and I must resist the temptation to kill the elf in his sleep to get the artefact.

The wheezy arcanist is whining for healing - again, a wave of my hands and some mumbled words convinces it that a curing has been performed. Unfortunately there is nothing Kord can really do for such a faithless wreck of a creature; however it does appear happier as it limps off, trailing that familiar ozone stench.

The elves have wandered off and set off another trap, fireball this time - more work for the divine....  
We decide to rest before the party is completely wiped out.

The mornings prayers enable me to channel divine healing into myself and others, the Gareth however still looks ill. After much investigation it arises that he has a rat bite on his asse (despite wearing full plate) that has festered and is now diseased. Such a wound I can not heal, causing the Gareth to become surly. As we prepare for more aimless wandering the Gareth declares that he will stay behind (no pun), but soon catches up - trailing his dummy behind him.

Several more rooms lead to several more traps; the elves are proving useful to absorb much of the damage. The munck is now able to predict the presence of a trap, in addition to then setting it off!

We have discovered a room full of drop-bears, but suddenly the world becomes dim, distant, something changes, something doesn't happen, must pray to Kord.....

## Chapter 7:

I have had the strangest dream, there I was laying on the beach in Maui when Mickey turns up in a pair of overalls, clutching a rubber hose and pipe wrench.....

Then I had another strange dream.....

*The munck lies unconscious at my feet, I rifle through his possessions to discover an artefact radiating horrific evil. As I remove it to begin the destruction of its foulness, a cry of pure evil is sent toward the next weak minded creature - the wheezy arcanist. This cowardly creature, realising that it can not act directly against me, attempts to use a potion to revive the munck.*

*The munck rises in a frenzied attempt to retrieve his precious artefact, I am forced to drop it and draw the holy greatsword of Kord. One divine blow mercifully returns the munck to unconsciousness; however Regina has now retrieved the artefact. Appalled by the evil radiating from its dark heart she tosses it away in terror - straight to the wheezy arcanist.*

*The wheezy arcanist is now completely in its dark thrall, gibbering inanely it turns and runs. As I turn to follow it becomes clear that even the Gareth is suffering under this immense evil. He attempts to thwart my chase, however he is like a wisp of cloud to the divine juggernaut of purpose that has become I.*

*Even with the great blessings of Kord I can not catch the wheezy arcanist, now powered as it is by the darkest of evil magiks. The wheezy arcanist stops and taunts with false words of comfort, saying that he has sent the artefact to another place. Such obvious falsehood rings hollow in the corridor, I know that he has neither the skill nor the inclination to send the artefact anywhere but his own filthy pockets. I draw my crossbow, knowing that one or two bolts of glory will knock its covetous ass down to unconsciousness. Only then will I be able to complete the destruction of the vile artefact.*

*My first bolt is a desperate warning to any remaining part of the pitiful creature that has not yet been overwhelmed by evil. With no intelligible response I prepare to shoot again, suddenly however there is a great flash of light and the dream ends.....*



Obviously this is a vision from Kord - or maybe one of the elves pissed in my soup last night? No, I see now that my prayers have been answered, I must wait until both elves are unconscious before attempting any destruction of this evil.

Nonetheless I think that I will cast purify on anything that the elves cook from now on.

As the new day dawns, there is a flash of light that leaves the party blinded by its brilliance. The holy paladin has returned, from the sun-bleached hair she has obviously been basking in the divine sunlight of Gods Own Land. I decide not to tell her yet of the evil in the party - such an affront to a divine warrior may lead to unnecessary confrontation when Kord has already shown me the correct path.

We begin our aimless wanderings for the day, but as we approach a suspicious room I feel a strong sense of de ja vu.....

Before I can voice my misgivings, the paladin charges into the room and is assaulted by drop-bears casting their vile darkness. Even as I cast the holy blessing of Kord, light returns to the room to reveal the servants of the devil. Horned jackals have joined the battle, cackling their evil laughter as they approach the munck.

In the melee that follows an item is dropped, only to be snatched up by other horned jackals who then victoriously carry it into the darkness. I can not be sure in the flickering shadows, but it may have been the evil artefact - the desperation of the munck to then retrieve this item seems to confirm this. As the horned jackals vanish into the darkness (never to be seen again) the rest of the party finish off the last of the drop-bears.

I am unsure if the item has truly gone, I will need to watch the elves closely to determine if they are still under the influence of the insidious evil.....

The next room we come to has still more drop-bears, our recent experience against these perverted creatures allows us to finish them with ease.

Another room reveals yet more drop-bears. These are larger and tougher, but still they can not withstand the might of divine vengeance. Our victory is assured and just, but the holy paladin is sorely in need of healing by the end.

Yet more drop-bears are found in the next room. Even larger, they appear to be the product of immense evil - some dark arcanist breeding program no doubt. An intense battle follows, during which the divine healing of Kord is greatly tested before the dark creatures are vanquished.

At the end of this battle it is clear that the holy priest of Kord has once again proven worthy of His devotion - I feel empowered, now with access to even greater feats of divinity.

To celebrate we decide to wander aimlessly, diligently setting off traps as we progress. Another room reveals strange creatures, lizards standing upright as men and talking in intelligible speech - although they are almost as bizarre in form as an elf they do appear much cleaner.

Any hope of useful negotiations is shattered when they attack us without warning. Soon the reason is clear; they are under the influence of another bestial arcanist - spouting its foul and faithless magiks to burn and rend our party. Such crude spells can not however withstand the blinding light of divine magnificence and the creatures are crushed without quarter.

The holy paladin is wounded in the encounter and I must channel the last of the healing energies that this meagre vessel can hold into her shattered form. With that we must rest.

## Chapter 8:

Our day's aimless wanderings begin badly. As usual we spring the obvious trap - leading to a state of apparent hypnosis. Fortunately the strength of Kord, flowing through my veins like flame from an ever-burning torch, enables me to resist the effects with no more than a brief black-out.

Shortly thereafter the munck begins a vigorous discussion with the Gareth, it seems that their precious maps disagree. A quick reality check revealed that the elf had in fact misconstrued left from right (several times) causing us to wander down passages that don't actually exist.

We decide to rest, forming a plan of action for the morrow - dispel the portal of darkest evil that has become the bane of Mickey's young life. As I sleep I dream of the gratuitous praises that will spring from Mickey when I accomplish this great deed, truly this will be a glorious day to remember!

The morning finds us hurrying to the portal room, only to find it guarded by the hideous beasts with the body of a bear and the head of an owl. In the heroic battle that follows a beast is slain, causing the other to turn and run - only to find support in a third. During the brief lull before their fearsome attack is resumed, I quickly utter the holy words that will bring the demonic doorway to an end.

Kord however finds this poor acolyte unworthy of His blessings and again teaches me the lessons of chaos. I fail to channel His holy energies and the portal remains unbroken. Humbled, we must retreat lest we become overcome by the servants of the unholy darkness. Unfortunately the Gareth becomes confused in the corridor, turning in the wrong direction and stumbling into the prostrate body of the quivering wheezy arcanist - hidden in the corner. They must wait five hours in the company of each other before the way is clear for them to return.

Much healing is done as we rest again - broken only by a distant guttural scream in the night, I suspect that poor Mickey may be having nightmares.

Then a perplexing series of events; the Gareth offered a set of magical bracers to bribe the munck for unspecified "favours". Lady Catherine is quick to announce that, according to the customs of her land, the giving of bracers is the equivalent of an engagement. This revelation has

reduced poor Regina to tears - she appears to have harboured a secret liking for the munck and is now inconsolable. Whatever the reason, such a union would clearly be outside the teachings of Kord and I pray for their souls (which must surely burn in the planes of hell).

I redouble my morning devotions, my prayers echoing off the walls of the chamber in a frenzy of holy reverberations. Then we return to the portal, safe in the knowledge that Kord will aid our actions. As we approach the room however, my divinely attuned senses detect the presence of a hidden creature in the corridor outside. A quick check reveals a malignant evil about its shadowy form and I am quick to invoke the blessings of Kord on the party.

Perhaps in the recognition that I am the natural foe of all things evil, the creature (now revealed to be a foul demonic imp) panics and attacks this humble servant of Kord. In divine retribution I summon a mighty celestial eagle; a magnificent creature endowed with a fearsome attack of beak and talon.

In a baffling move, the wheezy arcanist snuffles out a spell of the faithless and summons a web to ensnare the party. This hindrance is then reluctantly removed only when the imp proves to be unaffected. Despite this we manage to end the sickly life of the demon imp before it can do further harm.

Surprisingly the mighty eagle does not return to its plane at the appointed time. Such a gift from Kord can not be ignored and in His honour I name it Henry. Despite my fond wishes, it is clear that Henry is a free spirit and he soon flies off down the corridor - no doubt searching out further evil to smite.

Once again we face the unholy portal, this time however the divine energies of Kord flow freely and its vile evil is quenched beyond restitution.

With this action we are soon blessed with the sweet appearance of young Mickey, casting his soft glow over all who perceive him. Although the elves are agape at his wonder, it is soon revealed that Mickey is again in a testy mood as the stress of the past few days wears against his fragile soul. In addition, the sight of such distorted creatures as these elves must create a sense of wrongness for the innocent sensibilities of Mickey - as it did with me upon my first meeting with them.

Such a shock has left poor Mickey on the defensive and he refuses all knowledge of any reward for the deed of closing the portal. I am forced to chastise him severely, Bad Mickey! - even though it breaks my heart to do so.

Eventually though we must turn to other matters - the munck bargains away excitedly and without thought, leaving cheeky Mickey free to rob him blind (Bad Mickey!).

Mickey denies any knowledge of my new friend Henry - the poor fellow appears to be a little spoilt but he will soon learn to share my affection.

As we question him further, Mickey reveals the existence of a secret "council" that he must consult - whizzing away for a brief time to find answers with them. Although I feel that it is normal for a youngster to have such imaginary friends, I must be careful not to let them take on significant status. I shall play along for now but eventually Mickey must recognise that fantasy characters can not influence his reactions to the reality of our predicament.

As Mickey flits off, leaving the party saddened as if by a sudden loss, we determinedly continue our aimless wanderings. A room reveals a fierce battle between the owl-headed bears and the drop-bears. Such a spectacle makes one wish for stadium seating and popcorn, but it is over way too quickly. The victorious owl-headed bears head in our direction as we prepare for battle. Shortly though it is clear that such exhausted creatures of evil can make no match for the holy blessings of Kord and they are easily dispatched.

## Chapter 8:

The wheezy arcanist is behaving oddly, much like a poorly-made vaudeville puppet with a broken string or three. Much worse is the munck - acting suspiciously like the twisted puppet master. I must watch these two carefully as no-good is surely afoot.

The party once again benefits from the divine healing powers of Kord, channelled through His faithful and humble acolyte. Regina has revived another ancient elven tradition - apparently before they had paper they used to map their progress in knitting. To this end the needles and wool are blurring with feverish speed, but still she struggles to keep up with our leisurely pace.

We enter a corridor that reeks of evil - gore spattered weapon racks line its edges. We are assailed by the shadows of undead warriors, indistinct creatures of malevolent evil. The creatures prove to be resistant to the attacks of our brave warriors; however they are quickly cowed when faced with true divinity. With His glory ringing in my ears I show them the holy symbol of Kord, such craven evil as they cannot hope to withstand this glimpse of celestial majesty, despair wails as they flee.

More aimless wandering eventually leads us to a room with a silver door, but we can not yet determine its use. Further we discover another trap - the resulting fireball means that more healing is required. The paladin appears to be overheated in her full plate and Regina has dropped a stitch - such are the many disasters a party of adventurers must face. Rest and restoration are required before we can go further.

We decide to approach the trap differently, I pray to Kord to protect Regina from the fiery energies of the trap and send her ahead. As we wait in the distance we hear a loud boom, her efforts are not going well. Another boom and then another, finally she returns with the news that the trap is disabled - the protections of Kord have granted her the resistance needed to see the job done.

The rooms beyond reveal some form of art gallery, painted portraits adorn the walls. Closer inspection reveals that these are not great Lords or Gods, but in fact are mere public servants with too much free time on their hands. That they were able sit for this extravagant display of gratuitous self-aggrandisement is a devious insult to the good and hard-

working tax-payers. The wasteful portraits appear to be magical but not evil - it would be such a pity if they were, I would then be forced to burn them to ash in the righteous fires of purification.....

More rooms reveal more of the rort that has been performed, showing us greater evidence of this sickening abuse of public time and monies. We choose to stop and indulge in more elf-surprise (thanks to Regina Boom Boom), unexpectedly this causes the paladins knee to turn numb. Very odd.

Further reveals a room with the armoured corpse of a non-human female on the floor, the stench of death is everywhere. We are attacked by the undead shadows, but again the blinding magnificence that is Kord forces them to retreat to the burning hell from whence they came. Lady Catherine picks up a sword from the dead body - in a sign of divine providence it is a mighty greatsword, favoured weapon of Kord. Even in these darkest dungeons He watches over this acolyte and companions.

Returning to our plan of aimless wandering leads us to a narrow corridor where we are ambushed by hideous wolves. It is soon clear that they are adept in the evil ways of arcane magiks and use these abilities to attack from front and rear. This causes Regina (Boom Boom) to raise an eyebrow and injure herself most sorely.

Due to the confines of the corridor they can directly attack only two party members. Such is the evil of their bestial strength however they do great hurt, and there is much need for the divine powers of this holy acolyte. The pitched battle in limited space frustrates the Gareth and he retreats to the front at the latest opportunity, leaving his dummy behind him. Eventually we are victorious, these will not bother us again.

## Chapter 9:

After my strenuous exertions (divinity is hard work) over the past few days, it is no surprise that I sleep through the alarm this morning. The other members of the party, instead of rousing me from my slumbers, decide to continue their aimless wandering without the benefit of divine blessings. As could readily be predicted they have payed the price for this foolish action, returning battered and rent and telling tales of fearsome wolves and an evil arcanist goblin.

In a curious twist, the wheezy arcanist has run off, no doubt to demonstrate his conjuring magik trickery to a more receptive audience - maybe the rats will appreciate the farting noises and puffs of foul smoke?

I channel the holy energies of healing as best I am able into their tortured forms, but it is only with rest that they will be able to recover fully. This we attempt, but we are woken in the night by a cowardly onslaught of the same foul and evil creatures that the others faced earlier.

In my exhaustion I have not yet had a chance to pray to the mighty Kord, the blessings that I am able to provide in this dire time are painfully few. One by one my comrades are overwhelmed and knocked senseless to the ground; I have not the power to return them to the fight and can only attempt to protect their still forms with this blade of Kord. Despite losses, the creatures continue their attack of teeth and claw and heathen arcanist magiks, eventually only I stand between them and complete victory.

Despite my desperate assault, the frenzied attacks of these foul creatures avoid my righteous blows and pierce thine armoured steel, wounding me most terribly. As I slip into the darkness I feel the comforting presence of Him, calling this acolyte to His side.....

I wake in comfort, a room that is warm, soft and safe. My eyes shed tears to be so near the holy providence of Kord. Then I realise that I am naked, and the Gareth is similarly attired and parading around the room playing a game of "Where's Wally". Chaos can be a difficult tutor in times such as this.....



It seems that we have been rescued, however the munck has fallen. The devastation over this loss of our valiant (and a little rude) comrade bites deep to the heart. I quickly say a prayer for his soul, knowing that Kord will hear and surely invite the elf to visit His mighty halls in all honour. Such is the path of the fallen warrior.

Our rescuers have sent their faithful giant doggy to greet us. It ignores the puny antics of the Gareth and the resulting giggles of Lady Catherine and addresses us with dignity. I am astonished that the doggy can speak, the wonders of Kord fill our lives in many fashions. The doggy calls itself "Sandune" (silly name for a doggy) and stands taller than a man.

My investigations reveal that he also bears a greatsword of power. Despite my bargaining he will not donate it to this holy acolyte of Kord, stupid dog - what does he think he is going to do with a greatsword anyway? Even my offers to scratch his ears have been refused - he will regret that when he realises that the Gareth has given him fleas. Despite these setbacks, Kord has taught me all the patience I require - perhaps a game of "Fetch"?.....

We are taken to the masters of this faithful but obstinate hound, two leonine figures of great power. They are revealed to be Moocow and Kilara the Fearsome (no relation), recruitment agents for the local garrison. They claim that this garrison serves the interest of all Gods of good alignment, however I am already in the divine service of Kord and will serve no other - regardless of their intentions. In any case this garrison pays poorly and has no dental plan, I think what they really need is a marketing guru.

They do however reward us for the service we have unwittingly performed in their interests. To this end we are fully healed and our items are identified. In addition we are give access to their armoury and store room - this involves retrieving the silver door spotted some time back and lugging the heavy, awkward damn thing back to their quarters. Unfortunately our efforts are wasted as their cupboard is almost bare and little can be gained.

It is also revealed that there are three other glowing balls of light (similar to Mickey) in this region. Exciting news indeed! If I can discover their whereabouts I may be able to get a breeding pair going, I am sure Mickey will be very happy to be put out to stud....

We decide to avenge the death of the muncck and slay the foul beasties that have taken our friend from this plane. We are guided by our faithful doggy companion through a huge, forested cavern that leads to an area that these beasts frequent. The doggy proves to be very polite, warning us to watch our step after he lays waste to a large patch of the path just ahead - I think he needs more fibre in his diet.

As we leave the doggy safely tied to a lamppost we press on in familiar territory. A guttural howl ahead warns us of the presence of our prey and I set to work dispensing the divine blessings of Kord to our champion fighters and to the Gareth.

In no time a fierce combat develops, again the foul wolves and a heathen arcanist goblin of most deviant evil. The battle teeters on a fulcrum of blow and counter-blow as both friend and foe fall. We are divinely blessed however and our victory nears, but then the goblin strikes us a sickening blow. The craven beast retreats to the body of our unconscious Regina and, before we can counterattack, proceeds to feast on her still form like it were some form of spiced jerky delicacy. It quickly savages the tenuous thread of her life before turning to face our holy vengeance. Even as we sunder the putrid spirit from this unholy abomination we mourn the loss of our roguish elf, again will I pray in the memory of a fallen companion.

## Chapter 10:

In deepest sorrow we search the lair of the malignant evil - righteously slaughtered in holy revenge. In a small, putrid pile we find the gnawed bones of our slain munck, these I collect along with the body of Regina - final respects will be made for these earthly remains.

As the others rest I maintain vigil, intoning the prayers that will guide the spirits of our elves to peaceful rest. At the breaking of the dawn I invoke the holy fires of purification down upon their consecrated remains, taking them back to the ashes from whence they came. These I collect with reverence, for I vow that I shall release these last mortal fragments to the winds of freedom when we escape this oppressive darkness. Should I be recalled to His hand before this holy deed is completed then I will require whomever discovers my words to perform this last action for our friends.

Our sombre party begins to retrace steps taken long ago; the Gareth mumbles something about a long lost grandfather. I hesitate to tell him that the old codger probably died ages ago, his bones now consigned to rat droppings - such news after our recent sorrow would be but a cruel blow.

A gust of warm, dry air heralds the appearance of an odd couple of creatures. One is a strange elf, a sharply dressed, dark skinned female. The other is tall for an elf, strangely blending with the stone behind him. Our battle-honed, bloodlust-inspired instincts come to the fore and we retreat at once. The good Lady scans for the stench of evil as I channel the holy blessings of Kord in preparation for their inevitable assault.

Incredibly the female begins to speak, asking for guidance to the nearest exit. Warily I respond, advising her to seek the Mickey - for only he has provided us with such knowledge. Such a smart little fellow, pity he is so moody - maybe a change in diet would help??

The good Lady mutters that she can detect no evil in this pair, so I ready my holy might to strike them down before they can perform any underhanded deceit.

But, before I can act in divine pre-emptive vengeance against their insidious subterfuge, we are assaulted from the rear (where did they come from?) by the foul stink of bugbears. Like a well-oiled fighting

machine I swing into instant action, I strike the nearest beastie a devastating blow and then quickly move to stand behind my newest dear friends.

With astonishing speed the tall elf moves closer to the heathen attackers and smites them with monstrous blows. Never before have I witnessed such power wielded in the hands of a mortal being. Blood and gore spray freely as their puny lives are smashed from existence - at the same time not a single blow is landed on the mighty elf.

With the combat decisively concluded we continue our discussions. It is revealed that the tall elf is named Melonkeye the Bungler and is a member of a race of giant stone elves. The dark female is named Mayseed and is of a race of aquatic elves calling themselves the Drown.

Although she is attractive and wears a very nice (but little naughty) tie, I am dismayed to find that she another is a student of the faithless arcanist magiks. Apparently she believes that good looks and a colgate smile can make heathenish powers leap from her fingertips..... - Kord have mercy on this one. Nonetheless she has found at least one admirer, with the Gareth making cooing noises and carefully polishing his sword in her presence.

We decide to travel together, joining in our quest for aimless wanderings. A room of bugbears is discovered and the tall elf goes to work with joyous fervour, surely he must be touched by the hand of Kord. In the inevitable aftermath it is revealed that the tall elf is quite a student of the fine arts, with blood and gore staining the walls in a delicate sfumato pattern truly worthy of critical acclaim.

As we wander further I find myself relegated to a position of serious disadvantage. Bringing up the rear of the party I find myself walking alongside the pretty heathen arcanist and behind the tall elf. My world is obliterated by heaving stone buttocks (that loincloth really needs more cloth, much more) and endless nattering about the virtues of obscure cosmetics. The tall elf also reveals a disturbing humour, pull my what!!.....?? - my prayers to Kord reach a new fervour.

I am not the only one suffering, on several occasions discontented muttering may be heard from the front of the party - shortly thereafter I am forced to retrieve the dummy for the Gareth.

We discover a room containing a large well, however the water therein is foul and tainted with the corpses of rotted beasts. Nearby rests some gemstones, an obvious trap for the covetous and feeble minded. Unfortunately the Gareth is drawn to it like a moth to light and begins to collect the gems. The doors to the room slam shut and water rises quickly from the well, flooding us with its fetid pollution. Again it is the quick action of the tall elf that allows us to escape the trap. With mighty blows he blasts the locked doors of the room out into the corridor, draining the foul water and freeing the party.

We wander further and I watch in concern as the tall elf somehow squeezes into a corridor a mere five feet wide. From the front of the party comes the distant sound of combat, however I am unable reach past to the battle. It is only after the fight has concluded that I can provide healing for the Gareth and the good Lady, both injured by an unknown foe.

In another room we are alerted to enemies by noises penetrating through the wall. A secret door is discovered in the wall and quickly opened. Foul and craven bugbears cower on the other side and I call for them to surrender or die. They choose to die and their remaining life is accordingly brief.

Nearby we find both an abandoned armoury and library, but they contain little of any use. We stumble across a trap comprising a pit of spikes, the Gareth again choosing his role as the crash test dummy and is impaled most severely. We extricate the Gareth and continue on, keeping our trap tester to the fore.

## Chapter 11:

An obstinate door carved in the likeness of a gryffon blocks our righteous progress, the attempt by our holy paladin to open the door leaves her struck low by a deadly blast of sonic energies. As I administer to the grievous wounds sustained by the Lady, the tall elf decides to take matters into his own hands and flings mighty blows at the quivering door. Too late it is realised that the pretty arcanist has wandered close, the resultant blast from this foul trap pulverises her small and delicate frame and casts her as a pile of bloody rags to the floor.

Immediately I leave the noble but smelly paladin and rush to the aid of the pretty arcanist, calling for the crash cart as I clank determinedly to her still form. In a miracle of modern trauma medicine I am humbled to channel the holiest of healing energies to bring her essence back from the very brink of death; others less humble than I might say that she was even beyond that final, abyssal brink....

Even one as talented as I can not bring her to a full recovery, methinks that she will suffer a permanent hearing loss - such is the all too common fate of the young who punish their bodies in this fashion.

We rest for the night; however my sleep is disturbed by the sound of heavy breathing from behind a nearby door. After my devoted prayers in the morning it is decided to reveal our shy, asthmatic guest. The door is opened to reveal a number of savage wolves, the tall elf swings into action and rapidly converts them all into breakfast and rugs. Before continuing I take the time to heal the hurts of the Gareth and retrieve his dummy.

As we continue with our aimless wandering I am forced to explain to the pretty arcanist that I am in fact a holy Priest of Kord, not some leech-wielding shyster quack. She appears to be confused by the subtleties of this argument, but she is a godless heathen after all - I must have patience.

We discover a room that is walled completely in mirrors - causing the Gareth to frantically search for his comb. Before it can be found the door slams shut and we are sealed in with no obvious exit, trapped. While the others are occupied searching for a hidden exit, I am able to engage the holy paladin in a stimulating discussion on the relative merits of the greater deities. Although she attempts to deny it, it is clear to me that Kord could easily flog the ass off Heironeous in a fair fight.

Our efforts to find the exit are fruitless, I call for the assistance of Mickey, but he is unable to find the entrance of our prison. Nonetheless it is a useful lesson for one so young, to learn ones limitations in a non-threatening situation can make one wiser without any real damage. In any case he must keep his strength up for when he meets the ladies....

It is seven hours later before the pretty arcanist finally finds the hidden control to open our prison. I try to explain to her that she would have found it much sooner if only she had faith and renounced those heathen arcanist magiks that she practices, however she appears to have gone a little deaf.

Another room is bitterly cold and contains a massive chain, each link larger than a man. Forewarned by our previous prison, we leave the tall elf in the doorway as we enter the room. Immediately the door attempts to close, but is held open by the strength of giant stony elf-buttocks. We leave before we are again trapped.

Other rooms are found to be full of sharpened stakes or wobbling pavers, obvious traps that we are forced to avoid due to our lack of any ability to disable them. We decide to rest and plan a new day of aimless wandering. A breakfast of wolf meat is provided, but the pretty arcanist is reluctant to dine, something about it having too many glutens.

We attempt the gryffon door again; a cunning plan is developed to defeat its sonic defences. The glory of Kord allows me to envelop the party in divine silence, thus protected we advance on the door. At a safe distance I stop and set up a triage ward with the pretty arcanist, then I am able assist her with the knitting. The rest of the party reaches the door, but it responds with a demonic intelligence - blasting them with a fury of cold. I am able to heal the frostbitten wounds of the Gareth and the paladin, but then we must retreat to plan anew.

Aimless wandering leads us to a large room that has an odd, evil air. Twice I am struck by arrows fired from cowardly concealed positions before we move on.

The Lady Catherine has decided that she must be properly mounted and summons a big donkey with a large horn. The Gareth looks ill. Apparently it is a magical creature queerly known as a eunuch-horn, she names it

Valium. The teachings of Kord declare these creatures to be quite a delicacy, their horns being used to aid persistence in manly endeavours. The tall elf also appears to know these teachings, as he immediately begins to prepare the cooking fire and donkey spice.

Vigorous discussion follows as we decide where to place the (newly mounted) paladin in the party order. We plan to celebrate by visiting the hydra and check if it has surrendered yet, I collect the dummy for the Gareth and move off.

Unfortunately the door to the hydra's room is a little too small for the tall elf and the donkey, so we decide to search for a larger entrance. Another room looks more promising, however it reeks of the stench of evil. As we move into the room we are surrounded by undead spawn, their vaporous forms casting a vile pallor over the party. Almost without pause the blinding radiance of Kord strikes out from His holy symbol, filling the room with divine magnificence and banishing the putrid ill from the region.

Too late however to help the holy paladin, she has been struck a devastating blow and is greatly weakened. I can do little to repair such a debilitating ailment; I will need to petition Kord for His benevolence on the next morning. It is with a sad heart and a voyeuristic twinge that I watch the once mighty Lady Catherine struggle to mount her strange donkey, it is quite an effort but eventually she comes out on top.

We continue into the foul demesne of the hydra, again calling upon it to surrender and face divine justice and punishment. It foolishly chooses to do battle, focusing its heathen energies upon this holy acolyte of Kord in a desperate attempt to punish that which is good and pure.

It is bone-bleachingly cold as the world creaks to a stop on a rusted axis; there is movement still but time has no meaning. The room looks oddly tilted, as if I were lying on the floor. My companions are pale and blurred as I watch them through the fog of sightless eyes. The body of a holy armoured warrior lies below me, clutching the sacred device of Kord; it is I for I am slain.

The heathen creature cries its mortal agonies from a dozen mouths, the spirit hovering briefly over its rent corpse before being summoned to a fiery hell. The paladin prays in holy devotion over my body, her faithful



mount bows down and touches its horn to.....WHERE? Get out of it you deformed rodent! Poke me with that thing one more time and I will turn your mangy ass into dog-food and glue!!!

My complaints go unheard as I drift up beyond vision, the faces of my companions fading into a sea of fog. The mighty hall of Kord beckons.

## Chapter 12:

My fate is sealed, the mighty gates approach - already I can hear the vestal virgins lamenting the loss of this humble acolyte. I am greeted by a lackey and taken through a side entrance to an odd-looking office complex - large, carrot-like obelisks flank its entrance. Truly this is the home of all that is good and chaotic. Here I am ushered to a room to await His glory; strangely it is furnished with long green couches of fake leather and adorned with posters advocating dental hygiene. The carpet crackles and sparks as I move, reminding me of His divine glory.

The lackey disappears through a simple wooden door on which the letters GOD are inscribed; no doubt this leads to His inner sanctum to which I am being announced even now. The lackey returns with a number of parchment forms on which I am asked to record the details of the incident occasioning or leading to premature death and/or terminating injury. Coloured inks are provided to allow me to draw a diagram of the incident, noting the location of each of the aggrieved participants and any influencing events. Unfortunately my depiction of the donkey looks more like a mouse with a long, skinny nose - so I label it with care.

Three hours later, after carefully reading the legal text on the last four pages of the parchment regarding the liabilities and responsibilities of all parties, I sign and date and file it with the lackey. It is returned shortly thereafter to confirm that the drawing is actually of a donkey and not of a deformed mouse, I initial it in affirmation. I am then asked to wait while my application for post-life benefits after deceasement in active service under S56 (4) of the Death Act is processed.

Almost four hours later the Lackey returns to announce that He has gone home for the evening and could I return tomorrow. As I have nowhere to go I carefully floss and then go to sleep on the couch.

It is mid-afternoon of the next day before the lackey returns with the news that my application has been rejected. Apparently there is insufficient evidence of death in an approved form and I am to be deported to my mortal remains while awaiting the result of any appeal. I begin to protest the veracity of my demise, but two rather large iron bailiffs appear and assist me from the premises. In parting the lackey indicates that there will be a filing fee imposed for the failed application; already I feel less skilled than before.

My vision is blurred, then dark. Time lurches, and then squeals back into motion. With a jarring thump I return, my heartbeat staggers into action, breath wheezes into cracked lungs, congealed fluids begin to reluctantly circulate - I feel sick. The stench of putrefaction fills my nostrils, along with something else; they could at least have cleaned my armour out.

A long tongue lathers over my face, maybe it belongs to the paladin or even the pretty arcanist? My heart pounds in anticipation. My eyelids crack and retreat over sandy eyeballs, revealed is a bloody big doggy standing over me - chaos again reigns supreme.

The party rests as I commence my prayers to Kord, channelling His mighty powers to restore my body to its former glory (almost). The big doggy plays fetch with a stick. As soon as I am fit we plan to continue our aimless wandering.

We head North into corridors lined with flesh, the tall elf begins to look hungry. One room appears to be an armoury - we liberate a sword for the tall elf and a healers kit for this faithful servant. We are attacked by some blanket-like beasties, but they are easily defeated.

Another room reveals the presence of a great evil. As the party gathers to plan its destruction I find that I can delay no longer. Righteous fervour takes my hand and I charge the foul monster, followed closely by the brave paladin mounted on her faithful donkey. We face a huge mound of black goo, quivering as the holy warriors approach with their mighty blades of vindication.

In a masterstroke of tactical subterfuge this humble acolyte stays his blow, instead ravaging the unprepared demon with a blast of searing light to cause it to be sorely wounded. The good Lady Catherine however appears to be befuddled and attacks this acolyte of Kord instead of the hulking monstrous evil in plain view.

Bad Lady! Very Bad!

In addition my armour begins to dissolve most alarmingly; cousin will NOT be impressed over this loss. Soon I am left standing only in my silk boxers, the green ones with the little balls of light patterned over them. In shock I feel faint all of a sudden, only to find the paladin laying her hands on my naked body, all over my body - this revives me considerably. Good Lady! Very Good!

As I slowly recover my faculties (and the painful swelling subsides) I notice the Gareth advancing on me with a sword in hand and jealous rage in his eyes. An opportune tap by the tall elf to the helmet of the Gareth slows this approach to a literal crawl. The tall elf then continues and slays the bestial evil, aided no doubt by the almost immeasurable damage meted out to it by this hand of Kord.

In despair at seeing the noble priest of Kord reduced to his underwear, the tall elf provides me with some spare armour - patterned in a style that is apparently very popular in his region. All in black leather, it is liberally sprinkled with chrome studs and comes with such features as holes in the vest to allow chains to be attached to ones nipples, fishnet stockings to match the high boots and natty cap, and hot pants with an inflatable crotch and built in pump.

As I slither into this strange armour, aided by liberal amounts of powder, I cannot help but feel that a holy priest of Kord should be more traditionally garbed in full plate.

I proceed to repair the damage done to the Gareth, but the new healing kit appears to be beyond its use-by date and his condition rapidly worsens. At the same time the pretty arcanist appears to be struck down by a foul infestation, numerous beetles are visible crawling just under her skin. It is clear to me that delicate and extensive surgery will be required to cure her and I proceed to sharpen the bone saw.

The donkey is also injured but I refuse to use the hallowed powers of Kord on a mere dumb beast, I am not a veterinarian - I can however make a mean pepper steak.

We decide to return to an area of safety - the Gareth is healing amazingly quickly after I pull out the bone saw, even the pretty arcanist appears to be perking up. We are greeted at the doorway by the big doggy, joyfully wagging his tail as we come into sight. I make sure to give him a big pat and scratch around the ear, I might have a bone for him later....

As we rest we discover three floating balls of light - shy but alluring creatures that entrance us with their ethereal beauty. I record their location so that I may return later and enlist them for my Mickey breeding program; he is going to be so excited when I tell him.

## Chapter 13:

The Gareth appears to be feeling poorly, he is very tired and is just not himself. Nonetheless he insists on leading the party, often venturing far ahead to spring traps of mortal danger, thus sparing us the injury and hurt. We are able to follow his scouting tracks by the cleverly deposited trail of dummies, where does he get them all? Brave the Gareth!

We discover a secret door but can not budge it; one wonders the use of a secret door that can not be opened? Why not just have a wall instead?

Noise from the front of the party indicates a battle ahead, however I can not pass the donkey and tall elf to enter the fray. Instead I chat to the pretty arcanist as she carefully knits the corridor into her map. The sound of the Gareth gargling eventually forces everyone to hasten into the room of heathen beasties. The room is full of tiny creatures intent on choking the Gareth, but he appears to have already swallowed his dummy and is turning blue - I fetch the bone saw. We slaughter the evil babies with ease, and with a resounding POP-Tink the Gareth brings up his dummy.

Another room reveals a statue of an evil-looking beast, the tall elf is obviously repulsed by its astonishing evility and attempts to deface it before I can warn him. A fiery blackness engulfs us, leaving only when we are sorely hurt. As I dispense the blessed healings of Kord I notice that the Gareth has grown fangs. He shrugs out of his armour to stand naked - this is NOT the time or place for another game of Where's Wally! The pretty elf shrieks in shock. But no, fur sprouts over his body, an extra four limbs sprout from his cephalothorax and he proceeds to scuttle under the nearby fridge. I maintain that I am not a veterinarian and refuse to waste the holy healing energies of Kord on such a base creature.

Suddenly the room fills with fearsome creatures, all fangs and tentacles with glowing green skin, gore drips from taloned fingers. A crackling voice screeches at me to run for help as my companions are enthralled by the vile creatures. Indeed they have taken no notice, instead watching the Gareth scuttle behind a painting while the tall elf rolls up a newspaper. I flee but do not move, a voice gibbers that can not be mine, trapped, drowning, the world turns black.

ARhhhhhhhh.....

A room, held prisoner, must dig to safety. Green loathsome creatures, dastardly evil, the voice reassures, tells me ..... things..... secrets. The penguins. An open door, freedom, run to Mickey, Run Karbine Run! Running, the world moves no closer, perform diagnostic check:

Left leg - moving - check.

Right Leg - moving - check.

Result = running.

The world moves no closer, the door closes, purple, the voices screech, gibbering screams - who is that? The green beasts cackle their evil laughter, surely they have informed their demonic masters of this great capture. Darkness.

The door opens, a big doggy stands there. We go play a game of fetch. My companions arrive, the Gareth looks oddly normal, the paladin mounts her faithful donkey, I pull the thigh-length boots over my fishnets and struggle to attach the nipple chains, we continue wandering aimlessly.

We discover a skeletal form, gleaming in liquid gold and platinum. This is obviously the sacred remains of a celestial being. I pray before the still form, and then collect some of the remaining blood such that it may still be used to defeat the monstrous evils of this dungeon.

Another room is layered in slippery purple slime, within are tentacled snakes of obvious evil. Without pause the power of Kord builds mighty in my body, a searing light strikes a foul serpent and slays it dead. The room is cleared of the devil spawn and I attend to the wounded paladin.

The next room contains more of the evil creatures, twisted by dark powers beyond imagine they have mutated to sickening reptilian freaks. One of the monsters adheres to the paladin, I ready the bone saw but it is scrapped off by the tall elf.

A putrid green monster appears behind me - returning recent memories of the horror, the only hope is to run and warn the others at the front of the party. Already the pretty arcanist has fallen under its thrall and ignores it.

The front of the party is confronted by more deformed serpents, huge diabolical creatures. We must escape. I call on the serpents to surrender but they foolishly take no heed. As I hack mighty blows at the nearest

serpent I can feel the looming presence of the green evil behind me. In desperation my strength knows no bounds and the blows I land sunder the mighty greatsword of Kord, splintering it to scrap. I realise now that my last duty must be to my beleaguered companions. Nimble avoiding the sickening green evil behind me I pour the healing energies of Kord into the ailing the Gareth.

In a masterful stroke the paladin rides her faithful donkey down and slays the fearsome green evil. Although she is struck an injurious blow she manages to stay on top her mount and receive the blessings of Kord at my side. At the same time the tall elf is able to dispatch the last of the deformed snakes.

## Chapter 14:

As we recollect our wits from the frenetic combat, the good Lady kindly donates a greatsword to replace the holy item I shattered in His service. In a surprising move, the Gareth declares that he is much less tired than before. He also declares dissatisfaction with the state of our rudimentary map of the local area.

It appears that quality standards have slipped yet again and the Gareth refuses to be goaded into mapping any further, even choosing to forsake his rare and expensive mapping tablet.

Like an ant to a pole-vault, the pretty arcanist steps up and declares that her knitted map is almost ready for use! Unfortunately it seems to be lacking in some detail beyond the first room of this dungeon - also it appears to be riddled with spelling errors. We return it to her with kind words of encouragement.

In desperation we return to the special graph parchment (or "graph" if you hail from that part of the kingdom). The good Lady Paladin charitably offers to do the mapping honours; how she manages to keep the lines straight with the constant jolting from being mounted I do not know.

Our aimless wanderings lead us to more of the hideous serpents, crikey but they are ugly! With the divine blessings of Kord our fight begins - and ends almost as quickly. The tall elf did not even get warmed up.

We continue our aimless wanderings, but soon trouble brews - a-circling we appear to be! In desperation the tall elf assaults the Gareth, mangling pack and wearer alike in desperate search for a decent map. With a roar the Gareth begins to spit dummies on fully-automatix, soft rubber projectiles ricocheting and whining dangerously close to both combatants and onlookers. Equipment spills over the floor, including entire clips of dummies readied for instant action. The end comes with the Gareth being helplessly pinned under the massive stone buttocks of the tall elf.

In the vigorous discussion that follows the Gareth agrees to continue with his mapping escapades, in return he is allowed to stand once again. In celebration the pretty arcanist begins to sing, forcing us to leave the area in a bit of a rush.



In another room we discover a letter, but only the pretty arcanist can read it. Full of heathen strangeness the translation is, I urge her to discard it before we all doomed - but she is heedless of my just concerns.

Soon after we discover the mortal remains of a saintly being, only its bones remain. To my eyes they glow gently with the holy radiance of goodness, surely this is the final resting place of a great celestial warrior. In creaking awe the tall elf touches the bones with a his great stone hand, lifting them reverently to his mouth and ....., and .....  
Eating them!

No, No - Bad Elf! Very Bad Elf! But it is too late, he crunches them happily to splinters before swallowing and belching. I resign myself to days of sieving buckets of stony elf-poop in order to retrieve them. Kord teaches patience in the world of chaos, but this is going a little too far I think.

We return to the comforting light of our safe haven, the big doggy (that faithful hound!) awaits us with wagging tail and slobbery grin. I reward him with a scratch around the ear and offer a game of fetch, but he is more interested in the tall elf who appears to have secreted some excess bones in his loincloth.

While resting I find that the mighty greatsword of Kord is repaired, I fervently send my prayer of thanks to Him. The pretty arcanist has become hungry beyond all forbearance and begins to munch ravenously on our wolf rations. Despite the terrifying abundance of gluttons in such fare she appears unharmed. I comfort her with the knowledge that even now the donkey is being fattened up in the nearby forest. I am undecided however - grilled or roasted? I shall pray for guidance.

The next morning finds us continuing on the path of aimless wanderings. A couple of rooms reveal cunning traps and deep pits, death to the unwary. Soon after we stumble upon a complex of rooms that faces us with closed doors. In a surprise move the party throws caution to the wind (Bad Elf!) and flings open two of the doors simultaneously. One door reveals shelves of trophies, stuffed heads of beasts line the walls along with the odd runner-up prize for the over-100s cricket comp (C-Grade). The other room houses some form of Library, complete with librarian.

A bizarre construct greets us, all metal and gears it takes the form of a horse but has the head and torso of a man. I ready myself for action as the good Lady Catherine sizes it up - obviously thinking about acquiring another mount. Her hopes fade as it opens its mouth and spews forth doublespeak gibberish. With difficulty we discern that it is some form of heathen lawyer and if we wish information we can expect to be billed in six minute increments.

Apparently it is part of a race that call themselves "The Incredibles" - they wear their underwear on the outside of their jumpsuits and run around saving the world. Unfortunately the Incredibles appear to be having some form of contract dispute with the Centennials (they being the members of the over-100s cricket team (C-grade)) that has resulted in a break-down of communications with the afore-said party.

We leave the mechanical lawyer muttering to itself over match-fixing fees and move further into the complex. We find an Incredibles crypt (smelling of rusted metal) and a shrine (a poster for magical synthetic oil) before meeting another Incredibles, this time a grocer named Wetsock.

In a stroke of luck, Wetsock just happens to have in stock a complete suit of full plate armour in my size. After tense negotiations (he does not appear to believe in donating to Kord, I shall pray for his ... um ... cogs) it is mine. Ahh the joy of cold, hard steel - I strip off the chafing nipple clamps and the restrictive fishnets of my studded armour and crawl into my new carapace. It is only then that I notice that the good Lady has made a purchase from the adult section of the store, with a glazed look in her eye she informs me that it is an item known as an "erotic saddle" that will assist her to be better mounted. Covered with odd bumps and protrusions and making a low buzzing noise, she refuses to have it wrapped and instead insists on riding it out of the store.

We move on, but suddenly a hidden pit opens beneath us, swallowing the Gareth and the well-mounted Lady Catherine. Luckily the tender, juicy flesh of the donkey is spared from bruising by landing on top of the good Lady. The tall elf throws down a rope and then, with some gentle coaxing, hauls up our lost party members. The trapped pit resets itself, but a quick backtrack to Wetsock the grocer reveals the mechanism to hold it closed.

## Chapter 15:

Behind another door we find an Incredible power-shopper, apparently looking for good deals on magic doors. We are reminded of the mysterious door back near the big doggy's house, this may be what the poor heathen mechanist is looking for.

Another door leads to Similar, Keeper of the List - we wish him a happy birthday and move on.

We wander aimlessly North through corridors infested with infidels. Finally we enter a cloakroom - filled with evil cloaks that are as evil as only a cloak can be! Our proud and victorious victory in this room is marred only by the tall elf slipping and knocking the pretty arcanist unconscious. Luckily this humble servant of Kord is ever-present to channel the holy healing powers into her slim but supple form. We rest after the battle, the next morning I feel re-energised to a level not yet experienced, praise Kord!

The aimless wanderings in morning lead us to a restaurant, however the service is pitifully poor. After many shouts of 'Garcon!' we give up and I take a silver knife in way of holy restitution for time wasted - I make a note to never recommend this particular establishment to my little friend Mickey (he can be very fussy about his food). We come across a clothing store, but nothing takes our fancy so we move on (in any case I find that I am still very sensitive from those clamps).

A slippery slope forces us into another trap, followed shortly thereafter by an unfortunate encounter with an ice wall - leaving me unconscious. The good Lady lends the use of her mangy horned donkey to magikally return me to awareness, this is quickly done but I feel very sore afterwards.

In another room we find many floating balls of light. These are very rude and unresponsive, I must warn little Mickey not to associate with their kind. We also find a room of silver ingots, then one full of spell reagents for those poor individuals with so little faith that they must resort to the heathen arcane magiks.

We decide to rest again, the pretty arcanist taking the time to rub out her map and begin knitting a new one.

On the next morning we find a magik scroll - obviously it does not contain the pious teaching of a worthy god, so I donate it to the heathen arcanist. Further investigations reveal that the scroll is trapped; unfortunately the pretty arcanist is now a pretty toad and can do little to reverse it effects. Despite my knowledge that good soup can be made from such as these, the tall elf decides to keep her as a familiar. Stuffing the pretty toad into his loincloth, we continue.

Another room has a talking statue, but is obviously of evil and we leave it to soak in its own despair. Further wanderings become confusing, and with a sigh of relief we make our way back to the big doggy for a game of fetch and a long rest.

## Chapter 16:

It is with some surprise that we wake the next morning to find the Gareth clutching a mysterious note. Apparently deposited overnight, it has left the Gareth in fits of puppy-wriggling happiness at the thought that anyone appreciates him enough to write to him. After a quick party consultation however we decide that such an event is too unlikely to be credible, obviously false we ignore its libellous contents and continue in our plan of aimless wanderings. The pretty arcanist has returned from her toady dealings and is now much more attractive as a Drown.

We enter a room thick with the stench of evil. With ruthless ferocity huge tentacles snake out of the darkness and bind the still-wriggling the Gareth. It is with some pity that I channel Kords blessing to the party, for I know that no evil can be a match for such as we with His blessings. After some minor difficulties with his coordination the tall elf finally frees the Gareth, grievously wounding the tentacled evilness in the process.

Without warning a diabolical madness comes over the tall elf, before we can stop him a blow turns the pretty arcanist into a fine but very pretty red mist. As I instinctively launch to her aid I glimpse another massive swing approaching me from the side. Luckily it misses, however its tremendous wake leaves me lying on the ground.....looking at a headless armoured body some distance from me. I seem to be having some difficulty in getting up again, maybe missing a leg or to I think, that armour sure does look familiar...

Oh Crap! The now familiar rushing wheeze sinks to the pit of my stomach as my spirit is forcibly regurgitated to the very gates of His domain. The sweet song of the vestal virgins swells in my ears as I am whisked past His mighty gates to the small side entrance next to the sewerage outflow. As I crawl in holy humbleness through this meagre entrance, I am met by a woman dressed in leather and fishnets, the words "Skanky Ho!" emblazoned large across her ample....erm...chest. In a piercingly shrill voice she introduces herself as His secretary and demands that all supplicants should follow her - I faithfully crawl onwards, following the pert swaying ..... ummm ..... well you know.....

A familiar building, large carrots outside and what appears to be an extension going on the back - His domain. A familiar waiting room, peeling

green paint, fake leather couches, posters advocating dental hygiene, out-of-date magazines with the best bits torn out of them (and the crosswords already done), a carpet that crackles and sparks viscously as I crawl across it (still with the stain in the corner from when I was last here), a single door with the letters G.O.D inscribed on it - with tremulous knees I await his divine glory.

As the honky-tonk muzak patters at my ears I am once again brought the parchment forms and coloured inks in which to describe the details of the incident occasioning or leading to premature death and/or terminating injury. With great concentration I describe the incident, drawing the figures to scale and carefully labelling them - particularly the stone elf (Bad Elf!) and the pretty red mist. With a flourish I sign and date the document and hand it to the secretary, she disappears through The Door with it.

Several hours later she returns; with smeared lipstick and clothing askew she informs me the He will see me now. I crawl on my belly through the door, nose firmly ploughing a trench across the carpet - to be stopped at the foot of an imposing desk, laminate peeling from the legs. A booming voice of divine whining tells me to stop grovelling and stand up. At this holy command I spring to my feet, sneezing from carpet lint and shielding my eyes from the glorious radiance.

Although I immediately bow my unworthy head before His divine magnificence, I am still unable to miss a glimpse of His divine corporal form.

A mighty God-like figure sits behind the desk - slight of build and dark of skin He is attired in a leopard-spotted vest (open across His hairless chest), purple suede leggings, and a thick gold chain around His neck from which hangs His symbol. From his fingers dangles an aromatic cigarette - discarded ash burning holes in the carpet and food scraps around him, he seems to be very mellow today. His bare feet show a mighty set of toenails painted a delicate shade of lilac, and a gold tooth winks at me from behind his thin but divine lips.

Oh the Glory of it all !!!

His words to me are now so sacred a memory that it would be blasphemy to repeat them to any other than the holiest of His holy disciples - I can think of no one other than myself that fulfil these mighty requirements. Suffice to say that my application for post-life benefits after

deceasement in active service under S56 (4) of the Death Act is again denied. I am to be returned to this humble body forthwith, my task to spread his Divine word and to destroy the evil that lingers. My heart hammers pitifully at the sound of His booming, whining voice, Glory!

I beg him to not allow my humble body to fail him again; perhaps He should discard this worthless being who has doubly failed Him and take the pure Mickey as His humble servant, for surely Mickey would serve Him better than I. He considers this grovelling submission carefully, flips a coin and eventually decides against it. Again I am in awe of the holy purity of the chaotic mind at work, oh to be worthy of its magnificence !!

Falling to my face, I inch backwards from his presence - stopping only as dead weevils (and one live spider) clog my nostrils. His secretary (now I see she has her name tag - Dolores) leads me away, His booming snorts fade slowly in my hearing - oh the wonder of it all makes me aquiver !! No time for a bath or a peak at the vestal virgins, for I now have His work to do! As I crawl through the gate my last glimpse is of Dolores extracting an official looking form and beginning to add details in a shaking hand - something about an application for stress leave.

With a screeching thump I feel body and spirit collide once again, stitches strain at my neck as breath wheezes into decaying lungs - my eyes scrape on tracks of deathly gravel and the world returns. I feel sick.

A strange sight greets my fogged corneas, the tall elf has handed in his resignation in order to take up a new position as guardian. With him he takes the (amazingly) whole pretty arcanist, funny I didn't know they even had an interview. With a puff of noxious vapour and a final grind of stone they are off, weakly I wave Bye Bye but I can not tell if they notice.

Nearby I find that Kord has left me a rebirth (again) present - a fancy new sword. I fall to my knees in grovelling prayer to His generosity.

We have returned to the safety of the big doggy's kennel, in a rush of playful energy I attempt to teach him how to fetch a stick but he appears more interested in talking to us, how cute.

The big doggy warns us to return to the tentacled creature and unmake it, but he is cagey on the details of how this is to be done. I feel that he holding back and I threaten him with a summer-course at puppy school, but he will give us no more. Bad Doggy!

We make our way to the lair of the creature, it still lies dead but I am forced to admit that it does appear less dead than before. We chop it up some more - just in case.

In a flare of inspiration we return to the Incredibles to ask if they have further knowledge on this matter. They inform us that we will need the assembly instructions from the makers in order to permanently unmake this foul evil, but they can not tell us where these may be found.

We rest, I must pray to Him for holy guidance in this matter. In the morning we return to chop the foul monstrosity further, overnight it has become less dead with alarming rapidity. Then I prepare, purifying my soul in the ritual needed to enter His presence. This humble servant prays fervently and suddenly that voice, that booming, whining voice of divine glory fills my ears and asks me WTF I want now! In the background I can hear a noise that sounds like Dolores giggling, but I might be mistaken.

In tremulous and respectful words I ask, and he replies! His response is short and to the point - telling me that a "Ritual of Unmaking" spell will be required, and next time to stop interrupting. As the line goes dead I thank His chaotic wisdom and ponder His advice.

We wander from room to room, I hardly notice the strange happenings in each as I think on His words. Without warning the world turns shallow and I am faced with the overwhelming desire to scuttle sideways under the fridge. As the party continues I cling to the top of the tunnel and scuttle after them, trapping and webbing a tasty insect on the way - I must remember to return later and suck out its luvly juices.....

His words echo across my mind until suddenly I cannot grip the ceiling any more, I fall to the ground - stunned. A gibbering noise, dribbling armour, green bestial evil, Attack! Voices, secrets, dark things..... evil laughter, Run!, Run Karbine Run! Green evil, scaly.....

With a pop the world returns to normality, I must rest for I have further questions for Him. The next morning I pray, a little less fervently than before so that He may not be so abruptly called. The voice that answers makes me breathless with holy awe, I assure Him that yes I do know what time it is. After I beg my question of him there is near silence, broken only by what seems to be Dolores moaning in the background - she must



be ill the poor thing. With a hurried but familiar whining boom He gives me the task "answer the questions from the voices of the dark" and the line goes dead.

As the divine glory of His words sear my conscious memory, the rest of the day falls in a blur of forgotten visions - Chaos reigns. I am forced to rest, for further I must ask.

A tentative prayer the next morning results in a whining roar of booming majesty, apparently Dolores is exhausted and was forced to take the day off - he is not happy. Yes, I do know that He is NOT the effing help desk, nor is he the cylopedia effing brutannica (whatever that is), but still I must ask. The silence is deathly, but eventually He intones "South East of where you sleep a statue speaks".

My voluminous and heartfelt thanks are cut off suddenly as the line goes dead, even so I cannot help but grovel for several more minutes - bathed in the glory of His words.

We travel in the directed direction, only to find a statue that speaks a strange and foreign tongue. Even implicit threats can not convince it to stop its heathen murmurings and speak such that the holy good such as we can comprehend. We return to the big doggy to rest and pray, a new plan will be required.