



# THE HALL OF FIRE

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# THE HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

## IN THIS ISSUE

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GREETINGS	PAGE 2
AN EVENING WITH	PAGE 3-5
IT'S ALL OPTIONAL	PAGE 6-7
ADVENTURING IN	PAGE 8-10
A PC'S SO-CALLED LIFE	PAGE 11-12
FAN FLAVOUR	PAGE 13
ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES	PAGE 14-23
FEATURED CREATURES	PAGE 24-27
CALLING ALL GAMERS	PAGE 28
WHAT'S OUT THERE	PAGE 29

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# GREETINGS

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WELCOME TO THE FOURTH INSTALLMENT OF THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE, THE INTERNET'S PREMIER FAN PUBLICATION DEVOTED TO DECIPHER'S THE LORD OF THE RINGS RPG!

My name is Scott, better known as "Scottomir" on the game boards. I have been drawn into this particular game more deeply than perhaps any other game. The *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* is something special--a mechanically flexible, dramatically narrative, readily customizable game beautifully grounded in literary source material. How many other games have warranted such praise? Few and far between. There are other games out there with solid mechanics or intriguing settings, but none combines quite so many winning elements quite so well as *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*. For that reason, it is a special game that deserves to remain in the consciousness of the gaming community. I think that is why Matt came up with the idea for the webzine and why Doug and Jason have invested so much time in designing these gorgeous layouts worthy of commercial publications. It is certainly why I am proud to be a contributing writer.

The past month has been a difficult time for fans of the game. After months of baffling, unexplained delays in releasing new products, we learned that the Decipher company headquarters closed the California office and laid off line-developer Jeff Tidball and most his team. Weeks have gone by without any further public releases to explain how this will affect the future of the product line. Although it is important to stress that Decipher has not formally cancelled *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* product line, and apparently holds the license through 2005, we must face the possibility (probability?) that this shake-up represents a shift in Decipher marketing away from RPGs to its other interests. LOTR-mania was at its height at the end of 2003; that would have been the ideal time to release the long-promised supplements and so it is possible that some of them may now never see the light of day.

If this sad possibility proves to be true, the fan efforts like *The Hall of Fire* are our community's best way to keep the game alive. We are fortunate to count among our number some extremely knowledgeable Tolkien experts, and they can provide us with a framework of knowledge to produce our own supplemental material -- feature NPCs, new opponents, plot hooks and chronicle ideas, and optional rules to better evoke Tolkien's world. *The Hall of Fire* exists as a platform to host and disseminate all of this potential fan material. So, as the guest editor this month, I invite **YOU** to get involved in the enterprise. Check out the end of this issue for information on how you can submit material for *The Hall of Fire* future issues. The only limits are Tolkien's world and your imagination.

Scott  
aka Scottomir  
Editor

# AN EVENING WITH

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## ...JEFF TIDBALL

**Note:** This interview took place over email correspondence from February 23 - 25, 2004.

### ON... THE LORD OF THE RINGS RPG

#### **Matt: How did you initially get your job writing for Decipher's RPG's?**

**Jeff:** When John Nephew (President of Atlas Games, my former boss) was in Southern California for Peter Adkison's wedding, he had dinner with Christian Moore and Owen Seyler and mentioned that I was looking to escape the job I had with Gold Circle Films. They were looking for a new line developer, knew of my work, and things progressed from there. Just like with every other job search, it frequently boils down to who you know.

#### **Matt: Which projects did you personally work on and/or head development of?**

**Jeff:** I did something or other on pretty much every project other than the core rulebook.

The first project that I oversaw starting with the initial outline was Helm's Deep, which made the timing of my layoff so very disappointing. I think that Helm's Deep and the order books (Paths of the Wise, Fields of Battle, Play of Word and Shadow) really take the game to another level, and I hope that Decipher releases them eventually.

I also worked on prior releases, of course. My first day on the job, I proofread the Narrator's screen (so you can blame me for the table of contents screw-up, I suppose, but I wasn't aware at the time that all of the tables were un-errated versions). I did more and more as releases progressed. I thoroughly proofread FotRSB. I put FBWM, TTSB, and Moria through additional playtesting and thoroughly redeveloped parts of all three. I also selected and developed the web adventures, including Sword of the Witch-king. I hope Decipher releases them.

#### **Matt: What do you think was the best product produced so far?**

**Jeff:** The Moria boxed set. It's a meaty game supplement in a way that FotRSB and TTSB couldn't have been. Even though Fell Beasts also has some meat on it, Moria is a better product.

#### **Matt: Do you feel the game (LOTR) captures Tolkien's ideals for the world he created?**

**Jeff:** That's hard to say, and the main reason is that any individual gamer's experience with any given roleplaying game is 80% Narrator and 20% rule system. That is to say, the skill and knowledge of the Narrator overshadows anything you could put into the rules. That said, I think that Decipher's LotR RPG does capture Tolkien's conception of Middle-earth. Steve Long did an excellent job on that front.

#### **Matt: If you had more power initially in the decision-making process for producing the game, what would you have done different? better?**

**Jeff:** Hindsight being 20/20 and all that, I'd have playtested the core rulebook more rigorously. I wasn't at Decipher at the time it was released, though, so it's difficult for me to second-guess the people who were working on the line at the time. Christian, Steve, Owen, Matt Forbeck, and the rest are great designers (and great guys), so it's hard to say.

#### **Matt: What sorts of changes to the system, character creation, combat, etc. would a 2nd edition have included?**

**Jeff:** If I had developed a second edition, the most important change would have been related to character creation. The specific problem is that the weight edges have in affecting skill totals is totally out of control. I don't know whether the best solution would be a system of weighting edges by effectiveness (à la GURPS, say), or scaling back the impact of the most egregious edges so all unimproved edges have about the same level of impact, or what. I think playtesting a number of solutions would have shown the way.

I also would have liked to include a better system for travel, because travel is so important in Middle-earth. As I discovered while I was developing The Sword of the Witch-king, the current system is not very good at giving options to travelers. How

much ground can you cover if you press yourself? How far can you press your horse before you endanger its health? How big a problem does it become when you lose sleep day after day? How fatigued do you get over time when pressing yourself in travel?

There are a number of minor tweaks I'd advocate, too, like limiting a given character's skill ranks at their score in the governing attribute and limiting spellcasting ability to members of elite orders.

## ON... THE INDUSTRY

**Matt: Since you've been in the gaming industry awhile, I have a few questions pertaining to it. First, what are typical problems in gaming companies that lead to miscommunication with customers?**

**Jeff:** Speaking generally, the idea that keeping production information secret from a game's fanbase will accomplish anything positive is a huge problem. As long as the fans of a game are getting straight answers from people who speak in a human voice, they're generally supportive and interested and willing to hang in with their favorite games through just about anything. Atlas, Eden, and Steve Jackson Games are three companies that do this very well.

Another problem is that many game designers and executives feel that they've risen above the need to interact with their customers.

**Matt: How do you think companies should interact with their fan base?**

**Jeff:** The most important thing a company should do is deliver products as advertised, in terms of both content and timing. This is so rare in the adventure gaming industry that a company that consistently does so will quickly develop an ironclad reputation that it is impossible to create with advertising, promotions, and the like.

I also think that the designers and executives at game companies should personally participate in discussions among fans about their games, though it's important to note that this can go too far. When I worked as the line developer for *Ars Magica*, for example, I sometimes spent too much time participating in listserv discussions and online forums, at the expense of supplements and publications. It's a difficult balance.

**Matt: Finally, what are some specific reasons why some companies succeed with their products, yet other companies with similar (maybe even better) products can't seem to turn a profit?**

**Jeff:** The common denominator is often overreaching. There aren't all that many people in the world who want to play roleplaying games, and so RPG publishers just can't advertise like mass-market companies, or promote like mass-market companies, or hire staff like mass-market companies. But it's so tempting to think that if your ads were better, or you had a broader demo program, or you had just one more designer, then everything would explode and success would rain from the skies.

The key to success in RPG publishing is to have very realistic expectations, to make very realistic plans, and to be ruthless in carrying them out.

## POST DECIPHER...

**Matt: What are you doing now?**

**Jeff:** My agent and manager recently sent a sci-fi script I've been working on for the last year and a half out to production companies, so I've been taking a lot of meetings with those companies based on interest the script generated.

I'm also playing a lot of video games to update my knowledge of trends and design in that industry. There are a lot of jobs -- and good ones -- in video game design.

**Matt: Are you writing for other games?**

**Jeff:** Not yet, but I will be soon. I don't think I can talk about the projects I'm looking at.

**Matt: Would you write for Decipher again if asked?**

**Jeff:** At this point, the terms under which I would be willing to write for Decipher are almost certainly not terms to which they would agree. That's not to say I wouldn't be thrilled to make more contributions to the *LotR* RPG, because it's a game I thoroughly enjoyed working on.

## PERSONAL...

### **Matt: Do you play the game (still)?**

**Jeff:** Not right now. Actually, the chronicle I was running had gone on hiatus sometime in late 2003 because the development schedule wasn't allowing me any time to develop material for my home game. It's too bad, really; I liked the characters and the way the chronicle was developing.

### **Matt: What's your favorite character/type of character to play?**

**Jeff:** I like playing Mannish (human, that is) characters. Generally, I gravitate to those who have skills and abilities that are not "out there;" I don't usually play wizards, mentalists, superheroes, and so forth. Part of the interest of roleplaying, for me, is to put characters who are similar to people I might know in real life into situations of drama and adventure. The characters may be vastly more skilled than anyone I know in life, but even so, they're still human.

I readily confess that this predilection made it difficult for me to identify with the LotR RPG fans who are so very interested in Elves. On the balance, I just never found the Elf-characters in The Lord of the Rings all that interesting. The dramatic choices forced upon Éowyn (for example) are much more interesting to me, because I can identify with them.

### **Matt: Have you considered publishing your own RPG?**

**Jeff:** I think that all game designers have. As times passes, doing so becomes both an easier proposition and a worse idea. It's easier because you can bring your RPG to market with a very small outlay of capital through web publishing and print-on-demand. It's a worse idea because with this ease, more and more publishers are fighting over a consumer base that's either shrinking or barely breaking even over time.

Of course, the idea of creating a game universe that's wholly my own is very appealing. It's near the top of my list of things to do when I'm stupid rich and don't have to worry about the mortgage and gas bill.

### **Matt: Have you read The Hall of Fire?**

**Jeff:** I read the first issue when it came out; I haven't read the second (if, in fact, it is available). I was greatly impressed with the high-quality graphic presentation. I hope it continues on for a long time.

### **Matt: What do you think of the films?**

**Jeff:** I love the films. Absolutely love them. Though I realize it's heresy to say so, I think that in some ways the films exceed the text. I'll give just one example:

Tolkien would go on and on about landforms, and I'm sorry, but landforms are just not that interesting to read about. The incredible shots of mountains and forests in the films, however, are really awe-inspiring. Keep in mind that I've got a film degree, though, so I'm predisposed toward the medium.

**Matt: Thanks again Jeff from all of us at the webzine for agreeing to the interview, I'm quite sure everyone will find your remarks and opinions interesting, helpful, and informative. As always, The Hall of Fire is looking for contributions from any and everyone, so if you're interested and if/when you're are able (barring contractual restrictions), we'd be more than grateful for anything that you'd like to submit.**

### **Good luck and happy gaming!**

**Jeff:** Sure thing! It's been fun!

**Note: If at anytime you'd like to catch up on Jeff and his many exploits, log in to his website at: <http://www.jefftidball.com>**

# IT'S ALL OPTIONAL

## TAKING THE MIN-MAX OUT OF MIDDLE-EARTH CHARACTERS

By Scottomir

One of the first things a player new to Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings* RPG will notice is that starting characters can be surprisingly powerful. For new gamers possessing prior experience with D&D (D20 or otherwise), this can come as quite a shock. A starting D&D character is notoriously vulnerable: one solid sword-blow is usually enough to mortally wound a 1<sup>st</sup>-level wizard or thief. Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings* RPG is a refreshing change in this regard, but the downside to this greater security for starting LOTR characters is that they can begin half-way to their maximum potential in their key areas. Characters can start out so well-developed that by the time they reach their 10<sup>th</sup> advancement they already will have 12 ranks in key skills, scores of 12 in key attributes, and all the best order abilities and edges. In short, the downside to the LOTR system is that starting characters are too easy, and too tempting, to "min-max" (which is when a player calculates character decisions to achieve the maximum power return for the minimum cost investment). This article will offer some optional rules making it harder for players to "min-max" their characters and, hopefully, extending effective lifespan of a character beyond 10 advancements (instead of front-loading so much of a character's power into his initial development).

Perhaps the single most abusive loophole in the core book's character-creation system is the **attribute modifiers** on Table 2.1 (p. 48). Especially when combined with the Pick Method (p. 46), it is too tempting to give a new character 4 or 5 in a couple attributes of lesser importance (since 4-5 doesn't impose any penalty) in order to jack up all other attributes to 10, 11, or 12 (granting a +2 or +3 bonus to everything else). Fortunately, there is an easy fix: cut out of abusive 4-7 range for the +0 modifier. Consider this alternate distribution...

**Table 2.1 (Revised): Attribute Modifiers**

<u>Attribute Level</u>	<u>Modifier</u>
0-1	-3
2-3	-2
4-5	-1
6-7	± 0
8 and up	Unchanged (as listed on p. 48)

While you're revising the attribute modifiers, it may be a good idea to revisit the **Pick Method** specifically. As written, the Pick Method yields attribute scores considerably higher

than the Random Method (on average), and the 8 free points makes it too tempting to "min-max" away all weaknesses. An interesting variant that keeps the spirit of the Pick Method while reining in the potential for abuse is to have the player select one of the following two sets of scores to distribute among his character's attributes...

**Set 1:** 11, 10, 9, 8, 6, 4

**Set 2:** 10, 9, 8, 8, 7, 6

The character does not get 8 free points to distribute; he must use the scores in the set chosen, applying racial modifiers to determine the final rating for each attribute. The above sets are slightly less powerful than the standard Pick Method (48 total points compared to 50). They are also carefully balanced so that a character who wants great strengths will have at least one weakness, and no character can start out with the 12 maximum in any attribute. There should always be room to grow!



Another serious "min-max" problem is **starting skill ranks**. According to the core book (p. 77), a new character can start out with as many as 6 ranks in a starting skill. But, since 12 is the maximum this means that a brand-new character can be already halfway to his ultimate potential. Considering that a character can buy 2 ranks in an Order skill with each advancement, this means a character can reach 12 ranks in his key skills by his 3<sup>rd</sup> advancement. One very easy way to curtail this abuse is to decrease the starting rank limit from 6 to 3. If a character cannot start out with more than 3 ranks in any skill, this means that he won't be able to reach 12 ranks in his key skills until his 5<sup>th</sup> advancement. Of course, Language and Lore skills, especially the "native" skills a character buys with his free ranks based on his Wits, should be an exception—these skills can begin with up to 6 ranks. Lastly, many of the Order abilities are written with the assumption that a character can start with 6 ranks (the Minstrel's Inspiring Performance ability, for example). If you decrease the maximum starting ranks, you should also cut in half the Requisite skill ranks for these basic Order abilities (Inspiring Performance should have a Requisite of Perform +3). Please note: Specialties do *not* count toward the starting rank cap, and there is no limit to the number of extra specialties a character can buy for 1 rank each.

**Edges**, as written in the core book, are tremendously unbalanced. Why spend 6 advancement picks to raise your

Willpower by 2 when you can spend 2 picks on the Strong-willed edge? Why spend 6 picks raising your Stamina and Willpower when you can buy the Resolute edge for 2 picks? Every Narrator is advised to amend these abusive edges so that the bonuses are not constant but instead apply only in certain situations (for example, the Resolute bonuses could apply only to opposed tests or tests to overcome distractions). Readers are invited to check out my attempts at balancing the unbalanced edges in my Revised/Optional Rules Compilation (available for download at: [http://www.geocities.com/scott\\_metz/LOTRCODArevisions.doc](http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/LOTRCODArevisions.doc)). Furthermore, it is also a good idea to restrict the sheer number of edges a character can acquire. One option is to limit new characters to buying only one edge with their initial 6 picks for race (unless they are a part of an approved "background package"). Additionally, a new character cannot buy more than one edge with his final 5 free picks (p. 113). Thereafter, a character can buy only one new edge per experience advancement.

Yet another way to "min-max" new characters is with their **language ranks**. Why put more than 1 rank in a language? The core book doesn't provide any reason. Fortunately, the official errata suggest that 6 ranks in a language are necessary for native fluency. Thus, a Narrator should *require* a new character to put 6 of his free ranks from Wits into his native language. The character should also strive to get 6 ranks in all of the other languages he needs to speak. One way to enforce this is to require that the player make a language skill test (TN 10) when his character uses a language in which he has less than 6 ranks in an important or dramatic situation; on a failure the character's verbal gaffs cause a troublesome misunderstanding.

However, not all revisions to character generation need to punish calculating players. One way you can help out planning-minded players is by clarifying and reorganizing the **combat skill groups** (p. 119). As written, there are numerous

skill classifications of very uneven value and unclear use. Consider tightening things up for your players. **Armed Combat** can be combined into just three skills: *Hafted Weapons* (axes, clubs, maces, hammers), *Hilted Weapons* (swords, daggers, knives), and *Pole Weapons* (spears, pikes, staffs). **Ranged Combat** consists of Bows and Thrown Weapons (including spears and, if you want to add them into the game, slings). **Unarmed Combat** consists of Wrestling and Brawling, although the core book doesn't bother to define their use; the former could be used for all grappling attacks while the latter could be used for punch/kick attacks and shield bash attacks (after all, a shield bash is basically just a body slam while something happens to be on your arm).

Another character-development issue you can clarify for your players is how rank totals work for **skill groups**. For example, if you need 6 ranks in "Armed Combat" do you meet the requisite only if you have all 6 ranks in one specific skill or can you meet it by having 2 ranks in three separate skills? The core book does not specify, but you can use the following revision to clarify the matter. To determine if a general requisite (e.g., "Armed Combat 6+") is met, total together all ranks in all skills in that group. Maximum rank caps and rank advancements apply to each skill in the group separately, not to the whole skill group. Any "special" benefits are gained only for the first individual skill in that group to reach the listed rank level, not when the total ranks in all skills in the group reach the required level (e.g., a character gains the +1 combat maneuver bonuses for Armed Combat only when the first individual skill in that group reaches ranks 6, 9, and 12).

In conclusion, it is not impossible to take the "min-max" out of making Middle-earth characters. By revising the attribute modifiers, reducing the limit for starting skill ranks, restricting the abusive edges, and enforcing the fluency ranks for languages, you can tone down the power of starting characters and draw out their development over a greater number of advancements.





# ADVENTURING IN

## THE ROHIRRIM PART II: THE PEOPLE

By Ron Williams

### PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Rohirrim are a race of Middle men, distantly related to the Edain. They are descended of the House of Hador of the First Age. Physically, they are of fair complexion, with clean features, usually with blonde hair and light colored eyes. Most are tall, with men averaging 6'0" and woman only slightly shorter.

#### The Rohirrim (Middle Men)

##### Skills:

Armed Combat +1,  
Ranged Combat +1, Ride +2

##### Edges:

Honor's Insight,  
Night-eyed

##### Languages:

Rohirric, Westron

### ROHIRRIC CULTURE

A warrior race, the Rohirrim value bravery and honor above all else. They are proud and honest, and do not suffer thieves in their society. The word of a man of Rohan is his bond, and his family and forbearer's honor stands on this. The

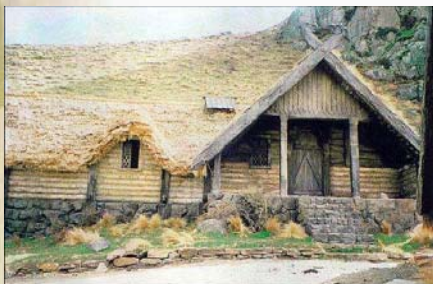
Rohirrim are also equestrians of unparalleled skill and ability. They love their horses as their children

Horse riding is way of life for the Rohirrim. Children are trained in horsemanship from the time they can walk.

Rohirric men are almost universally bearded and mustached and wear their hair long. Men's clothing consists of woolen hose or pants, high boots, and a loose fitted tunic. Virtually all men own a sword, and most have a chain shirt and helm.

The women of Rohan wear long dresses, bound at the waist, and wear their hair braided and long. While most women are not trained in warfare, many daughters of noble families are. These 'shield-maidens' are trained to defend their homeland to the death.

### SETTLEMENT PATTERNS



are the homes, shops and stables of its people. Villages are not so well defended, and often have no walls at all, and are placed for their location to water or crops.

Most Rohirrim live in small villages, farms or manor houses. A typical Rohirric town (or *burg*) is built upon a rise or hill, with a wooden palisade around it. Inside the walls of the town

The people of Rohan make their homes only in the Folds of the White Mountains. There are no permanent settlements in the Emnets. No cities exist in Rohan. Edoras is the largest town, consisting of a few thousand folk. Aldburg is the second largest town, located in the Eastfold. The rest of the communities in Rohan consist of small villages, scattered throughout the Folds and lower ranges of the White Mountains. These villages serve as markets for local farmers and administrative centers for local lords. The majority of the population lives in scattered farmsteads within a day's ride of villages and towns.



Stonework is exceedingly rare in Rohirric settlements, with most houses and buildings being built of wood, with thatch roofs.

At the time of the War of the Ring, Rohan has a probable population of 100,000 men, women and children.

### LANGUAGE

The language of Rohan is Rohirric. This tongue is derived from the ancient North-man tongues of Rhovanion, but it has evolved on its own after nearly a thousand years of being sundered from it.

When amongst themselves, Rohirric is primarily used. Besides Rohirric, all Rohirrim also speak Westron. Although the Rohirrim can speak Westron, even in the time of the War of the Ring, they often chose not to, because of their strong cultural pride.

Rohirric has no written form, rather its people learn and remember their past through songs and tales.

Among the nobility, most Rohirrim can read and write in Westron.

### ECONOMY

#### HERDING AND SHEPHERDING

The Rohirrim maintain a pastoral economy. Herds of sheep, goats, cattle and horses are tended throughout the Emnets. The Men drive their herds and flocks throughout the plains in search of good pastureland. Living in tents, the Men may

return to their villages and manors only sporadically, until the fall.

### FARMING

In the Folds, farming of grains and vegetables on small plots of land is common. Villagers work together in communal farms, tilling, planting and harvesting together. The village consumes most of the food grown, but a small surplus is either sold at local markets or paid to the local lords as taxes.

### MINING

Mining is done in the White Mountains above Edoras, and some silver is found there. Most of the silver mined is used to create fine, usable items, or jewelry. Occasionally, the King orders the minting of silver pennies, most notably to commemorate important events. Most of Rohan works on the barter system, however. Goods are traded in fairs and given to Lords for taxes.

Little iron ore is found in Rohan. What iron there is, is of poor quality, and of no use for weapons.

### TRADE

Rohan trades very little with the rest of Middle-earth. The town of Bree and other settlements of Eriador are too small and too distant to be regular trading partners. The Kingdom of Dale lies too far away for any regular commerce. The only regular trade Rohan has is with the Kingdom of Gondor. Yearly the Rohirrim send horses to the Dúnedain Kingdom, and in return they receive armor, weapons and steel. Gondor is the only land the Rohirrim will trade their horses to. No horses are sold to the East or South.

## GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY



Rohan is ruled by a hereditary king and is a centralized monarchy. The king rules from his great hall, Meduseld, in the town of Edoras. The land is divided into two military provinces: The West Mark and East Mark.

The king of Rohan keeps many advisors, both military and political, but he alone chooses the path the Rohirrim take. There is no parliamentary body in Rohan, and no separate judicial body.

Under the King at Edoras, the Marshals of the Mark (or Riddermark) are the highest military rank and the title of the King's lieutenants. These are commanders of the royal forces of fully equipped and trained Riders (The *Eohere*).

The First Marshal of the Mark is often the King himself, if he is of good health and strength. The First Marshal's ward is the capital, Edoras, and the adjacent King's Lands (including Dunharrow and Harrowdale). He commands the Riders of the Muster of Edoras, drawn from this ward, and from some parts

of the West Mark and East Mark, for which Edoras is the most convenient place of assembly.

The Second and Third Marshals commanded the forces of the West and East. The Second Mark consisted of whichever direction the king felt the greatest danger lay. This would change. At the time of the War of the Ring, the Second Marshal had command over the West Mark, with his base at Helm's Deep.

At the time of the War of the Ring, the Third Marshal has his ward the East Mark, with his base at Aldburg, in the Fold.

The Marshal's of the Mark are often family of the King, and in line for succession, should the King die.

Under the Marshals of the Mark are the Marshals of the *eored*. These men are the great lords of Rohan. Their manors are scattered throughout the vales and folds of the White

<b>Eored</b>
<b>Size: 15</b>
<b>Strength: 7</b>
<b>Toughness: 7</b>
<b>Mobility: 8 (16 mounted)</b>
<b>Moral: 21</b>

Mountains. Each Marshal is responsible for, and leads, a fixed number of mounted, armed and armored warriors, called an *eored*. An *eored* is gathered from the adult male population around the Marshal's manor (a ward, or district). These warriors are armed and supplied by their Marshal's.

Each of the three Marshals of the Mark also has an *eored* of their own, to command as they see fit.

A standard *eored* contains 120 riders, including their captain. The complete muster of Rohan consists of 100 *eored*, not including the King's personal *eored*. These forces are scattered throughout the Westfold and Eastfold, and occasionally on patrol in the Emnets. The entire force takes several days to raise. An emergency call by the King or a Marshal of the Mark can expect to raise 9-14 *eored* within a day's time.

The Riders of Rohan are some of the best-armed and armored warriors in Middle-earth. Standard armor for an *eored* consists of a hauberk of chain mail, a metal helm, a wooden round shield, ash spear, and longsword. Some Riders use short bows instead of spears. The Heraldry symbol for the Riddermark is a white horse on a green field.

## KING'S LIST

### FIRST LINE

**Eorl the Young (2485-2545):** He was so named because he succeeded his father in his youth and remained yellow haired and ruddy to the end of his days. Eorl fell in battle in the Wold with the Easterlings.

**Brego (2512-2570):** He drove the enemy out of the Wold, and Rohan was not attacked again for many years. In 2569 he completed the great hall of Meduseld.

**Aldor the Old (2544-2645):** He was Brego's second son. In his time the Rohirrim increased and drove out the Dunlandings that lingered east of the Isen.

**Frea (2570-2659):** Eldest son, but fourth child of Aldor; he was already old when he became king.

**Freawine (2594-2680)**

**Goldwine (2619-2699)**

**Deor (2644-2718):** In his time, the Dunlandings raided often over the Isen. In 2710 they occupied the deserted ring of Isengard, and could not be dislodged.

**Gram (2668-2741)**

**Helm Hammerhand (2691-2759):** At the end of his reign Rohan suffered great loss, by invasion and the Long Winter. Helm and his sons Haleth and Hama perished. Frealaf, Helm's sister's son, became king.

## SECOND LINE

**Frealaf Hildeson (2726-2798):** In his time Saruman came to Isengard, from which the Dunlandings had been driven. The Rohirrim at first profited by his friendship in the days of dearth and weakness that followed.

**Brytta (2752-2842):** He was called by his people Leofa, for he was loved by all; he was openhanded and a help to all the needy. In his time there was war with Orcs that, driven from the North, sought refuges in the White Mountains. When he died it was thought that they had all been hunted out; but it was not so.

**Walda (2780-2851):** He was king only nine years. He was slain with all his companions when Orcs trapped them, as they rode by mountain-paths from Dunharrow.

**Folca (2804-2864):** He was a great hunter, but he vowed to chase no wild beast while there was an Orc left in Rohan. When the last Orc-hold was found and destroyed, he went to hunt the great boar of Everholt in the Firien Wood. He slew the boar but died of the tusk-wound that it gave him.

**Folcwine (2830-2903):** When he became king the Rohirrim had recovered their strength. He re-conquered the west-march (between Adorn and Isen) that Dunlandings had occupied.

Rohan and received great help from Gondor in the evil days. When, therefore, he heard that the Haradrim were assailing Gondor with great strength, he sent many men to help of the Steward. He wished to lead them himself, but was dissuaded, and his twin sons Folcred and Fastred (born 2858) went in his stead. They fell side by side in battle in Ithilien (2885). Turin II of Gondor sent to Folcwine a rich wergild of gold.

**Fengel (2870-2953):** He was the third son and fourth child of Folcwine. He is not remembered with praise. He was greedy of food and of gold, and at strife with his marshals, and with his children. Thengel, this third child and only son, left Rohan when he came to manhood and lived long in Gondor, and won honor in the service of Turgon.

**Thengel (2905-2980):** He took no wife until late, but in 2943 he wedded Morwen of Lossarnach in Gondor, though she was seventeen years the younger. She bore him three children in Gondor, of whom Theoden, the second, was his only son. When Fengel died the Rohirrim recalled him, and he returned unwillingly. But he proved a good and wise king; though the speech of Gondor was used in his house, and not all men though that good. Morwen was the fairest, though she came late (2963), the child of his age. Her brother loved her dearly.

**Theoden (2948-3019):** He is called Theoden Ednew in the lore of Rohan, for he fell into a decline under the spells of Saruman, but was healed by Gandalf, and in the last year of his life arose and led his men to victory, at the Hornburg and soon after to the Fields of Pelennor, the greatest battle of the Age. He fell before the gates of Mundburg.

## THIRD LINE

**Eomer (2991-FA 63):** While still young he became a Marshal of the Mark (3017) and was given his father's charge in the east marches. In the War of the Ring Thloedred fell in battle with Saruman at the Crossing of the Isen. Therefore before he died on the Fields of the Pelennor, Theoden named Eomer his heir and called him king. He reigned for 65 years. In the War of the Ring he made the friendship of King Elessar and Imrahil of Dol Amroth; and he rode often to Gondor. In the last year of the Third Age he wedded Lothiriel, daughter of Imrahil. Their son, Elfwine the Fair ruled after him.



# A PC'S SO CALLED LIFE

## HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT, PART I

By Mathew Kearns

Most, if not all, RPG's have some sort of combat system and Lord of the Rings is no different. For a lot of players, a lot of the fun they have with a game is the ability to go out and whomp on creatures, regardless if they are puny things such as orcs or more powerful creatures such as trolls, undead, or demons. But it is also the part of the game in which most of a game session is spent: rolling initiative, waiting for your turn to perform your actions, and hoping that you don't take too much, if any, damage. This article will help explain the workings of the hand-to-hand combat system in *The Lord of the Rings RPG* per the rules stated in the CRB and CRF so that you can move through combat faster and with fewer mistakes.

For this and subsequent issues, I will be using Toradan, the character I created in the last three issues, for the examples. Any creatures I use will come from either the CRB or Fell Beasts & Wondrous Magic book.

*Toradan has been quietly patrolling a small forested area a few days from Rivendell in the Trollshaws when, at the edge of dusk, he happens to spot a small band of orcs from the Misty Mountains heading east. After shadowing them at a distance for a time, he realizes that they are heading towards a small distant settlement of Men. Knowing that they cannot defend themselves and that he cannot readily call upon help in time to help the people, he takes it upon himself to waylay the marauders. Doing his best to move ahead of the party, he prepares to ambush the orcs. When the time is right, he lets fly his arrows.*

### Rounds

Combat is broken up into sections called rounds. This is when characters take their turn to make the actions to resolve the combat: attacking, defending, skill tests, movement, etc.

### Surprise

Before the first initiative is rolled, a Narrator may wish to see if the party of heroes and/or the enemies notices one another (maybe they are setting an ambush, a chance encounter, etc.). If so, all should make a TN 10 Observe (Spot) test or other relevant test to see if someone notices something. Whomever wins, gains the superior initiative in the first round (and maybe for all of combat), while the loser(s) have the inferior initiative and lose one action in the first round.



*Even though Toradan had hid himself well, the orcs suspected something was up and prepared themselves by drawing their swords.*

### Initiative

The first part of each round is initiative. This is a roll, which determines in what order the PC's and NPC's act within a given round. This is a physical test based off your Swiftwiness ( $2d6 + \text{Swiftwiness value} + \text{bonuses} - \text{penalties}$ ). It has only one trait specifically associated with it, Wary, where you receive a +3 bonus to the initiative roll. It is also important to note that Initiative is a physical test because the test is modified by all generic physical test bonuses, but is also affected by similar penalties.

#### - Running Initiative

Initiative can be run in two ways. The first is that all make their initiative rolls every round. Doing it this way can make the tension of combat much higher in that you don't know who is going first, making it all the more unpredictable. The drawback of this is that this takes up time to make another roll each round for the Narrator to keep track of. The second way is to roll initiative once at the beginning of combat so everyone knows when it is his or her turn to go. This is easier than the first because you don't have to keep re-rolling and cuts down on the time spent in combat. The drawback is that if the order is predictable, then some players may begin to have a tendency to think in a meta-game fashion and not direct their character in way consistent to if he were actually the character (i.e. loss of realism). This a choice that a Narrator must make depending on his/her style of running a game and what everyone wants out of the game.

#### - Initiative for Groups

Where it concerns groups of creatures against a party of heroes, the Narrator again has a number of choices for rolling initiative: all enemies collectively, all enemies individually, or, if there are groups of different creatures, each group. I'm sure there are other ways, but these are probably the most popular.

#### - Ties in Initiative

As far as I know, there is no provision for ties for initiative, but a quick way to resolve it is to compare Swiftsness scores; the higher score goes first. If they also tie, then just roll 1d6 and the highest roll wins. A Narrator may also choose not to break a tie and have their actions occur at the same time, which can be confusing or difficult to resolve sometimes, but it's the Narrator's prerogative.

*Both sides roll initiative. Toradan rolls  $2d6 + 2 = (4 + 1) + 2 = 7$ . Since there are only four orcs to this group, I will roll their initiative individually. Orc1 rolls  $(4 + 2) + 1 = 7$ ; Orc2 rolls  $(6 + 5) + 1 = 12$ ; Orc3 rolls  $(3 + 3) + 1 = 7$ ; Orc4 rolls  $(6 + 1) + 1 = 8$ . So two orcs go before Toradan and the other two orcs (whom all go at the same time as they are tied in initiative).*

### Taking Turns in Combat

Once initiative has been determined, the characters/groups may now act in accord to the players' and Narrator's wishes: the Ranger attacks the orc, the elf shoots his bow, the troll sweeps a group of heroes with his mace, while the hobbit attempts to hide from melee. Each character gets a minimum of 2 actions per round to use without penalty (this doesn't include penalties due to Weariness, injury, etc. or bonus actions due to abilities or traits) and may attempt further actions with a cumulative -5 penalty (or not, depending on the Narrator). If further actions aren't skill or attribute tests (i.e. loading a bow, picking up a sword, etc.), the Narrator may require the character to perform a suitable test equal to the value of the current or worst penalty (if the action takes more than one combat action).

*As Orc3 and Orc4 are unaware of any imminent danger, they cautiously continue forward moving at half their movement rate (6 yards total). At the same time as Orc1 and Orc2 are moving forward, following their companions, Toradan shoots four arrows, two apiece at Orc3 and Orc4. For the sake of the example, the orcs will be within Short range to Toradan.*

- 1) Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) -  $(6+4) + 3 + 2 = 17$  -> Orc3
- 2) Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) -  $(5+1) + 3 + 2 = 13$  -> Orc3
- 3) Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) -  $(3+2) + 3 + 2 + 2 - 5 = 7$  -> Orc4
- 4) Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) -  $(5+1) + 3 + 2 + 2 - 10 = 3$  -> Orc4

### - Resolving Actions in Combat

There are three different attack skills to choose from: Armed, Ranged, and Unarmed. If you want to attack someone who is within range of the type of attack, roll the skill normally, taking into account all sources of bonuses and penalties (injury, cover, position of body such as standing or prone, etc.). When you have come up with a test total, you compare that to the defender's Defense. If the attacker's test result is

greater than or equal to the defender's Defense, then the attack hits and has the potential to do damage.

### - Parrying/Blocking

If in melee combat and an attack upon a defender is successful, the defender may opt to parrying or block the attack, but doing so costs 1 combat action. If the attack came after the defender has used up her 2 standard actions, the cumulative action penalties do affect the parry/block attempt. To block or parry an attack, the defender rolls the appropriate Armed Combat or Unarmed Combat skill just as if she was attacking, but also adds in the parry/block bonus of her weapon/unarmed attempt. Ranged Combat attacks cannot be parried or blocked.

### - Dodging

If in melee combat and an attack upon a defender is successful, the defender may opt to dodge the attack, but doing so costs 1 combat action. If the attack came after the defender has used up her 2 standard actions, the cumulative action penalties do affect the dodge attempt. Dodging is a Swiftsness test and is modified by the usual bonuses and penalties in addition to a +3 bonus if the Dodge edge is taken. If a character dodges and the result is greater than her Defense, then her Defense, applying to this attack and all subsequent attacks that round, equals her dodge test result. Ranged Combat attacks may only be dodged.

### - Combat Actions

There is a list of combat actions on pages 228-229 in the CRB. These actions have special effects in combat other than just the standard attack, parry, and dodge. Take a look at them, in the right circumstances; they can be quite effective and fun for both player and Narrator.

*The Defense of all the orcs is 10, so the first two would hit Orc3 while the second two would completely miss Orc4. As he used his free actions to move forward, Orc3 would have a penalty to dodge the arrows and does so hoping to avoid getting hurt (as they all have the Evasion ability). Swiftsness (dodge)  $-5, 2, 1 (5+2) + 1 - 5 = 3$ ; Orc3's dodge attempt was unsuccessful and he is hit by both arrows for 5 and 4 damage (after their natural armour), totaling 9 damage. The battle has only just begun.*

And that is a typical round of combat: attack, defend, or otherwise. There are many other minutia associated with combat like spells and using creatures of different sizes, but I wanted to give a very small view of how combat is played out in this issue. Next issue I will proceed more in-depth with combat actions, skill tests in combat, movement, and creatures of different sizes.

# FAN FLAVOUR

## NEW TRAITS

### CULTURAL CONFLICT ( FLAW )

You disagree with the ideals and philosophies of society of origin or of the cultures of your parents.

**EFFECT:** You have a -4 penalty to all social tests when dealing with members of your own species. If of a mixed species, -4 to all social tests when dealing with a minimum of one of the species from which you are descended.

**IMPROVEMENT:** If this trait is selected again, add another -2 penalty (maximum penalty -8).

### OUTCAST ( FLAW )

You have been cast out of your home, society, or planet. Pretty serious consequences may take place if a member of the group you were excommunicated from ever encounters you.

**EFFECT:** If you encounter another of the group of which you were cast from and you are recognized as an outcast, double your Renown penalty to all social tests, minimum of -1.



### VENDETTA ( FLAW )

A great tragedy has occurred in your life, affecting you to the core. Correct or incorrect, you see a person or small group of people as the cause of this pain and feel the need to take revenge for this wrongdoing, wherever and whenever you can.

**EFFECT:** You have a -8 penalty to social tests with this person or small group and must spend 1 Courage to avoid inciting a confrontation regardless of the current situation.

**IMPROVEMENT:** Yes. With a second pick, you may upgrade this flaw for a medium group such as a people of a large organization like the Dwarves of Erebor. With a third pick, you may upgrade this flaw for a large group such as Elves of Lorien or Orcs of the Misty Mountains.

### JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES ( EDGE )

You have learned much from a variety of different people and professions, enough so that you are able to apply that knowledge so as to enhance your own ability.

**PREREQUISITE:** One Order Ability from your Basic Order and belong to a minimum of one active Basic Order.

**EFFECT:** You are able to purchase an Order Ability from any other Basic Order other than your own provided that you meet the ability's prerequisites and have enough Advancement Picks.

**IMPROVEMENT:** Yes. You may select a new ability for each pick of this edge.

# ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

## CADOC – GHOST OF KELATHAD

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 12 (+3), Nimbleness 12 (+3), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 13 (+3), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 10 (+2)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +3, Swiftmess +4, Willpower +4, Wisdom +3

**DEFENCE:** 13

**ORDERS:** Barbarian, magician

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Preferred Weapon, Champion, Spellcasting 2

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 15

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +19, Climb +6, Dodge +8 Intimidate (Fear) +16, Language (Westron) +10, Language (Sindarin) +10, Lore (Rhudaer) +8, Lore (Magic) +10, Observe (Spot, Sense Power) +7, Ranged Combat: Bows (Short Bow) +9, Search +3, Stealth (Move Quiet) +9, Survival (Mountains) +6, Track (Human) +7, Unarmed Combat (Icy Touch) +7 **note:** all ranks include all bonuses from each source

**EDGES:** Armour of Heroes, Fell-Handed, Dodge

**FLAWS:** Hatred (Dúnedain)

**SPELLS:** *Bladeshattering, Blast of Sorcery, Create light, Dumbness, Evoke Fear, Fog-raising, Forgetfulness, Holding-spell, Shadows and Phantoms, Spellbinding*

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Icy Touch, Undead Stamina, Vulnerability (Sunlight)

**SIZE:** Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

**HEALTH:** 13

**COURAGE:** 4

**RENOWN:** 10

**TN EQUIVALENT:** 10

### ORDER ABILITIES / EDGES / FLAWS

**PREFERRED WEAPON** – Specialty bonus of the preferred weapon is +4 instead of +2. Cadoc's preferred weapon is the longsword.

**CHAMPION** – When Cadoc fights to defend his "town" he gains a +1 to all attack, dodge, parry or block tests.

**SPELLCASTING 2** – Cadoc has 10 spell picks.

**ARMOUR OF HEROES** – 2 Armour points when no armor is worn.

**FELL HANDED** – +1 bonus to all attack tests to hit Dúnedain.

**DODGE** – +3 bonus to Dodge tests.

### UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

**ICY TOUCH** – Cadoc's chill and deadly touch causes his victims to lose 2 points of Strength and Vitality each round of contact. When either attribute reaches 0, the victim falls unconscious



for 2d6x10 minutes. Lost points are regained at the rate of 1 in each attribute per 10 minutes – or in full when the victim awakens or upon the application of a *Healing Spell*.

**UNDEAD STAMINA** – Cadoc need never eat nor drink, takes only half damage from physical attacks, and heals all injuries at five times the normal rate. Further, Cadoc does not have Weariness Levels and need never make a Stamina test to resist Weariness for any reason.

**VULNERABILITY** – The light of the sun, which causes a withering effect, affects Cadoc. When exposed to the sunlight, Cadoc suffers 1d6 damage per round until he can either return to darkness or perish.

## DESCRIPTION

Cadoc is a withered corpse that has remained within the living world for the last 286 years. The body that he possesses is actually Dúnedain in its origins and still bears some vague markings of that folk. It amused Cadoc to possess and animate the body – he believes that by doing so, the spirit of the man suffers in his after-life.

Cadoc stands at 6' 4" and is dressed in tattered garb. His body is dried skin pulled taut over the skeletal frame and is very emaciated. He has long straggly hair that he sometimes braids. The eyes of Cadoc glow with a soft malignant white light.

## HISTORY

**1349 T.A.** – Cadoc was a Hill-man shaman in Rhudaur in the last years of the countries existence. After long discontent with the Dúnedain lords of the region, Cadoc swore allegiance to the Witch-king of Angmar and led a small revolt against the town of Keláthad. Though he weaved some minor magic, Cadoc and

his folk were all slain and the revolt put down. Not long after, the fate of Keláthad and the Dúnedain of Rhudaur followed this same path when the Angmarim marched down upon them.

The anger and bitterness held in life, preserved Cadoc's spirit in this world and it was summoned before the Witch-king and imbued with greater powers – becoming a fell-spirit. The ghost returned to the ruined town and drew the other angry spirits of its kin to dwell alongside it. Cadoc possessed the dead body of the Dúnadan lord of Keláthad as a form of vengeance and has done so ever since – his dark energy preserving the withered corpse.

Even after 286 years, Cadoc is still present, haunting the land where he died surrounded by the other ghosts of his people. He sends his servants forth to trick and misguide individuals – having them walk off a precipice or drawing them directly to Cadoc himself. In the case of the latter, he draws their life energy from them and sustains his power within this world.

## HABITAT

Cadoc resides within a network of caves that run under the ruins of his former home. Within these caves he has amassed the treasures of his victims and any that he could scavenge from the ruin. He has no true need for such earthly treasures other than to keep as trophies.

Due to his vulnerability, Cadoc seldom ventures out of the tunnels until after dusk.

The legends about the old ruined town have spread over the many years of an old horror that stirs within the vale and lets no living thing pass in peace.

## SOCIETY

Cadoc lives in an area that is no longer inhabited (partially due to him) and he has gathered around him 11 other kindred spirits that aid him by leading victims to his clutches.

The other 11 spirits are incorporeal and can only interact with the living through illusions and beguiling powers. Cadoc finds amusement in this and will at times have his followers lead the entranced victim into a trap or off a high precipice.

## USAGE

Cadoc began his un-living existence in the year 1351 of the Third Age. He perished in the wars of Rhudaur in 1349 and his spirit spent the next two years adrift until it was drawn to Angmar and the Witch-king.

He is settled in the location of his death but this location may be changed in any way to fill the needs of a Narrator's chronicle.

## EOHAM – ROHIRRIC WARRIOR

**RACE:** Rohirrim (Middle-man)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable (+2 Swiftiness), Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 9 (+1)\*, Strength 9 (+1), Vitality 10 (+2)\*, Wits 6 (+0)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +2, Swiftiness +4\*, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

**ORDER:** Warrior

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Warrior-born

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 0

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +6, Armed Combat: Pole-arm (Spear) +3, Healing (Treat Wounds) +4, Inspire +3, Intimidate (Power) +3, Language: Rohirric +6, Language: Westron +3, Lore: Race (Men, Orcs) +3,





Lore: Realm (Rohan) +5, Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Thrown (Spear) +3, Ride +6, Siege-craft (Unit Leadership) +1

**EDGES:** Honor's Insight, Night eyed, Warwise

**FLAWS:** Fealty (to the King of Rohan)

**HEALTH:** 11

**COURAGE:** 4

**RENOWN:** 0

**INITIATIVE:** +4

**DEFENCE:** 12

**GEAR:** Chainmail (hauberk), small shield, helm, longsword, spear, warhorse (with metal barding)

## BACKGROUND

Raised in the Westfold, near Helm's Deep, Eohaim grew up watching the Riders of Rohan protect the lands and herds of horses around him. Upon his becoming a man, and showing an aptitude for horsemanship and arms, he became a member of an eored of a lesser Marshal of the Mark. Eohaim hopes to win the favor of his lord and the honor of his people.

## FRAM - ROHIRRIC HERO

"... Fram, descendant of Frumgar, king of the Eotheod, slew Scatha, the great Dragon of the Grey Mountains, and the land had peace from the long-worms afterwards."

-- *The Lord of the Rings Appendices*

**RACE:** Man (Middle: Rohirrim)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 10 (+2), Nimbleness 11 (+2)\*, Perception 8 (+1), Strength 14 (+4)\*, Vitality 12 (+3), Wits 10 (+2)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +8\*, Swiftiness +3, Willpower +3, Wisdom +2

**ORDER:** Warrior, Knight, Loremaster, Dragonslayer

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Bemuse, Born to the Saddle, Create Dragonslayer Spear, Evasion, Expertise (Dragons), Favoured Weapon (Longsword), Horse Archer, Horsemaster, Mounted Combat, Secretive, Spellcasting, Swift Strike 2, Tool Dragon-fell, Warrior-born

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 41

**SPELLS:** Bane-spell

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +6, Armed Combat: Polearms (Dragonslayer Spear, Spear) +7, Climb +4, Craft: Carving +4, Games: Riddles +7, Healing (Treat Wounds) +4, Insight +5, Inspire +3, Intimidate (Power) +2, Jump +4, Language: Felakmek +6, Language: Rohirric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Animals (Horses) +4, Lore: Dragons +9, Lore: History (the Éothéod) +5, Lore: Race (Men, Orcs, Trolls) +5, Lore: Realm (Anduin Vales) +4, Observe (Spot) +8, Perform: Sing +6, Ranged Combat: Polearms (Spear) +6, Ride (Horse) +10, Run +4, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +5, Smithcraft (Armoursmith) +5, Stealth (Hide, Sneak) +4, Survival (Arctic, Mountains, Plains) +6, Track (Dragons, Orcs) +9

**EDGES:** Accurate (Dragonslayer Spear), Bold, Doughty, Faithful (the Éothéod), Fell-handed 3, Friends (Folk of Thulin), Hardy, Hoard 6 (Hoard of Scatha), Honour's Insight, Keen-eyed, Night-eyed 2, Quick-draw, Rank 2 (Lord of Éothéod), Resolute, Valiant, Valour, Warrior's Heart, Warwise 2, Wary, Weapon Mastery (Dragonslayer Spear)

**FLAWS:** Enemy (Orcs of Misty Mountains), Enemy 2 (Dragons, Folk of Durin's Line), Fealty (the Éothéod), Grasping, Oath (Slay Scatha, Help Folk of Thulin), Proud

**HEALTH:** 16

**COURAGE:** 15

**RENOWN:** 15

## DEFENCE: 12

**GEAR:** Isenhere (his longsword), Dragon-helm, Dragon-fell of Scatha, Dragonslayer spear, Dragon-shield, clothing, winter clothing, dagger, 1 month of rations, Guthgar (his warhorse), Necklace of Scatha's teeth, Cured dragon-hide for another suit of armour, Dragon bones for carving Dragonslayer spears

## DRAGON-HELM

**Protection from Fire** - The wearer takes no damage due to fire, including dragon-fire, during combat only.

**Ire of the Wyrms** - You gain the flaw Enemy 2 (Dragons). If a dragon encounters anyone wearing these helms, it immediately attacks them and considers him forever a mortal enemy.

## DRAGON-FELL OF SCATHA

**Dragon Armour** - Armour Rating: 16. The armour is also impervious to dragon-fire, negating all damage to its wearer.

**Ire of the Wyrms** - You gain the flaw Enemy 2 (Dragons). If a dragon encounters anyone wearing this armour, it recognizes the make of the armour and immediately attacks the wearer, considering him forever a mortal enemy.

**Unworthy Bearer** - You gain the flaw Enemy 2 (Folk of Thulin). If a character who is wearing the dragon-fell that did not slay the dragon whom the armour was made from, any of Thulin's folk are immediately the wearer's enemy as is their custom.

## DRAGON SHIELD

**Terrible Visage** - +2 bonus to Intimidate and Inspire tests in combat

## DRAGONSLAYER SPEAR

**Dragon-bane** - +5 bonus to attacks against dragons

**Unbreakable** - Only the Bladeshattering spell or other similar power may undo one of these spears

**Tougher Than Dragon-scales** - Ignore a dragon's natural armour when calculating damage

## ISENHERE (R. 'IRON WARRIOR')

**Fell Blade** - +2 bonus v. Orcs, +1 bonus v. others

## NECKLACE OF SCATHA'S TEETH

**Trophy of Battle** - +4 bonus to Intimidate and all social tests with Dragonslayers

**Cursed** - If you don't already have them, you gain the flaws Enemy 2 (Dragons, Folk of Durin's Line). Both dragons and dwarves of Durin's Line would recognize this accursed heirloom and consider the bearer a mortal enemy.

## BACKGROUND

Fram grew up in the royal house of the Éothéod while the ancestors of Rohan abided in the Anduin Vales far to the north near both the Grey and Misty Mountains. Life was a constant struggle against the remnants of Angmar and dragons from the Grey Mountains and Withered Heath, but the Éothéod were able to hold their own, that is, until the ancient wrym, Scatha, descended from the remote peaks of the Grey Mountains. The dragon slaughtered all in its path and laid waste much of the fertile vales of the horse-people. Young though he was at this time, Fram, a recently appointed knight of the Éothéod, took it upon himself to track down and slay the accursed creature that wantonly destroyed much of what he and his people held most dear.

He wandered many days in the wild in search of the dragon with his faithful steed, Guthgar, but after awhile in the maze of rocky spire and boulder, he was lost and unable to find his way out of the Grey Mountains. To his luck, he encountered a small band of dwarves who were in search of

another wrym in these parts. As his thanks for helping him re-supply, he offered in return his services to help them in hunting the dragon. They looked at one another and laughed a bit to themselves, but agreed to take him along. Eventually the group hit upon the trail of the dragon and discovered its lair. The battle that ensued was brutal; most of the dwarves died, but Fram lived up to his oath. As he pulled the body of one of the dwarves to relative safety, he charged into the fray not fully realizing his danger. It proved the one thing the dragon hadn't counted on and to be its undoing; Fram slew the dragon with a great slash to its throat as he dodged its mighty maw.

So in awe of his courage, daring, and honour, the dwarves, folk of Thulin's clan, took him to their land in the far north and taught him their ways of the Dragonslayer. He is the only person not of Thulin's people who has learned their secrets, not even those of other dwarf clans or the Lossoth were given this privilege. Fram took up their teachings with a great fervor to match his ire and thirst for revenge upon Scatha. A few months after he completed his training while on the road with the remaining dwarves who found him, they caught word of a great winged drake terrorizing the north vales all the way out to Mirkwood. Figuring it was Scatha, Fram pressed on in search of the fell beast.

Once again through great skill and a bit of luck, the group of dragonslayers made their way to the lair of Scatha. To their surprise it was a great dwarf hall, surmised to be built by dwarven brethren of Durin's Line. Almost at once their presence was known by the great wrym and they were caught off-guard, to the demise of all but Fram and two other dwarves. Relying on his new found knowledge and fueled by his own fire, Fram waded in. The fight was so intense that if seen from afar, the mountain looked as though it had erupted in fire and ash. All were beaten and broken, but Fram's will could not be shaken. In one last

desperate attempt, he charged the dragon with all his might. Unable to reliably see the man coming because it lost its left eye, Scatha made a swipe to bat away Fram, but missed. This left an opening for him and he threw his spear at the vulnerable opening given him and the spear plunged deep into the body of the wyrm, so deep in fact that it couldn't be retrieved.

Looking around him, he saw not first the treasure, but his fallen friends. To their memory, he built a great pyre and burned their bodies along with the carcass of Scatha; the fire burned for many days afterwards. With that solemn task done, he then took to looking about the dragon's lair. The wealth indeed was vast and enough, he thought, to repay his people for their suffering. He then rode away, seeking to return home. As good fortune was still on his side, he did finally make it out of the mountains and down to the vales of his people. As he came to the burg of his home, he blew upon a great horn he took from the treasure to announce his triumphant return; all anyone could do was stare in awe and disbelief as they thought him dead.

It took many trips, but the men of the Éothéod reclaimed the treasure hoard

of Scatha and secured it within the burg. Word spread that the dragon was slain and who had done the deed. Dwarves of Erebor and the Iron Hills, descendants of the survivors of the dwarf-hold that Scatha took, came in search of Fram and demanded that he return the wealth of the hold to them, as it was rightfully theirs. He laughed at their impudence and brazenness and to their appeals he tossed the families' emissaries a string of teeth: the teeth of Scatha. This was the only bit of treasure that they would receive from him or his people. The dwarves spit many curses upon him and his people and they left, vowing vengeance.

In the years that followed, war raged between the men of the Éothéod and dwarves of Durin's Line. Eventually, the dwarves managed to sack the burg and reclaimed their lost treasure. Fram, who fell in the burg's last defence, was slain, pierced by many arrows and slashed by many mattocks and axes. The dwarves left his broken and mutilated body where it fell and took his weapons and armour with them when they left as the war, for them, was over. With their forges and foundries, they unmade the weapons and armour of Fram and sent them by messenger back to what remained of

the Éothéod in kind to his insult to them.

## IN THE GAME

You are unlikely to encounter Fram unless your game is set in the region of the Anduin Vales near the top of the Misty Mountains and the Grey Mountains or the far north dealing with Thulin's folk during the mid-late Third Age. As much of his history is unknown, interaction could be as much or little as possible. Your characters could encounter him on the battlefield with the remnants of Angmar or against the orcs of Gundabad. He could also be found during his travels into the Grey Mountains or at your side in the last defence of the burg against the dwarves. He is as forthright and honourable as any of his folk, but once he slew Scatha, he became vengeful and bloodthirsty in his defence of the dragon's hoard. Depending on your characters' intentions or priorities, he may help you, but be wary of his pride and vengeful side against Scatha and all other wyrms, as only the most hardy (and lucky) can survive those encounters.



‘They were robed in white and grey. Swords were naked in their pale hands.  
... Their cold eyes glittered, and they called to him with fell voices.’

-- *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The Nazgûl are the most powerful of Sauron’s minions, nine shades who were once mighty kings of Men. Each one corrupted, they now serve his will as harbingers of evil throughout Middle-earth.

## KHAMÛL: THE EASTERLING

By Decipher/ICE/MERP, Contributed by Doug Joos

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 14 (+4), Nimbleness 12 (+3), Perception 12 (+3), Strength 11 (+2)\*, Vitality 12 (+3), Wits 13 (+3)\*

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +5\*, Swiftess +7, Willpower +5, Wisdom +5

**DEFENCE:** 13

**MOVEMENT:** 6

**ORDERS:** Warrior, magician (sorcerer)

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Battle-hardened, Evasion, Spellcasting 8, Spell Specialty (Sorcery), Swift Strike, Tactics

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 40

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +10, Armed Combat: Clubs (Mace) +10, Inquire (Interrogate) +10, Inspire +5, Intimidate (Fear) +15, Language: Westron +6, Language: Black Speech +8, Lore: Realm (Harad, Mordor) +4, Lore: History (Men) +8, Lore: Magic +6, Lore: Servants of the Shadow +8, Lore: Rings of Power +7, Observe (Spot) +10, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +4, Ride (Hell-hawk, Horse) +9, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +8, Stealth (Sneak) +6, Track (Scent) +6

**EDGES:** Fell-handed (+3 against all enemies of Sauron), Night-eyed 2, Strong-willed, Warwise, Weapon Mastery (Sword), Wise

**FLAWS:** Fealty (absolutely bound and obedient to Sauron), Hatred (the living)

**SPELLS:** Bane-spell, Bladeshattering, Command, Create Light, Display of Power, Dumbness, Enslave Beast, Evoke Fear, Forgetfulness, Holding-spell, Kindle Fire, Lightning, Opening-spell, Quench Fire, Ruin, Sense Power (ability), Shadow of Fear, Shutting-spell, Spellbinding, Veil, Voice of Command, Wizard’s Guise, Wizard’s Hand

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Black Breath, Nazgûl Terror, Perceive Rings of Power, Persistent Existence, Purity of Running Water, Scent of Blood, Senses of the Dead, Undead Stamina, Wraithform

**SIZE:** Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

**HEALTH:** 17

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOWN:** 38

**TN EQUIVALENT:** 20



## UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

**BLACK BREATH** Those who run in fear at the sight of the Nazgûl are perhaps the wisest of all, as those who stand against them are susceptible to the Black Breath, a condition most dire. Any character who attacks a Nazgûl directly or is Unmanned in the presence of one must make an immediate Willpower test. Against the Lord of the Nazgûl, this test is TN 25. Characters who succeed in this test manage to stave off the effects for the moment, but if they fall otherwise unconscious while in combat with the Black Riders, they remain unconscious for 1d6 hours no matter what healing is brought to bear upon them. Failure at the Willpower test, on the other hand, results in unconsciousness for 1d6 days, Complete Failure in unconsciousness for 1d6 weeks, and Disastrous Failure in unconsciousness until the character can be brought to a house of great healing, as described under 'Advanced Treatment' on page 248 of the Core Rulebook. All characters rendered unconscious by the Black Breath must make a TN 10 Vitality test each day the condition lasts or lose 1 point of vitality and Strength. Any character reduced to 0 in either succumbs to death.

Characters roused from their unconsciousness continue to suffer intense feelings of dread, accompanied by terrible nightmares, for 1d6 days. These feelings impair all tests in that time, imposing a -2 penalty. Only a proper use of Inspire or Healing (TN 15) can end this period of lingering terror.

**NAZGÛL TERROR** In addition to having the effects of the standard special ability Terror, the Nazgûl can increase this effect when they gather in numbers. Although their opponents need not roll separately for each Nazgûl's Terror, the TN of the single test they must make is increased by one for each Nazgûl past the first. Furthermore, night imposes a -2 penalty to all reaction tests against Nazgûl Terror.

### PERCEIVE RINGS OF POWER

The existence of the Nazgûl is tied to the Rings of Power, and they can easily detect them. They receive a +4 *Sense Power* test modifier to perceive them.

### PERSISTENT EXISTENCE

Nazgûl with this ability cannot be slain while their Dark Lord lives. If 'slain', the Nazgûl reforms in Dol Guldur or Mordor, restored to full health.

### PURITY OF RUNNING WATER

All Nazgûl but the Witch-king are frustrated by the presence of running water. They suffer a -6 penalty to all tests while at the shores of a river or stream. They never ford deep rivers except in the most extreme of circumstances, preferring to cross on bridges or ferries.

### SCENT OF BLOOD

Nazgûl can smell blood as it pulses through the veins of living creatures, giving them a +2 to Observe (Scent) tests to find them. They also benefit from a +4 test modifier to track bleeding creatures.

### SENSES OF THE DEAD

The Nazgûl do not see the living beings of the world, but instead perceive the shadows they cast. To them, black seems white and darkness light. In sunlight, they suffer a -6 modifier to all Observe tests. At night, the penalty is only -3. When mounted on Black Horses or Hell-hawks, however, the Nazgûl do not suffer from this weakness, as they can instead see the world through the eyes of their mounts. The Lord of the Nazgûl's power is such that he may ignore the drawbacks of Senses of the Dead at will.

### UNDEAD STAMINA

Nazgûl need never eat or drink, take only half damage from physical attacks, and recover from injuries at five times the normal rate. Further, they do not have Weariness Levels and need never make a Stamina test to resist weariness for any reason.

**WRAITHFORM** The Nazgûl are invisible unless they garb themselves. However, their eyes – orbs of evil, red fire – can still be seen at times. Unless a Nazgûl wishes its eyes to be visible, spotting them requires a TN 15 Observe (spot) test.

## DESCRIPTION

The Nazgûl typically wear black, hooded, cloaks and blackened hauberks. Underneath this garb, however, they are insubstantial spirits, their bodies long ago faded with the passage of time and the corrupting influence of Sauron.

Khamûl stands at 6' 3", dark and ominous as his companions. Like all of the Ringwraiths, Khamûl feared common water – knowing that the spirit of Ulmo resided in its sparkling depths. The Easterling's aversion, however, exceeded the trepidations of his brethren, for his Ring of Power magnified the memories and fears of his early life. He also suffered greatly in daylight, more so than his companions. This weakness, however, was offset by his acute senses of smell and hearing.

No one among the Womaw was a better hunter or tracker than Khamûl. Even as a child, he could run like a deer, remaining quiet as he passed through the dark woods of his cool homeland. His sense of smell was exceptional, and half-joking minstrels spoke of his "hound heritage". Somber, solitary, and clever he excelled in contests of stealth and duplicity. These qualities served him well in the face of the complex problems that confronted him as Hionvor, and they made him an admirable choice as the Dark Lord's chief tracker and as the caretaker of Sauron's citadel of Dol Guldur.

Khamûl's Womaw wife Komiis gave birth to three children: a daughter, Womiis, and two sons, Womûl and Komon. Of his three offspring, only Womiis remembered her father.

## HABITAT

The Nazgûl require neither food nor shelter, dwelling effortlessly in any environment to which their master sends them. However, with the exception of the Lord of the Nazgûl, they are more capable at night, so they usually travel or do battle when the shadows are deeper.

## SOCIETY

The Nazgûl are completely devoted to and dominated by the will of Sauron. While the Lord of the Nazgûl is nominally in command of the other eight, his authority is a dim reflection of Sauron's. When the Nazgûl are within a few miles of one another, they can communicate through piercing wails that torture both the eardrums and the souls of living beings.

## USAGE

The Nazgûl are harbingers of doom, sowing fear and reaping terror wherever they may be. Anywhere heroes struggle against the Enemy, his servants may travel to stop them. The Nazgûl are among Sauron's most powerful servants, and a terrible challenge to any but the most powerful heroes. Those who expect to do anything other than avoid their attention or flee before them are certainly near the end of their chronicle, where peril is greatest and the consequences of failure most dire.

## HISTORY

Born at Laeg Goak in easternmost Endor in 1744, Second Age, Komûl was the eldest son of Mûl Tanûl, the High-lord (Wm. "Hionvor") of the Womaw. His mother, Klea-shay, was popular despite her Shay heritage, but died while the young heir was only seven; Tanûl's elven advisor Dardarian reared Komûl and served as his principal advisor until he assumed the throne of Womawas Drus in S.A. 1844. Komûl's relationship with Dardarian corrupted his outlook and

led to his incessant longing for immortality.

As Hionvor and Mûl (Wm. "King") of the Womaw kingdom, Komûl I presided over the strongest realm in eastern Middle-earth. His people had descended from the remnants of the First Tribe of Cuiviënen (Q. "Awakening Water"), the same lineage that produced the Edain of western Endor. Elven blood coursed through the veins of Womaw Hiona (Wm. "Lords;" sing. "Hion"), and their mastery over other men was spurred in part by their longevity. Heavily influenced by the Avari, the Womaw of Komûl's day practiced natural magic and enjoyed the benefit of a rich and practical cultural tradition. Their political and military sophistication enabled them to dominate the eastern coasts of Middle-earth for thousands of years. This hegemony withstood its strongest test during the middle of the Second Age, but Komûl I was lost in the struggle.

The distant Númenorean cousins of the Womaw comprised the only group of men who could challenge the supremacy of Womawas Drus, and as early as S.A. 900, the Dúnedain established trade embassies in Womaw-influenced territories. During the next 650 years, the Númenoreans swayed many of the Womaw's southern neighbors and built fortified colonies in the isles of southern Middle-earth. The Men of Westemnesse forced Womaw concessions and threatened the stability of the eastern kingdom. By the one hundred and fiftieth year of Komûl I's stormy, militaristic reign (S.A. 1994), Womawas Drus appeared resigned to outside domination and many of the Womaw Hiona had disclaimed their allegiance to the High-Lord. Proud and desperate, Komûl sought help elsewhere and turned to his age old ally Dardarian.

Dardarian met Komul at the Isle of Sunrises, at the easternmost point in the Middle Land and there, the advisor seduced the Womaw King with talk of power, alliances, revenge and most importantly, an offer of immortality. Komûl agreed to an alliance between the Womaw and Dardarian's suggested Avar kingdom of Helkanen.

This union led to Númenorean concessions (under the First Acknowledgement) the following year, preventing any outright conquest and relegating the Dúnadan interests to centers of commercial rather than strategic value.

Unfortunately for the Womaw, Dardarian's pact led to the downfall of their Hionvor. Unbeknownst to Komûl I, Dardarian served Sauron of Mordor. In S.A. 1996, only a year after the First Acknowledgement, Komûl accepted the instrument that conferred the gift promised by his advisor. Taking one of the Nine Rings of Men, Komûl became the immortal slave of the Lord of the Rings. His reign over the Womawas Drus ended abruptly.

Komûl I disappeared from Laeg Goak in the spring of S.A. 1997, after nearly seven months of virtual isolation from his people and his court. These seven months were marked by palace intrigue and bloody transition to a new order. Over three dozen of the Hionvor's trusted advisors perished in an urge that nearly ruined the kingdom. The outer Hiona gathered in preparation for a revolt, and Komûl departed in favor of a Númenorean-supported faction led by his cousin Aon. Almost no one in Womawas Drus realized the critical nature of their King's abdication, but Komûl's dethronement probably saved the Womaw from the Shadow. The deposed monarch could do little more than swear a vengeful oath, a curse that he would act upon many millennia later.

### **Khamûl the Ringwraith**

Komûl appeared at Barad-dûr in Mordor around S.A. 2000. He was known thereafter as Khamûl, in accordance with the Black Speech pronunciation of his given name. While at the Dark Tower he served Sauron as the Master of the Hold, and his responsibilities included administering the maintenance of the citadel and its garrison. The wardship remained in his capable hands until S.A. 3350, when Úrzahil of Umbar became the Mouth of Sauron and the Lieutenant of the Tower.

Khamûl fled Mordor when Sauron was captured in S.A. 3262.

Retreating into the East, he first went to Nûrad and, after a brief stay, he proceeded into the Shay until S.A. 3319, cultivating a network of servants whose greed fomented a sundering of the Five Tribes. This corruption continued after Khamûl returned to the Black Land, and by S.A. 3400 Khamûl's agent Monarlan brought three of the tribes under the Shadow.

The Easterling remained in Mordor during the War of the Last Alliance (S.A. 3429-3441), sallying forth only during the campaign in Ithilien that opened the conflict. During the first four and one half years, he resided at Lug Ghurzûn (BS. "Darkland Tower") in eastern Nûrn (BS. "Ghurzûn"); but in S.A. 3434 the army of the Last Alliance of Elves and Men forced its way through Udûn, so Khamûl returned to his Master's side. The Ringwraith stole into Barad-Dûr during the night before the outset of the long siege.

When the Dark Tower fell in S.A. 3441, the Nazgûl met the vanguard of the Elven host and fought a long, brutal melee. Unprotected, Sauron was forced to engage his foes in personal combat. This proved to be his undoing for, although he slew both Elendil the Tall and Gil-galad, the Evil One lost his One Ring (and his ring finger) in the fray, and his spirit passed into the Shadow World.

### The Third Age

With the departure of the Lord of the Rings, the Nine lost the ability to maintain form. They followed the Dark Lord into Shadow as the Second Age ended. Their exile coincided with Sauron's and lasted over a thousand years. The first to return reassumed form in Endor around T.A. 1050, some fifty years after the appearance of the Evil One.

Unlike his brethren, Khamûl briefly took up residence with Sauron at the citadel of Dol Guldur in southern Mirkwood. The Dark Lord

hid behind the guise of the "Necromancer" and slowly rebuilt his strength. Then, about T.A. 1300, he renewed his struggle against the Free Peoples, sending the Witch-king to Angmar in the northwest Misty Mountains in hopes of crushing the successor states of Arnor.

Khamûl left his command of Dol Guldur's garrison upon the departure of the Witch-king, and for the next three hundred and forty years the Easterling lived at Sart and Mang in

Lord was satisfied and ordered the Second of the Úlairi back to Dol Guldur.

Khamûl's arrival coincided with the advent of the Great Plague that ravaged northwest Endor, so for the next four years he stayed in Rhovanion as Sauron's chief servant. He was Keeper of the Hill of Sorcery and remained in residence there until the end of the Watch on Mordor in T.A. 1640. Late that year, he entered the Black land and Began work on rebuilding the Evil One's domain. Three hundred and sixty years later he accompanied the other Nine in the surprise assault against Minas Ithil. Two years later, the Úlairi took the surrounded city for the Dark Lord, capturing the palantir. Minas Ithil became the home of the Ringwraiths and was henceforth called Minas Morgul.

After Gandalf threatened to uncover Sauron's deception as the Necromancer of Dol Guldur, the Dark Lord went into the East. Residing in the Chey Lands, the Lord of the Rings bided his time and expanded his dominion over the Men of eastern Middle-earth. These so-called quiet years in the west constituted the era of the Watchful Peace (T.A. 2063-2460). During this time, the people of Khamûl's mother, the Shay, fell under the Shadow. Khamûl's father's people opposed the Evil One, but they lost most of their kingdom in a series of dire wars. Finally, Khamûl the Easterling left Minas Morgul and returned home to Goak in northeastern Endor. He entered the defeated realm of his forefathers after crushing the Womaw in the snows of Yule, T.A.2400.

Sauron returned to the West three years before Déagol found the lost One Ring at the Gladden Fields. Khamûl followed, having decimated the strength of Womawas Drus. He left the once- splendid lands east of the Orocarni (S. "Red Mountains") in the hands of Sauron's brutal nomadic vassals, and he returned to Minas



the Mountains of the Wind. From these two rocky strongholds, he sought to gain sway over the peoples of southeastern Middle-earth. Often working in unison with Dwar of Waw, Khamûl fought the influences of the Istari Alatar and Pallando and vied with the Blue Wizards for control of the region. His success was only partial but, by T.A. 1635, the Dark

Morgul. During his frequent trips to Dol Guldur, the Easterling continued his close association with the Hill of Sorcery, as well as his relative independence from the Lord of Morgul. On one such visit during Sauron's last stay at Dol Guldur (T.A. 2460-2941), Khamûl's warriors captured the Dwarf-lord Thráin II and took his Ring of Power. From T.A. 2845 to T.A. 2850, the Easterling tortured his Dwarven captive, but during the last year of his imprisonment Thráin II gave Gandalf the key to the side entry into Erebor (S. "Lonely Mountain"). The failure of the citadel's guard to stop the Grey Wizard's covert entry – coupled with Khamûl's inability to derive concessions from the Dwarf-king – led the Dark Lord to chastise the Ringwraith, but the Easterling remained one of Sauron's four most powerful servants (the others being the Witch-king, Gothmog, and the Mouth of Sauron).

In anticipation of the White Council's attack on the Hill of Sorcery, the Evil One briefly abandoned his hold in southern Mirkwood in T.A. 2941, retreating home to Barad-Dûr. From that time onward, he stepped up his search for the Ruling Ring and labored to prepare for the conquest of the West. Ten years later, Sauron felt comfortable enough to openly declare himself once again and, following his proclamation, he ordered his minions to reopen Dol Guldur. Khamûl went northward to the Hill of Sorcery with Adûnaphel, where he kept watch on Rhovanion and, more importantly, Lorien. He communicated with the Dark Lord via Úvatha, the ninth Nazgûl and the Easterling's chosen envoy. The Witch-king and the other five of the Nine stayed in Minas Morgul, awaiting the coming conflagration.

War clouds gathered quickly and loomed ready to break by T.A. 3017. Then came the catalyst – the capture of the Stoor Gollum (Sméagol) in Mordor. Sauron learned little of immediate value, but realized the worth of the fallen Hobbit, knowing that Gollum's insatiable quest for the One Ring would eventually lead him to his long lost prize. The Dark Lord's plan went awry, though, when Gollum fell into the hands of the Ranger Aragorn. Seeing the threat presented by his enemies' discovery of the Ruling Ring, Sauron resolved to act before a rival could come to the fore.

In the late spring of T.A. 3018, the Witch-king and the Nazgûl occupying

Minas Morgul led an army down the Ithilduin Valley and into Ithilien. Their foray swept away the few Gondorian defenders that stood vigil over the ruins of Osgiliath, and the servants of Mordor broke the giant bridge that spanned the mighty Anduin. Despite the surprise and fury of the onslaught, however, Gondor's army gathered on the western side of the Great River, standing firm against any further advance.

As the battle raged in Ithilien, Khamûl and Adûnaphel led the Orcs of Dol Guldur against Thranduil's Elf-kingdom in northern Mirkwood. Their plan was to crush the Silvan Elves and capture Gollum but the scale of their assault proved to be too modest to afford any significant victory. As the Elves melted northward through the wood, they inflicted tremendous losses on Khamûl's underlings.

Sauron tested his enemies with a two-pronged offensive, but his ultimate purpose was to conceal the further exploits of his Ringwraiths. The Evil One hoped to tie his armies' movements to those of the Nine, thereby misleading the leaders of the Free Peoples. Within weeks, the Nine gathered for their principal mission and set out across the Anduin in search of the Hobbit that held the Ruling Ring.

Khamûl rode with the other eight Black Riders up the Nan Anduin in hope of finding the Shire near the Gladden Fields. Unfortunately, their quest proved to be a time-consuming detour, for they found only ruins of an ancient Stoor settlement, together with a few abandoned homes that had enjoyed recent use. They failed to find the Shire, but realized that it must be in Eriador. Turning southward, they skirted Lorien and rode through Rohan and past Isengard. Their search took them to Tharbad and up the Greenway to the crossroads that served as the junction with the road to the land of the Hobbits. There, Khamûl, Adûnaphel, and Hoarmûrath split from the main party and rode toward the Iach Sarn (S. "Stone Ford;" also "Athrad Sarn") and on to Sackville. The Witch-king and the other Riders went directly north toward Andrath and Bree.

Khamûl's party crossed paths with the Hobbits in the Green Hill Country and the Easterling's keen sense of smell nearly uncovered Frodo's hiding place below the road, but the halflings escaped and the three Riders did not see them

again until the encounter at the Bruinen Ford. Although Khamûl and his companions tracked them through Buckland (where they entered the Bolger yard in Crickhollow), they failed to run down the elusive Hobbits.

The Easterling's party joined Úvatha on the road east of Bree and rode toward the Lone Lands, where they met the other five Ringwraiths. Racing the Company in hope of cutting them off from the safety of Rivendell, the Riders found their prey at the banks of the Bruinen. There Khamûl avoided the initial rush of the waters summoned by Elrond; however, his horse panicked like the others and died in the gushing stream.

Following the debacle near Rivendell, Khamûl and Adûnaphel returned to Dol Guldur and prepared for the war. Their orders were simple, but their mission was ambitious: Sauron charged the Orcs of the Naked Hill with the task of crushing the Elf-kingdom in Lorien and northern Mirkwood. Both assaults failed, forcing Khamûl and Adûnaphel to retire back to Mordor just before the Battle of Morannon.

The Witch-king died on the Pelennor Fields, and Khamûl assumed leadership over the other Fell Riders during their airborne attack against the Army of the Free Peoples. Battling the Great Eagles above the chaos that gripped the barren slag-fields outside of the Gates of Mordor, Khamûl faced Gwaihir himself – only to turn in apparent retreat. Sauron's orders to stop Frodo and Sam from destroying the One Ring in Mount Doom took precedence over any challenge, and the Easterling was forced to lead his fellow Ringwraiths on a fruitless flight to save the Lord of the Rings. Gwaihir gave pursuit but, with the destruction of the Ruling Ring, there was no need for further combat. Khamûl and his brethren passed outside of Éa with their fallen Master.

*Over the next nine issues of The Hall of Fire, I am going to be expanding upon the known background of each of the nine Ringwraiths and "fleshing" them out. For some of you, parts of this information will be familiar as it was first presented by ICE/MERP in their Lords of Middle-earth Supplement. Understand it is in no way our intention at the Hall of Fire, to turn our webzine into a re-hash of old ICE/MERP material. But our publication is meant, for all purposes, to broaden the sources beyond canon that our readers can turn to or discard if they do not wish to put it in their game.*



# FEATURED CREATURES

## CADOC'S MINIONS

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 10 (+2), Perception 8 (+1), Vitality 9 (+1), Wits 11 (+2)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +1, Swiftiness +4, Willpower +4, Wisdom +3

**DEFENCE:** 13

**SKILLS:** Intimidate (Fear) +9

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Icy Touch, Undead Stamina, Vulnerability (Sunlight), Incorporeal, Invulnerable (to physical harm), Beguile, Illusions

**HEALTH:** 9

**SIZE:** Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

### UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

**ICY TOUCH** – These spirit's chill and deadly touch causes a victim to lose 2 points of Strength and Vitality each round of contact. When either attribute reaches 0, the victim falls unconscious for 2d6x10 minutes. Lost points are regained at the rate of 1 in each attribute per 10 minutes – or in full when the victim awakens or upon the application of a *Healing Spell*.

Even though the spirit has no physical body, it must still make a test against the victim's Defence rating using its Swiftiness modifier. On a success they may then drain – the victim feeling it as a cold an eerie presence.

**UNDEAD STAMINA** – The minion need never eat nor drink, is invulnerable to physical attacks, and heals all injuries at five times the normal rate. Further, the minion does not have Weariness Levels and need never make a Stamina test to resist Weariness for any reason.

**VULNERABILITY** – When exposed to the sunlight, the minion suffers 1d6 damage per round until it can either return to darkness or perish.

**INCORPOREAL** – The minion has no physical or visible form except its two soft glowing white eyes – even these can be hidden if it wishes.

**INVULNERABLE** – The minion is completely invulnerable to any physical harm whatsoever.

**BEGUILE** – The minion can make a Contest of Wills against the victim as stated in the Core Rule book (page 222) – *except Willpower is used for both contestants*. If successful, the victim is susceptible to any given command from the minion (*except any that would cause self-destruction*). The minion will use its illusion power in tandem with this ability and make



the beguilement more effective. It is in this way that a minion can have a person walk off a precipice to their death – the illusion hides the apparent danger so an order is obeyed.

The minion will be able to beguile a victim for 10 minutes per point of Bearing. The victim may be freed in one of three ways: 1) a self-destructive order is given, 2) a *Voice of Command* spell is cast, 3) a Persuade test is made by another character (TN is equal to the minion's Bearing plus his Willpower).

**ILLUSIONS** – The minion is able to create illusions. This is treated as the spell *Shadows and Phantoms* as if it were an ability. Any character that is *beguiled* may not make any Wisdom tests to dispel any illusion created by a minion; otherwise they may be dispelled as stated in the spell description. A minion may make one illusion for each point of Willpower it has, per day.

### DESCRIPTION

The Minions of Cadoc are nothing more than luminous globes of insidious evil. These spirits are akin to Cadoc though they are not as powerful. They reside with their master and do his bidding. There are a total of 11 minions but a Narrator need not use them all if his player characters are not advanced enough.

# MARSH GHOULS

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 10 (+2), Nimbleness 8 (+1)\*, Perception 6 (+0), Strength 9 (+1)\*, Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 7 (+0)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +3\*, Swiftsness +3, Willpower +2, Wisdom +2

**DEFENCE:** 11

**MOVEMENT:** 6

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Blade of the Bog) +5, Intimidate (Fear) +4, Language: Understand Westron +3, Language: Understand Black Speech +3, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Bog Bow) +5, Stealth (Hide) +6

**EDGES:** Accurate (Short Bow) or Weapon Mastery (choose)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Camouflage, Marsh Weapons, Swamp Armour, Undead Stamina

**SIZE:** Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

**HEALTH:** 9

**COURAGE:** 2

**RENOWN:** 0

**TN EQUIVALENT:** 10

## UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

**MARSH WEAPONS** If the ghoulish is disarmed, taking a full round, it may rearm itself by reaching into the swamp and pulling out a new weapon. The disarmed weapon dissolves back into swamp muck. Arrows, made of rotting wood, are very brittle and break after they are spent.

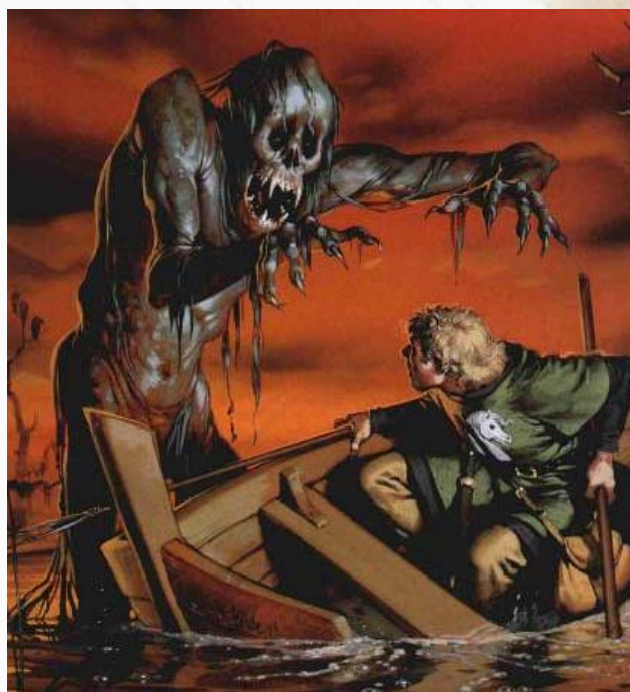
**Marsh Blade:** Scimitar, 2d6+4/+1, poisoned (see below)

**Bog Bow:** Short Bow, 5/20/45/90/+20, arrows poisoned

**BLOOD OF THE BOG (POISON)** This black ooze is the concentrated poisons and evil of the swamps inhabited by these creatures. Its effects sap the energy of the person and begin to decompose her body.

<b>Type:</b>	Injury
<b>Onset:</b>	1 minute
<b>Potency:</b>	+7 (TN 12)
<b>Treatment:</b>	+10 (TN 15)
<b>Effect:</b>	1d6 Vitality, 2 Bearing (Primary) 1 Vitality, 1 Bearing (Secondary)

**Stages:** Every minute until neutralized or if both person's Vitality and Bearing reach 0, her body dissolves into swamp muck. Once this happens, roll 2d6 on the table below:



### Effects After Decomposition

- 2: Nothing
- 3: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 rounds
- 4: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 minutes
- 5: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 hours
- 6: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 2d6 hours
- 7: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 days
- 8: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 2d6 hours
- 9: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 hours
- 10: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 minutes
- 11: Re-animates as marsh ghoulish in 1d6 rounds
- 12: Nothing

**SWAMP ARMOUR** Marsh ghoulish wear scavenged armour from the fallen around their habitat. Regardless of the type, it has an AR of 5.

## DESCRIPTION

The marsh ghoulish is a Fell-spirit that inhabits the rotting corpse of a mortal who has fallen in an evil and fetid swamp. After enough damage has been dealt to the marsh ghoulish, it shudders and bursts asunder, collapsing back to the ground as bog slime.

## HISTORY

As long as there has been war, marsh ghoulish have existed in the world. They harry the living out of hate and for a need to

increase their numbers. The Dead Marshes between the Morannon and Eryn Mui is where an abundance of these foul monstrosities can be found.

## HABITAT

Marsh ghouls are the putrid bi-products of being in a swamp near a site of intense evil or where a great battle occurred.

## SOCIETY

They have no society.

## USAGE

The Marsh Ghoul's single-minded purpose and ease of control by Bog-Wights make them great physical adversaries against a party who happens to travel in the Dead Marshes or any of the other swamp, bog, or marshland of Middle Earth.

# BLACK SQUIRRELS OF MIRKWOOD

"There were black squirrels in the wood. As Bilbo's sharp inquisitive eyes got used to seeing things he could catch glimpses of them whisking off the path and scuttling behind tree-trunks."

*-The Hobbit*

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 3 (-1), Nimbleness 12 (+3), Perception 7 (+0), Strength 2 (-2), Vitality 5 (+0), Wits 2 (-2)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +0, Swiftsness +3, Willpower -1, Wisdom +0

**DEFENCE:** 13

**MOVEMENT:** 6

**SKILLS:** Climb +10, Language: Understand Westron +2, Language: Understand Sindarin +2, Language: Understand Black Speech +3, Observe (Hear, Spot) +4, Search +6, Stealth (Sneak) +5, Survival (Forests) +5

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Natural Weapon (bite, ½-d6)

**SIZE:** Little (3 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

**HEALTH:** 3

**COURAGE:** 0

**RENOWN:** 0

**TN EQUIVALENT:** 5

## DESCRIPTION

With smooth black fur and dark, watchful eyes, the Black Squirrels serve as Sauron's small and secretive eyes and ears. Whenever they spy something of interest, they will quickly return to their master, whether it is The Necromancer himself in Dol Guldur, or a Nazgûl. Oftentimes, they are routinely summoned every few nights to report. Doing their master's bidding, the squirrels travail the whole length of the forest, observing what travelers do and where they are going. The squirrels in particular are charged with spying on the movement of the Mirkwood Elves, and their reconnaissance is invaluable in anticipating enemy attacks.

## HISTORY

When Sauron first made Mirkwood his home he recruited many creatures as his servants. Few are as sly and stealthy as the black squirrels. With dark magics such as Enslave Beast, he twisted regular squirrels to do his bidding and act as his spies. Giving them the power to understand the speech of those on two-legs, he ensured that his spies would be able to gain valuable information about the Free Peoples. When the White Council drove Sauron, disguised as The Necromancer, from Dol Guldur in 2941 TA he lost his direct contact with the black squirrels. Years later, in his stead, his Nazgûl lieutenants took up command of the squirrels, using their

dark speech alone to communicate with the squirrels and have them do the Ringwraiths' bidding.

## HABITAT

Black squirrels are a product of dark magics from long ago. These same magics helped darken the forest of Greenwood the Great, turning it into the shadowy haunt, which is now called Mirkwood. The squirrels that were created long ago have since bred and multiplied, populating the forest with spies that serve Sauron and his minions. Not all black squirrels directly serve Sauron, though it is known by the Wise that many black squirrels are indeed the eyes and ears of the enemy. Their normal habits

include all those of a normal squirrel, but in addition they regularly scout the forest for anything worth reporting to their masters. When not spying, they can be found eating roots and nuts, and dwelling in the trees performing natural functions.

## SOCIETY

The black squirrels mentioned here whom directly serve the Enemy do so not out of their own free will, but out of years of domination. Because of this, they are loyal servants who would do anything for their masters. They will communicate with one another in order to work in teams to spy upon travelers, or will act in solitude, keeping to the shadows to gather information. Whatever the case,

their goal is only to spy, and report. They will avoid danger at all costs, and will not attack or harass adventurers unless cornered. An adventurer who would try to communicate with one through Beast Speech or normal coaxing will find them devious and secretive, and they will try to avoid such situations. If an enterprising group forces the creature to speak through magic or some other trick, the squirrel might reveal small information such as that he serves a "greater master," and that his master's lair is in Dol Guldur, but beyond that the squirrel has little capacity for answering questions. It simply takes in information, and passes it along to his masters, not aware of much more than this.

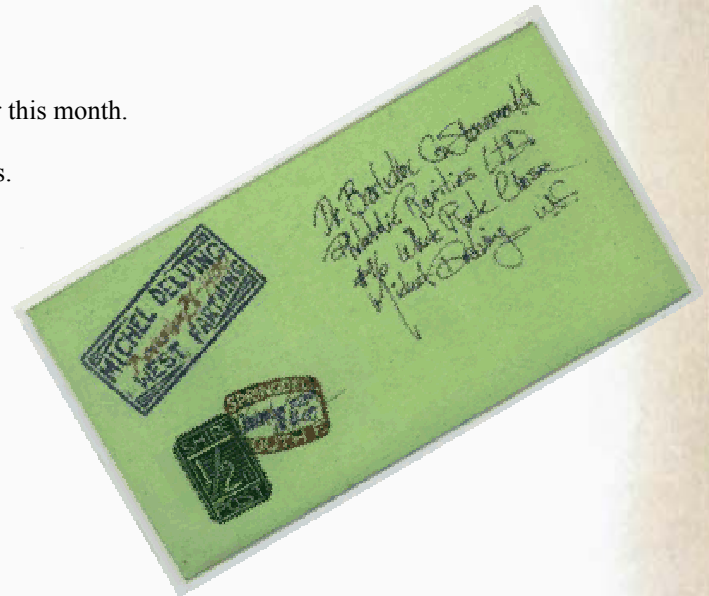
## USAGE

These spies are very useful tools of the Enemy. An adventuring fellowship that is working directly against that Shadow could find their movements being watched at every turn by the black squirrels, and before they know it an enemy from Dol Guldur could come to track the heroes down. Besides this obvious threat, the squirrels are also disturbing in that most travelers are not aware that the squirrels spy for the Enemy. Because of this, many characters might ignore their presence or simply consider it just another dark mystery of Mirkwood. A TN 10 Lore: Realm (Mirkwood) test would reveal that these squirrels are rumored to be spies for the Enemy.

# POSTMASTER

There have been no reader questions or comments to be posted for this month.

We look forward to your comments and questions for future issues.



# CALLING ALL GAMERS!

*Interested in submitting...*

- A mini or side adventure?
- Racial/Personal Development or Order/Professional Development packages?
- New creatures, or fell beasts?
- New Orders or Elite Orders?
- NPC's?
- Weapons, equipment, or magical items?
- Fan Art?

If so, write to us for details on submission at: [codawebzine@hotmail.com](mailto:codawebzine@hotmail.com) with “**Fan Content**” in the subject line. Please include your name and/or pseudonym (handle/online identity) and email address(es) with which one of our editors may contact you.

Please note that if you would like to submit a mini-adventure, Decipher will not consider it for publishing. Please do not directly submit your items to us without prior approval.

*Fancy yourself a writer and would like to contribute to the webzine?*

If so, write to us at [codawebzine@hotmail.com](mailto:codawebzine@hotmail.com) with “**Writer**” in the subject line. One of the editors will get back to you with details about writing for **THE HALL OF FIRE**.

*If you would like to post an advertisement for:*

- A local or online RPG that you are hosting
- An RPG convention or tournament
- Or any events pertaining to The *Lord of the Rings* RPG or Star Trek RPG by Decipher

Write to us at [codawebzine@hotmail.com](mailto:codawebzine@hotmail.com) with “**Ad**” in the subject line along with your advertisement. The advertisement is to be less than 100 words and a graphic to go with it no more than 1" x 1"

## 2004 DECIPHER CONVENTION CALENDAR

Updated 3-1-04

Spring is almost here, and that means convention season is upon us! Check out the shows listed below that Decipher will be attending, and make your plans to join us at one or more for demos, tournaments, special guests, the Decipher Convention Store, and of course, DecipherCon at Gen Con Indy.

We'll add more information on each convention as it becomes available. Check back often for updates on what's happening on the Decipher convention front!

Dates	Convention	Location
June 24-27	Origins International Game Fair	Columbus, OH
July 21-25	Comic-Con International	San Diego, CA
August 13-15	Wizard World Chicago	Chicago, IL
<b>August 19-22</b>	<b>Gen Con Indy / DecipherCon 2004</b>	<b>Indianapolis, IN</b>
October 21-24	Spiel '04 / World Cup (Oct 20-23)	Essen, Germany

In addition, look for Decipher and the .hack//ENEMY TCG at the Bandai booth at these anime shows:

Dates	Anime Show	Location
May 28-31	Fanime	Santa Clara, CA
June 4-6	Project A-kon	Dallas, TX
July 2-5	Anime Expo	Long Beach, CA
July 30-August 1	Otakon	Baltimore, MD
September 24-26	Anime Weekend Atlanta	Atlanta, GA

# WHAT'S OUT THERE

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This is a list of websites along with Decipher's official websites. We have found they supply useful information to *Lord of the Rings* gamers.

## DECIPHER'S LORD OF THE RINGS RPG HOME

<http://decipher.com/lordoftherings/rpg/index.html>

## DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG BOARD

<http://calder.decipher.com/cgi-bin/msgbd?lotr-rpg>

## DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG SUPPORT DOCS

<http://decipher.com/lordoftherings/rpg/support/index.html>

## THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE SITE

<http://home.bellsouth.net/p/pwp-lotrwebzine>

## FAN MODULES FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules>

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS CODA RPG GROUP

[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lotrrpg\\_coda](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lotrrpg_coda)

## THE MAD IRISHMAN

<http://www.mad-irishman.net>

## RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rpgtools/>

## THE SLAVE PITTS OF BARAD-DUR

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/smaugrob/lotrmain.html>

## THE STEWARD AND THE KING

<http://www.stewardandking.net>

## THE TOWER HILLS

<http://homepage.mac.com/jeremybaker/towerhills>

## TREK-RPG.NET

<http://forum.trek-rpg.net>

## VALINOR

<http://sauron.misled.us>

# CREDITS AND CONTACTS

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