

THE HALL OF FIRE FAN WEBZINE

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Gollum by New Line



GREETINGS,

SALUTATIONS... HELLO ALL!

To start things off this issue, I'd like to introduce you to one of two new staff writers for *The Hall of Fire*: Camdin. She has provided us and you with some interesting content to consider for your games and hopes to continue to do so on a more regular basis. Without further adieu...

Matthew A. Kearns
aka GandalfOfBorg
Editor

Hello, my name is Erica Balsley. I am the new staff writer for the Hall of Fire. I've been a role-playing enthusiast for about 23 years, starting as so many others in my age group did with Advanced Dungeons and Dragons in the early 1980s. In the ensuing years I've played MERP and Rolemaster, Call of Cthulhu, Elfquest, various Palladium games, Marvel Superheroes, Powers and Perils, and more than a few homebrew systems. More recently, I returned to Dungeons and Dragons with the release of 3e, and, of course, your favourite and mine: the *Lord of the Rings* game by Decipher.

If my name looks familiar, then you're probably a fan of Necromancer Games - I am a staff d20 Content Editor for that company, and my name appears in the credits of several of their books that were published between 2000 and the present. I suppose the most famous book in which I took part was the Tome of Horrors, a big book of updated First Edition monsters as well as quite a few originals.

Oh, and if you want to chat with me on the Decipher forum, my member name there is "Camdin," named after one of my first MERP characters, a Sylvan Elf thief.

I'm happy to be a part of the *Hall of Fire*, and look forward to helping bring new ideas to the game.

Erica Balsley
aka Camdin
Staff Writer

THE MRKKY:FN:CA HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

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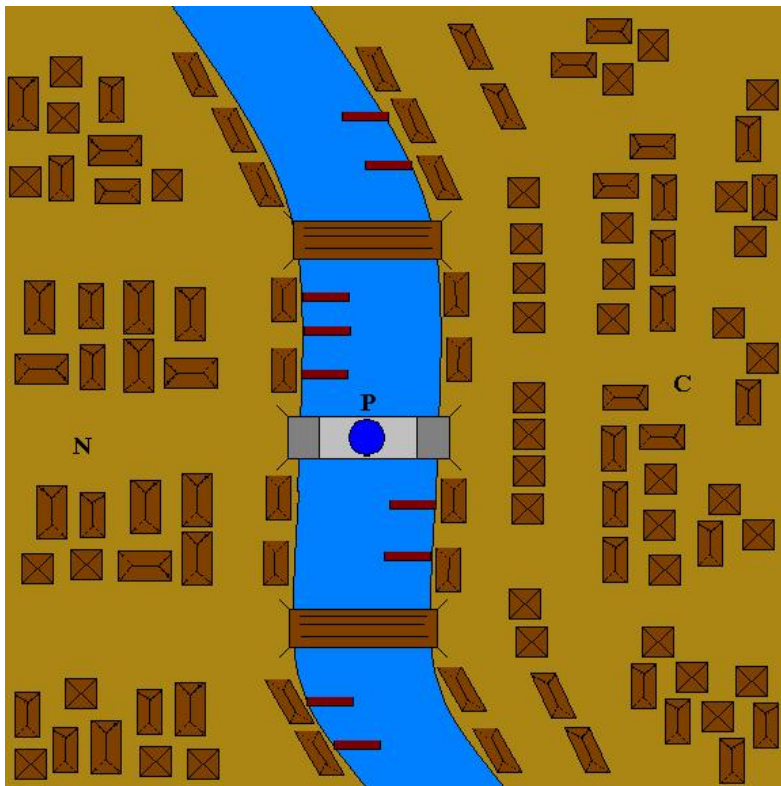
ADVENTURING IN

THE CITY OF OSGILIATH

The 'Fortress of the Stars' that was the central and chief city of Gondor during its early years, Osgiliath was largely deserted after the plague of the mid-Third Age, and lay in ruins at the time of the War of the Ring. 'Fortress of the Stars' is a particular reference to the 'Dome of Stars' that stood in the heart of the city.

Beneath the dome's starred vault, the chief palantír of the South-kingdom and all palantíri was kept here for about 1500 years. While most of the palantíri were small and portable, the Stone of Osgiliath was much larger and could not be lifted by a Man. During the early reign of Eldacar, a rebellion arose that came to be known as the Kin-strife. During this civil war, the city of Osgiliath was besieged and burned by the rebels, and the stone was lost into the deep waters of Anduin.

After it was deserted, Osgiliath became a hotly contested piece of land that was long garrisoned by the forces of Gondor against the armies of Mordor and Minas Morgul. Back and forth ground was given up and taken, further destroying the city on the east side to almost rubble. While the forces of Gondor held the city, they had control of the bridges, the key defense against an outright invasion, that also gave them the ability to sneak in and out the Rangers of Ithilien, Gondor's elite forces, to waylay and harry shipments of goods, equipment, and men in and out of Mordor along the South Road. In the final days of the war with Mordor, the armies of the Enemy led by the Witch-king crossed the river even after the bridges were cut and struck down the resistance at the Rammas Echor.



NOTABLE FEATURES

Dome of Stars

At the height of the city, this structure was the wonder of the land. On tall stone pillars was supported an enormous dome of crystal with many facets that captured the light of the stars on moonless nights and illuminated the entire rooftop of the palace where the Palantir of Osgiliath lay. It is also here that many of the court astronomers and many kings, queens, and royal families would come to gaze upon the heavens in quiet contemplation or marvel at the dome's beauty.

Palace of Osgiliath (P)

Before the Kin-strife and subsequent battles with Mordor and Minas Morgul, Osgiliath was also the capital seat of Gondor. The amazing palace that resided at the center of the city held a vast library of unique texts that managed to survive the destruction of Númenor, while many others also were sent to the library of Annúminas. It also was the place where stood the Dome of Stars atop it. The palace was constructed on supports and platforms in a vast archway and bridge over the Anduin. Being the symbol of the kingdom and power of the true kings of Gondor, it was one of the first buildings destroyed in the Kin-strife.

District of the Nobles (N)

Because the Númenoreans, above all Men, hold the West in much greater reverence, the western side of the river (closest to Minas Anor) is considered it a symbol of status and most desirable place to live. It had the better maintained streets and least amount of crime, but it also was on the other side of the river opposite of Mordor. The streets were strategically laid out so as to facilitate supporting forces to defend the city and allowing for a quick evacuation at the same time.



Common District (C)

This part of the city was on the eastern side of Anduin. Crime was higher here and the streets less faithfully maintained than the western side. Part of the reason for this is to hamper progress through the city by an enemy force, but it also tended to hamper trade from Ithilien and the south into the city and on to Minas Anor. It wasn't until a couple of decades before the Kin-strife that some reorganization was made to ease transportation through this district to the bridges and beyond.

The Outlays

This part of the city really isn't the city per se, but the nearby farming and grazing lands of both the wealthy and commoner. The more expensive land was that closer to the city where hands were hired from the Common District to tend to the crops and animals. Those who lived and tilled on the very furthest outskirts had to bring there goods in by wagon or, if they were fortunate enough to have access to the river, boat their goods and animals to the markets.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

Second Age

- Assist in finding a good site for the new Númenorean capital for the South Kingdom.
- Help protect the settlement and burgeoning city against the increasing threat from Mordor.
- Scout out and surveil the land for both signs of the Enemy and potential areas for building roads to establish trade routes in the region.

Third Age

- Defend the city against raiding men from the East or orcs from Mordor or Minas Morgul.
- Lead a party of Rangers across the river into Ithilien to waylay orc raiding parties, reinforcements from the South, and spy upon Mordor.
- Navigate the intrigue and politics of Gondor's nobility while trying to prevent (the eventual) civil war.

Fourth Age

- Assist in the rebuilding of the city
- Search for the lost palantir in and around the waters of Anduin the Great.
- Reestablish trade routes to and from the city to the rest of western Middle-earth.



IT'S ALL OPTIONAL

SUPPLEMENTAL HEALING RULES

by Jim 'Ineti' Johnson

This article provides additional material for use in your *Lord of the Rings* chronicles, especially in those chronicles where at least one player character or supporting character makes use of healing-related skills or is of the Healer elite order.

Healing-related Subskills and Skill Specialties

The *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core book lists just a few subskills and skill specialties for healing-related skills. The versatility of the game system, coupled with the rule for awarding skill affinities (page 118 of the core book), should encourage you to select many related skills for your healer character, even if some of the skills seem redundant. The affinity bonus, while small, could prove to be the edge you need to succeed.

Following is a list of additional subskills and skill specialties related to healing for the Craft, Healing, and Lore skills. Consult with your Narrator before selecting any of these subskills or specialties to ensure he or she will allow them in your chronicle.

Craft Subskills and Specialties

- Craft: Herbalism (Medicinal, Poison)
- Craft: Midwivery (Specific race)
- Craft: Animal Care (Specific animal)

Healing Specialties

Healing (Herbal Remedies, Identify/Treat Injury, Identify/Treat Poisons, Identify/Treat Diseases, Midwivery, specific race, specific realm, specific animal)

Lore Subskills and Specialties

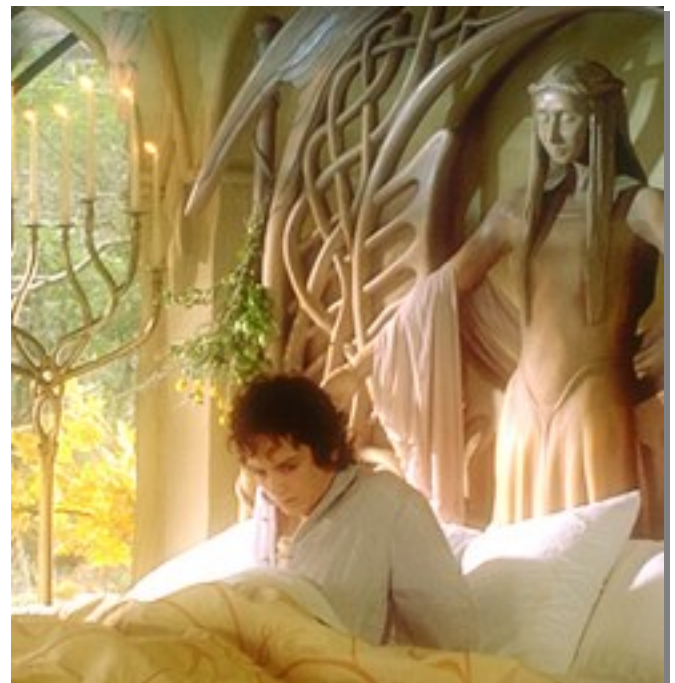
- Lore: Herbalism (Medicinal, Poison)
- Lore: Medicine (Herbal Remedies, specific race, specific realm, specific animal, specific disease or ailment)
- Lore: Specific animal (Healing)

Advanced Medical Treatment

Page 248 of the core rulebook discusses the idea that certain locations (Rivendell, the Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith, and Lórien) grant a +5 bonus to a healer attempting a Healing test at that location. Following are several more locations that could provide a bonus to those practicing the curative craft. Alternatively, a Narrator could allow a character possessing lore gathered from these locations, in the form of tomes or scrolls, to have the same bonus while the healer is in the field.

Dwarven Archives: Most Dwarven settlements had at least one storehouse full of tomes, some possibly related to medicine and herb-lore. A character making a healing-related test armed with such knowledge gains a +2 test result bonus.

Meduseld Archives: The Golden Hall of Meduseld, the capital of Rohan, contains a handful of useful tomes and scrolls. One such tome contains much of the medical lore Rohan has gathered over the ages, some of which is particularly relevant to horse and animal care. A character making a healing-related test using this lore gains a +2 test result bonus unless he is treating an animal, in which case the bonus is increased to +4.





Orthanc: Saruman the White possesses a great store of knowledge and lore in his dark tower at Isengard, even lore related to the healing arts. A character somehow able to enter the tower and make use of the knowledge there to aid in a healing-related test gains a +4 test result bonus

Rhosgobel: The home of Radagast the Brown, a renowned sage of herbs and medicinal lore. Many books of his collected learnings are available here. A character making a healing-related test while at Rhosgobel gains a +3 test result bonus.

Other Archives or Tomes: There are other tomes and locations scattered throughout Middle-earth that may also provide a slight bonus to a character performing healing-related tests. Places such as the Shire, Rhûn, Umbar, and Harad may contain books or other information that could provide a +1 to +3 test result bonus, depending on the Narrator's desires. Indeed, there are no doubt countless tomes considered lost that are waiting for an enterprising or desperate healer to recover and use.

MAGIC RINGS by Erica 'Camdin' Balsley

“There are many magic rings in this world, Bilbo Baggins, and none of them should be used lightly!”

—Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Ring movie

At first sight magic rings appear to be normal pieces of masterwork jewelry. Some have inscriptions or are jewel-encrusted, but most are just simple bands of gold or silver or adamant or even mithril. The circle that is the ring itself binds magic into the very material of the ring, holding it there and keeping it for all eternity. As the magic swirls around in the circle, so, too, it flows into the hand of anyone that puts the ring on his finger and knows how to access it.

The most famous ring-makers of Middle-earth are Sauron (in the guise of Annatar) and Celebrimbor who, with Sauron's assistance, crafted the three rings of the Elves. After the fall of Sauron and the ruination at the end of the Second Age, the art of ring-making was thought to be lost. Indeed, Gandalf made a point to note that Saruman was wearing a ring, and was taken aback when he called himself 'Saruman the Ring-Maker.' However the fact that Saruman was able to learn the craft of ring-making points to the fact that perhaps the art was not lost after all. The secrets of ring-making may be locked in ancient archives, and although none of the Wise know the craft there might still be Elves who learned it from Celebrimbor and still practice it in hidden enclaves. The ruins of Ost-In-Edhel might also contain journals or manuals detailing the processes involved in ring-craft. Other magic rings no doubt still lie in hidden treasure troves or rest on the fingers of skilled Magicians.

Rings of Power, such as the Three or the Nine or the One are beyond the scope of this article. Set down here are only guidelines for use by Narrators to design minor magic rings with limited abilities. Although magic rings of any kind are far from common in Middle-earth, there must be enough to not arouse too much suspicion from the Wise when one appears on someone's finger. Case in point: Gandalf barely batted an eye when he found out that Bilbo Baggins had discovered a ring that turned him invisible. He was more upset at Bilbo for having misled him about how he escaped the Goblin Gate than he was about any magic rings. For that to be so, Gandalf must have known that minor magic rings existed and could be found if one looked in the right (or wrong!) places. If magic rings were uncommon or generally thought to be mythical, his reaction to Bilbo's story would have been considerably stronger than it was in *The Hobbit*.

Activating Magic Rings

Rings with powers that are in effect for as long as they are worn are generally considered more powerful than those that require 'activation.' Activating a ring's power requires 1 action as the wearer concentrates on the ring and brings the magic forth. Once activated, the power of the ring goes into effect and lasts for a certain duration as given in the ring descriptions below. After the duration has expired, the power must be reactivated for it to provide further benefit. Deactivating the power is a free action and ends the effects of the power immediately. Regardless of the number of magic rings worn, only the power of one ring may be used at any given time.

Magic rings that are in effect for as long as they are worn do not need to be activated. They are automatically activated when the wearer puts it on his finger, and its effects are constant until the ring is removed.

Characters using Sense Power can detect an active magic ring with a successful TN 15 Observe (Sense Power) test. A Superior Success or better tells the observer whether or not the ring is Corrupt. The only way to determine what a particular magic ring can do is through trial and error. If a magic ring is named or has a history, it can be researched and its power discovered in places of great lore such as Rivendell or the libraries of Minas Tirith. The TN for such research is left to the Narrator.



Types of Magic Rings

A magic ring can have one of many powers. Select one power from the following list.

- **A Single Spell:** Generally thought to be the most powerful, this type of minor magic ring provides its wearer with the ability to cast a single spell even if the wearer lacks the Spellcasting ability or otherwise doesn't know the spell. The normal casting time of the spell must pass before the wearer gains the benefit of the spell. The wearer does not have to gesture or speak to activate the spell within the ring, but he must make a Weariness test as if he had cast the spell. On a failure, the ring's spell does not activate and the wearer gains a level of Weariness. He need not gesture or speak, however. All other effects of the spell are as per the description of the spell, as calculated from the attributes of the wearer of the ring. Some magic rings of this type were crafted with an additional *Word of Command* spell, which enhances the power of the spell within the ring. The wearer does not have to activate the *Word of Command* spell, but the Weariness TN to activate the ring is 13 (the same TN as the *Word of Command* spell).
- **A Skill Test Result Bonus:** Some minor magic rings help the wearer perform certain tasks or gives them a slight magical boost to certain skills. Such rings provide a +1, +2, or +3 test result bonus to a single skill and specialty. A *ring of sight*, for example, provides a test result bonus to Observe (Spot) tests, while a *swordsman's ring* would provide a bonus to Armed Combat Blades (Longsword) tests. The power of a ring of this type normally has a duration of 1d6+6 minutes. The duration is rolled by the Narrator at the time the ring is first used by a character and does not change; once rolled the duration for that power is set for that ring.
- **A Reaction Bonus:** Other minor magic rings provide a +1, +2, or +3 bonus to a single type of Reaction test. Such rings include a *ring of swiftness*, which helps when dodging enemy attacks, or a *ring of willpower* which helps stave off the effects of fear and the *Command* spell. The power of a ring of this type normally has a duration of 1d6+6 minutes. The duration is rolled by the Narrator at the time the ring is first used by a character and does not change; once rolled the duration for that power is set for that ring.
- **An Edge:** Although they are rare, there are some minor magic rings that provide the wearer with the benefits of an edge while it is active. The wearer need not meet the normal requisites for the edge; the requisites are automatically assumed to be met by the magic of the ring itself. Not all edges are appropriate for inclusion into a minor magic ring, so the Narrator should use his better judgment when designing rings of this type. The power of a ring of this type normally has a duration of 1d6+6 minutes. The duration is rolled by the Narrator at the time the ring is first used by a character and does not change; once rolled the duration for that power is set for that ring.

Corrupt Rings

If the crafter of a magic ring was Corrupt or the ring utilizes a Sorcery spell then it is a Corrupt ring. In addition, a magic ring crafted with malicious or greedy intent may be Corrupt as well regardless of whether or not its maker has any Corruption. Corruption tests for corrupt rings should be made every time:

- the ring is put on
- there is an attempt to take it off (+5 TN)
- uses or benefits from the ring's powers, except in the case of orders or some edges and abilities (Narrator's discretion) i.e. casts a spell, makes a skill, reaction, or attribute test, etc. (Note: One can use a ring containing a Sorcery counter-spell without risking Corruption as per the normal rules for counter-spells on page 170 of the *Lord of the Rings core rulebook*.)

The effects of a Corrupt ring depend upon the whims of the Narrator, but the use of it should have dire circumstances on the wearer. The ring might subconsciously urge its wearer to use it, or tempt the wearer in some other way so as to cause Corruption. Giving into the temptation causes Corruption as per the rules set down on pages 234-235 of the *Lord of the Rings core rulebook*.

Sample Magic Rings

Ring of Beast Speech: A ring of beast speech allows the wearer to communicate with beasts as per the *Beast Speech* spell for as long as the ring is active.

Ring of Command: The ring of command enables the wearer to bend the wills of those around him as per the *Command* spell. This is a corrupt ring, since a sorcery spell must be used to make it.

Ring of Guarding: A ring of guarding helps defend the wearer. For as long as it is active, the wearer of a ring of guarding has the benefits of the *Guarding-spell*.

Ring of Invisibility: No doubt Gandalf assumed the ring Bilbo Baggins found was a simple ring of invisibility and nothing more. A ring of invisibility uses the *Change Hue* spell enhanced by a *Word of Command* to render the wearer invisible to normal



sight for as long as it is active. In essence, the ring causes the wearer to blend in perfectly with his surroundings, making him difficult if not impossible to see. A ring of invisibility grants the wearer a +10 test result bonus to the wearer's Stealth (Hide) tests (doubled via the *Word of Command* to +10 from the standard +5 bonus provided by the *Change Hue* spell). This bonus applies to the wearer and any object he is wearing or carrying. Note that a ring of this type does not make the wearer silent; his Stealth (Sneak) skill is not affected.

Ring of Kindling Hearts: A ring of kindling hearts provides the wearer a bonus to Inspire tests. While it is active, the wearer appears to be taller, stronger, and more valiant, and brings hope to hearts darkened by despair.

Ring of Majesty: A ring of majesty provides the wearer a bonus to Intimidate (Majesty) tests. While it is active, the wearer appears to be taller, stronger, and sterner, and to creatures of Shadow he appears to be bathed in a glittering halo of pure light.

Ring of Sight: A ring of sight provides the wearer a bonus to Observe (Spot) tests. While it is active, the wearer's vision is clear and keen, and his eyes lightly sparkle as if with flecks of silver.

Ring of Valour: A ring of valour provides the wearer with the Valour edge. While it is active, the wearer's heart his made strong and he is able to stave off the effects of fear and terror brought by the servants of Shadow.

ANCIENT SCRIPTS

CONVERTING D&D MONSTERS TO LORD OF THE RINGS

by Erica 'Camdin' Balsley

This article discusses the various roles of monsters in Middle-earth, as provided by *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*. I also provide examples of each monster role as they appear in the *Lord of the Rings*, and discuss which monsters from *Dungeons and Dragons* are perhaps the most suitable for conversion if one wishes to remain as "canon" as possible. Of course, the only things that are truly canon in any chronicle are what the Narrator brings to the table, so you can use these guidelines to convert any *Dungeons and Dragons* creature you want to include in your chronicle.

A large part of making a new monster "fit" Middle-earth involves working it into the history that is already there, weaving it into the already rich tapestry of places and things without disrupting them or overtly altering what has gone before.

The next article in this series will talk you through the conversion process, going line-by-line through a *Dungeons and Dragons* monster entry.

Converting from *Dungeons and Dragons* to *Lord of the Rings*

When converting a monster from *Dungeons and Dragons* to *Lord of the Rings*, it should fit into one of the following roles: Plant (Immobile and Mobile), Beast (Natural, Intelligent, Monstrous, and Magical), Civilised Creature (Tranquil, Noble, and Warlike), Spirit (Natural, Restless, and Corrupt), and Demon (Animate and Place). I've further broken down the roles into:

What – a basic description of the creature's role

Where – the region of Middle-earth in which such a creature might live

How – how such a creature may have come to be given the history and 'the way things are' in Middle-earth

Which – the *Dungeons and Dragons* monsters that best fit that role as well as being 'appropriate' to the feel of Middle-earth.

NOTE: These conversion guidelines only concern themselves with monsters from the *Monster Manual* which can be found in the *Dungeons and Dragons* SRD (System Reference Document).

Plant, Immobile/Mobile

What: Plants include huorns, Ents, and ancient aware trees like Old Man Willow.

The only plants that are truly mobile plants in Middle-earth are the Ents. Huorns can move from place to place, but they have to be commanded to do so and generally cannot walk about of their own accord.

Where: Animate plants are quite rare in Middle-earth, and are known to exist in only two places of extreme antiquity: The Old Forest and Fangorn. However, it is said that a squirrel could once leap from tree to tree from Fangorn to the sea in the west without ever having to touch the ground. In Eriador there





may still be groves of trees with roots older than stones, and the deeps of Mirkwood might hold unknown enclaves of Ent-like creatures perhaps corrupted by the Shadow in Dol Guldur. Some awakened plants may have escaped the desolation of the Brown lands and might live still in fields and meads of Southern Mirkwood and the East.

How: Long, long ago, the Elves wandered far and wide in Middle-earth. They “always wished to talk to everything,” as Treebeard said. The Elves awakened trees and taught them to speak, and learned their tree-speech. Once they were awakened they became the Ents, and in turn could awaken other trees (although not to the full extent that the Elves could). These second-born trees are the Huorns. The Entwives, female Ents that is, were as concerned with small trees, bushes, and flowers as Ents are concerned with trees. Like the Ents the Entwives may have awakened these lesser plants to some degree of awareness similar to the huorns.

Which: Most plants from the *Monster Manual* are not really appropriate for Middle-earth; *Dungeons and Dragons* plants are simply too mobile or too bizarre to really fit in with the explanation of how plants were awakened.

Example: Assassin vine.

Beast, Natural (Predator, Scavenger)

What: Natural beasts are the normal fauna of Middle-earth: horses, cows, sheep, dogs, and so on. The Beast category is further divided into predator, scavenger, and intelligent (dealt with separately below). The predator and scavenger roles are self-explanatory.

Where: Natural animals exist everywhere in Middle-earth, and remain true to their Earthly counterparts in their preferred climate, terrain, and behaviour.

How: You don't really need to explain how a natural beast came to exist in Middle-earth. It is assumed that they were counted among the Kelvar and awoke with others of their kind in Arda.

Which: Nearly any creature of the Animal type could exist in Middle-earth. Exceptions include dinosaurs, and giant animals like the roc.



Beast, Intelligent

What: Unlike natural beasts, intelligent beasts are self-aware. They can understand speech and make themselves understood — either through actual speech or through some form of non-verbal communication. Intelligent beasts may be larger than normal or have an extended life span, but otherwise they appear to be natural beasts in every visible way. Examples of intelligent beasts in Middle-earth are Roäc of Ravenhill, the Crebain, and the Great Eagles.

Where: Intelligent beasts can live anywhere their natural counterparts live. The ravens of Ravenhill live in and around Erebor, and the Crebain live in Dunland and Fangorn Forest.

How: As mentioned in the plant role, the Elves of the Elder Days wandered far and wide awakening plants and animals to speak to them. The gift of awareness is passed from generation to generation, and soon a small band of intelligent beasts may arise and

become the dominant beasts of that type in the region. In the case of the Great Eagles, they are the descendants of Thorondor, the messenger of the Vala Manwë and were blessed long ago with great size and the power of speech. Like many of the creatures of Middle-earth, intelligent beasts are either unique or they live in isolated colonies with little interaction from outsiders.

Which: Any natural beast can be an intelligent beast of the Narrator so desires. Nothing need be changed in the natural beast's attributes except for its Wits and maybe its Bearing. Those attributes should be increased to at least 3 each to qualify the beast as intelligent.

Example: Giant owl, any animal given a high enough Wits and Bearing.

Beast, Monstrous/Magical

What: A monstrous or magical beast is a creature that is wholly unnatural and uncanny. They are the true “monsters” of Middle-earth. Such creatures may or may not be intelligent, but they are never humanoid in form. The Watcher in the Water, Wargs, the spiders of Mirkwood, and Hell Hawks are all monstrous beasts.

Magical beasts are like monstrous beasts with the exception that for whatever reason they have supernatural abilities. Such a creature might be able to innately cast a few spells, or it might have unique supernatural abilities which it can use at will. An intelligent beast or intelligent monstrous beast that takes the Magician order (if the Narrator allows such things) becomes a magical beast by virtue of its ability with spells. There are few examples of truly *magical* beasts in Middle-earth other than Dragons.

Where: Monstrous or magical beasts live in very few places in Middle-earth, and they aren't normally met in civilized areas. These creatures live in the wild places where they can roam free, or in the places that are dominated by the Shadow. The Trollshaws, Angmar, Mordor, Mirkwood, the East, the wild parts of Eriador, and deep subterranean pits are the homes of



monstrous or magical beasts. Rohan, Gondor, Lórien, Rivendell and its environs, Erebor and its environs, the Shire, and Bree-land are all relatively free of monstrous and magical beasts.

How: Every creature in Middle-earth has a purpose for being there. They don't just exist to threaten the heroes or make overland travel difficult. Monstrous and magical beasts are the unnatural creations of Morgoth or Sauron, left over from the Elder Days and somehow existing on into the present. Many monstrous beasts, such as the Wargs and the Black Horses, were once natural beasts that were reshaped with dark arts into loyal and ferocious servants. Other magical beasts arose in the First Age and were made all but extinct by the great heroes of that time. Those that survived slinked away into Middle-earth and hid themselves away from all sight. There they wait to perhaps be once more discovered by the heroes of the later ages.

Which: Although most monsters from the *Monster Manual* could fit into this broad category, not all of them are really appropriate for the feel of Middle-earth. The best choices for conversion from *Dungeons and Dragons* to *Lord of the Rings* are Aberrations and Magical Beasts that have few or no overt magical powers. The beasts of Middle-earth tend to rely more on fang and claw and cunning than magic (although of course there are exceptions).

You should only select monsters for conversion that can be explained through Morgoth's corrupting influence or Sauron's strange cross-breeding experiments or ones that dwell underground and can thus remain "in the deep places of the world."

Magical, slimy, tentacled, unnatural-looking things are usually First Age horrors. They are most often unique creatures, "the last of [their] kind to trouble the unhappy world" as was said of Shelob. The more unnatural and unwholesome a creature appears to be, the more likely it is that it is a holdover from the Elder Days and no more of its kind now live in Middle-earth. Likely, too, is the fact that they live deep underground or in enclaves of great evil and would take considerable effort to find or stumble across.

A lesser creature with few true magical powers and with a form that *could* be natural even if it isn't should likely be the perverse work of Morgoth or Sauron. Remember that Sauron and Morgoth share the restriction that they cannot create new creatures: All they can do is twist and corrupt existing creatures. Before you select a monster to convert as a work of such perversion, look at its shape and ask these questions, "What was it created from? Why did Morgoth or Sauron bend/subjugate it? Why wasn't it used in the War of the Ring?" If you can easily answer those questions, it's likely that you have a good candidate for conversion.

Examples: Aboleth (First Age horror), ankheg (perversion), bulette (perversion), choker (First Age horror), dire animals (perversions), ettercap (perversion), grick (First Age horror), owl bear (perversion), and winter wolf (perversion).



Civilized Creature: Tranquil/Noble/Warlike

What: Civilized creatures are those that have complex societies and build cities and communities. Men, Dwarves, Elves, and Hobbits are all civilized creatures, and although one could strongly argue about how 'civilized' they are, Trolls and Orcs are included in this role. Simply put, the civilized creature role is reserved for intelligent (Wits 3+), humanoid beings.

Where: All civilized creatures have their own places in Middle-earth, and they rarely travel far from home. The world is a large and dangerous place, and wandering over its face is sure to invite trouble. The Elves live in Rivendell or Lórien, the Dwarves in the Iron Hills or Erebor or the Blue Mountains, the Hobbits live in the Shire, the Orcs live in Angmar or Mount Gundabad or Mordor, and the Trolls live in the Trollshaws. Men live... pretty much everywhere else, but mostly in Gondor, Rohan, Bree-land, Esgaroth, the East, and Harad.

How: Tolkien already tells us how each of these races came to be in Middle-earth.

Which: Honestly, none of the Humanoids or Monstrous Humanoids in *Dungeons and Dragons* are really suitable for Middle-earth. All of the civilized creatures of Middle-earth have finely detailed histories and societies, and their place and role in the world are intricately interwoven. Adding in new or bizarre civilized creatures would be difficult if you want to maintain the feel of Middle-earth. The same questions need to be asked of new civilized creatures as were asked of monstrous and magical beasts: Where did they come from? How were they made? What is their place in the world? How do they relate to the other civilized creatures?

Just about the only civilized creatures from *Dungeons and Dragons* that could fit into Middle-earth are Giants, but not all *Dungeons and Dragons* giants are really appropriate to the setting. Tolkien did mention Stone-giants in *The Hobbit*, and there is even a passing mention of ogres in Bilbo's riddling games with Gollum. Although giants and ogres are mentioned nowhere else in the *Lord of the Rings* or any of his other works one could take their brief mention in *The Hobbit* as just enough proof that they are a part of the world. Of course it has been argued that the 'ogres' mentioned in *The Hobbit* were actually the



Uruk-hai (there is some similarity in pronunciation) or were mythical creatures from Hobbit-lore. Whether or not to convert ogres is best left to the desires of the Narrator.

Examples: Hill giant, ogre, stone giant.

Spirit, Natural

What: A Natural Spirit is a creature of the land itself. Natural Spirits are not undead beings, that is, they are not the liberated sprits of creatures that were once alive but are no longer so. Natural Spirits were always invested in the forms they now have. In other game systems, Natural Spirits would be called elementals (or, in the case of the Valar and Maiar, gods and demigods). Given this description, Animate Demons and Demons of Place also fall into this category. Demons are Natural Spirits that were corrupted by Morgoth and the discordant notes he wove into the Song of Creation, or were corrupted by Sauron and his lies and promises of power.

The more powerful Natural Spirits can take on physical form and function normally in the material world. The exact form and function of a Natural Spirit varies, and they are as numerous as the stars in the sky and as varied as the notes sung by Eru in the creation of Arda. The Natural Spirits of Arda are all unique, each with its own realm, powers, abilities and motives.

Samples of Natural Spirits in Middle-earth are Tom Bombadil, Goldberry (and her mother the Old River Woman), and the gentle unseen spirit that inhabits the clear stream of Nimrodel. The Valar and the Maiar also fall into the category of Natural Spirits, and they are the most powerful examples of this type of creature to be found anywhere in Middle-earth. Animate Demons include the Balrogs, and are the only examples of those creatures described in Middle-earth.

Where: Natural Spirits can exist anywhere, for they embody the very forces of the world itself. They don't appreciate interlopers and frequently harass trespassers, but any secluded grove, serene lake, warm meadow, or babbling brook could contain the life-essence of a Natural Spirit. Few Maiar currently dwell in Middle-earth, with Tom Bombadil and Sauron being two notable exceptions. The Valar never leave the Undying Lands.

How: Natural Spirits were created in the beginning, after the first few notes of the Song of Creation left Eru's lips. They are the oldest of the oldest creatures in all of Arda.

Which: Most *Dungeons and Dragons* elementals could technically be converted as Natural Spirits, but the concept of walking, talking pillars of fire or water or whatever isn't really appropriate to the setting. The Natural Spirits of Middle-earth are more mysterious than that, and certainly aren't as overt in appearance as elementals. They embody the forces of the natural world, but do so in more subtle forms. If one didn't know who Tom Bombadil really was, for example, he might simply be taken as a whimsical old man who dresses funny. None of the elementals or outsiders in the *Monster Manual* are really appropriate for conversion.

Examples: None.

Spirit: Restless/Corrupt

What: Unlike Natural Spirits, Restless Spirits and most Corrupt Spirits were once living creatures. These are the Undead of Middle-earth, the pitiful spirits of once-living creatures that have been denied their eternal rest. All Restless Spirits are incorporeal — they are diaphanous, nearly invisible things that have only hazy outlines or shadowy forms.

Restless Spirits maintain some degree of free will, and they recall their past lives with regretful clarity. Not all Restless Spirits are evil, although many appear to be so due to their perpetual states of melancholy, frustration and regret.

The only examples of Restless Spirits in Middle-earth are ghosts, most notably the ghosts that dwelt in the Paths of the Dead.

Corrupt Spirits are under the command of Sauron (or, in campaigns set in the First Age, Morgoth). Like all Spirits, Corrupt Spirits are normally incorporeal beings, with few exceptions. The most powerful Corrupt Spirits in Middle-earth are the Barrow-wights and the Ringwraiths themselves.

It is important to note that although they are classified as Undead creatures, Vampires and Wights in Middle-earth are Corrupt Spirits are *not* the spirits of once-living creatures. Vampires are Corrupt Spirits which must possess a living body, ultimately killing that body to feed the fires of Corruption that burn with cold fire deep within. The Wights are Corrupt Spirits which reside in the dead bodies of kings of Men — they are not walking corpses as much as they are corpses that have been inhabited by demonic forces of Shadow. No part of the original spirit that inhabited the body exists once the Corrupt Spirit takes it over. The Corrupt Spirit has no recollection or knowledge of the life of the Man whose body it has taken over.

Where: Restless Spirits exist only in places of great tragedy or in places where the spirits of the dead find solace or where they once felt at home. Some Restless Spirits, such as the previously mentioned Men of Dunharrow, are bound to a certain location by ancient curses. The ruins of the Second Age that litter Eriador and the lands north of Bree are prime haunting grounds, as are old houses, dark caverns, and literally anyplace else.

How: Simply put, a Restless Spirit arises whenever a creature dies but has some pressing reason to stay on in spirit form. Corrupt Spirits arise as a direct result of the will of Sauron and have some role to play in his designs: Vampires act as spies, Wights guard the treasures of the Dúnedain and keep them out of the hands of his enemies, and Wraiths are his servants and lieutenants.

Which: Any incorporeal undead can be converted as a Restless or Corrupt Spirit. *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic* already provides many examples, but that is by no means the only form a Natural or Corrupt Spirit might take. Remember that although nearly all *Dungeons and Dragons* Undead are evil, that is not necessarily the case for the Restless Spirits.

To maintain the “feel” of Middle-earth, corporeal undead converted to *Lord of the Rings* should be similar to Barrow-wights: Corrupt Spirits that inhabit and reanimate the corpses of Men.

Undead in Middle-earth are *never* spawned by others of their kind, so the Create Spawn special attack should simply be ignored during conversion.

Examples: Allip, bodak, ghoul, shadow, spectre, wraith.

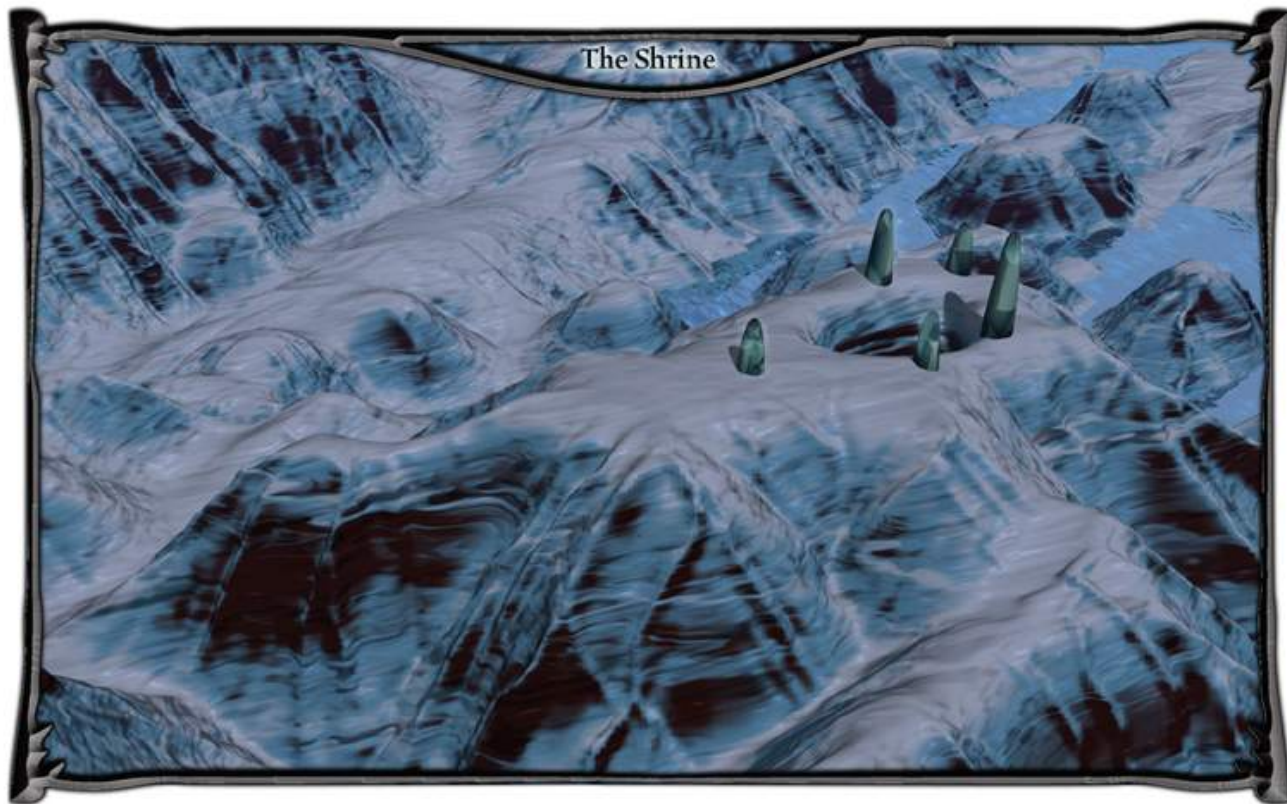
Demon: Animate/Place

See *Spirit, Natural*.



HOSTILE HAUNTS

THE SHRINE



HISTORY

In the middle of the First Age, when Morgoth made his home in Angband in the north, many tribes of Men that had never come to dwell among the Elves, feared and worshipped him. A great shrine was erected by these northmen tribes at the far end of the Grey Mountains and the beginning of the Misty Mountains (what would one day be Angmar) and many sacrifices and tributes were made to the fallen Vala. This worship did not go unnoticed by Morgoth and at times he would appear before these simple folk and thus was the shrine truly corrupted and became a place of power within Middle-earth - a place of Shadow. Morgoth also corrupted these folk and used them effectively against the Elves and Men of Beleriand in the many wars of that Age.



When the world was reshaped at the end of the First Age and Morgoth cast out into the Void, the Shrine to him still stood within the northern wastes of Eriador. And as was its nature, the Shrine continued to draw to it those of weak will and corrupt them so that they would fall under the Shadow and become tools of the dark powers that still remained in Middle-earth. Sauron, and later the Witch-king, used the draw of the Shrine to make new pacts with the Men of the region and to send them against the Dúnedain of the North.

LEGENDS

It is whispered in the north that the Keystone of the Shrine is the vessel through which Morgoth will return from the Void to re-claim Middle-earth. And so, Sauron has seen to it that the lands around the Shrine were well protected and that the forces of the Free Peoples could make no offensive move against the ancient site. To see to its protection, Sauron had the Witch-king establish Angmar and when he left, after the destruction of the North Kingdoms, he left behind a guardian and his servants to watch over the Shrine so that it would remain untouched – ready for the coming of the Dark Lord.

LOCATION

The Shrine sits within the realm of Angmar just east of Carn Dûm. Narrators may feel free to move the location of the Shrine as they need to for their game. To find the Shrine will require a series of Survival (to survive the weather and region), Climb (to climb into the heights of the Grey Mountains), Lore (to know the direction to follow and be ready for any possible dangerous effects), and Track (to stay on course) tests made by the players and each should be no less than TN 12.



POWERS

The area around the Shrine is corrupt by the powers that influenced it and any that enter the region must be strong of will or will potentially be consumed by the corrupting influence.

1. The Shrine emanates the effect of the spell Misdirection (5 mile radius, opposed Wisdom tests against TN 15) to throw off course any non-servant of the Shadow.
2. Any Non-Corrupt person that enters within 5 miles of the Shrine's location will feel uneasy and will desire to leave the area; characters must have a Bearing of 6 or greater to continue on towards the Shrine or have the Faithful Edge or the Fealty Flaw and have that to which you are faithful or show fealty need you to go. Corrupt individuals will feel elated and will wish to seek out the location.
3. The Shrine throws off an Intimidation effect and can cause fear to quell any would be interlopers. Any person that enters within 100 yards of the Shrine must make an opposed Willpower Test TN 15 and consult the Fear Table on page 233 of the Core Rule Book, apply results to all tests. Characters may make another Willpower test each 5 rounds.
4. Any Non-Corrupt person that enters within 100 yards of the location will begin to feel the corrupting influence and must make a Willpower test TN 10 for each 5 minutes they remain in the area. If failed, the individual will gain 1 Corruption point per test failed. If the character were to leave the area before they attain 5 Corruption points, the corruption will automatically decrease by 1 point per hour. If they stay long enough to gain 5 or more points, the standard rules of reducing Corruption apply. Any person that stays long enough to have their Corruption increase to equal their Bearing are lost to the Shadow and become Corrupt - give the character sheet to the Narrator.



5. Any Non-Corrupt person that enters within 50 yards of the location will begin to feel the corrupting influence and must make a Willpower test TN 12 for each 1 minute they remain in the area. All other effects are the same as in #2.
6. Any Non-Corrupt person that enters within 25 yards of the location will begin to feel the corrupting influence and must make a Willpower test TN 12 for each 10 Rounds they remain in the area. All other effects are the same as in #2.
7. The old Shrine has started to age and, with the countless years of freezing winters, the stones of the Shrine are beginning to crack. Small pieces of stone lay scattered around the large monolith and if a character were to take up a shard of the stone, they will gain a +5 to all Stamina Tests to cast any Sorcery spells. If they are not corrupt, the rules apply as in #4.
8. Should someone wish to destroy the Old Shrine, the cracked stones could be broken if hit with hard enough force or energy from a strong enough casting of the Flame of Anor. The stones must all be broken to negate the corrupting influence of the region; each stone has a Protection value of 10 and Structure value of 50. Only a person with a Bearing of 10 or greater can bring **any** harm to the stones, whether they use a weapon or cast a Flame of Anor spell upon them.

Along with the corrupting effects of the Shrine, there is also a guardian that has watched it since the Witch-king bestowed the duty unto him in T.A. 1980. The guardian also has three servants that answer his call to arms when needed. For information on the Guardian and his Servants, see the *Featured Creatures* section of this issue.

FAN FLAVOUR

HEALER ELITE ORDER by Jim 'Ineti' Johnson

'...for long years we healers have only sought to patch the rents made by the men of swords. Though we should still have enough to do without them: the world is full enough of hurts and mischances without wars to multiply them.'

— *The Warden of the Houses of Healing, The Return of the King*

A Healer is a person who dedicates their time and efforts to healing the wounded and sick. A Healer may perform other functions, but their focus is on the healing arts. Healers are among the best-trained curates in all of Middle-earth, and as such are highly sought after by those in need. In the dark war-torn times of the Third Age, trained Healers rarely find themselves without work.

ADVENTURES

Healers are often caught up in adventures. Their particular skills are always of value to most any adventuring group. Their liege lord could assign them to a group, or they could be hired to join a quest. Healers may even simply offer their services to a party they feel could use their talents.

BACKGROUND

Most Healers begin their careers as either Loremasters or Nobles, though most any order can produce a Healer with time and training. Healers tend to learn at least a little magic-craft, and many possess other skills beyond their curative talents. While all races have Healers, they are more numerous among Elves and Men. Elvish Healers possess the finest medical training and resources, especially in Rivendell, but the Houses of Healing in Minas Tirith are comparable.

GAME INFORMATION

REQUISITES

To become a Healer, you must have Wits 8+, Bearing 6+, Healing 8+, and a total of 8+ ranks in healing-related Lore skills.

ORDER SKILLS

The Healer's order skills are: Craft (Nimbleness), Healing (Wits), Inquire (Bearing), Insight (Perception), Language (Wits), Lore (Wits), Observe (Perception), Persuade (Bearing), Search (Perception), Survival (Perception).

ABILITIES

When you create a Healer, you may make one pick from the following special abilities:



BATTLEFIELD MAGIC

You have been trained to ignore the distractions and discomforts of battle when conducting healing in the field. When attempting a Healing test or related while on the battlefield, you may ignore up to ± 5 TN of modifiers due to lighting conditions, terrain, or other battlefield distractions. Consult with your Narrator on what modifiers may be ignored.

Requisites: Bearing 8+, Bold

Improvement: You may pick this ability multiple times. Each additional pick allows you to ignore an additional ± 2 TN of modifiers to your Healing tests due to lighting conditions, terrain, or other distractions on the battlefield.

CROSS-ORDER SKILL

Because they tend to be exposed to a wide variety of races, realms, and situations, Healers often possess a wide range of skills and lore. You may choose one non-order skill and treat it like an order skill for the purposes of skill acquisition and advancement.

DEFT HEALER

Your extensive training as a Healer allows you to treat injuries and illnesses with swift sureness. Action times for treating most wounds is halved: 5 rounds (1/2 a minute) per difficulty category; 5 rounds for a Simple task, 1 minute for a Routine task, and so on.

Requisites: Nimbleness 8+, Healing skill 10+

HEALER'S REPUTATION

Few remaining in Middle-earth possess the medical knowledge of ages past. You have mastered much of what was lost, and your name is famed through all the Lands of the West. Your reputation as a learned and proficient Healer precedes you, and you are sought after by name. You gain 4 Renown.

Requisites: Healing skill 10+, any three healing-related Lore skills 8+.

Improvement: You may improve this ability multiple times, up to a number of improvements equal to your Bearing modifier. You gain 2 Renown for each improvement. (If your Bearing modifier is ± 0 or less, you cannot improve this ability.)

MASTER HEALER

Some Healers possess a deeper knowledge of the healing arts which grants them an especial advantage when curing hurts. Whenever such Healers spend a point of Courage on a healing-related test—including any such tests using Craft or Lore skills—they gain a +5 bonus, rather than the usual +3.

Requisite: Healing skill 10+

MEDICINAL HERB LORE

Your knowledge regarding medicinal herbs and plants gives you an especial advantage when looking for them in the field. You gain a +4 bonus to Search tests that involve looking for a specific medicinal plant or herb.

Requisites: Perception 8+, Lore: Herbalism skill 8+

THE EFFECTIVE CRAFTSMAN

by Jim 'Ineti' Johnson

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'They are made of hithlain,' said the Elf, 'but there is no time now to instruct you in the art of their making. Had we known that this craft delighted you, we could have taught you much.'

- An Elf, The Fellowship of the Ring

Though fear and war sweep the lands of Middle-earth during the Third Age, Craftsmen and merchants strive to make lives for themselves by plying their trades. The Craftsmen are trained apprentices, journeymen, or masters—creating goods both mundane and masterful. Their efforts ensure that the communities of Middle-earth, from the most humble of Mannish dwellings to the finest delvings of the Dwarves, are equipped with the goods required for a healthy and happy lifestyle.

Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* allows you to play such Craftsmen—a Rohirrim blacksmith, a Dwarf jeweler, a Hobbit farmer, perhaps even a Silvan weaver. This article is for you, the player of such a Craftsman. This article provides suggestions on creating your Craftsman's background; effectively selecting skills, traits, and order abilities; tips on advancing your Craftsman; and ideas on how most effectively to play your Craftsman hero.



DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE CRAFTSMAN

'No gleam came from the blades of Sting or of Glamdring; and that was some comfort, for being the work of Elvish smiths in the Elder Days these swords shone with a cold light, if any Orcs were near at hand.'

- *The Fellowship of the Ring*



While *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core book provides general information on creating a Craftsman, it does not go into a great deal of detail on the finer points of character generation for such a hero. Following are a number of tips and suggestions to consider when creating a Craftsman hero for your Narrator's adventures.

CREATING A BACKGROUND

Perhaps the most important aspect of your character, especially in a roleplaying-focused game such as *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, is your hero's background. Where is he from, who does he know, what are his goals and hopes and dreams? What does he want out of life? You

should have some idea in mind what the answers are to these questions when creating your hero.

You should work with your Narrator and fellow players when creating a background for your Craftsman hero. The Narrator may have specific ideas on where heroes should be from, so that they fit well into her story ideas. You may find inspiration by talking to your fellow players and listening to what their ideas are for their characters. You might even be able to create a mutual history or share a past event with another player's hero. Perhaps your Dúnadan armorer has opened a business with one player's leatherworker from Dale. Maybe another player's Silvan florist travels extensively with your Gondorian vintner. The possibilities are limitless; though do check with your Narrator before settling on a character background. Many craftsmen do business in one limited area of Middle-earth, and you need to make sure your Narrator's game allows for such a character, should you choose to play one.

A good background for your character does not necessarily require a long written history, though your Narrator would almost certainly appreciate one. A simple list of ideas or even a thumbnail sketch of your hero's background may be sufficient. Sometimes it is more enjoyable to create your hero's past as he encounters new situations in your Narrator's chronicle.

SELECTING EFFECTIVE CRAFTSMAN STATISTICS

Once you have some form of background for your character created and approved by your Narrator (if she requires such approval), you need to select statistics that most effectively represent your character's history and abilities. If your character is a blacksmith or stonemason, you might want to give him a good to high Strength and Vitality, as he would likely spend much of his time hammering metal or moving stone. If your Craftsman is more of a merchant out to make a good living at selling his or someone else's wares, a good score in Bearing or Perception, and ranks in Debate and Persuade would prove useful. Whatever the case, your hero's background should serve as the foundation for his statistics, at least at the start of his adventuring career.

ATTRIBUTES

Because the Craftsman order is so flexible, there is no one attribute that carries more weight than another. Having a clear character concept in mind will help you decide which attributes should be at high levels, and which ones you should make



your favoured attributes. Remember that your character's *highest* attribute does not necessarily have to be one of his two *favoured* attributes.

Before choosing your attributes, you should have at least a general idea of what advancement path your Craftsman will follow once he begins to gain advancements.

Do you want your hero to become a renowned shipwright? If so, a few advancements in Mariner and good scores in Wits and Nimbleness would be useful. Perhaps you want your Craftsman to attain the favour of an important local noble. In that case, advancements in Noble may come in handy, as would a good score in Bearing. Maybe you want your hero to become a famed crafter of delicate musical instruments. Advancements in Minstrel would be most useful here, and high scores in Perception and Bearing would prove valuable. Your Craftsman may even choose to take up a martial life and travel with or serve in a military unit as an armorer. If so, having advancements in Warrior and a high Strength and Nimbleness would prove invaluable.

There are many options available to you. You should select your attributes with both the short- and long-term in mind. You will not be able to reconsider later once your attributes are set, and improving attributes with advancement picks later is a costly endeavour.

REACTIONS

The Craftsman's capabilities are a mixed bag, and as such, no one reaction stands out from the others as the most ideal to select as your Craftsman's favoured reaction. A good understanding of how the character will develop should prove useful in selecting your favoured reaction. Wisdom is a good general purpose selection, but a Craftsman with a specific life path in mind might want to favour a different reaction. Stamina would be worthwhile for those Craftsmen planning to take on advancements in Warrior, while Swiftiness would be useful for Craftsmen taking on Rogue or Minstrel advancements. Favour the reaction you feel will best serve your character in the long run.

SKILLS

Being a Craftsman includes the assumption that you are planning to create goods and sell them. The Craftsman order skills support this assumption, whether you're a farmer, a blacksmith, or a stonemason. Most Craftsmen should take as many ranks in their primary Craft, Smithcraft, or Stonecraft skill of choice as possible—as much as the full 6 ranks if possible. This is presumably your livelihood, and you will want to be as effective a Craftsman as possible.

To support your hero's primary Craft skill, it is recommended you take several ranks in the merchant-friendly skills, such as Appraise, Debate, Observe, and Persuade. Ranks in each should serve you in determining what your customers want and how much they're willing to pay (or how much you can get away with charging). If you expect your Craftsman to engage in shady affairs, then ranks in Conceal and Observe, along with a few advancements in Rogue, may prove useful. A Craftsman looking toward a career as a bard may want to take ranks in Debate, Perform, and Observe.

As with all other character generation aspects, having at least a general idea of what your Craftsman may aspire to will help you select order skills during character generation.



RACIAL BACKGROUND SKILLS

Each starting hero gets six picks to spend on skills and/or edges, which represent the character's background before taking on an Order. While you could select a background racial package from the core book, you should probably spend those six picks in a customized and specific fashion.

The Craftsman order lists none of the combat skills as order skills. Because of this, you'll probably want to spend at least one or two of your racial skill picks in one or more combat skills since your hero will, in all likelihood, engage in combat at some point. Every race except Hobbit lists the combat skills as racial skills, so you are free to select them with these picks (unless you play a Hobbit, of course). Other non-order skills a Craftsman may find useful taking ranks in include Insight, Inquire, and Sea-craft (especially if you're planning to play a shipwright or a Craftsman who uses the sea-lanes to ply his trade).

It is usually not an effective use of these six picks to select ranks in order skills or on Language or Lore skills. You will be able to select ranks in order skills with the 20 order skill picks, and you will gain a wealth of Language and Lore skills elsewhere during character creation. Therefore, it would be more effective to spend these six racial background picks either on skills that you will not be able to improve easily later, or on edges that enhance your hero's skills and abilities.



LANGUAGE AND LORE SKILLS

Multiplying your Wits score by three gives you a pool of skill picks used to select your Craftsman's Language and Lore skills. Some Craftsmen, especially those who are merchants or are frequent travelers, may need the ability to speak in more than one language. These types of Craftsmen may also possess a breadth of knowledge, even if only of their own people and culture. If your hero has a high Wits score, feel free to take a wide variety of Language and Lore skills, even if you only place 1 to 3 ranks in each skill. These racial skills are inexpensive to improve, so you should feel free to give your Craftsman hero as wide a knowledge base as practicable to reflect his background.

ORDER SKILLS

There are 20 order skill picks to spend among the previously mentioned order skills. You could simply select one of the pre-generated order packages, but since you have been completely customizing your character up to this point, you may as well continue to do so and spend those 20 picks in exactly the skills you feel would most benefit your hero. The only limitation you have to consider is that no zero-advancement character may have more than 6 ranks in any one skill. So you should feel free to assign the maximum ranks allowed in the one skill for which you feel your hero should be well known. Spend the remainder of the points as you see fit, but do consider that a balance of skills is preferable to having just a handful at high ranks. Order skills are inexpensive to improve, so feel free to spend those 20 picks liberally among the Craftsman's order skills.

A note on skill specialties: Remember that you may select one free specialty per skill during character generation. The immediate +2 bonus a specialty provides to its related skill is a benefit you should not ignore. Whenever possible, select a specialty for each skill in which you spent at least one rank.

While you can spend skill picks on additional specialties, you will likely not need more than one specialty per skill as a starting hero. Concentrate more on spending the skill picks on skill ranks than on skill specialties. It costs just one advancement pick to select a new skill specialization, and there will be many an opportunity to do so as your Craftsman gains advancements.





FREE PICKS

The last step of character generation is receiving five free picks and spending them as you would an advancement's worth of picks. You can gain more ranks in skills, buy additional edges, or improve your attributes. You cannot purchase additional order abilities with these free picks. The most effective use of these picks would be to spend them on skill ranks, increasing those skills you already selected, or taking a rank or two in a new skill or skills.

ORDER ABILITIES

The core rulebook provides six order abilities for the Craftsman order. You will want to select one that either complements your hero's selected strengths or helps to shore up any weaknesses you built into your character. Let us look at the order abilities to determine which may be the most effective selection for your Craftsman hero.

Enchantment: The requisites for this powerful order ability are such that a starting character cannot select it as his starting order ability. It is something a Craftsman can aspire to attain, though. If it is something you plan to acquire later, keep in mind that you will need both the Masterwork and Preservation order abilities, in addition to 12 ranks in a specific Craft skill.

Masterwork: The requisites for this order ability also put this selection out of reach of any starting Craftsman. Your character would need to have at least two advancements to be able to select this ability. It is a useful ability to have, especially if your Craftsman is a weaponsmith or an armourer.

Place of Trade: This order ability would be a good selection if your Narrator runs a chronicle set in a localized area of Middle-earth. The ability effectively keeps your character in one place, so it may not be ideal for a chronicle that requires much travel, and would not be suited for a character that has a case of wanderlust and wants to see more of Middle-earth than just the four walls of his shop.

Preservation: This is another useful order ability, though its requirements also keep it out of the realm of possibility for a beginning Craftsman hero.

Refuge: Refuge is a good order ability, though its benefits are limited if you play a Craftsman that does much travel. Like Place of Trade, Refuge effectively requires your character to stay in the same place for much of the chronicle. As a result, it may not be ideally suited for all chronicles. Consult with your Narrator before selecting this order ability.

Speedy Work: This is a simple, effective order ability with a low cost. Most Craftsmen should pick up Speedy Work at some point as they gain advancements, if only to make their livelihood easier and more productive.

TRAITS

Now that you have selected your attributes, reactions, skills, and order abilities, it is time to add some flavour (represented by edges and flaws) to your Craftsman and make him a truly unique hero of Middle-earth. You have several opportunities during character generation to select edges and flaws. With the six racial background picks, you may pick one edge per pick. You gain one order edge from your order package, and you may select up to four flaws and receive either an edge or 1 skill rank in return. Finally, you may spend some of your free picks at the end of character generation on edges. However, be sure to check with your Narrator as she may have set a limit on how many edges a starting hero may have at the beginning of a chronicle.

EDGES

Some edges are better suited to a Craftsman than others. Following are brief descriptions of several edges, highlighting their value to a Craftsman hero.

Ally: Many Craftsmen, especially those that travel from land to land, may have many an ally they could call upon when in need.

Craftmaster: The benefit this edge provides to the various Craft skills should make it a mandatory Edge selection for any Craftsman.



Elf-friend: Some well-traveled Craftsmen may have befriended any number of peoples or races, making this a useful edge, especially since you can expand it into an 'X-friend' edge, where 'X' represents any culture or group. (For example, you could choose Dwarf-friend, Hobbit-friend, or Friend of the Riddermark.)

Friends: Many Craftsmen have friends they can call upon for information. This would be a good edge to take if you want your character to have a number of contacts throughout Middle-earth.

Hoard: Some Craftsmen are good at their chosen profession, and as such, may have amassed a store of wealth and valuable goods.

Travel-sense: Merchants who spend much time on the road or on the seas would benefit from this edge.

FLAWS

Likewise, some flaws are better suited than others for a Craftsman hero. Following is a short list and description of some ideal flaws for Craftsmen.

Arrogant: Some Craftsmen place more value in their goods and services than would seem realistic. Take this flaw if your hero is of that sort.

Dullard: Many a Craftsman may be clever of hand or strong of arm, but may possess a lack of wits and a dearth of intelligence.

Dull-eared: Some smiths have had their hearing damaged from years of working with the hammer and anvil.

Enemy: Some Craftsmen, especially the well-traveled merchants, may have an enemy in any number of cities, towns, or establishments.

Fealty: A Craftsman may swear fealty to a local noble in exchange for a court position as an artificer or perhaps for permission to sell wares in that noble's demesne.

Grasping: Once a taste for coin has been established, many merchants and craftsmen find it hard to ignore the continuous call, and will do all they can to accumulate wealth.

Proud: Especially skilled Craftsmen (or even particularly arrogant ones) often exhibit excessive pride in their workmanship and product.

Rival: It is said that competition is good for business, and a Craftsman may very well have one or more rivals to vie with.

ADVANCEMENT

As your Craftsman gains advancements, you will want to improve his skills and abilities in such a way that he remains an effective and valuable member of your group of heroes. Having a plan of advancement (whether short term or long term) is a good idea, if only to get a gauge of the direction in which you would like to see your hero grow. Perhaps you want your Craftsman to become a world-wise merchant, hauling supplies to distant lands, or perhaps you would like to see him grow into a prosperous shopkeeper.

MULTIPLE ORDERS

While *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* allows a Craftsman hero to multi-order with any of the other eight basic orders, some of those orders are more complementary to the Craftsman than others. Because the Craftsman order has only a few truly useful order abilities, you'll probably want to multi-order your hero so that he will be most effective. Following are brief descriptions of how each basic order might complement the existing Craftsman hero.

Barbarian: Unless your hero is of a less-than-civilized people such as the Dunlendings or the Drúedain, taking advancements in this order is not a good option for a Craftsman hero.



Loremaster: A Craftsman who wished to be more worldly and knowledgeable would benefit from a few advancements in Loremaster. An advancement or two in this order would also be useful for the Craftsman interested in learning the rare art of weaving the subtle magics of Middle-earth into his wares.

Magician: A Craftsman interested in learning the arcane arts and exploring the subtle magic of the world would naturally benefit from several advancements in Magician.

Mariner: A Craftsman who uses the rivers and seas of Middle-earth to ply his wares rather than roads and trails would certainly benefit from several advancements in Mariner.

Minstrel: Some Craftsmen specialize in creating musical instruments of all types. Those Craftsmen might even want to gain additional income performing on their instruments. If so, a few advancements in Minstrel would prove useful.

Noble: Many Craftsmen hail from the larger cities and important holdings of Middle-earth, such as Minas Tirith, Rivendell, and Hobbiton. As a result, some may be of noble blood or may interact regularly with nobility, and could benefit from an advancement or two of Noble.

Rogue: Some Craftsmen make burglary and trap-breaking their specialty. Some may even be active practitioners of the roguish trades. A few advancements in Rogue would benefit the Craftsman looking to supplement his income by shady means.

Warrior: One of the more common Craftsmen in Middle-earth would naturally be a weaponsmith or armourer. Many soldiers or veterans make smithing their profession when they are not making war. A Craftsman with advancements in Warrior would not only benefit the fellowship he is part of, but would also be that much more knowledgeable about his chosen craft.

ELITE ORDERS

A Craftsman hero, whether multi-ordered or not, may aspire to achieve advancements in any of the elite orders presented in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*. Like the basic orders, though, some elite orders are more complementary toward the Craftsman than others are. Following are brief descriptions of how each elite order might work with a Craftsman hero.

Archer: Some Craftsmen specialize in crafting bows and arrows. Being a trained Archer would certainly help a Craftsman to perfect his craft. Having a few advancements in Warrior would also be a benefit here.

Captain: Only in extraordinary cases would a Craftsman become a Captain of men. If such a thing were to occur, a few advancements in Warrior would be useful as well.

Knight: Very few Craftsmen would attain the rank of Knight, making this an unlikely option for Craftsmen heroes. Do not let this dissuade you from creating a unique Craftsman who aspires to such a rank, however.

Ranger: Because Craftsmen tend to favour areas where people gather (in order to more easily sell their wares), the Ranger elite order wouldn't normally be a good fit. However, it is conceivable that some Craftsmen, especially Silvan Elves, would want an advancement or two of Ranger.

Spy: A traveling merchant selling his wares could easily double as a spy. A few advancements in Rogue would complement any potential Craftsman\Spy.

Wizard: Craftsmen who take to the mystical arts would do well in the Wizard elite order. Advancements in Loremaster or Magician would naturally benefit such a character.

SPELLS

If you decide to add advancements of a spellcasting order to your Craftsman hero, consider selecting the following spells, ideally suited for a Craftsman.

Bane-spell: This spell would be useful when cast upon a masterwork weapon created by the Craftsman.

Blade Preservation: This spell essentially functions like the Craftsman order ability Preservation, though at a higher rate of frequency.

Crafting-spell: This spell should be the very first spell any Craftsman spellcaster selects. Its benefit to any Craft, Smithcraft, Stonecraft, or similar skill is too great to be ignored.

Enhance Food: A Craftsman who farms, bakes, brews, or otherwise prepares food and drink could use this spell to enhance the quality and taste of their wares.



PLAYING A CRAFTSMAN

'They saw now that the pillars were richly carved, gleaming dully with gold and half-seen colours. Many woven cloths were hung upon the walls, and over their wide spaces marched figures of ancient legend, some dim with years, some darkling in the shade.'

- The Two Towers

While no one person or article can tell you how best to play your character, the following guidelines may prove useful when playing your Craftsman hero.

The greatest value a Craftsman hero brings to any game chronicle is his ability to create enchanted and masterwork items. A fellowship with a Craftsman hero as a member will, in all likelihood, soon have arms, armour, and goods superior in quality to any they see for sale on the streets and in the shops of Middle-earth's cities and towns.

As a Craftsman, you should make every effort to practice your livelihood and attempt to profit from your hard work. If your Craftsman focuses on weaving, for example, do all you can to make sure the products he creates are among the finest in the land. Pick up the Masterwork and Enchantment order abilities as soon as you can, and maximize your Craft skill to its full potential early on in the chronicle. The sooner you have these abilities, the sooner you can create wondrous items and sell them for a princely sum.

Indeed, creating such fine items will likely earn your Craftsman Renown, as the peoples far and wide talk of your superior craftsmanship. Even a well-timed and -placed gift to some noble or lordling may reap dividends for you later. You never know when a recalcitrant guard will turn a more favourable eye upon you and your group if he remembers a previous gift of your generosity.

CONCLUSION

As Craftsman characters such as Barliman Butterbur play interesting and useful roles in *The Lord of the Rings*, so should Craftsmen player characters in any given chronicle. It is hoped that the advice detailed in this article will aid you in creating and playing interesting, exciting, and effective Craftsmen. Build your characters intelligently and have them take their place among the stalwart and respected artificers and merchants of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth





ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

BILL FERNY by Scofflaw

“Bill Ferny... has an evil name in the Bree-land, and queer folk call at his house... he would sell anything to anybody; or make mischief for amusement.”

-The Fellowship of the Ring

RACE: Man, Middle Man (Man of Bree)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable (+2 to Swiftness), Dominion of Man, Skilled (+1 to Appraise, +1 to Legerdemain)

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 3 (-1), Nimbleness 8 (+1)*, Perception 8 (+1)*, Strength 6 (+0), Vitality 6 (+0), Wits 7 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 11

ORDERS: Rogue

ORDER ABILITIES: Lurking in Shadows

ADVANCEMENTS: 4

SKILLS: Appraise (Coins, Valuables) +2, Armed Combat: Clubs (Club) +1, Climb +, Conceal +2, Debate (Bargain) +1, Games (Darts) +1, Inquire (Converse) +4, Intimidate (Fear)+1, Language: Orkish (Orcs of the White Hand) +3, Language: Westron (Bree-land dialect) +5, Lore: History (Bree-land) +3, Lore: Race: (Hobbits, Men) +4, Lore: Realm (Bree-land) +6, Observe (Hear, Spot) +4, Persuade (Fast Talk) +1, Run +1, Search +2

EDGES: Ally (Grimlach, half-orc spy of Isengard), Curious, Friends (Shady Bree-landers), Furtive, Keen-eyed, Woodcrafty

FLAWS: Arrogant, Craven, Dark Secret (employ of Saruman), Duty (spy in Bree for Isengard)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 6

COURAGE: 1

RENOWN: 4

CORRUPTION: 2

* Favoured Attribute, Reaction, or active Order

BACKGROUND

The Ferny's have long been the bad neighbors and ne'er-do-wells of the Bree-land: lazy, quarrelsome, and unproductive. Bill Ferny is the natural end product of this lineage. He lives in the last house in Bree by the East-gate, a dark, ill-kept building surrounded by an untrimmed hedge. Bill Ferny is a swarthy man with heavy black brows, dark eyes, and a large mouth, usually contorted in a sneer.

Ferny is a petty criminal who otherwise makes a living doing odd jobs around the Bree-land. He can usually be found in the Prancing Pony or circulating around the Bree-land villages and the Chetwood, attempting to pick up information that can prove useful to him and/or hurtful to others. By this time he has got to know the geography of the Bree-land well, though he knows little about the lands outside that area.

Sneering and scornful, Bill Ferny is an amoral opportunist – completely mercenary when his own interest is at stake and, in his mind, his own interest is what is always at stake. Whether attempting to swindle his fellow citizens or travelers or causing misfortune or making profit out of others' misfortune, he will always act in an underhanded way. The people of Bree tolerate him because he has done little more than petty larceny and been possessed of an indolent and poor attitude, or, as they put it, "he hasn't done murder nor worse... yet." Recently he has been in contact with Grimlach, a mannish looking half-orc sent to Bree by Saruman to recruit spies in the area. Seeing only a chance to make easy money and cause trouble, he does not really know what he has gotten himself into.

HALBARAD

 by Scofflaw


“This is an evil door,’ said Halbarad, ‘and my death lies beyond it. I will dare to pass it nonetheless...”
- The Return of the King

RACE: Man (Dúnadan)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable (+2 to Willpower), Dominion of Man, Skilled (+1 to Insight, +1 to Survival)

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 11 (+2)*, Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 12 (+3), Strength 10 (+2), Vitality 11 (+2)*, Wits 12 (+3)

REACTIONS: Stamina +4, Swiftsness +3, Willpower +4*, Wisdom +5

DEFENCE: 12

ORDERS: Warrior, Ranger

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion, Battle-Hardened, Hard March, Protector (Free Peoples of the North), Retreat (Ranger community in The Angle), Walk Without Trace, Wilderness Lore, Cross-Order Skill: Lore

ADVANCEMENTS: 34

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +9, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spears) +5, Climb +4, Debate (Negotiate, Parley) +7, Healing (Treat Wounds, Treat Illness) +4, Inquire (Converse, Interrogate) +5, Insight +10, Jump +4, Language: Adûnaic +3, Language: Orkish (Orcs of Angmar) +3, Language: Orkish (Orcs of the Misty Mountains) +3, Language: Quenya +1, Language: Sindarin +8, Language: Westron +8, Lore: History (Agnor, Dúnedain, Elves, Gondor) +8, Lore: Race (Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits, Men, Orcs, Trolls) +8, Lore: Realm (Angmar, Arthedain, Dunland, Misty Mountains, Rivendell) +6, Observe (Spot, Hearing) +8, Perform (Tell Stories, Recite Verse) +4, Persuade (Oratory) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +6, Ride (Horse) +7, Run +6, Sea-craft (Boating) +2, Siegecraft (Defense, Unit Leadership) +5, Stealth (Hide, Shadow, Sneak) +8, Swim +3, Track (Men, Orcs, Trolls, Beasts) +10, Unarmed Combat: Wrestle +3, Weather-sense +4

EDGES: Ally Allies 6 (Aragorn, Gandalf, Elrond, Elladan, Elrohir, other rangers and members of The Wise), Command 1 (Ranger Troop), Doughty, Elf-friend, Fell Handed 2 (All foes), Fore-sighted, Hardy, Stern, Tireless 3, Travel-sense, Valour, Warwise, Wary, Woodcrafty 2, Friends (Rangers of the North, The Wandering Companies)

FLAWS: Duty (To protect and defend Eriador), Enemies (The Shadow and its servants), Fealty (Aragorn II), Oath (To fulfill all duties required of service with the Rangers of the North)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 15

COURAGE: 5

RENOWN: 10

GEAR: Dúnadan Blade (Longsword), grey cloak, horn, Star of the Dúnedain, war-horse, quality chain hauberk, spear, longbow, quiver of arrows (20), long knife

* Favoured Attribute, Reaction, or active Order

ITEMS

Arminist: This is a Dúnadan blade, with the qualities described in *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*. It is a long sword and has been passed down in his family from father to son over many generations.

Star of the Dúnedain: This is a brooch of silver, shaped like a rayed star, worn by the Rangers of the North on their cloaks, pinned upon the left shoulder. It is the *elenriss*, symbol of the North Kingdom of old. It is seldom worn openly by the Dúnedain, save for occasions of ceremony, at great councils or when arrayed for war. It gives the wearer +3 to social tests with those allied or friendly with the Rangers. It also adds +1 to the wearers bearing. The consequences for wearing an *elenriss* under false pretenses could be dire.

BACKGROUND

Close kin to his liege-lord, Aragorn son of Arathorn, Halbarad is Aragorn's lieutenant and most trusted confidant amongst the Rangers, often having responsibility for their operations and the maintenance of the Dúnedain community in the North



while Aragorn is away. Stern and silent even for one of the Dúnedain, Halbarad says little and keeps close council, but is forbearing and brave to the point of self-abnegation. The destiny of the Dúnedain and the legacy of Aragorn are his primary concerns and, though his gift of foresightedness can make him appear forbidding or severe, he has a tenacity and a belief that allow him to carry out his duties with little regard to his own safety. Halbarad can mean “tall tower” or “hidden fortress” in Sindarin and that is the effect his manner has on his fellow Rangers and their allies, though quiet, he is stalwart, enduring and possessed of great fortitude, acting as a support to Aragorn in his trials.

In the War of the Ring, Halbarad rode with a troop of Rangers and the sons of Elrond from Rivendell to seek Aragorn, bearing the banner of the King that Arwen had long woven in secret. They joined him in Rohan, and took the Paths of the Dead to confront the Corsairs of Umbar at Pelargir. Sailing up the Anduin, they came to Minas Tirith, and fought in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, where Halbarad was slain.

THEODRED by Jim ‘Ineti’ Johnson

*“Théodred...Second Marshal of the Mark.”
-The Two Towers*

RACE: Man (Middle Man: Rohirrim)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable (+2 to Stamina), Dominion of Man, Skilled

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +5*, Swiftswiftness +5, Willpower +2, Wisdom +3

DEFENCE: 12

ORDERS: Noble, warrior, knight

ORDER ABILITIES: Born to the Saddle, Courtier, Deference, Domain (Second Mark of Rohan), Horsemaster, Mounted Combat, Noble Mien, Shield Wall, Swift Strike, Warrior-born

ADVANCEMENTS: 26

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +8, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +8, Climb (Trees) +2, Craft: Leatherwork +3, Debate (Parley) +2, Healing (Treat Wounds) +4, Inquire (Converse) +2, Insight (Rohirrim) +2, Inspire (Rohirrim) +3, Intimidate (Majesty) +4, Jump +2, Language: Late Adûnaic (Rohiric) +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Rohan (Kings of Old) +3, Lore: *Mearas* +2, Lore: Men (Rohirrim) +6, Lore: Rohan (Edoras) +6, Lore: Domesticated Beasts (Horses) +6, Observe (Spot) +6, Persuade (Oratory) +1, Ranged Combat: Spears (Spear) +6, Ride (Horse) +12, Run +1, Siegecraft (Defence) +4, Smithcraft: Blacksmith +2, Stealth (Sneak) +4, Survival (Plains) +6, Track (Men, Orcs) +3

EDGES: Allies 2 (Éomer, Éowyn), Bold, Command 3 (Riders of the Second Mark), Fell-handed 2 (Orcs), Honour’s Insight, Indomitable, Rank 3 (Second Marshal of Rohan), Warrior’s Heart, Valour

FLAWS: Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Enemy (Orcs), Fealty (to Théoden King)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 10

COURAGE: 4

RENOWN: 4

GEAR: Longsword, spear, small shield, helm, chainmail corselet, warhorse

* Favoured Attribute, Reaction, or active Order

FEATURED CREATURES

THE CHIEF WOLF by Erica 'Camdin' Balsley

'...and in the middle of the circle was a great grey wolf. He spoke to them in the dreadful language of the Wargs... Every now and then all the Wargs in the circle would answer their grey chief all together...'

-The Hobbit



RACE: Warg-wight

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 9 (+1), Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 10 (+2)*, Wits 4 (±0)

REACTIONS: Stamina +6*, Swiftiness +3, Willpower +2, Wisdom ±0

ORDERS: Barbarian, Captain

ORDER ABILITIES: Air of Command, Fires of Devotion, Move Without Trace (Mountains) 2 (-10 test penalty),

Preferred Weapon (Fangs)

ADVANCEMENTS: 10

DEFENCE: 11

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Fangs) +12, Inspire +2, Intimidate (Fear) +10, Jump +8, Language: Understand Westron +2, Language: Understand Black Speech +2, Language: Warg-speak +4, Observe (Smell, Spot) +8 (+13 to Sense Power), Ride (Keep Rider) +3, Run +11, Stealth (Sneak) +10, Survival (Mountains) +5, Track (Scent) +9

EDGES: Command 1 (Wargs), Dodge, Strong-willed 2, War-wise, Wary, Weapon Mastery (Fangs) edge

FLAWS: Enemy (Gandalf the Grey)

SPELLS: Evoke Fear (ability), Fog-Raising (ability)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Dissolution in Death, Extraordinary Sense: Sense Power, Icy Breath, Natural Weapons (Fangs, 2d6+1), Undead Stamina, Vulnerability (Sunlight, 2d6/round)

SIZE: Medium (6 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 14

COURAGE: 2

RENOWN: 15

TN EQUIVALENT: 20

UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dissolution in Death: When slain, the body of a Warg-wight dissolves into mist.

Icy Breath: The breath of Warg-wights carries the chill of the grave. When a Warg-wight scores a Superior success or higher with a bite, his chill breath gets into the wound, freezing the flesh, causing the victim to lose 1 point of strength and one point of vitality. Lost points are regained at the rate of one in each attribute per 10 minutes, or in full upon application of a *Healing-spell*.

Undead Stamina: Warg-wights do not eat or drink, take only half damage from physical attacks, and heal all injuries at five times the normal rate. Warg-wights do not have Weariness Levels and do not need to make Stamina tests to resist Weariness for any reason.

IN THE NOVELS

The Chief Wolf is only so named in *The Hobbit*, and is one of the of wolves that trapped Thorin and Company in pine trees soon after their escape from the tunnels at the Goblin Gate.

The Chief Wolf is a grey beast, larger by some considerable amount than any other wolf or Warg known. He was a great leader of wolf-kind in the North, in command of "hundreds and hundreds" of Wargs that were gathering in the for a long-planned Orc incursion into the Mannish settlements in the Vales of Anduin. That incursion was disrupted by Gandalf's slaying of the Great Goblin and the rousting of Beorn, who killed many Orcs and Wargs as they scoured the countryside looking for Thorin and Company.



During the Wargs' assault on the Dwarves, Gandalf, and Bilbo Baggins high in the pine trees, the Chief Wolf was fiercely burned by a well-placed *Burning Sparks* spell. Dealt such terrible injury by Gandalf wielding nothing more than dry old pine cones, the Chief Wolf fled to lick his wounds.

(The following depictions of the Chief Wolf's history are not canon, and are pure speculation on the part of this author.)

Little is mentioned of the Chief Wolf after his defeat at the pine trees, and indeed despite his prestige as a leader of Wargs he isn't even mentioned in the description of the Battle of Five Armies. Since little else is written of him, it could be assumed that he lost face amongst his kin and was outcast from the Warg-packs of the North.

Humiliated, the Chief Wolf wandered South and eventually found his way to Dol Guldur, the tower of the Necromancer. There the Chief Wolf first encountered the foul Warg-wights and swore to someday be their master. (See *Hall of Fire #12* for more information on Warg-wights.)

Misfortune (and Gandalf!) seemed to follow the beleaguered Chief Wolf, however, for shortly after he arrived at Dol Guldur the White Council appeared and drove the Necromancer — revealed at last to be Sauron — out of Mirkwood. Hoping to once more be elevated to a position of status among Warg-kind, the Chief Wolf fled with the Dark Lord to Mordor.

In those long dark years in Mordor, strong had the Chief Wolf grown in his heart and hatred, and much foul magic had been worked upon him by the Master of Barad-dûr. At long last the Chief Wolf passed away, and as he had sworn his spirit lingered on in Middle-earth and he became one of Sauron's Warg-wights.

Many years later, the Chief Wolf and his Shadow-Pack was dispatched along with other powerful servants of the Shadow to scour the countryside looking for the One Ring. Knowing the lands Gandalf traveled most, the Chief Wolf took his pack to Eriador. There, in those wild lands, he sought in vain for the One Ring, but so too did he search for the enemy that had dealt him so many wounds of body and heart.

The Chief Wolf found Gandalf at last in the land of Hollin, called Eregion by the Elves of old. Undaunted by the eight travelers that accompanied the Grey Wizard, the Chief Wolf tracked his enemy to the mountains near Moria. He had gathered with him a sizable pack of natural wolves, but they fled when their pack-leader was slain by Legolas. Enraged, the Chief Wolf and his Shadow-Pack assaulted the nine travelers. A great battle then ensued, and as he did so long ago Gandalf lit the forest ablaze with searing fire. Before the Chief Wolf could reach his old enemy, however, he, too, was slain by Legolas. His form melted into the earth with the coming of dawn, and nothing more was ever written or seen of the Chief Wolf.

'When the full light of the morning came no signs of the wolves were to be found, and they looked in vain for the bodies of the dead ... "It is as I feared," said Gandalf. "These were no ordinary wolves hunting for food in the wilderness." '

-The Fellowship of the Ring

IN THE FILM

The Chief Wolf does not appear in any of the films. This does not, of course, mean that he does not exist in the setting of the film.

IN THE GAME

Around the time of the War of the Ring, the Chief Wolf is in Eriador with a small detachment of Warg-wights searching for the One Ring. Heroes could encounter them in the wilderness near the ruins of Tharbad, or skulking among the barrows of the Barrow-downs. Alternately, the Chief Wolf could be used to harass travelers around Rivendell, as he knows that his old enemy Gandalf spends much of his time there. Between the events in *The Hobbit* and the War of the Ring the Chief Wolf is in Mordor with Sauron.

Of course, you don't have to use the Chief Wolf with the history detailed here. You could use him as an antagonist or "boss monster" for your chronicle. In this capacity he could be encountered in any region of Middle-earth where the Shadow holds sway.

THE GUARDIAN

RACE: Greater Wight

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +7, Swiftmess +4, Willpower +6*, Wisdom +4

DEFENCE: 11

MOVEMENT: 6

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +10~, Intimidate (Fear) +6, Jump +5, Language: Understand Westron +4, Language: Understand Black Speech +4, Observe (Sense Power, Smell, Spot) +8, Run +5, Stealth (Hide, Sneak) +10, Track (Scent) +9

~ = includes the bonus from the Amulet of Ankath

SPELLS: Blast of Sorcery, Command, Evoke Fear, Sense Power, Slumber, Shadow of Fear, Veiling Shadow

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Icy Touch, Turning, Undead Stamina

SIZE: Medium (6 Wound Levels, 1 Healthy)

HEALTH: 15

COURAGE: 5

RENOWN: 8

TN EQUIVALENT: 17

GEAR: Chainmail, Kâthotar (Longsword), Amulet of Ankath

* = Favoured Reaction or Attribute

UNIQUE ITEMS

Kâthotar – This awful blade was forged in the early days of Angmar by the sorcerous smiths of the Witch-king. Tied into its length are fell magics that are a bane to all of the Free Peoples or any who defy the will of the Dark Lord. The sword gives a +2 to all Armed

Combat tests and any wound inflicted by it will cause standard damage, but the victim will also be afflicted by Morgul Poison. This poison will cause an additional 1 point of damage per round for a number of rounds equal to twice a character's Vitality. The wound becomes chill and the area around it numb. Should the damaging poison spread enough, it can kill the victim. In game terms, if the victim has already taken damage and the 2x Vitality drain takes them to below Near Death, they expire. Any who bear this sword will gain an immediate 4 Corruption and 1 more for each week they keep the blade.

Amulet of Ankath – The amulet is a flat piece of gold, about 1 inch long and a half inch wide – it has been laced with magic to add an advantage to the wearer - the wearer gains the Edge: Warwise +2. Though the item is not corrupt itself, it has been hanging around the Guardians neck for so long and within the area of the Shrine that it will convey 2 Corruption to any who put it on.

UNIQUE ABILITIES

Turning - By killing a living person in a ritual that takes five minutes uninterrupted, the person's corrupted spirit will rise the next night, becoming a wight under the command and will of the Greater Wight.

DESCRIPTION

Greater wights look the same as lesser Barrow-wights, but are able to retain a more human appearance when the evil spirit occupies its chosen body.





HISTORY

These wholly evil and ghastly spirits are the most powerful of the terrifying essences that the Witch-king let loose upon the North Kingdom of Arnor and its remains.

HABITAT

Along with the lesser spirits, they inhabit the sacred burial mounds, fields of the dead, and other dark evil places. The areas where their evil takes root is infected by the spread of fear.

SOCIETY

They are very powerful spirits and exert their power and command over lesser powers and use them to the evil ends as designed by the Witch-king.

USAGE

The Guardian stands a vigil watch over the ancient Shrine of Morgoth. Along with his three servants, they see to it that the site is not marred by any hand. The servants of the Guardian are standard wights that may be taken out of the *Fell Beast and Wondrous Magics* supplement. A Narrator may feel free to tweak the wights as needed to conform to the level of their game.

STEP-BY-STEP ENCOUNTERS

ÉOWYN VERSUS THE WITCH-KING by Malcolm 'Taliesin' Wolter



This is the third in a series of step-by-step combat encounters in the CODA system. The first test featured none other than the Fellowship versus the Balrog and was conducted as an illustrative tool for those new to the game, but also as an objective way to test whether the game designers 'got it right'; that is to say, could the events in the books or movie be simulated in the game? The Balrog test proved that Durin's Bane, when played properly, was more than a match for the Fellowship, as Tolkien intended. The second test pitted Sam against Shelob, and resulted in a very different outcome. This test attempts to recreate the epic showdown between Éowyn and the Witch-king of Angmar in *The Return of the King*.

Methodology

The stats for the Witch-king were taken from *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magics* book. I used the Éowyn and Merry stats as provided in *The Two Towers Sourcebook*. However, both Éowyn and Merry present a special problem: since Decipher never published a *Return of the King Sourcebook*, we don't have an official version of either of these characters at this point of their development. Since TTTS version of Merry has two advancements and *The Fellowship of the Ring Sourcebook* version has but



one, we can reasonably extrapolate that *RotKS Merry* could have a whopping three advancements. I also took the liberty of advancing *Éowyn* one as well. This is how I spent the advancements:

Merry: Addition of one flaw (Fealty: Théoden) grants six picks, total: Armed Combat: Blades +3, Faithful (Rohan), Willpower +2

Éowyn: Faithful: Théoden, Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword): +8, Warrior-born

I captured every move as I made them, so I could check and re-check all of the appropriate modifiers, which, in typical CODA fashion, seem to be never-ending.

I used only official CODA rules, as found in the Core Book and official errata and clarification docs.

I used a computer dice-rolling program to generate all the dice rolls to save time. Dice rolls are indicated in the formulae with an asterisk (*). And there's no fudging—the rolls are recorded exactly as I made them.

I've tried really hard to capture everything, but wouldn't be surprised if someone finds something that still slipped through the cracks, modifier-wise. However, it's useless to argue *tactics*. All participants were played as closely to Tolkien's description of the event as possible, and that's that. No coulda-shoulda-woulda's allowed for the purposes of this test.

Assumptions

Merry wields a Dúnadan blade, per the *TFotRS*. He has an armoured with a steel helm, a leather jerkin, and a shield, per Tolkien's novel.

Although *Éowyn* isn't equipped with a shield in the official *TTTS* write-up, we can forgive this colossal oversight and assume the *shieldmaiden* of Rohan actually has a large shield, especially since Tolkien provides her one in *RotK*. We can also assume she has a steel helm and chainmail armour, as per the book and the movie, even though *TTTS* makes no mention of any protective gear!

Decipher never specifies what sort of armour the Lord of the Nazgûl—or the rest of the Nazgûl for that matter—wears, either. However, Tolkien describes a hauberk of mail. The Witch-king's legs are apparently unprotected, since Tolkien says Merry's sword passes “up beneath the hauberk” to pierce “the sinew behind his mighty knee”.

I also ruled that characters have to spend a point of Courage to attack the Witch-King, per the *Core Book* p.53. I don't apply this to each individual attack action, but each combat round requires a new expenditure of Courage.

It is assumed that all characters start with all of their Courage.

A word about parrying: The *Core Book* says that, “with a successful Armed or Unarmed Combat test (Parry), the defender thwarts the incoming attack and avoids all damage”. However, in recent months one of the games reps on the official Decipher site as indicated that even if the Parry fails, the Parry result is used to determine the attacker's degree of success, not the defender's Defence value. Still, I don't believe this interpretation has made it into the official clarification docs. Therefore for I used the Parry rule as originally stated.

I also used the optional rule on page 217 of the *Core Book* to limit multiple actions per round to twice the character's normal action allowance, adjusted for edges like Swift Strike. I'm not going to allow more than six actions in a six-second round in my game.

And with that, we're ready to rumble!

ROUND 1

TERROR ROLLS

The Lord of the Nazgûl's Terror special ability is ‘always on’ at $(15 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{BRG } 5)/2 = 11$. At the beginning of the each round, the effects of Fear are determined before aught else.

The Witch-king: Automatic Terror $(11 + 9^*) = 20$

Éowyn: Willpower TN 20 $(3 + \text{Valour } 4 + \text{Faithful } 1 + 6^*) = 14$. Spends 1 Courage to make this a 17. Éowyn is Panicked



(-2 to all tests going forward), but stands her ground!

She must also try to resist the foul stench of the Hell-hawk TN 10: (STA 2 + Panicked -2 + Faithful 1 + 4*) = 5. She succumbs to the awful stench, and will suffer -2 on all tests going forward.

Merry: Willpower TN 20 (2 + Valour 4 + Faithful 1 + 10*) = 17. Merry is Panicked (-2 to all tests going forward)!

Merry must also try to resist the Hell-hawk's stench TN 10: (STA 1 + Panicked -2 + 8*) = 7. He succumbs as well, and will suffer -2 on all tests going forward!

The first round hasn't even begun and Éowyn and Merry are at -4 for all actions!

ROUND 1

Round 1 Actions by Order of Initiative

Witch-king Initiative: (7 + 12* + 1*) = 20

Seeing that a woman challenges him, the Witch-king hesitates on the back of the fell beast "silent, as if in sudden doubt". He effectively uses a Delay manoeuvre.

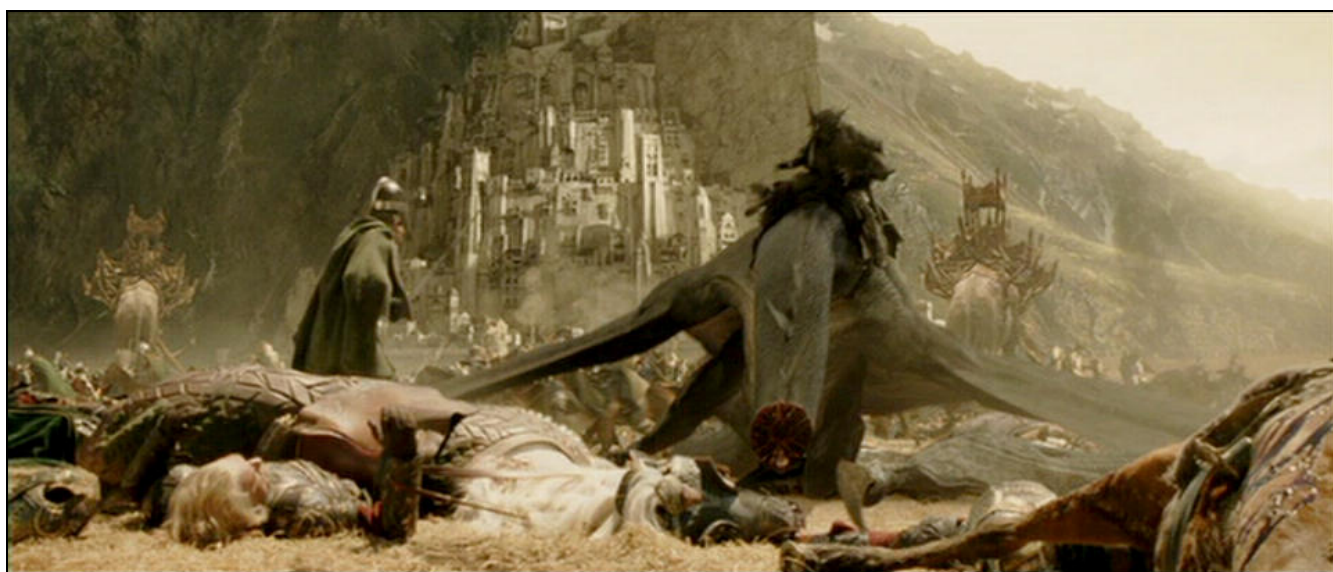
Éowyn Initiative: (4 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 11*) = 11

Delays action also, waiting for the Witch-king's onslaught. However she spends 1 Courage at this point to activate the Warrior-born order ability which will grant a +2 to all Combat skill tests for the remainder of the battle.

Hell-hawk: (2 + 8*) = 10

1st and 2nd Action: Mammoth creature Charges medium-sized Éowyn (TN 16), "shrieking, striking with beak and claw": (6 + Specialty 2 + Charge 1 + 5*) = 14. The Hell-hawk misses!

Éowyn's 1st Action interrupts the beast's Charge and she deals the mammoth-sized beast a "swift stroke", "skilled and deadly" (TN 6): (8 + Specialty 2 + NIM 2 + Warrior-born 2 + Faithful 1 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 7*) = 18. Éowyn spends 1 Courage to make this a 23 (including the Bold edge). The Narrator rules that the Hell-hawk is so committed to the Charge it cannot Dodge in time, so Éowyn lands an Extraordinary Success! Since this is 17 above the TN, the Narrator allows Éowyn to deliver a *coup de grace*, per the *Core Book*, page 231. The hawk's neck is "clove asunder"!



"Foul!" you cry? "Using the '*coup de grace*' option is a cop-out!"

[Sigh.] Okay, even though Extraordinary Success special effects are perfectly legal, here it is the hard way:

Éowyn's 1st attack deals max damage for STR 1 + 17 = 18 points of damage, without having to spend the Courage for the



coup de grace. The beast loses 2 Healthy levels.

Éowyn's 2nd delay action is another attack TN 6: $(8 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{NIM } 2 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 7^*) = 18$. Another Extraordinary Success! The hawk again takes max damage of 18/36. It is now Injured (-3 to all tests).

Éowyn's 3rd action is another attack TN 6 $(8 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{NIM } 2 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 9^*) = 20$, but the Hell-hawk tries to Dodge (Swiftess 2 + Injured -3 + 3*) = 2. Another Extraordinary success for the shieldmaiden of Rohan! The hawk again takes max damage of 18/54. It is now Incapacitated (-7 to all tests).

For her 4th Action, Éowyn attacks once again! TN 6 $(8 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{NIM } 2 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + \text{MultiAction } -5 + 4^*) = 10$. A Complete Success! The Hell-hawk tries to Dodge (Swiftess 2 + Incapacitated -7 + 11*) = 6. Éowyn deals STR 1 + 15* = 16/70! The Hawk is Near Death, with only 2 hit points left!

For her 5th Action, Éowyn decides to finish the monster! TN 6 $(8 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{NIM } 2 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + \text{MultiAction } -10 + 5^*) = 6$. A Marginal Success! Éowyn deals STR 1 + 12* = 13! The Hawk's neck is finally "clove asunder".

The Witch-king is thrown to the ground from the fell beast's crash.

Merry Initiative: $(0 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 3^*) = -1$ (0)

Seeing Éowyn defy the Witch-king, Merry is still Panicked, but suddenly the "slow-kindled courage of his race" awakes.

The end of Round 1 finds things tracking with the book quite nicely!



ROUND 2

TERROR ROLLS

The Witch-king: Automatic Terror $(11 + 9^*) = 20$

Éowyn: Willpower TN 20 $(3 + \text{Valour } 4 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 8^*) = 12$. Spends 1 Courage to make this a 15. Éowyn is Panicked (-2 to all tests going forward), but stands her ground!

Merry: Willpower TN 20 $(2 + \text{Valour } 4 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 10^*) = 13$. Spends 1 Courage to make this a 16. Merry is still Panicked!



Actions by Initiative

Witch-king Initiative: $(7 + 11^*) = 18$

1st and 2nd Actions: The Witch-king "rises from wreck" of the Fell-beast.

3rd and 4th Actions: Two-handed Attack on Éowyn with mace TN 12 ($9 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{STR } 3 + \text{Fell-handed } 3 + \text{Warwise } 1 + 8^*$) = 26. Éowyn spends 1 Action to try to Parry (TN 26): $(8 + \text{Shield } 5 + \text{Faithfulness } 1 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 7^*) = 19$. No way. The Witch-king's mace hits with an Extraordinary Success (14)! The Narrator rules Éowyn's shield is broken, and maybe her left arm as well, as per Tolkien's account in *RotK*. No other damage dealt, as per the *Core Book*, p. 231.

Merry Initiative: $(0 + 4^*) = 4$. Spends 1 Courage to make this a 7.

1st Action: Tries to Sneak up on the Witch-king and attack him from behind. Since the Nazgûl has exhausted all non-combat actions for the round he cannot try to Observe the halfling! The Narrator therefore rules it is a Simple thing (TN10) to sneak up on the Black Rider, considering he is so intent on Éowyn. Furthermore, the Narrator will grant a +5 bonus to represent the tumult of battle as well as a +2 bonus for the hobbit's small size. Merry's Sneak: $(5 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{Soft-footed } 4 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Tumult Bonus } 5 + \text{SIZ } 2 + \text{Stench } -2 + \text{Panicked } -2 + 5^*) = 20$. A Superior Success! Narrator rules that Merry will completely surprise the Witch-king, which will grant the hobbit and Advantageous position bonus for his attack as well as rob the Nazgûl of initiative in the next round as per the Surprise rule on page 227 of the *Core Book*.

2nd Action: Merry spends 1 Courage to attack TN 13: $(2 + \text{Dúnadan blade } 3 + \text{Faithful } 1 + \text{Advantageous Position } 3 + \text{Stench } -2 + \text{Panicked } -2 + 9^*) = 14$. A Complete Success! The Dúnadan blade bites into the back of the Witch-king's mighty, but unarmoured, knee for $(12^* + 5^*) = 17$ pts! The Nazgûl's special ability Undead Stamina ensures that the sorcerer only takes half of this damage, for 9 pts (rounded up).

Éowyn Initiative: $(4 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 6^*) = 6$

3rd and 4th Actions: Éowyn must spend 1 Courage to merely attack the Witch-king. She decides to spend 1 Courage and 2 actions to make an all-out Power Attack. But she also has the Valiant edge so she gets two more Courage to spend on the attack. By spending 3 Courage, the Bold edge gives her a total bonus of +15! Attack the Witch-king TN 13 ($8 + \text{Specialty } 2 + \text{Faithfulness } 1 + \text{Warrior-born } 2 + \text{Bold } 15 + \text{Panicked } -2 + \text{Stench } -2 + 5^*$) = 29. The Witch-king has used all of his actions and cannot Dodge or Parry. Éowyn scores 16 above the TN for an Extraordinary Success. Again, using the special effect rules, this can spell instant destruction for the Witch-king, at the Narrator's discretion. Prophecy fulfilled and game over!



Otherwise, the blow does max damage $\text{STR}1 + 17 + 3 = 21$. The sorcerer's Undead Stamina cuts this in half, so he actually takes 11/20. The Witch-king is Dazed and at -1 on all actions going forward.

Upon connecting with the Witch-king, Éowyn's blade shatters! If you're opting out of the special effects rules, the encounter goes downhill quickly from here...



ROUND 3

TERROR ROLLS

The Witch-king: Automatic Terror (11 + 3*) = 14

Éowyn: Willpower TN 24 (3 + Valour 4 + Faithful 1 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 4*) = 8. Spends 1 Courage to make this an 11. Éowyn is still Panicked (-2 to all tests going forward), but stands her ground!

Merry: Willpower TN 20 (2 + Valour 4 + Faithful 1 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 8*) = 11. Merry is Panicked!

Actions by Initiative

As per the surprise rules, the Witch-king automatically loses initiative as well as one action this round. Merry's blade has been shattered!

Éowyn has the initiative. However, she's unarmed and out of Courage! If she hadn't spent the last Courage to minimize the effects of the Witch-king's Terror, she would have been Unnerved and unable to act this round. As it is now, she's out of Courage and can't attack the Lord of the Nazgûl! All she can do is survive, and that means run—or die facing her enemy with her boots on, as it were.

Witch-king 1st action: Attacks Éowyn with mace TN 12 (9 + Specialty 2 + STR 3 + Fell-handed 3 + Warwise 1 + 4*) = 22. Éowyn spends 1 Action to try to Dodge (TN 22): (4 + Faithfulness 1 + Warrior-born 2 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 7*) = 10. No can do. Witch-king scores an Extraordinary Success for max damage (3 + 13*) = 16. Éowyn's armour absorbs 5. She takes 11/11.

2nd action: Attacks Éowyn with mace TN 12 (9 + Specialty 2 + STR 3 + Fell-handed 3 + Warwise 1 + 10*) = 28. Éowyn spends her second Action to try to Dodge TN 28: (4 + Faithfulness 1 + Warrior-born 2 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 + 8*) = 11. Nada. Again, by the optional rules, we could count Éowyn dead since the Witch-king scores 17 over TN. With the play-by-play rules, she suffers max damage (3 + 13) = 16 - 5 = 11/22. She is Dazed (-1 to all tests).

3rd Action: Attacks Éowyn with mace TN 12 (9 + Specialty 2 + STR 3 + Fell-handed 3 + Warwise 1 + 3*) = 21. Éowyn spends her third Action to try to Dodge (TN 21): (4 + Faithfulness 1 + Warrior-born 2 + Panicked -2 + Stench -2 Dazed -1 + 3*) = 5. Not even close. Witch-king scores another Extraordinary Success (3 + 13) = 16 - 5 = 11/33. She is Injured (-3 to all actions going forward).

ROUND 4

Do we really need to do round 4?

Conclusions

If you're not using the suggested rules for special effects for Extraordinary Successes in combat, as per the *Core Book* page 231, you might as well forget it. When confronting mighty enemies, non-munchkin heroes will not be able to perform on the grand mythic scale that Tolkien's milieu provides. Here we were able to recreate the events of the book almost exactly by using the special effects, which include a *coup de grace*, which I interpret to mean a decisive blow, meaning instant death. In fact the *Core Book* specifically says "narrators may find these options particularly useful when PC's confront powerful enemies such as the Lord of the Nazgûl". How 'bout that. The other advantage the special effects rules have is that they speed up combat considerably. If you want grit and "realism", I would argue that Middle-earth, as conceived by the good Professor, may not be the setting for you. If you don't allow the powerful special effects for Extraordinary Successes of 15 or more above the TN (like the *coup de grace*) there's *no way* Éowyn can behead the Hell-hawk in one stroke, much less take out the Witch-king with one "swift stroke", as she does in the book and the movie. If this isn't a solid argument for using the special effects, I don't know what is.

Another thing I've learned from this test is that I don't believe unbalanced weapons like maces or axes should be eligible for multiple combat actions. There's just no way one can be as quick with a heavy-headed weapon, which needs to be recovered after each blow that connects, as with a sword. Also, the mace only has a -1 penalty to Parry. This seems a bit absurd to me as well. I'd consider making this much more substantial, say, -4, if allowing Parry with a mace at all.



If you insist on using the grittier rules, some adjustment will need to be made to enable an outcome like the book and movie. Without the special effects, the Witch-king may just be too tough, period. The Enemy's chief weapon is Fear; the undead creatures themselves are barely corporeal, merely shadows held together only by the power of the Rings they wear and the will of their dark lord. I would consider removing Swift Strike, and Evasion from his edges. I'd also recommend reducing the Witch-king's Health to 14, which means a reduction in Vitality, and stripping him and all Nazgûl of the Undead Stamina ability. Since we know they're wearing mail under those black cloaks, the addition of this protection makes them almost invulnerable to weapons, and thus invulnerable Éowyn, too.

Another thing that could help is the (apparently) official ruling that, when Parrying, even a failed Parry sets the result for determining the degree of success. At first I agreed with the critics of this new ruling that a miss was a miss. But now I could be persuaded that the Parry, or even a Dodge result, could be representative, in an abstract way, of the defender's overall effectiveness in defending himself and thus escaping damage. I can see a Parry deflecting a blow from a vital organ, for example, while not stopping it completely. I'd extend this rule to Dodge, Block and Parry.

Too, one could always increase the damage for all weapons across the board, or increase the effects of special combat manoeuvres. But if you do that, be prepared for *your heroes* to go down early and often.

Now for Éowyn: Can she be improved to have a chance against the Black Captain? Well, first off, the Armour of Heroes edge doesn't do her much good, since she wears mail and a steel helm into battle. Other edges that might be more helpful and appropriate for the daughter of Éomund include Favor of Fortune, Hardy, Resolute, Strong-willed, and Warwise. Heck, lacking the special effects rules, she might need *all* of them if she's to have any hope of going toe-to-toe with the Witch-king of Angmar. The Faithful edge isn't much help here, either. It should be taken multiple times for Éowyn, maybe 4. It might be a good idea to give Éowyn a masterwork sword as well.

The last thing that could be considered is the power of Prophecy. Although no guidelines are given in the *Core Book* for system mechanics to simulate the force of Fate, I imagine a Narrator could provide any bonus he wants, up to 15, for any actions deemed appropriate to fulfilling the prophecy! Whether this is a “cop-out” or a legitimate use of the rules depends largely on the Narrator's style and philosophy.





WHAT'S OUT THERE

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://forums.decipher.com/viewforum.php?f=44>

DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG SUPPORT DOCS

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

THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE SITE

<http://halloffire.inspiring.us>

FAN MODULES FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

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

THE MAD IRISHMAN

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

STARBASE CODA

<http://www.starbase-coda.com>

RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES

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

THE SLAVE PITS 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>

VALINOR

<http://sauron.misled.us>

TREK-RPG.NET

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

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