



ISSUE NINETEEN
JUNE 2005

THE HALL OF FIRE

FAN WEBZINE



GREETINGS,

SALUTATIONS... HELLO ALL!

June is here and during this month we will see if Decipher is going to come through on their long belated word and release the Helm's Deep Sourcebook. I personally have been a consumer of Decipher's products since 1994-5 when they released their Star Trek CCG, and when they came out with their Lord of the Rings and Star Trek RPG's, I became an even bigger fan of their work.

But like everyone else, time and repetition of the previously stated line (only with new dates) has worn even me down. I have been one to play down Decipher's inexplicable or contractually required silence pertaining to the games in the hope that my time, faith, and well-earned (and in my opinion, also well-spent) money were going to pay off -- and now we are on the verge of it. Call me rabid fanboy, call me blindly devoted, call me what you will, but I continue to keep the faith, probably the last one, until shown otherwise.

We gamers do have a sliver of hope with the Tales of Middle-earth living campaign sponsored by one of the faithful, Timothy Creese, and many others at http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/tales_of_middle_earth/. If you're interested, get involved. Go to cons, talk it up, and play the game even if there aren't any supported by Decipher. Remember: games don't die unless the fans let them die.

But have no fear... if this game's official support does indeed go the way of the dodo, I will be here with my comrades-at-pen giving this well-intentioned game the attention and respect it deserves for as long as we are able.

Matthew A. Kearns
aka GandalfOfBorg
Editor

THE MIDDLE-EARTH HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

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ADVENTURING IN

CARN DÛM AND ANGMAR

by Mathew Kearns (GandalfofBorg)
pictures by Peter Merryman

HISTORY

For many years before his grand reemergence, the Witch-king labored in secret to create a grand fortress in the desolate and dreary land at the north end of the Misty Mountains, unseen and unthought of by both the Dúnedain and Elves of Rivendell. On the last peak of the Misty Mountains, Carn Dûm, the fortress was built bearing the same name. Around 1300 in the Third Age, the Witch-king strode forth and made war upon the weaker remnants of the North Kingdom.

In TA 1409, the forces of Angmar were able to break the lines of the Dúnedain and invade the lands of Arthedain and Rhudaur. Soon after, Rhudaur fell to orcs and the evil hill-men. To cause further angst and fear, the Witch-king sent forth mighty spirits of evil to inhabit the barrows of Tyn Gorthad, the tombs of mighty kings and princes. At this time, the Great Plague also swept through the western lands of men, starting in the north and moving south into Gondor, killing thousands. Even though many lesser men fell to this dread disease, it seemed to target the Dúnedain specifically. Their numbers began to dwindle drastically in the following years, leaving the few that remained to wander the empty lands of their former glory until the day that Aragorn II returned it to them.



In TA 1974, the Witch-king rode through the gates of the Dúnedain's last stronghold of Fornost with his triumph nigh complete. From here he chased, but lost, the remaining Dúnedain of the North into the wastes of Forod where they found a temporary haven with the Lossoth. Eventually they were found, but too late -- those that left by ship were drowned upon the grinding ice of Forochel and the others were able to remain hidden.

Finally getting around to help their brethren, Gondor sent a mighty force to the north in TA 1975 that proceeded to dismantle and destroy the evil kingdom of Angmar. The Witch-king fled into the hills and eventually went south to reside with his master, Sauron. Fearing that Carn Dûm or another fortress might be rebuilt and populated by more than just the orcs and trolls of the wild lands, Elrond set up a constant watch over the region by both Rangers and the Wandering Companies.

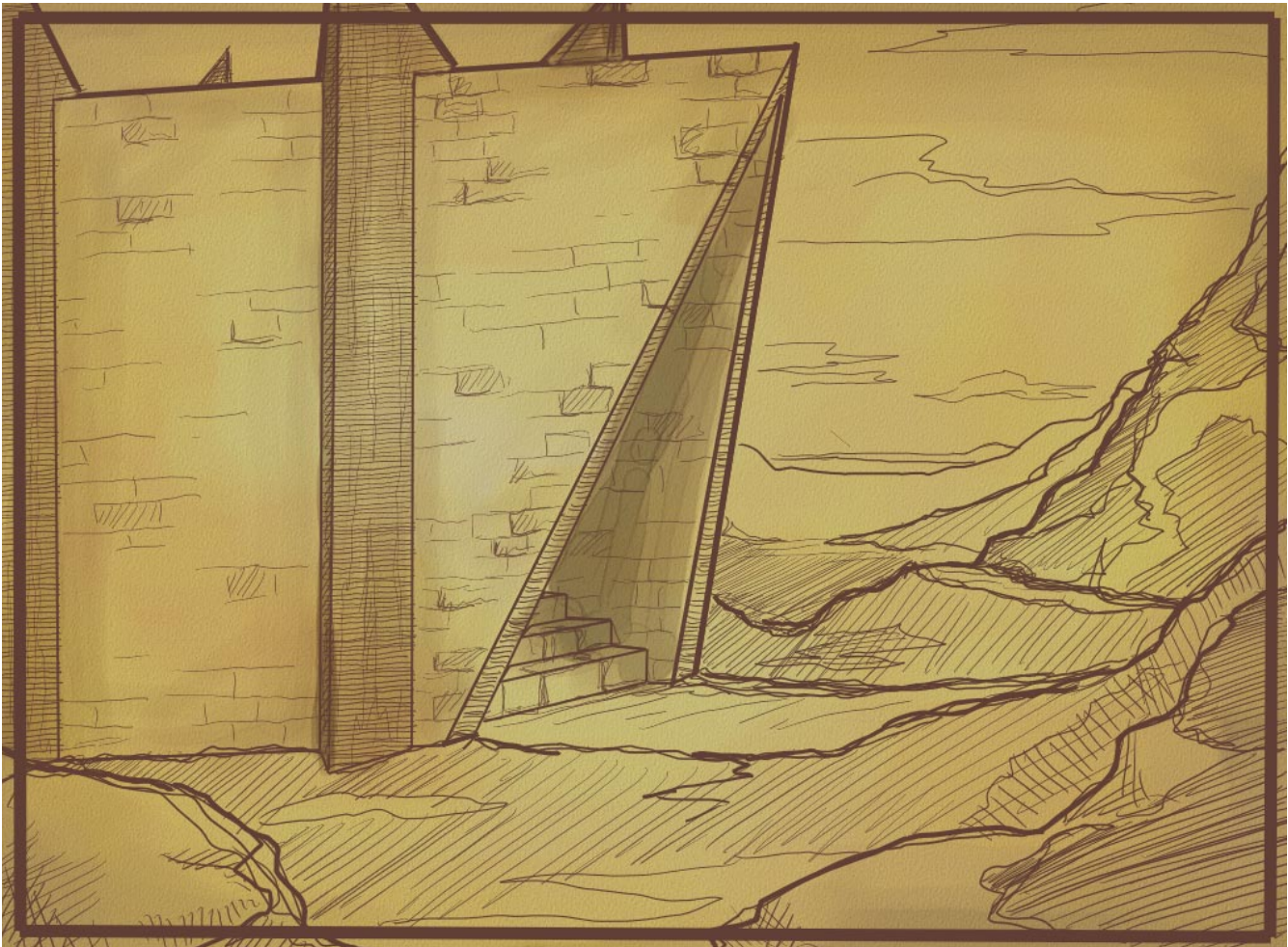
SITES

Throne Room: It is here that the Witch-king spent all his time when not in the tower or on the battlefield. The whole of the room is carved right from the living stone of Carn Dûm. The stone itself is black and polished, but when in the presence of sunlight, it glints blood red. What is not stone is made of crimson cloth bearing the devices of Angmar. In the center of the room is an altar of a lidless eye ringed in flame. Large braziers and the living flame ringing the eye on the altar illuminate this room.

Tower: Built in the same manner as the throne room, the tower has but one room at the top where the Lord of the Nazgûl's flying mount may perch and where he crafts the blackest of arts. Within the tower is naught but long, steep stair lit by torches.

Great Hall: The rest of the fortress is built of shaped stone from Carn Dûm instead of being cut out of the mountain. Decorated much like the throne room, the great hall is lit by many torches and is where the feasting table resides. It is here that the Witch-king's majordomo entertains dignitaries and captains of the Shadow's allies.

Smithy: Also built of the shaped stone, the smithy is where Angmar's war-machine is crafted. Second only to the throne room and tower, this building is tainted with the foulest of evil. Within these walls, fell weapons are created with spells of dread and doom woven into them. In here is kept approximately Hoard 4 worth of weapons and armor at all times, for it also the armory for outfitting the garrison of Carn Dûm.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

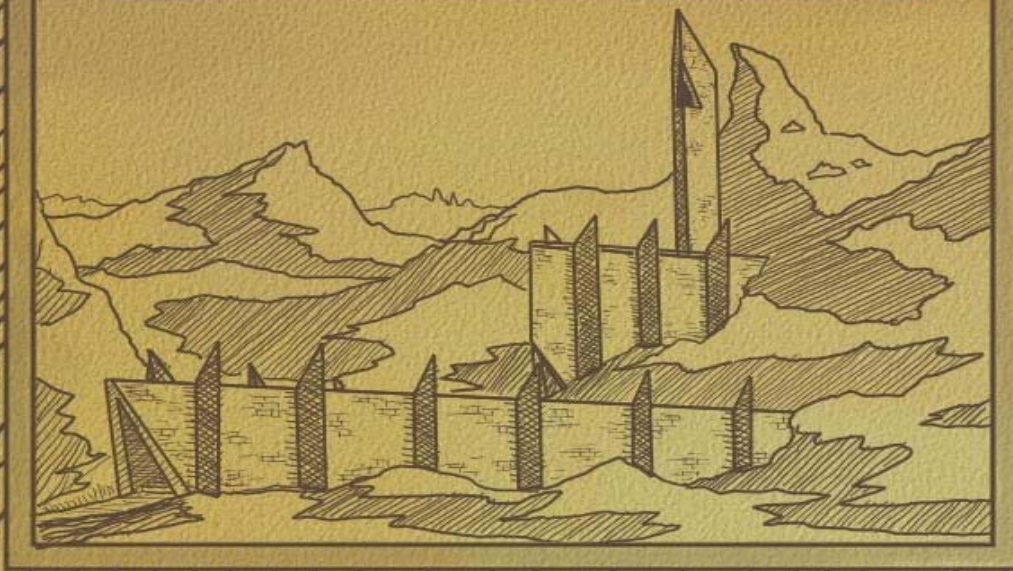
Investigation/Spying: Either before the fall of Arthedain or after Angmar's destruction, a group is sent to spy upon the land making sure the fortress isn't being rebuilt or getting estimates of the size of Angmar's forces.

Siege of Carn Dûm: Gondor's forces make their landing on the eastern-most shore, near Angmar. The group takes part in spying upon Angmar from the hook above and/or participates in the destruction of the realm and siege of Carn Dûm.

Rescue: While they were escaping the destruction of Fornost or Annúminas, some of the royal family was captured by the forces of Angmar. A small group of elite soldiers is sent to Angmar to retrieve them before they are lost forever within the walls of Carn Dûm.

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South View



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PEOPLES OF MIDDLE-EARTH – MEN OF THE ANDUIN VALES

'Eorl the Young was lord of the Men of Éothéod. That land lay near the sources of Anduin, between the furthest ranges of the Misty Mountains and the northernmost part of Mirkwood.'

Appendix – The Return of the King

STATS AND/OR RACIAL PACKAGES

Attribute Modifiers: Same as Middle Men

Racial Packages:

Éothéod - Armed Combat +1, Observe +1, Ranged Combat +1, Ride +2; Honour's Insight

Men of the Mountains - Armed Combat +1, Climb +1, Stonecraft +1, Survival (Mountains) +2, Weather-sense +1

Woodsmen - Armed Combat +1, Craft +1, Ranged Combat +1, Survival Forests or Mountains) +2, Track +1

HISTORY AND LANDS

The Anduin Vales, a valley at the headwaters of the Anduin, bounded by the Grey Mountains to the north, the Misty Mountains to the west, and Mirkwood to the east. It is here that many an ancient tale is told of dragons, ancient horse-lords, and descendants of the lesser houses of Men.

First Age and the Settling of the Secondborn

Little is told of this region during the First Age, but it can be assumed that the young houses of Men, Elves, and even Dwarves carved out their niches in this area. Then, after the sundering of the seas and sinking of Beleriand, many foul things came into the area, mostly residing in the mountains and forests around the valley. Mannish settlements spread throughout the northern lands of Middle-earth in the Third Age, from the sources of Anduin to the valley of Dale, and southward through Rhovanion. More commonly called 'Northmen', they were a broad mix of peoples, speaking many different but related tongues. It is from the languages of the Men of the North that the two greatest Wizards took their names: Saruman ('Man of Skill') and Gandalf ('Elf of the Wand').

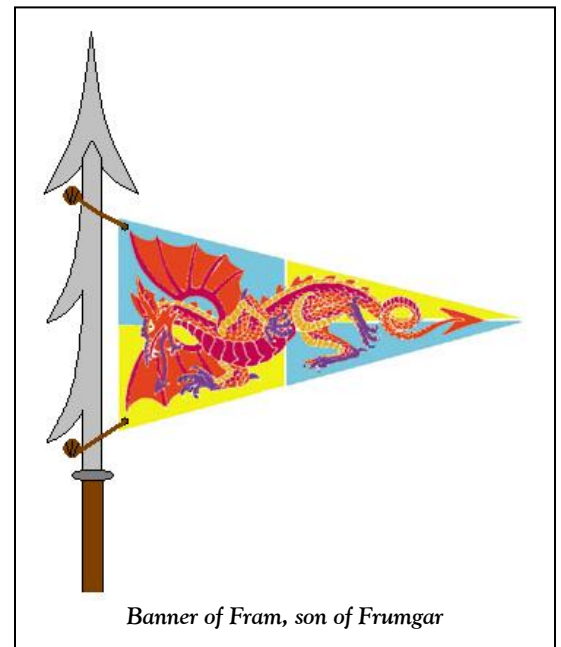
After the downfall of Morgoth, the Northmen, who weren't considered to be quite as high and noble as those of the Three Houses, crossed back over the Blue and Misty Mountains where they found rich pasture in the land of the Anduin Vales. Soon Sauron made war against the Elves in Lindon and Angmar's emergence darkened this area for many years. Not until after the beginning of the Third Age did these men of lesser houses return to these beloved vales to continue the life they had once lived.

The Éothéod

A large clan of these Middle Men, led by a chieftain named Frumgar, founded a loosely held nation called the Éothéod. These men built few cities (or burgs, as known to them), but led a mostly nomadic existence tending to their beloved equine brothers along the river Anduin. Little is written of their exploits, but there are two among them who were of great import to the history of Middle-earth: Fram, son of Frumgar, and Eorl the Young.

Fram, Son of Frumgar

Long-worms were a type of dragon found in the northern parts of Middle-earth, and perhaps elsewhere. The most famous of these great serpents was Scatha of the Ered Mithrin, who preyed on the Dwarves and Men about the Grey Mountains and Anduin Vales. Not long after Frumgar managed to collect as many men as he could to his banner, as there was safety in numbers, Scatha again set forth, bold and terrible, ravaging the countryside and killing many of the fledgling coalition of Northmen. After the destruction many were calling for the head of Frumgar or for outright civil war, so Fram set out himself to find the beast and destroy it for both the honor of his father and his own personal glory.



Banner of Fram, son of Frumgar



Time passed and through many adventures, in the year 2200 TA, Fram managed finally to come upon the lair of Scatha and slew him, which ended the carnage dealt to the Men of the Anduin Vales by these creatures -- either because Scatha was the last of his kind, he was the only one in the area, or the others were afraid of being hunted down by dragonslayers. Soon word got out that Scatha was dead and descendants of the Dwarves who were exiled from their homes by Scatha's appearance many years ago came looking for their wergild in recompense for their suffering. Fram scoffed at their pleas, and things soon came to blows over the dragon's hoard -- a legacy born of the evil surrounding such piles of wealth -- and war raged for many years between the Dwarves of Durin's Line and the Éothéod, ending with the death of Fram and recovery of the dragon's hoard by the Dwarves.

For more information concerning Fram, see the Allies & Adversaries section in Issue #4.

Fram's Pennant

The use of the dragon represents Fram's destruction of the great wrym, Scatha. The pole that the pennant is attached to is made in the likeness of his dragonslayer's spear, with which the wrym was brought down.

Eorl the Young

Léod was a tamer of horses among the Éothéod, who captured a wild white horse while it was still a foal, a descendant of those brought by Béma (Vala Oromë) from the Far West. He tried to tame it himself, but when he attempted to mount it, he was thrown, hitting his head upon a stone that killed him instantly while the horse escaped. So Léod died, leaving a sixteen-year-old son, Eorl. Eorl hunted down the white horse, found it, and demanded that it give up its freedom in payment for the death of his father. The horse agreed, and took the name that Eorl gave it: Felaróf, a name said to mean 'very valiant' or 'very strong'.

It was on Felaróf that Eorl rode to the last minute aid of Gondor against a great horde of Eastmen called the Balchoth. For their bravery and service to Gondor, the Steward Cirion granted them the wide empty land of Calenardhon, which would come to be called Rohan. For more than thirty years afterwards, Felaróf had the freedom of those wide grasslands, but a new invasion of Easterlings saw Eorl ride to battle once again. In the Wold, the far northern reach of Rohan, Eorl and Felaróf met their ends, and were laid together in a mound raised outside the gate of Edoras.

For more information concerning Eorl and Felarof, see The Two Towers Sourcebook.

Men of the Mountains

Akin to the Éothéod, these men eke out a meager life in the rocky foothills of the Grey and Misty Mountains about the Vales of Anduin. The Men of the Mountains are simple yet hardy folk who live for the simple pleasures in life. Keeping to themselves mostly and harboring little ill will towards anyone, they take no sides in any conflict save against the evil spawn of the Dark Lord.

Woodsmen of Mirkwood

Farther south other of these men roamed, taking up small settlements about the forests and lush prairies between the woods of the Misty Mountains and the great forest of Mirkwood. Like their mountain brethren, these Men lead a simple life and only take up arms against orcs raiding out of the mountains or Mirkwood or the Great Eagles who steal their sheep.

Beorn and the Beornings

Of these people, the most famous are the Beornings. The men are great in stature and renowned craftsmen and beekeepers. The head of this house and his direct descendants are fabled to be able to speak with animals and transform into great black bears. They are intrigued by the mysterious, fearsome in battle, and devoted to any whom they call 'friend'.

Beorn, the greatest of this line of Men, was most renowned for his aid given to Gandalf, Bilbo, and the Dwarves in the quest to reclaim Erebor from Smaug. Besides giving them shelter and supplies before they entered Mirkwood, he came in bear form as aid unlooked for during the Battle of the Five Armies, rescuing Thorin, Kili, and Fili, and killing the great goblin leader, Bolg.

For more information concerning Beorn, see the Allies & Adversaries section in Issue #9.

Mark of the Beornings

This device shows the paw print of the bear, representing their ability to shapeshift into bears. The color black represents the color of their fur while in bear form. The gold ground represents The Carrock. The green represents the forest and all living things that they've befriended.





PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Éothéod

Men of the Éothéod are fair of skin or have a slight ruddy tone. They have dark eyes (brown or blue) with blonde, red, or auburn hair. They are usually lithe of build, but quite strong. They are quite keen-eyed and renowned, like their descendants, for their piercing sight into the darkness.

Men of the Mountains

These men are a bit swarthy in appearance, quite hirsute and burly. They have eyes of dark brown and even darker brown or black hair. They are shorter and stockier than Men of the Éothéod, much like the Beornings. They have an uncanny sense of weather and woodlands about where they live.

Woodsmen of Mirkwood

These are men who look to be both of the Éothéod and of the mountains. They have the powerful build of the Mountain-men, but the height and piercing gaze, both of eye and heart, of the Éothéod.

SOCIETY

Éothéod

Their social structure is much like that of the Rohirrim, their descendants, with a king and other feudal accoutrements. They live in burghs, small walled towns and cities for easy defense, or in outlying areas where there is fertile land for farming and raising livestock, especially their horses. One of the most famous is Framsburg, which was built, both literally and figuratively, upon the hoard Fram claimed from the great wym, Scatha. It was eventually destroyed in the conflict between Fram and the Dwarves of Durin's Line.

Men of the Mountains

These people live exclusively in loosely ordered nomadic clans; there are few, if any, permanent settlements held by them. Their social structure is fairly tribal in nature owing to their primitiveness. They will war on occasion between themselves or with the other groups of men of the Anduin Vales.

Woodsmen of Mirkwood

The Woodsmen owe no allegiance to any man or kingdom, but if they were to rally to anyone, it would be to the Beornings. The Woodsmen live in small groups tending to large homesteads where they raise livestock or make a living off the forest of Mirkwood.

It should be noted that while some men of the mountains may deal with the orcs or even side with them, this is very rare and orcs are typically considered enemies by all. The great eagles have also been known to be attacked by the woodsmen, but only in defense of their livestock.

ECONOMICS

Éothéod

Many of the Éothéod make their living off the land. Most are farmers, while there are those who raise sheep and cattle; the more affluent raise horses. They trade with many in the area such as the woodsmen, the Mountain-men, and even occasionally the Elves of Mirkwood and dwarves. Goods they have for trade are meat, grain, wool, and finished products such as clothing.

Men of the Mountains

These men don't typically trade between themselves or others, preferring to remain self-sufficient while eking out a living from the harsh climes of the mountains. If they do happen to trade, it would be with the Éothéod for their wool, wool products, and sometimes food if times are tough. They will in turn trade stone and simple metal tools and ores along with craft-items from antler and bone.

Woodsmen of Mirkwood

Similar to the Éothéod, they farm and raise livestock, though they rarely, if ever, slaughter their animals. They are renowned for their wool and wool products, but also the finest honey and bakery-type products (cakes, bread, etc.). The Woodsmen are also considered some of the best woodcarvers in the West.

IT'S ALL OPTIONAL

FEAR AND ITS EFFECTS

by Mathew Kearns



Frodo is wary of an approaching rider and hides with his companions on the side of the road. The rider turns out to be one of the Nazgûl, a fearsome creature of unnatural origins that exudes fear and malice. This innate power to cow and dismay others is an unseen force that comes from the creature, affecting those nearby, even if they cannot see it. Frodo and the others remain silent in fear and anxiousness until the Nazgûl passes. Later on at Weathertop, they once again encounter the Nazgûl, though en masse. They again secrete a dark fear about them, but the Hobbits have a better idea of what to expect and are able to stand up to the threat somewhat better than they did before.

Fear is a strange mechanic. The use of Intimidate (Fear) can cause a horde of weak-willed foes to break ranks and flee or cause an individual to cower in a corner until the source has left his presence. How to apply it, when to use it and encountering the same source of fear repeatedly are the foci of this article.

Using Fear

Intimidate is the skill used for unsettling or instilling fear into others. The specialties Fear, Power, and to some extent Majesty are different aspects or means of cowering others. The Fear specialty should be used mainly, if not only, by NPC's of an evil nature, while Power would be used by PC's and NPC's of a good nature. Majesty, for the most part, is used separately in 'courtly' situations by characters of noble descent or bearing.

There are two ways to cause fear effects in others -- a direct use of the skill where an opposed roll is made (Intimidate vs. Willpower) or a passive use by creatures that have the Terror ability, where they have a constant aura of fear about them and anything that enters the aura's radius must make a Willpower test against a TN equal to $2d6 + 1/2$ total modifier. For the effects of failing a save against fear, see the Fear Effects table in the CRB.

When to Use Fear

This skill can be used at just about any time, including and especially combat, costing # action(s). A well-placed use of intimidation can frighten foes into submission or cause them to flee the battlefield altogether. Using this skill while under favorable conditions (friendly stronghold, brandishing an item that instills fear, etc.) can improve your chances and the effect of the Intimidate attempt.

Many creatures have Intimidate (Fear), and then there are those powerful foes like dragons, balrogs, and Nazgûl that have the Terror ability, which can enhance the disruption fear can cause in the midst of action because this aura is on constantly and doesn't require actions to use.

Besides creatures using Intimidate to cause fear, there are other psychological sources such as encountering strange creatures or people for the first time or the source of a character's phobia (heights, water, creepy crawlies, etc.) that can warrant the use of a Willpower save against fear. See the Fan Flavour section for more info on the Fear flaw.

Sources of Fear

In my opinion, repeated encounters with the same source of fear (albeit an individual or type of creature) will become less effective over time. With this in mind, the potentially overpowering effect of fear in a game should diminish over time. When characters encounter terrifying or greatly unusual creatures (that may or may not have the Terror ability), they must make the usual Willpower save. A successful save grants a +1 bonus the next time you encounter the same source of fear (Witch-king, wargs, a giant bear, etc.). This effect is cumulative (+2 bonus for two successful saves, etc.). If you make a number of successful saves equal to the creature's or specific character's Bearing modifier, the following apply:

- Further failed saves vs. fear from this source are reduced by one level of success (minimum Marginal) when it uses fear at full strength (e.g. making the appropriate skill test)
- If the creature or character has the Terror ability, the worst effect of a failed save is a Complete Success from the ability's effect

Since supernatural creatures (Nazgûl, undead, Balrogs, etc.) and dragons are beings with the darkness woven into their very essence, the rules stated above could be ignored or altered at the Narrator's discretion. Similar rules could be used as well to overcome/negate Fear flaws, though I would also advise spending 2 Advancement picks to remove the flaw.





NINE RINGS FOR MORTAL MEN

by Doug (Tomcat) Joos

“Nine he gave to Mortal Men, proud and great, and so ensnared them. Long ago they fell under the dominion of the One.”

-- Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Ring



“Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,”... and so J.R.R. Tolkien told of the fallibility of Men and their desire for power, in his epic tale, and how that power can corrupt completely. The professor created a mystique about these artifacts that were made by the hands of Celebrimbor and the Dark-lord, Sauron – objects of great, but not blatant, power.

In the Core Rule Book is a very subtle description of the powers that these rings contain. Decipher and the CODA system stresses the idea of ‘story-telling’ instead of defining a list of mechanics on how the rings ‘work’. The mystique is left in place and the Narrator has free reign on how he or she would like to use the Rings of Power in their chronicle. Some think this is best, as it does not put limits on the wondrous items and also keeps them from being ‘cheapened’. Still, others think that the descriptions done by Decipher have defined these – the greatest treasures created since the Silmarils – as trivial and minor in power and might. I have to say I agree with both sides of the argument and I was a little apprehensive in putting pen to paper on this project. But, as all of the optional rules go, you may use what you want and leave the rest.

The following is to be used in unison with the information given in the Core Rule Book, from here on out to be referred to as the CRB, and the powers that are listed therein.

DESCRIPTION

Of all the Rings of Power, the Nine were most like the One Ring, and their wearers, Men, were more susceptible to Sauron’s control than any other. They were simple bands of gold, each with a single stone, though some were imbued with more power than others.

The Nine Rings were crafted by the Elves of Eregion with the aid of Annatar - Sauron, the Dark Lord, in disguise. Like the Three rings for Elves, the Nine were created to enhance the wearer’s power of understanding, but unlike the Three they hid a dark secret - a corrupting influence that would cause the wearer to succumb to the will of the Dark Lord. The Nine were intended to be worn by Men but any being of great enough power could use these artifacts. An individual that takes up one of the Nine must have a minimum of **10 Advancements**, a **Bearing of 10** and **Willpower of 6** to be able to use any of the powers listed below. Anyone of lesser stature that wields the ring will not be able to perceive it for what it is and find it useless in his or her hand, though they may still be affected by some of the ring’s general effects (i.e. extension of their lifespan, desire etc.)

Some powers listed below are automatic while others require a ‘force of the wearer’s will’ to enable; these requirements can only be fulfilled by those that meet the above listed requirements. The requirements needed to activate a power of the rings are given in the manifestation section of each power. Narrators are to understand that the powers given in the CRB are unchanged or enhanced upon here:

GENERAL EFFECTS

The Nine Rings have the following general effects and will affect any that may wield them:



Protect Itself – Has the power to protect itself by hiding from those not powerful enough to perceive it. To see the ring, a person must make a Bearing Test TN 15. The Narrator may also allow a Perception or Observe (Sense Power).
Manifestation: This power is automatic to any who look upon the ring or the wearers' hand.

Desire – Those of a weak will shall become very attached to the ring and desire it above all other things. The ring has the ability to change its size to slip off a finger and to keep it contained the wielder must make a Bearing Test TN 12 once a week. This may at times require the use of Courage, but even the weakest willed individual would gladly spend it to keep such a treasure.

Manifestation: This power is automatic to any who possess one of the Nine, but do not fill the Advancement, Bearing and Willpower requirements.

Extension of Years – The Nine Rings have the ability to extend the life of any mortal who wears them. This extension of years causes great weariness and the rings will become great burdens. The eventuality is that the wearer will slowly fade over time becoming a wraith. This may take many numbers of 'normal' lifetimes for the wearer but the effect of the extension will be evident to any who look upon the wearer until they have faded completely.

Manifestation: This power is automatic to any who possess one of the Nine.

Corrupting Influence – The Nine Rings slowly corrupt any that wear them and bring the wearer under the control of the Dark Lord. Each year that the ring is possessed and its powers used by an individual, whether innocently or not, will cause that individual to gain 1 permanent Corruption. These accumulated points of Corruption may never be removed by any means. The wearer may attempt to save against the Corruption by making a Willpower test TN 15.

Manifestation: This power is automatic to any who possess one of the Nine.

POWERS

The Nine Rings were made equal for the most part although three of them were intended for the mightiest of the race of Men. These powers do not require Weariness Tests and do not cause any spell penalties for having the active.

Greater Sanctum – Like the Magician Order ability, the Nine may exert a Sanctum around the wearer that covers an area based on the chart below. If the wielder already has a Sanctum, the rings may either potentially extend the area of the Sanctum or allow the wielder to create a new one. The wearer may also subdue this power by making a Willpower test TN 12.

Manifestation: This power is automatic but the Sanctum area may only be as large as the strength of the wearer can manifest. See the chart below:

- 10 Advancements – ½ square mile per point of Bearing
- 15 Advancements – 1 square mile per point of Bearing
- 20 Advancements – 2 square miles per point of Bearing
- 25 Advancements – 4 square miles per point of Bearing
- 30 Advancements – 8 square miles per point of Bearing
- 35 Advancements – 16 square miles per point of Bearing
- 40 Advancements – 20 square miles per point of Bearing
- 45 Advancements – 40 square miles per point of Bearing (*Maximum*)

Greater Sanctum Power – Like the Magician Order ability, the Nine grant Sanctum Power to the wearer allowing them to control the subtle magics of the land within their Sanctum. The wearer may also manifest some spell affects with the Nine.

Manifestation: Use *Table 4.1: Sanctum Power TN's*, in the CRB on page 90, to manifest any control over the land.

Veil – Like the spell, the wielder of a ring may put a veil around their Sanctum that allows no one to see in using *Farseeing* and imposes the -8 to any that attempt to Observe (Sense Power).

Manifestation: Bearing Test TN 12 to manifest and a Willpower Test TN 12 daily to maintain. This has the affect as having an active spell for as long as the wearer maintains a veil over the sanctum.

Misdirection – Like the spell, the wielder of a ring may weave a spell of Misdirection throughout his or her Sanctum to deter any unwanted from entering.

Manifestation: Bearing Test TN 10 to manifest and a Willpower Test TN 12 per hour to maintain. This has the affect as having an active spell for as long as the wearer maintains the misdirection effect.



Note: The above-mentioned powers were not witnessed in the *Lord of the Rings* but this can be explained by the fact that Sauron had taken the Nine away from the Ringwraiths to maintain his control of them. But as the mortal kings wore these treasures and slowly fell into corruption, these powers would allow them greater control of their kingdoms. The powers would have been a great benefit to the Witch-king during his rule of Angmar.

Observation – the ring sharpens the hearing and sense of smell of the wearer. It bestows a +3 bonus to all Observe (Hear) and Observe (Scent) tests. It dims the sight in the light of day causing a -2 penalty to all Observe (See) tests, but enhances the same sense in shadows and dark - +2 to Observe (See) tests.

Manifestation: Automatic

Comprehension – the ring allows the wearer to comprehend the speech of all who serve the Shadow as if he has 3 levels in the appropriate language skill.

Manifestation: Automatic

Invisibility – the ring allows the wearer to walk unseen amongst their fellows, although traces of the wearers passing would still be evident (i.e. footprints in snow, brushing against a branch causing it to move, any sounds made, etc.).

Manifestation: This power is automatic to any of weaker will but those of greater strength may gain control of it. If the ring is put on by those of weak will, they will turn invisible whether they wish to or not. A wearer of 10 Advancements minimum and a base Willpower of +6 (no Edge or Order bonuses) may control the invisibility effect as they wish.

Spellcasting – the ring grants to the wearer the Magician Ability, Spellcasting, and the wearer may choose new spells from the following specialties without knowing them prior (all spell prerequisites must still be met): *Air and Storm*, *Fire Smoke and Light*, and *Sorcery* as listed on page 161 of the Core Rule Book.

Manifestation: Automatic; the wearer gains one additional 5 spell picks per each 10 Advancement levels. If the wearer was a Magician/Wizard prior to obtaining a ring, they will receive an additional 5 spell picks to add to their current allotment. As the wearer becomes corrupt, they will tend towards Sorcery above all other specialties.

Empower – Like the spell *Word of Command*, the wearer of a ring is able to empower a spell and increase a chosen effect (i.e. range, duration, damage, etc.) once per day.

Manifestation: Need to have a minimum of 20 Advancements and then a Bearing Test TN 15 to empower the spell.

UNIQUE POWERS

Of the Nine, three were meant for the High Men of Númenor. During the Second Age when the Númenoreans were the greatest power within Middle-earth, Sauron sought to corrupt some of the fine princes of that people and bring them under his will. The Dark Lord saw to it that three of the Nine were given greater powers and he bestowed them as gifts to the mightiest Númenoreans who harboured resentment towards the throne in Armenelos and wished autonomy from their king. These Men of Westemne had settled their own lands within the bounds of Middle-earth and ruled them as they wished. With the gifts of Sauron, they grew in power enough to eventually break from the throne in Númenor. Like the other six lesser kings that Sauron ensnared, the Númenorean lords fell into his sway and became his mightiest of servants.

Command – Like the spell, the ring conveys the automatic power of *Command* to its wearer. If the wearer desires, the power may be used in unison with the spell to gain an additional +5 bonus to their Willpower test.

Manifestation: Need to have a minimum of 20 Advancements and then a Bearing Test TN 12 to command.

Fit for a King – (*Witch-king's ring only*) Of all of the Nazgûls, only the Witch-king had semi-independent thought and freedom of choice from Sauron. Where the other rings completely chained the wills of the other Úlairi to Sauron, the Witch-king's ring allowed the Dark Lord's second-in-command the ability to command as he wished or needed. It is wondered that this 'freedom' from Sauron may have allowed the Witch-king's fell spirit to persist even with the destruction of the One and Sauron.

THE ONE RING

As all other Rings of Power, the Nine are bound to the Ruling Ring. Should Sauron retrieve his Ring, or another individual of great enough Bearing take it as his or her own, the wearers of the Nine will immediately be known to the wearer of the One. The Ruling Ring's wearer may then attempt a Test of Wills against the wearers of the Three, gaining a +8 advantage to the tests. If the Ruling Ring is successful in the Test of Wills, the wearers of the Nine will become puppets to the master Ring and its wearer – their minds being opened to the One and easily manipulated.

FLAWED AROUND THE EDGES:

FIXING CODA'S BROKEN CHARACTER TRAITS by Scotttomir



When I ran my first chronicle for Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings* Role-playing Game, I didn't put too much forethought into the edges and flaws. After all, I was a longtime player of the White Wolf games, *Alternity*, and D&D, and I knew advantages, perks, and feats pretty well. How different could the CODA edges be? Boy, was I ever wrong! After some of the more, ah, "power conscious" players gorged their characters on edges (one character had nine edges after his second advancement), I paid much closer attention to edges and flaws. These "on the side" character traits are a wonderful idea and are part of the reason why CODA is so flexible and customizable, but most of them are badly broken as written—a player is almost foolish to use his advancement picks for anything besides edges. The basic idea is such a good one, though, that it is worth the effort to fix the system.

There are two potential ways to approach fixing CODA's broken traits. The first way is to keep them as written, but to revise their costs based on their power. As written, all edges cost 2 advancement picks, but in terms of effect some of them are worth much more. The difficulty with this approach is comparing the large number of edges and calculating the equivalent value of each benefit. In the end, I felt another way would be better: to keep all edges at a cost of 2 advancement picks, but to re-write the broken effects so that the traits were better balanced. This article identifies the broken edges and flaws, explains why they are unbalanced, and suggests alternative wording to make them better balanced.

General Guidelines

The chief problem with the broken edges is that many of them are shortcuts to higher scores, obviating the need to raise those scores normally. Why spend numerous advancement picks to raise a reaction score when for 2 picks you can buy an edge (like Strong-Willed) that gives a constant +2 bonus? When these broken edges can be bought up to four times, a character would never need to waste advancement picks raising these reaction scores normally. If you want to keep all edges a uniform cost of 2 advancement picks, it is necessary to re-write the effects so that they are generally equivalent.

Here's a good general guideline—both for fixing broken edges and for designing new ones. An edge should grant a +1 bonus to a skill/score in very broad circumstances *or* to several skills/scores in a special circumstance, a +2 bonus to a couple of skills/scores in somewhat narrower circumstances, or a +4 bonus to a single skill/score in very specific circumstances. For example, a +4 bonus to "all Swiftess tests" is horribly unbalanced, but a +3 bonus to "all Swiftess tests for dodge actions" is much fairer.

Another way to make a broken trait better balanced is to make the requisites more demanding. For example, a powerful edge that any character can take during character creation is badly unbalanced, but a powerful edge that requires a high attribute score and/or many ranks in a particular skill is more reasonable. The fixes recommended below use these general guidelines.

Edges

The traits listed below are in need of fixing. Edges not included work fine as written.

ACCURATE

Listed effect: +3 test result bonus when using a designated Ranged Combat specialty.

The Problem: The listed requisite is only Ranged Combat +4, so virtually any character can buy this edge very early on. This kind of bonus is more reasonably earned by experienced characters who have already raised Ranged Combat fairly through many advancements.

The Fix: Make the requisite more restrictive. Consider the following revised wording. "Requisite: Ranged Combat +8; at least 3 experience advancements." Also, restrict the availability. "Improvement: None (this edge can be taken only once)."

CRAFTMASTER

Listed effect: +2 bonus to all Craft, Smithcraft, and Stonecraft tests.

The Problem: The listed effect gives a sizable and constant bonus to three skills. This is the equivalent of spending at least 6 advancement picks if they are Order skills (or 12 advancement picks if they are not).

The Fix: Make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more restrictive. "Effect: You receive a +2 bonus to all Craft, Smithcraft, and Stonecraft tests to make a new item or build new stonework of your own design, but not to repair the work of others." You're a master of crafting new works, after all, not a humble tinker.

DODGE

Listed effect: +3 bonus on all Swiftess tests for dodge actions.



The Problem: Since dodging often is a difficult action, this is a nice edge that most heroes should consider taking. However, requisites listed in the initial printing of the core rulebook are confusing—Table 6.1 (CRB, p. 142) lists no requisite, but the entry (CRB, p. 144) lists a requisite of Nimbleness 9+.

The Fix: Ignore the requisite listed in the entry. “Requisite: None (as listed on CRB, p. 142).”

ELOQUENT

Listed effect: +2 bonus on all Debate or Persuade tests.

The Problem: The listed effect gives a sizable and constant bonus to a pair of very useful skills. This is the equivalent of spending 4 advancement picks if they are Order skills (and 8 picks if they are not). Furthermore, this broken edge is redundant with the much fairer edge HONEY-TONGUED.

The Fix: *Remove this edge from the game.* Replace all references to the edge with HONEY-TONGUED instead. If a player loves the adjective “Eloquent” then let him keep the name but still use the effect for HONEY-TONGUED.

FAIR

Listed effect: +4 bonus to Persuade (Charm) and appropriate Inspire tests.

The Problem: The listed effect gives a huge and constant bonus to one very useful skill and implies the Narrator should apply this generous bonus to many uses of a second important skill. Since the edge relates to the character’s physical appearance, it makes better sense that it should apply only in special circumstances (like seduction).

The Fix: Make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more restrictive. “Effect: You receive a +4 bonus to Persuade (Charm) and to appropriate Inspire tests whenever your physical appearance should influence the reaction of other—for example, when dealing with members of the opposite sex or with impressionable youths.”

FURTIVE

Listed effect: +1 test result bonus when using Conceal, Legerdemain, Stealth, and similar skills.

The Problem: The listed effect gives a constant bonus to a wide range of skills. That makes it worth considerably more than 2 advancement picks.

The Fix: Make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more restrictive. “Effect: You receive a +1 bonus to Conceal, Legerdemain, and Stealth tests involving hiding, skulking, and physical deception (sleight of hand).”

INCORRUPTIBLE

Listed effect: +4 bonus to Willpower tests to resist Corruption.

The Problem: This edge is a nice idea and quite appropriate for *The Lord of the Rings* setting. However, the effect is a little too narrow. Only Ringbearers like Frodo or Sam would bother with it.

The Fix: Expand the circumstances in which the bonus applies. “Effect: You receive a +4 bonus to Willpower tests to resist Corruption and to overcome temptations like greed or wrath.”

QUICK DRAW

Listed effect: Draw or ready any personal weapon as a free action.

The Problem: The listed effect is more than a little vague. How many weapons can you draw? How many times in a round? Does loading an arrow work with Quick Draw? If so, can you load unlimited arrows like a machine gun?

The Fix: Specify clearer limitations. “Effect: You can draw or ready a personal weapon, including loading an arrow in a bow, as a free action. If you attempt to draw your weapon before another person who also has Quick-draw, whoever has the most picks in the edge draws first (if both have the same number of picks, make opposed Swift tests to determine who wins).” The latest errata ruling from Decipher imposes no limit on the number of free actions a character can take, but Narrators are advised to limit a character to using this edge only once per round.

RESOLUTE

Listed effect: +1 bonus to Stamina and Willpower tests.

The Problem: This may be the most broken edge in the core rulebook. As written, by spending 2 advancement picks on this edge you get a constant +1 bonus to two reactions, equivalent to spending no fewer than 5 advancement picks normally. Even worse, a character can take this edge up to four times!

The Fix: Make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more limited. “Effect: You receive a +1 bonus to opposed tests for Willpower and to Willpower or Stamina tests required to overcome obstacles preventing you from completing any important task you are obligated or sworn to complete.” The Narrator may want to consider limiting the number of times the edge can be taken (perhaps allowing one improvement is sufficient).

STERN

Listed effect: +2 bonus to Debate and Intimidate tests, but possibly a -1 penalty to other social skills.



The Problem: The listed effect is vague, a little too arbitrary, and probably more than a little too good.

The Fix: Specify clearer limitations. “Effect: You receive a +2 bonus to Debate and Intimidate tests when trying to subdue or command others, such as swaying a council of war or cowing a rebellious subject. You suffer a -1 test penalty on social tests (such as Persuade or Inspire) when trying to put others at ease.” The Narrator may want to consider limiting the number of times the edge can be taken (perhaps allowing one improvement is sufficient).

STRONG-WILLED

Listed effect: +2 bonus to Willpower tests.

The Problem: This edge gives RESOLUTE a run for its money as the most broken edge as written in the core rulebook. By spending 2 advancement picks on this edge you get a constant +2 bonus to a useful reaction (worth at least 4 advancement picks normally). What’s worse, a character can take this edge up to four times.

The Fix: *Remove this edge from the game.* Replace all references to the edge with INCORRUPTIBLE, INDOMITABLE, or VALOUR instead (all of which are much fairer and better balanced).

WAKEFULNESS

Listed effect: The character can go without sleep a number of nights equal to his Stamina, though he loses one Weariness Level per day he goes without sleep.

The Problem: This edge is of very dubious value. Very rarely does a character need to go long without sleep. The effect is also confusing, since a character’s Stamina score may be higher than his number of Weariness Levels.

The Fix: Specify clearer and expanded benefits. “Effect: A character with this edge can remain awake for a number of nights in a row equal to his Stamina. Though awake, he can still recover lost Health points and Weariness Levels. However, for each consecutive day the character goes without sleep he suffers a cumulative +2 TN penalty on all Stamina tests against Weariness. Additionally, a character with this edge can sleep normally while wearing armor without suffering any penalty.”

WARRIOR’S HEART

Listed effect: +4 bonus to Stamina tests to resist Weariness related to battle.

The Problem: This edge is of very limited value. The core rulebook does not have rules requiring Weariness tests after battles anyway. It is up to the Narrator to decide when a fight lasts long enough to warrant a Weariness test.

The Fix: Provide expanded benefits for this edge. “Effect: You receive a +4 bonus to Stamina tests relating to battle, such as resisting Weariness, resisting stun effects, or recovering from wounds.”

WARWISE

Listed effect: +1 bonus to Siegecraft and all combat skills (Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, Unarmed Combat).

The Problem: Move over RESOLUTE and STRONG-WILLED, we have a new winner for Most Broken Edge. Who wouldn’t want to buy this edge as early and often as possible? It is worth far more than the 2 advancement picks it costs. Worst of all, it can be taken up to three times.

The Fix: It’s called War-“Wise” for a reason, so give it an appropriate restriction. “Requisite: Wits 7+, Wisdom +1.” Also, the benefits desperately need to be restricted. “Effect: You receive a +1 bonus to Siegecraft tests and to tests for one combat skill: Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, or Unarmed Combat (the player must choose one).” The potential for increasing the benefit must be removed. “Improvement: None (this edge can be taken only once).”

WEAPON MASTERY

Listed effect: +3 test result bonus when using a designated Armed Combat specialty.

The Problem: The listed requisite is only Armed Combat +4, so virtually any character can buy this edge very early on. This kind of bonus is more reasonably earned by experienced characters who have already raised Armed Combat fairly through many advancements.

The Fix: Make the requisite more restrictive. Consider the following revised wording. “Requisite: Armed Combat +8; at least 3 experience advancements.” Also, restrict the availability. “Improvement: None (this edge can be taken only once).”

WISE

Listed effect: +1 bonus with all Lore skills and Wisdom tests.

The Problem: Once again, we have a listed effect that gives a constant bonus to a wide range of useful skills, making it worth far more than just 2 advancement picks.

The Fix: Make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more restrictive. “Effect: You receive a +1 bonus to all Lore skill tests and Wisdom tests dealing with verifying knowledge or exposing false claims.”

WOODCRAFTY

Listed effect: +1 bonus with all wilderness-based skills like Survival, Track, Weather-Sense, and sometimes Stealth.



The Problem: This is yet another broken edge that gives a constant bonus to a number of skills and an arbitrary bonus to one very useful skill (Stealth). It is probably worth more than just 2 advancement picks.

The Fix: It's called "Wood"-Crafty, so make the circumstances in which the bonus applies more restrictive. "Effect: You receive a +1 bonus to Survival, Track, Weather-Sense, and Stealth when these skills are used in forests or substantially wooded areas."

Flaws

The traits listed below are in need of fixing. Flaws not included work fine as written.

CRAVEN

Listed effect: When facing danger or threats, you must flee or give in unless you spend a point of Courage.

The Problem: This is a rather obtuse effect, since it makes a character more likely to run away at the very start of battle but not any more likely afterwards. What's more, it drains Courage points and many creatures that should have this flaw don't have Courage points.

The Fix: The effect more reasonably should parallel the effect of the VALOUR edge. "Effect: You suffer a -4 penalty on Willpower tests for the purposes of resisting fear." The Narrator may wish to consider allowing the penalty to be expanded with additional picks. "Improvement: You may devote additional picks to this flaw. Each pick increases the test result penalty by -2 (maximum of -8)."

DULLARD

Listed effect: Receive only +2 when spending a point of Courage on any Lore skill instead of the usual +3.

The Problem: The listed effect is so inconsequential that it is laughable. The only reason that a character would not want to take this edge is because the adjective "Dullard" is pejorative.

The Fix: Impose a reasonable limitation. "Requisite: Wits 4 or lower." Expand the harshness of the penalty. "Effect: You cannot spend Courage points on tests with academic skills."

GRASPING

Listed effect: You must spend a Courage point to resist doing whatever you can to obtain wealth.

The Problem: The listed effect is vague and arbitrary, without any firm consequences in the game mechanics.

The Fix: Give the penalty some teeth grounded in game mechanics. "Effect: When wealth falls into your path, you must make a Corruption test. The TN typically is 10, though the Narrator may lower it for lesser treasures or raise it for objects of great value. If you fail, you gain a Corruption point and, unless you spend a point of Courage, also must do everything in your power to obtain it."

WEAK-WILLED

Listed effect: -2 penalty to Willpower tests.

The Problem: This is a viciously harsh penalty that few characters would ever consider taking. Not even Boromir!

The Fix: Limit the circumstances in which the penalty applies. "Effect: You suffer a -2 penalty on Willpower tests to resist Corruption (like Boromir) and manipulation or domination by others (like Gríma Wormtongue)."

Creating a New Trait

It can be fun and rewarding for Narrators and players to make up new edges and flaws appropriate for their chronicle. However, they should take care not to repeat the mistakes of the designers of the core rulebook and churn out a slew of new badly broken traits. Follow the general guidelines recommended above, and the new edges should work well. The example below is a new edge written with issues of game balance in mind. Feel free to use it as a template for new traits of your own creation.

AGILE

"[A] huge orc-chieftain...leaped into the chamber... Diving under Aragorn's blow with the speed of a striking snake he charged into the company..."

— *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Having developed superior reflexes, you make a difficult target to hit in combat.

Requisite: Nimbleness 10+; at least 3 experience advancements.

Effect: Your Defence is increased by +1.

Improvement: You may select this edge up to two times, increasing your Defence by +2 maximum.



HOSTILE HAUNTS

BASTION OF THE TROLL-GOD by MordorUrukHai



Far, far away from civilized lands, in the frozen Northern Wastes of Middle-earth, live creatures that have not been encountered by the Free Peoples for an age or more...and even some that have never been seen at all. One form of such creatures is a Helegrog, an ice demon of Morgoth from the First Age. These aberrations desire nothing more than power, living in tyranny over the thralls they gather beneath them. Here is the lair of one such demon, living on the northern end of the Misty Mountains in the long-forgotten realm of Angmar—an all-too-real threat to Eriador that no true hero could ignore.

Important Note: “The Bastion of the Troll-God” is *not* intended for assault by low-level PCs—or, indeed, any but the mightiest warriors of Middle-Earth! Though players may attempt to avoid combat as they trek upwards to battle the tower’s master, one failed Stealth test can bring the wrath of the entire tower on to the heads of the would-be attackers. Therefore, it is a good idea to create other objectives than storming the tower for low-level or non-combat-oriented PC groups.

Examples may include:

- Rescuing a prisoner from the Helegrog’s dungeons
- Determining the identity of the tower’s lord
- Recovering supplies taken by raiding parties under the Helegrog’s orders
- Attacking the tower with the aid of soldiers or powerful NPCs

You will need a copy of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic* to use “Bastion of the Troll-God.”

Raising the Alarm

The Helegrog has not been lax in his defenses. At any sign of an intruder, any orc or troll may sound the alarm and call for all soldiers to arm themselves. If this happens, all of the soldiers in the tower or caverns will run to the nearest armory and don their armor and weapons. For the orcs (there are 35 in total) in the caverns, this task will take about 15 rounds (1 minute, 30 seconds). Fifteen will arm themselves with short bows, and 20 with melee weapons – these count as standard Mook orcs. The trolls on the level above will take much longer—thirty action rounds, or 3 minutes. If the alarm is raised, the trolls (snow-trolls) will also wear armor (7 AR) with the exception of the trolls wielding bows. Also, these beasts will arm themselves with different weapons: 4 with pikes, 2 with greatswords (3d6+2 damage) and two with composite bows (2d6 +4 damage). The Helegrog also owns a similar set of armor, but will not put it on unless the tower is under attack by many soldiers.

Note: For the purpose of simplicity, all Armed or Ranged Combat skills will function for whatever weapon the enemies are holding, so to make the idea of storming the complex less appealing to combat-oriented PCs.

Many PCs, of course, may wish to avoid combat. To avoid being discovered, PCs must make a Stealth (Sneak) test whenever they enter a chamber. This is TN 5 normally, but TN 10 if the room contains orcs. If the alarm is raised, PCs may hide anywhere the Narrator deems acceptable with a TN 15 Stealth (Hide) test until the fortress settles. However, for the rest of the day, all orcs and trolls will keep their armor on and their weapons with them.

Section 1: The Caverns

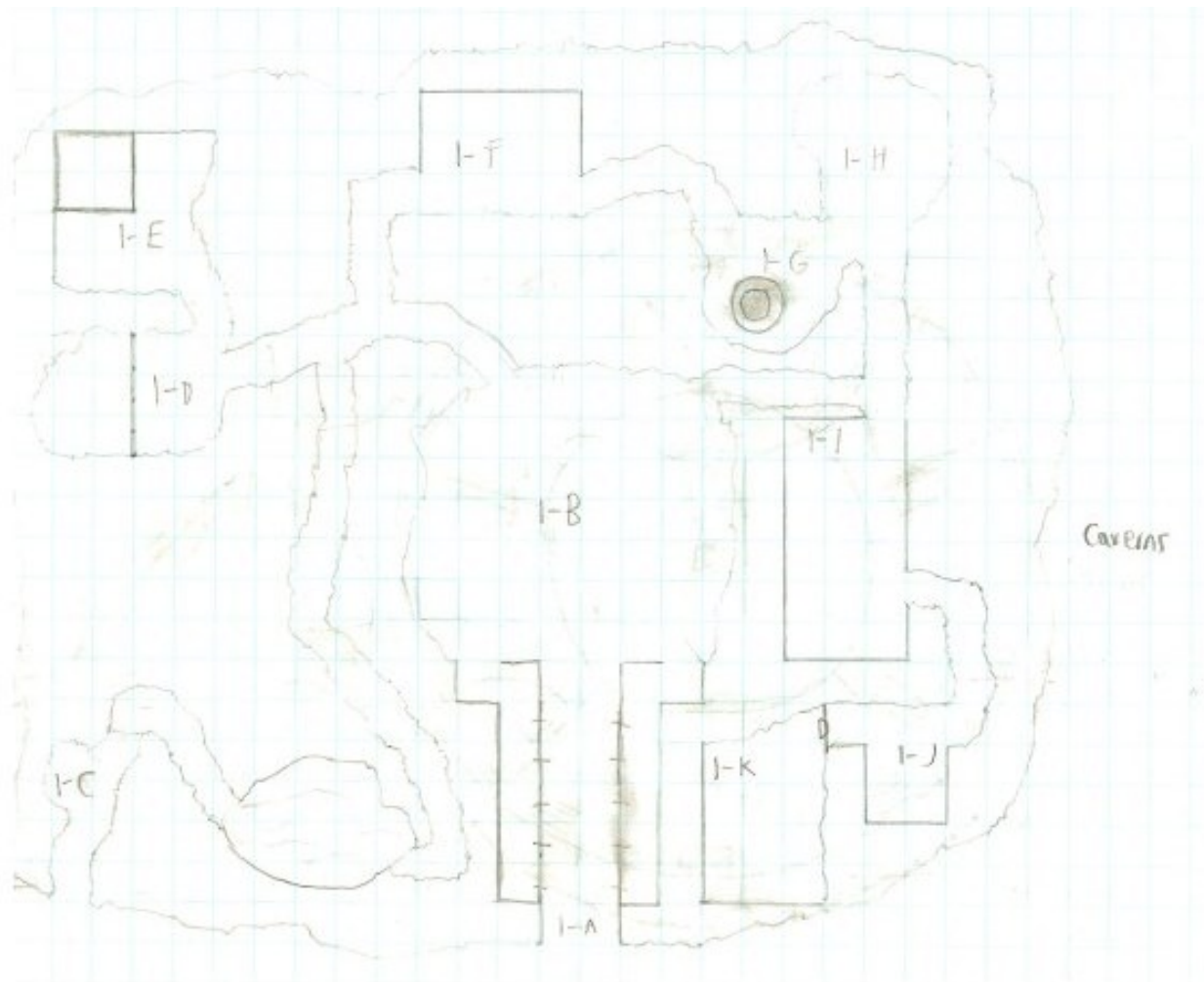
Below the icy tower, a darkened cave system rings with the sounds of hammers and the harsh croaks of orc voices. This is the foundation of the ice-demon’s power, the home of his lowliest servants—the orcs. This level alone constitutes a formidable defense. The caverns are stocked with orc-soldiers and fouler things, a ready defense for the tower’s only entrance. Here is where any PCs will make their entrance into this fortress, to whatever fate awaits them. This level is cloaked in darkness (-5 to physical tests).

Room 1-A is the main entrance to the caverns. All troops passing in or out of the fortress use this entrance. There are always two orc sentries on duty, lurking just within the dark gates. The very walls here conceal a deadly trap. Behind each wall is a hollow space that contains five bow-armed orcs, who shoot through the bolt-holes in the walls to rip apart attackers with their arrows. Luckily, the narrow slits make it difficult to see foes approaching, or to aim accurately. All Ranged Combat tests to fire at an enemy through a bolt-hole suffer a -3 penalty.

Room 1-B is the orc commons. At any given time, some eight orcs can be found here, drinking, eating, or sleeping someplace in the room, all the while staying away from the ladder at the northern end of this chamber. This is because of the trolls on the level above, who often climb down for a quick meal of orc-flesh to sate their hunger. Orcs are ill at ease near the trolls and suffer a -2 to Willpower tests when their wardens are nearby.



Room 1-C is the hidden tunnel into the caverns. The servants of the Helegrog do not know of it, having never bothered to investigate the tunnels completely. There is a small alcove some 10 feet inside, which at the Narrator's option may hold bats, giant rats, a long-forgotten cache of gold, etc. A little ways on is an underground lake. This requires a Swim test (base TN 10, with a -2 penalty for the cold of the waters) to cross.



Room 1-D is a small cavern with a fence built across the center of it. On the far side of the fence are four wargs, prized possessions of the most powerful orcs. If they see an intruder, they will immediately begin a frenzy of barking which will alert the tower's defense (see "Raising the Alarm," above). This room also contains leashes for the wargs, and riding equipment.

Room 1-E holds a large iron cage in one corner, and a sleeping orc close by. The cage is home to a furious Cave Troll that had the misfortune to wander into the caverns. This lone orc is in charge of feeding and caring for it, a task it despises. The Troll-tender has a ring of keys at his belt, including one to the cage and another to the dungeons (room 1-K).

Room 1-F is the armory. In here is an extensive supply of short bows and arrows, as well as scimitars and orkish longswords. If the alarm is raised, then all orcs on this level will immediately dash to this chamber and arm themselves, a maneuver that will take approximately one minute to complete. Once armed, all orcs wear orc chain corselets and carry appropriate weapons.

Room 1-G is the well. An old bucket on a rusty chain can be lowered into the darkness to retrieve a nasty greenish water. Because this is the only source of water that the orcs trust, at any time three orcs can be found here. The well is very deep, reaching down to the horrors of the Under-deep below. If any fighting takes place at the well, any combatant using a charge action or grab action against an opponent near the well may elect to knock them down into the well (although a wisely spent Courage point allows a character to grab the edge and haul themselves back up).

Room 1-H is a curiously empty chamber. No orcs can be found inside, nor will they pursue attackers into this cavern. In fact, this room is home to a Greater Giant Spider, used by the orcs to execute rebellious members of their kind, as well as

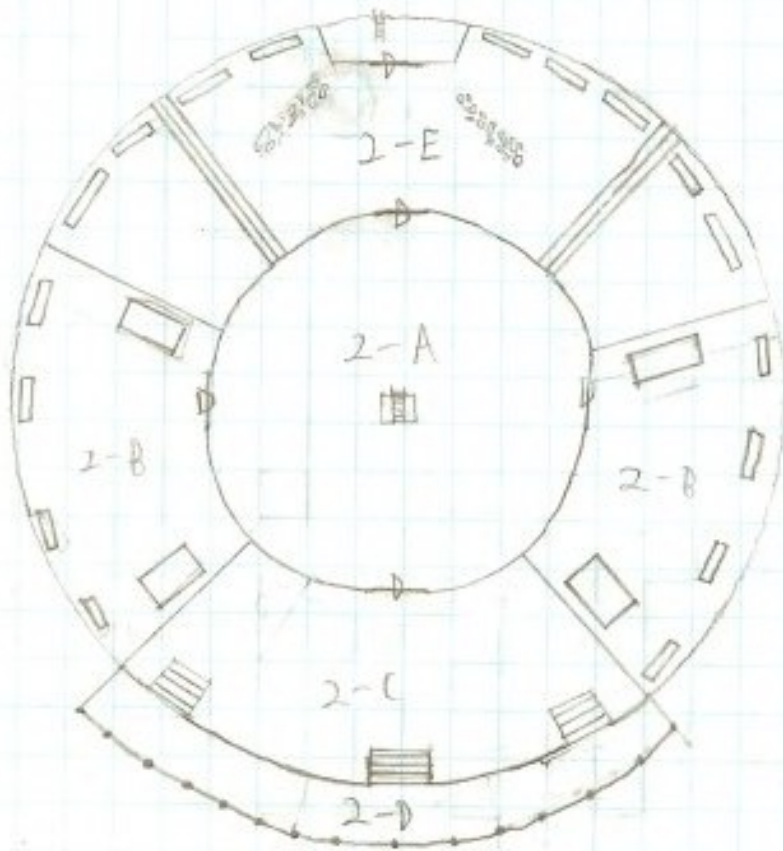


attackers. Inside this room are a large number of skeletons from orcs, Men, Dwarves, and other races. Near the walls, thick, sticky strands of spider-silk may be found. Fighting near the walls poses a risk of being stuck to one of the strands (TN 5 Nimbleness test every round). The Spider will use its Poison of Sickness until it is Injured or worse, at which point it will begin to use its deadly poison.

Room 1-I is a forge, where all weapons and armor for both orcs and trolls are smelted and forged. A large furnace dominates the room, as well as many anvils. There can always be found here some twelve orcs, all working on providing arms for the ever-growing supply of troops found in the Helegrog's complex. All can be considered to be armed with hammers, and wearing good leather clothing (1 point protection). This room is unbearably hot (use the -2 penalty for 'Uncomfortable Heat') and extremely loud (-4 to Observe (Hear) tests).

Room 1-J is a small storeroom, holding a few instruments of torture and an iron key hanging on the wall. The key is the key to the dungeon room (1-K). There is always one orc here, but he cannot alert the other orcs in the complex due to the din from the smithy. His weapon is a branding iron (1d6+4 damage). The orc will flee at the first chance to the north to alert the other orcs of intruders in the caverns.

Room 1-K is the Helegrog's dungeon and torture chamber. The door is locked and must be opened with one of the keys to the dungeon. Otherwise, players may choose to bash it down. The door has Protection 7 and Structure 9 for this purpose. Inside are many captives, most dead, but a few alive—just barely. Any prisoners for rescue may be found here. However, it is unwise to come inside while the fortress is on alert. Rather than fight the PCs, the orcs will simply lock the door and leave the players to their fate.



Tower Level 1

Section 2: The Tower's Defense Chambers

Inside the tower itself, snow-trolls live and work under the direction of their living god. Though normally empty, one level of the tower is designed explicitly for rapid and effective defense. Eight trolls make up the defense here, a challenge for any hero. This chamber has never yet failed to shield the Troll-God from his foes. This level is lit by torches, which provide dim lighting (-2 to physical tests).

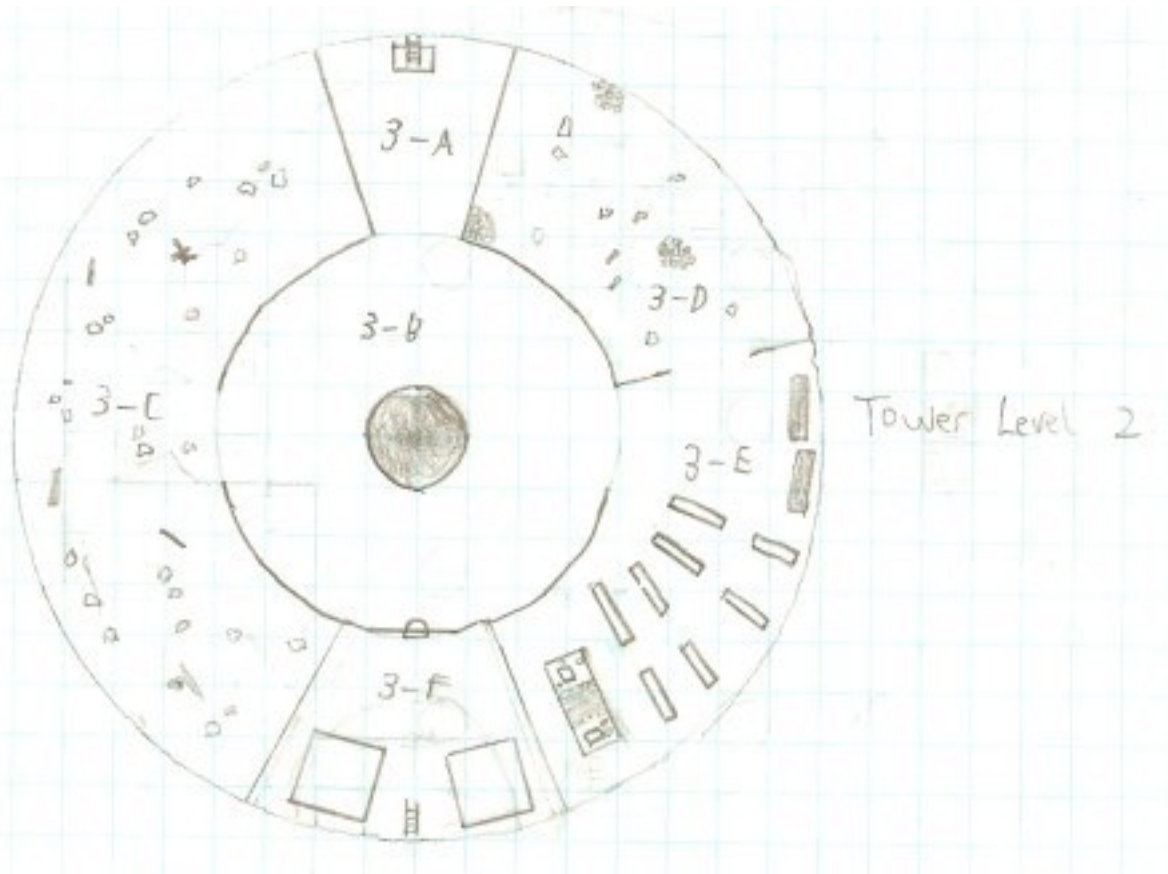
Room 2-A is the center of this level of the tower. It is normally home to the eight trolls garrisoned here. Under alert, however, all doors (count as 'Strong Wooden Doors') are barred, and all trolls are waiting in room 2-E to ambush the PCs. In time of peace, three of the trolls are here, wielding only their troll-clubs. There are no other prominent features in this room.



Rooms 2-B are weapon storage chambers. A few armor storage cabinets and weapon racks adorn the walls. Everything in these rooms is Troll-sized, and so can only be wielded by exceptionally strong PCs (Strength 12 or more, must be Man or Noldorin Elf). One troll is in here at all times unless the fortress is on alert.

Room 2-C is a different storage room. Quivers of arrows and enormous bows are found on the walls. The arrows, being Troll-sized, are as long as javelins and may be used as such. Three staircases lead out to the firing deck (Room 2-D), which holds the two bow-armed trolls. If it is day when the PCs venture here, the two troll bowmen are rather in room 2-C. If the tower is under siege, the 15 orc bowmen from the caverns will also be on the firing deck.

Room 2-E is the ambush chamber. Here is where many a group of heroes has made its last stand. On either side of the room, a staircase leads upward, where 2 troll pikemen and one troll swordsman will lie in wait. Large piles of rubble can be seen from the entrance, each concealing one of the troll bowmen from the firing deck. Weapons racks are on the walls, allowing the trolls to arm themselves hastily even if there was not enough time to do so before the PCs attacked. The door inside is a heavy wooden door and has similar Protection and Structure values. At the rear of the room is a locked door to a room that holds the ladder leading upwards. The key is on the body of one of the Troll swordsmen (TN 10 Search test to find).



Section 3: The Trolls' Quarters

Not all of the trolls living in the Troll-God's tower are warriors. Some few are acolytes, learning the power of their god and teaching the other servants the proper methods of worship. The acolytes also oversee the lower levels and make sure that no servant of their god intends to flee or rebel against his might. There are a total of six trolls on this level, all armed only with their troll-clubs and unarmored. This level will not react to a state of alarm. This level is lit by torches, which provide dim lighting (-2 to physical tests).

Room 3-A is the entrance to the trolls' quarters. The acolytes do not often visit the lower levels, and so this is an ideal spot to ambush any who intend to. All trolls attacked from this chamber are automatically considered surprised.

Room 3-B is the Troll Commons. A large, engraved pillar stands at the center of the room, carved with the teachings of the Troll-God. Three open doorways stand to the north, west, and east, and a set of iron double doors to the south. There is a large lock on the doors, which may be found in the worship chamber (3-E).

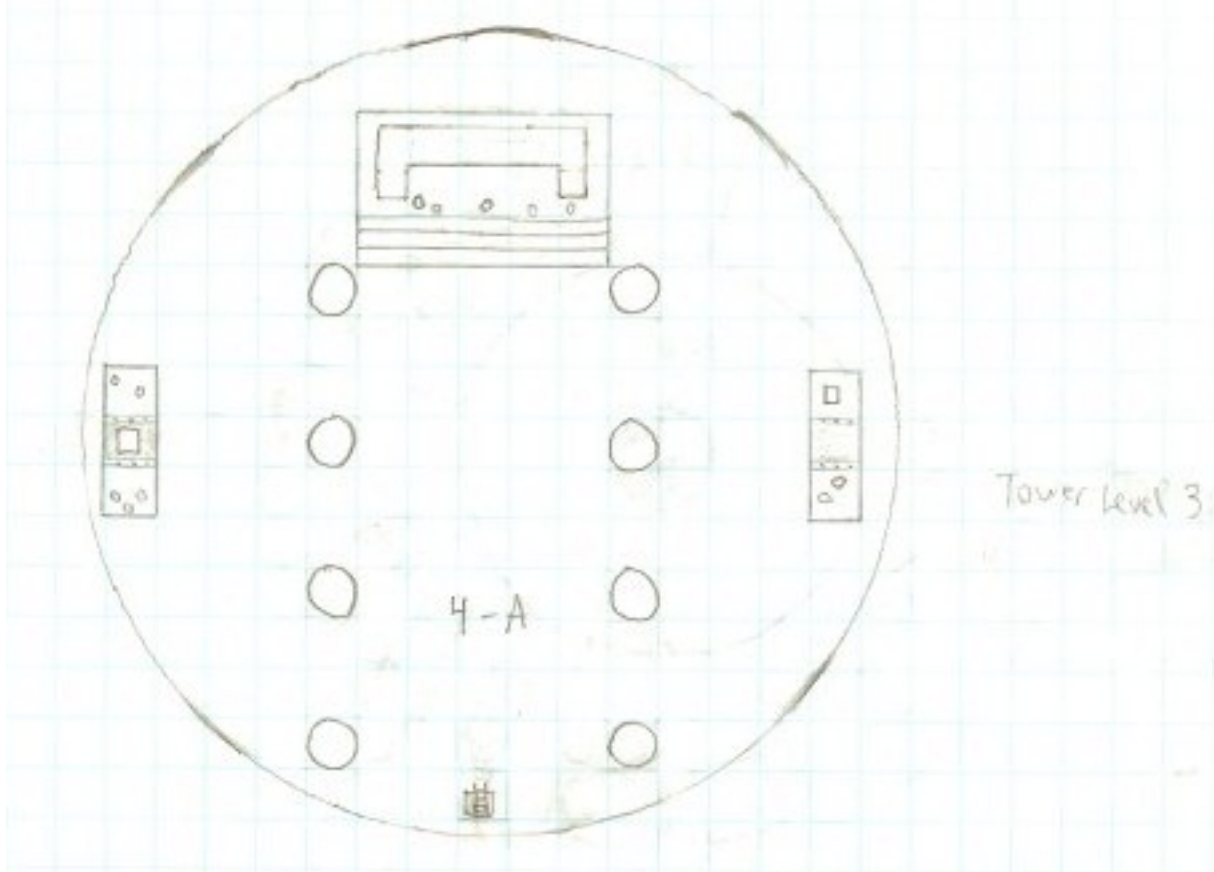


Room 3-C is where the snow-troll acolytes live. Meals are brought up to this level frequently for their consumption. During the day, the acolytes sleep in here. The floor is littered with trash, rubble, rotting scraps of meat, and other debris.

Room 3-D is the trolls' treasure chamber. Though united under their god, the trolls still do not entirely trust each other. Hidden within this chamber are four piles of treasure, under piles of rubble or in pits under loose floor tiles. Each pile of treasure requires a TN 20 Observe (Spot) test or TN 15 Search test to find and holds some 6 GP worth of jewelry, coins, goblets, and other treasures.

Room 3-E is the worship chamber. There are two cabinets on the walls holding candles, statuettes, and other religious paraphernalia. Large benches provide a place to sit for the trolls' rites. A large stone altar at the head of the room is covered with candles and statues. Inside one of the statues is the key to the level above. This requires a TN 10 Search test to find.

Room 3-F is the entrance to the Helegrog's shrine. On either side of the room are two mammoth statues of the demon, looking down upon any who enter here. Between them is one Troll-sized ladder, leading up to the final level.



Section 4: The Helegrog's Shrine

This is the final floor of the tower. Unlike the others, it is kept dazzlingly bright. During daylight, all trolls avoid this chamber, for obvious reasons. The only one who abides here is the Helegrog, whose very presence makes the room uncomfortably cold (-2 to physical tests). Any PCs strong and courageous enough to make it here deserve what they get. Good luck.

Room 4-A is the final chamber of the tower, the greatest of them. Eight massive pillars form an aisle to the throne at the end, holding the Helegrog himself. Blue candles litter the foot of his throne. On either side of the room are two altars, holding statues, candles, and a red book. On the walls are large tapestries depicting the ice demon, and the high domed ceiling is supported by marvels of architecture. Along the walls are large windows, streaming down light into the chamber, and one above the Helegrog's throne is stained with an image of himself. At first sight, the Helegrog will bellow with rage and charge the PCs, heedless of what danger they might pose. If the battle is won, then the Helegrog's influence over the tower will be broken. The room will warm up, and the magic which weaved the tower together will start to fade. Two hours after the demon is killed, the tower will collapse utterly, crushing any who remain.



FAN FLAVOUR

THE EFFECTIVE RANGER

by Mathew Kearns

It is evening and the fourth day out of Rivendell. You're weary from your forced march over the rough terrain of the Ettenmoors and Trollshaws. It was made especially difficult since you had to evade a raiding party of orcs from the Misty Mountains. Your objective is still another two days off, but you press on knowing that the information you are about to gather could mean many lives saved in the ever-constant war against the Shadow.

It is your expertise as a Ranger that guides you where no other would tread; protecting the innocent and the unaware from the night even though they may berate you for it, and preserving the last remnants of an ancient tradition and line of kings. Your knowledge of wood-lore and stealth give you and your comrades the edge if you be in Ithilien, safeguarding the kingdom of Gondor, or walking the treacherous and lonely paths of the northern wilds of the fallen kingdoms of Arnor.

BACKGROUND

The CODA system and the game almost beckons that you create your character's concept and background before you roll your dice and select skills. As Ranger is an Elite Order, in choosing it you have already chosen the life path of your character. Ranger is an Order that is applicable regardless of the Age in which your game is set, whether in the early days of the world or those of the younger days where you may be one of the last of the noble houses of ancient Númenor. Rangers are prototypical guardians, wardens, and expert woodsmen. Few others can match them in their woodcraftiness.

PREREQUISITES

Like all Elite Orders, there are prerequisites that must be met before joining the Ranger Order, but they are minimal considering the potential given by some of its abilities. A character must have:

- 6 advancements, minimum, in any one Basic Order
- Armed Combat 5+
- Ranged Combat 5+
- Stealth 5+
- Survival 7+
- Track 7+

RACE

There are no race restrictions for joining this Order, but the least likely of the four would be Dwarves.

ATTRIBUTES

High Nimbleness and Perception scores are what a Ranger would most likely covet, as he must be quite dexterous and aware of his surroundings. Strength and Vitality are also good considerations for favored attributes as they could, at character creation, give him a good Stamina reaction and initial Health score. Bearing is a decent choice if he is a commander of men. Wits is a good choice if he also has a broad selection of Lore and Language skills.

REACTIONS

Most Rangers are likely to start as either Rogues or Warriors, so they have probably chosen Swiftiness as their favored reaction for its usefulness in combat. Stamina is excellent for enduring long marches and the adverse effects of the elements, things common to the livelihood of a Ranger. Willpower is also useful to counter the effects of another's attempt at intimidation or to stave off corruption from evil sources. Wisdom allows a Ranger to see through deception, both in battle and, if applicable, the throne room.

EDGES

Many edges that would benefit a Warrior and/or Rogue also benefit a Ranger. Those that influence combat skills and situations are staples for this Order: Accurate, Dodge, Fell-handed, Keen-eared, Keen-eyed, Keen-nosed, Night-eyed, Quick-draw, Tireless, Travel-sense, Wary, Weapon Mastery (if the character has ranks in Armed Combat for the same weapon), and Woodcrafty. Other edges that would enhance the character's flavor and role-playing aspects include Ally, Armour of Heroes, Bold, Friends, Hardy, Honour's Insight, Rank, Resolute, and Strong-willed.

FLAWS

When it comes to Rangers, there aren't really any individual flaws that would be universally or even widely found in their character, but Code of Honour, Duty, Fealty, and Oath could be found amongst many.



SKILLS

For Rangers there are four skills that a Ranger should really excel at: Observe, Stealth, Survival, and Track. These skills really are what define the Ranger with an 'r' and 'R'. Combat and athletic-based skills (Run, Swim, etc.) are also skills that a Ranger should be proficient in as they are readily applicable to his time spent in the wilderness.

ABILITIES

Camouflage - Decent ability with acceptable costs to offer a Ranger better concealment while being stealthy in the wild.

Cross-Order Skill - This ability, I believe, should be available to all orders and is a good generic ability to take, where its effects can be used in the same advancement it is purchased.

Hard March - Just like for Barbarians, see HoF issue #16.

Protector - This is a very expensive thematic ability that nets a character very little in terms of mechanics (must have an additional 3 ranks of Armed Combat, another Ranger ability, and Duty or Fealty or Oath flaw, which many characters probably already have, to get a +2 Armed Combat bonus). Even when you add improvements to it, the effects don't get much better. The bonus doesn't even apply to the Ranged Combat skill, in which Rangers would have a very high level, opting for the use of a bow.

Retreat - This is another decent ability, similar to the Rogue ability that gives a Ranger a hideout of sorts. I don't agree that it should tie a character to a specific place, as it really would be used as more or less a last resort and/or a place for a quick resupply, but there is the possibility that it might never come into play of a campaign at all. Abuse of this ability is possible if the Narrator doesn't make the character define exactly what is available at his retreat.

Walk Without Trace - Just like for Barbarians, see HoF issue #16.

Wilderness Lore - A fairly attractive ability, as it would be applicable to many tests (though few actual skills) made by a character when he uses Courage. Combined with acquiring a few key edges, using even one Courage point on a wilderness-based skill could give a significant boost to a test result.

MULTIPLE ORDERS

A Ranger has quite a bit to offer in the way of spending advancement picks and expanding his repertoire both in mechanics and theme. Here are some ideas about combining this Elite Order with others, or choosing Orders to take on your way to becoming a Ranger.

Barbarian - Very similar to a Ranger, it's highly unlikely that you would have started in this Order due to many duplications of Order Abilities.

Craftsman - Though a Ranger has little use for most everything a Craftsman has, this is a decent choice if he chooses to retire from stalking the woods and assist the younger generation in teaching them the finer points.

Loremaster - Neither a likely or unlikely choice for a Ranger to start as, because in concept a Ranger has much knowledge of geography, plants, animals, and weather. A Loremaster, though, is unlikely to have very high Stealth, Track, or combat skills early on.

Magician: Least likely Order a Ranger would start as, but it can give access to combat- and nature-related spells. A possible concept could be going as far as you like in the Ranger Order and then combining this Order with Craftsman.

Mariner: This Order at first doesn't seem to go with Ranger, but if your character is adventuring primarily on the sea or grew up near it, it is conceivable that you'd have a few advancements in this Order. Unless this were true, it is unlikely a Ranger would have taken any advancements in this Order.

Noble: Many, if not all, Rangers of the North are some sort of noble or come from a noble house from the fallen Dúnedain kingdoms of Cardolan, Rhodaur, and Arthedain (all of which comprised ancient Arnor). Rangers of Ithilien were regarded as great fighters and leaders of men and so could conceivably have advancements in Noble as well.



Rogue: If you didn't start as a Rogue, then you should get into this Order as you can better your movement (Run) tests, chances to hit foes, and be more deadly against foes when you surprise them or are flanking them -- all are good considering the nature and philosophy of the Ranger.

Warrior: Like the Rogue Order, if you didn't start as a Warrior, then you should get into this Order, especially if your ranged weapon can also be used via Armed Combat.

Archer: This Order can do much to enhance your skill and ability in the art of the bow or other ranged weapons.

Captain: Those who are natural leaders of men in battle or in hunting parties would be considered a part of this Order, which can also further enhance the character's combat prowess.

Knight: This Order may or may not be applicable to Rangers unless they are of the Rangers of Ithilien. It is highly suggested that you consult with your Narrator before taking this Order.

Spy: Rangers have many of the required skills and abilities that would behoove a Spy. A hired Ranger/Spy would be extremely potent in performing his required duties.

Wizard: Same as Magician (required to enter this Order for the Spellcasting ability unless you purchase spells using Advancement Picks) -- not a likely choice, but can give access to enhanced abilities and spells. A possible concept could be going as far as you like in the Ranger Order and then combining this Order with Craftsman.

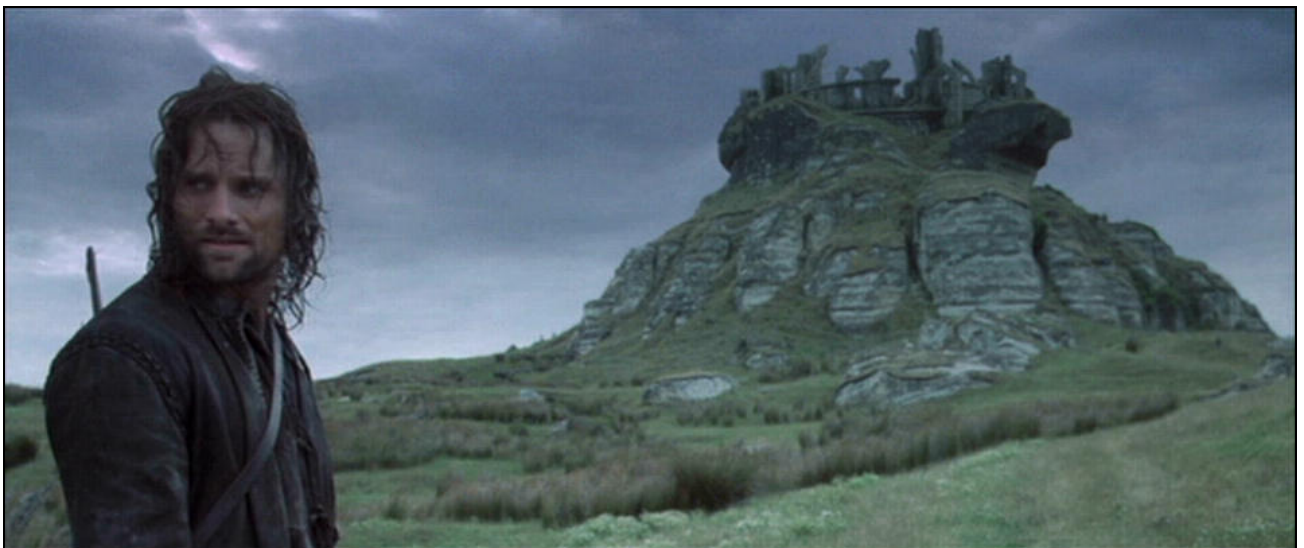
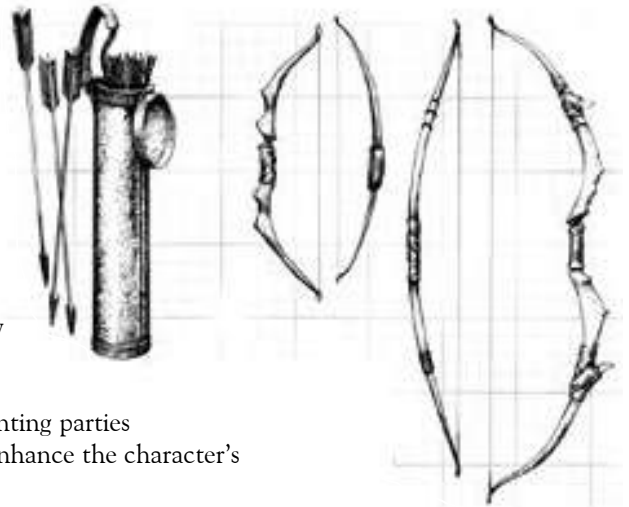
SPELLS

If you decide to add advancements of a spellcaster Order and acquire the Spellcasting ability, there are many spells that would be useful to Rangers, especially those pertaining to nature such as Animal Messenger, Beast Summoning, Mastery of Shapes, etc.

PLAYING A RANGER

The greatest value a Ranger hero brings to any game is his unmatched ability in the wilds and stealthy combat therein. Having a Ranger as a comrade means you should fear little from enemy trackers or going hungry while on a long march.

If ever you should need assistance in finding good examples of Rangers, look to Aragorn, the epitome of all Rangers, Haldir of the Galadhrim, and the Grey Company.



THE ROAD GOES EVER ON...

THE REACH OF THE WHITE HAND by Paul Bennett

A PARALLEL ADVENTURE
TO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
For The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game



This adventure is designed for 3 to 5, beginning or 1 advancement characters with at least one Dúnedain character with tracking skills. This is a fast paced adventure and every effort should be made to keep up the momentum. It was also designed as a lead in for *The Ruins of Annúminas*, a free adventure game found on www.decipher.com.

THE RACE OF THE RING

The world of Man has borne witness to the growth of the Shadow for many a long year. But now in the air one can sense a race between those that would preserve the good in the world and those that would utterly control or destroy what good remains. The One Ring, formed in evil by Sauron long ago, has the power to spread its malice throughout the world. Sauron, the enemy of the all the Free Peoples, has gained knowledge of the whereabouts of his precious trinket and sent his dreaded Black Riders forth from Mordor to search The Shire for one named Baggins. Meanwhile Frodo Baggins, after receiving the Ring from Bilbo Baggins, and his companions have made it to Bree where they meet Strider. Strider, sent by Gandalf the Grey, has laid plans for the Ring to travel to Rivendell. That night the Black Riders enter Bree, called by the ring, yet do not find it or the hobbits and disappear into the night. As the morning breaks the company sets out on their journey. But the Black Riders are not the only ones searching for Hobbits. For within Bree another power has eyes that too are searching for The One Ring. So Strider sets out for Rivendell with the uneasy feeling of being watched.

THE SHORT OF IT

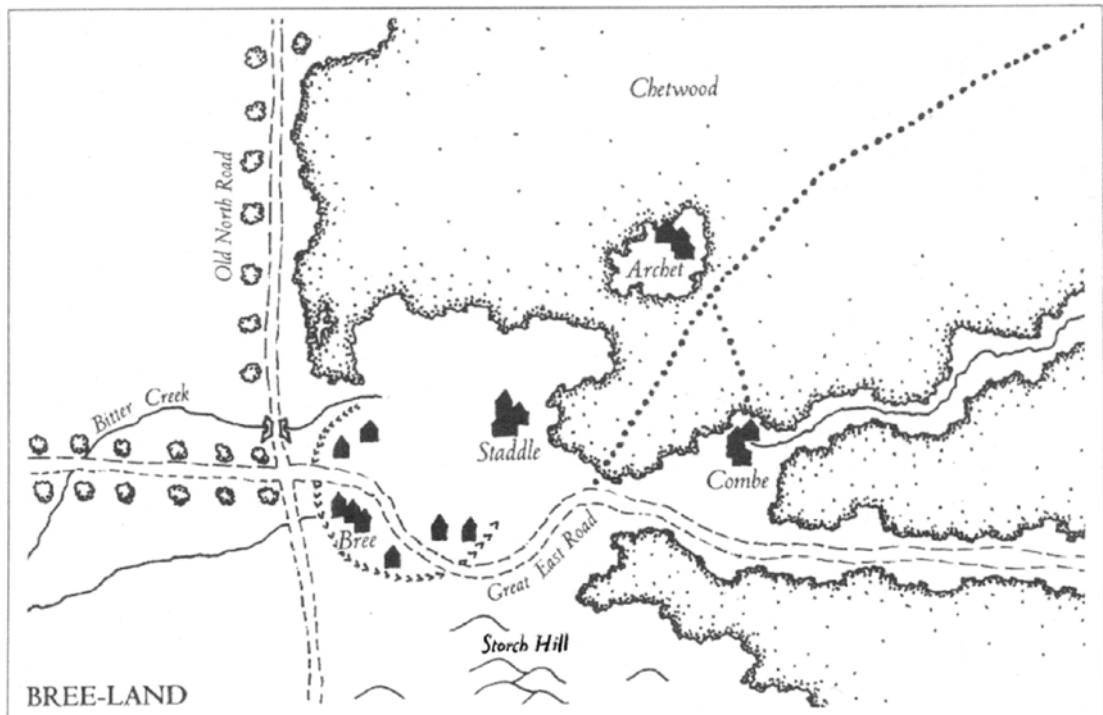
The adventure begins in a Ranger outpost within the Chetwood Forest. Pelegond the Captain of the Chetwood sends the characters to investigate an encampment of strangers southeast of Bree. As the heroes reach the Great East Road they encounter Bill Ferny who is looking, as always, for information to sell. Bill tells them a story about a camp of strangers, seeking to make a few silver pieces, and leads them (or is chased) back to Bree. But Bill has other plans to make a few coins. Once they are in Bree outside the blacksmith's shop, Bill's thugs try to mug the heroes.

In the failed attempt, Bill now runs to his house where the characters first encounter one of Saruman's spies giving Bill his just rewards. After the characters defeat the spy, Bill will tell the characters about the stranger's interest in a Ranger called Strider and his new-found friends. From here they track two other spies to their abandoned camp where they pick up the tracks of the strangers leading back to the East Road. And the pursuit ends in a battle to the death, where the victorious heroes return to inform Pelegond of the White Hand.

THE MISSION BESTOWED

The sun is beginning to peek out from its shelter on the morn of September 30th in the year TA 3018. Rumours of strange folk wandering in Eriador are abundant. The Rangers have been stretched thin, for Gandalf has requested to double the watch over the Shire. The Ranger Captain of the Chetwood, Pelegond, has requested the heroes' help; a chance for them to show their "quality". He says, "We have had reports of an encampment of strangers in the woods somewhere south of Bree. There are no Rangers left to send on this simple mission, so I offer you this chance to prove your worth. Go to this area and scout out these strangers, but do nothing else. I will expect you back this evening or tomorrow morning at the latest. Now go, and stay off the roads as best you can."

Pelegond offers the heroes what supplies they may need and stables any horses they may have until their return (as they will be traveling through the woods.) After preparing for the journey, the characters set out at about ten o'clock that morning, leaving the Rangers' camp near Archet and heading south through the woods.



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Act I: AN UNSAVORY CHARACTER

The travel through Chetwood Forest is uneventful, and as your company comes to the edge of the forest it is about eleven o'clock. There, on the Great East Road, you spot a man walking slowly along where the north track breaks off of the main road. He appears to be looking for something rather intently. The man's appearance is rather unsavory and he has thick black eyebrows, dark eyes and a red swollen nose.

This is none other than Bill Ferny who is looking for Striders tracks.

BILL FERNY

Bill has lived in Bree all of his life. He is a scoundrel who constantly looks for ways of making a profit. Bill also recently made a small fortune selling his sickly pony to Strider and his companions. His favorite place to set up shop is the Inn of the Prancing Pony, where he can be found cheating people at cards or listening to conversations in order to sell information.

RACE: Man of Bree

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +1, Swiftens +2*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +1

ORDER: Rogue (Lurker)

ORDER ABILITIES: Fleet Footed

ADVANCEMENTS: 1

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +3, Appraise (Gems) +2, Conceal (Hide Weapon) +3, Craft: Woodcarving +2, Debate (Bargain) +3, Games: Cards +4, Guise +2, Inquire (Converse) +3, Language: Westron +5, Language: Dunlending +4, Legerdemain (Pickpocket) +3, Observe (Spot) +3, Persuade (Fast Talk) +4, Run +4, Stealth (Sneak) +3, Unarmed Combat: Brawling +3

EDGES: Woodcrafty, Wary

FLAWS: Craven

HEALTH: 8

DEFENSE: 12

GEAR: Longsword (2d6+5), dagger (1d6+2)



If asked any questions from the characters Bill will tell them that he has some information about a group of strangers that are camped nearby, in the hopes of being paid for said information. He then will tell them a short tale of how he and a friend came across the camp. After his tale he directs the characters to follow him back to Bree to talk with his companion. Use Bill's Persuade skill and Debate, Language skills as affinity bonuses to talk the characters into going back to Bree. If the characters show any force towards Bill, he will flee back to Bree.

In The Company of Bill:

Upon arrival at Bree, Bill leads the characters to an overhang outside the Blacksmith's shop. He compels them to wait here while he fetches his companion. When he returns the characters see a very rough and grubby man with him. He introduces him as Dirty Jake and tells Jake to tell what he knows of these strangers (see "The Sneak Attack!").

The Chase of Bill:

As the characters run after Bill they see that he is rather a fast runner. He reaches the South Gate of Bree and the characters lose sight of him. As they search for Bill in the town they finally spot him outside of the Blacksmith's shop talking with a very dirty looking character. When the characters approach him he holds his hands up and says, "Hows about I tell you fine people what I know?" as he spits on the ground (see "The Sneak Attack!").

The Sneak Attack!

As Dirty Jake (or Bill) begins his tale, two other shady characters approach the heroes from behind. TN 10 to hear them approach. Once the other two men are in a good position, or are heard, they all attack the characters in unarmed combat. If the characters draw weapons they will also draw their short swords.

DIRTY JAKE AND 2 THUGS

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +1, Swiftiness +2*, Willpower 0, Wisdom 0

HEALTH: 9

DEFENSE: 10

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Short sword) +2, Unarmed Combat: Brawling +2

WEAPONS: Short sword (2d6+1), Punch/Kick (1d6+2)

If the characters overpower or kill one thug, Bill will flee to his home. Once Bill runs the other two will also flee. If the characters try to follow Bill they will see him run down the street and into the last house on the left by the South Gate.

Act II: A PLOT UNCOVERED

Down the street you see Bill run up the steps of the last house by the South Gate. As you reach the house you see that it is in such disrepair that one would think it was abandoned. Going up the steps the boards creak under your feet, making you wonder if the floor will hold any weight. The windows of the little house are so dingy that peering through them would reveal nothing beyond.

As the characters approach Bill's front door, they can hear a scuffle inside with a TN 10 Observe (Hear) test. The first character to enter sees a very ugly man, with dark skin and a sallow face, beating Bill Ferny. Two more men flee out of the back door and into the woods. Once the characters begin to enter the house, the man will drop Bill in a heap on the floor and draw his long sword to attack the first character. If the characters were successful in the Observe test, then roll for initiative. Otherwise the man automatically gets to attack first this round. Either way his first attack will be a charge attack in an attempt to knock that character to the ground. He will then fight to the death.

One feature of Bill's house will come into play during the combat. Because the floor is so weak with rot and termites, once each round for every combatant roll 2d6. On a 1-5 the floor under that character's foot will give way. Then have the character make a Nimbleness test or spend the next round getting his or her foot out of the floor. No damage is taken by any character that falls through the floor.

Note: Characters not involved in the combat, including those casting spells away from the melee, do not have this random encounter.

**HALF-ORC****ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 7, Nimbleness 7, Perception 8(+1), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 6**REACTIONS:** Stamina +2, Swiftiness +2, Willpower 1, Wisdom 1**ORDER:** Rogue**ORDER ABILITIES:** Lurking in shadows**SKILLS:** Armed Combat+2, Run +3**EDGES:** Furtive, Night eyed**FLAWS:** Fealty (Saruman)**HEALTH:** 9**DEFENSE:** 10**ARMOR:** Leather (-2 Damage)**WEAPON:** Long sword (2d6+5)

Once the characters overcome the man, Bill Ferny will be quite loose-lipped about the strangers. When asked he tells the characters that the strangers were very interested in some Hobbits that had taken up with Strider. And that they “forced” him to tell them where Strider and the Hobbits had gone. He also reveals that they have been camping about seven miles south east of Bree for 3 days. He does not know how many men are in the camp.

If the characters examine the body of the man, on an Observe test TN 20, they notice that he is actually half-man and half-orc. He has only a longsword on his person and a strange white hand mark on the front of his leather armor.

Encourage the characters to begin the pursuit of the other two men as quickly as possible. Once the characters decide to go after the men, they find following their tracks quite easy as they made haste to warn the camp and begin to track Strider.

Act III: THE PURSUIT**The Camp Abandoned**

As the heroes track the two runaways, they cross the Great East Road and follow along the north edge of Storch Hill, then turn east into the woods. About 2 miles east of Storch Hill they come to an area that had recently been used as a camp. The camp has a foul odor and looks very unkempt. If the characters search the camp they see a carcass of a horse that appears to have been used for food. As the characters begin to search for tracks they find that there are many around the outskirts of the camp, and only on a TN of 15 will they find that the most recent tracks lead north. If they roll a 20 or more then they can also tell that there were 8 Men.

Surprise, Surprise!

After traveling about 3 miles the characters are attacked by 2 half-orcs with long bows. On an Observe TN of 15 the orcs are spotted before they can let loose their arrows. However the characters only have time to take evasive action. The orcs will continue to shoot at the characters until they are within 20 feet, then they will draw long swords and attack. The orcs have taken good cover behind trees and rocks, so any ranged combat attack should have a +2 to the TN, and they are in an advantageous position which subtracts 2 from the TN for ranged attacks to hit their own targets. They will fight to the death in order to delay the characters.

HALF-ORCS**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 7, Nimbleness 7, Perception 8(+1), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 6**REACTIONS:** Stamina +2, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1**ORDER:** Rogue**ORDER ABILITIES:** Lurking in shadows**SKILLS:** Armed Combat+2, Run +3**EDGES:** Furtive, Night eyed**FLAWS:** Fealty (Saruman)**HEALTH:** 9**DEFENSE:** 10**ARMOR:** Leather (-2 Damage)**WEAPON:** Long bow (range 5/30/60), arrow (2d6), Long sword (2d6+5)



If the characters search the bodies of the half-orcs they will immediately notice that they are some new foul orc, apparently a mix of orc with man (if they have not already discovered this information). They will also see that both orcs have the mark of a white hand on the front of their leather armor. The half-orcs carry nothing of value.

The Pursuit Continues...

As the heroes take up the chase again, they find that the trail continues north, soon crossing the Great East Road onto a narrow track leading towards Archet. Just north of where Combe lies, the trail turns east into the woods again, heading straight toward the Midgewater Marshes. The characters begin to hear sounds of feet tramping ahead of them. As they reach the edge of the woods, before them lay the marshes and they can see ahead of them 6 figures less than 40 yards away running towards the marshes. If the characters continue the chase or fire on the half-orcs from the tree line, five of the half-orcs will turn and charge towards them drawing their long swords. Use the same stats as before for them. However their leader Krag will begin to shoot arrows at the characters as he walks toward them. Again the half-orcs will fight to the death.

Narrator: It is important to keep the characters alive in order to report their findings. If needed give them a break during the half-orc battle.

HALF-ORC LEADER: Krag

Krag was among the first half-orcs created by Saruman. His features are close to a man's, except for one eye that is obviously of orc nature. Krag has trained with his long sword and makes a formidable opponent. He hates all men with such a fire, even to the point of fighting with Saruman's Dunlending warriors. His hatred of men also drives him so that in a battle with men he will never surrender nor flee. This is a trait that Krag, through fear, has also bestowed upon his band of half-orcs.

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 8(+1), Strength 10(+2), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 7

REACTIONS: Stamina +2, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

ORDER: Warrior

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion,

SKILLS: Armed Combat+3, Run +3, Healing +1, Inspire +1, Intimidate +3, Observe (spot)+2, Ranged Combat (long bow)+3, Stealth (sneak)+3

EDGES: Weapon mastery (+3 long sword), Furtive, Night eyed +1

FLAWS: Fealty (Saruman)

HEALTH: 10

DEFENSE: 10

ARMOR: Leather (-2 Damage)

WEAPON: Long bow (range 5/30/60), arrow (2d6), Long sword (2d6+5)

The Task Complete

As the heroes return to the Chetwood their travel is calm and without incident, providing a rest not had since late morning. They arrive back at the Ranger camp at just about sun down, where they find Pelegond awaiting their arrival and their report.

The characters should tell Pelegond that the strangers were tracking a Ranger who was leading four hobbits, and about the strange white hand marks upon their armor. He says, "*We shall investigate these strangers further, perhaps Elrond might know of these markings. You have done well – there may yet be a place for you among the Rangers. Please stay here with us, as I fear we may soon have need of your aid again.*"

Rewards

The main objectives, finding the camp and reporting back as soon as possible, are worth 1,000 xp each character. Defeating Bill's friends without killing anyone is worth 200 xp, also doing so in unarmed combat is worth an additional 100 xp. Discovering the true identity of the strangers before leaving Bill's house is worth 100 xp, to that particular character. You may also give each character 1 Renown for unknowingly aiding part of the future Fellowship of the Ring.



HALL OF FIRE INDEX

The Hall of Fire Index is updated through issue 18. The index gives first the issue number and then the pages.

- aboleth: 16:9-17
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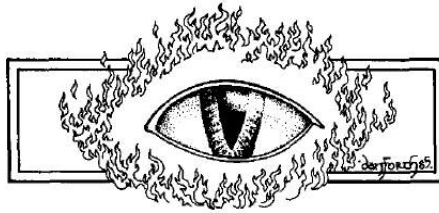
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WHAT'S OUT THERE

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>

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARDA

<http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/default.htm>

SCOTT'S RPG CENTRAL

http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/

CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH

<http://roleplay.avioc.org/lotr/index.htm>

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>

CODA WEBZINE REPOSITORY

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/coda_webzine

TOLKIEN ONLINE

<http://www.tolkienonline.com/>

TALES OF MIDDLE-EARTH

http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/tales_of_middle_earth/

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Note to any that wish to print out their copies of *The Hall of Fire*: If you wish to print this document in a book style (front and back pages), understand that the cover was intended to be printed by itself on one page.

