THE HALL of FIRE
FAN WEBZINE

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Boromir - by Anna Baldassarre

THE Hall of Fire
The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

GREETINGS,
SALUTATIONS... HELLO ALL!

Well, the Helm's Deep Sourcebook is out. In my opinion, it is by far a great addition to the RPG line. Though a large portion of it is devoted to the expanded mass combat rules, it makes a great supplement devoted to the portion of Rohan in and around the famed fortress. Later on, you'll find a review I've written based on the aspects of the book voted to be the most important to the gamers on the Decipher forum.

So now, without further ado, on to Issue #22! In this issue, we are simply loaded with the spawn of The Shadow: Adventuring in Gundabad, new breeds of orc, insights into orc-kind, a new campaign outline, plus a whole lot more!

Matthew A. Kearns
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Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

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Adventuring In

Mount Gundabad
by Mathew Kearns (GandalfofBorg); pictures by Peter Merryman; with much thanks to Scottomir for compiling info on this place

HISTORY

When the world was in its infancy, Aulë the Smith, Vala of the Earth, wrought in secret a blasphemy against Ilúvatar: from the materials he knew best he created a race, the fathers of the Dwarves. When The One discovered what he had done, he came to smite them from existence as they were not a part of his plan, but when he saw them, he pitied them. Granting them and Aulë clemency, he bade that they should lie in rest until the coming of the First-born. It was in this place that the fathers were wrought and first awoke -- the part of Endor that was to be named Mt. Gundabad. Pleased with Ilúvatar's decision, Aulë commanded his creations to sleep and placed them in different parts of Middle-earth, each to its own liking, but leaving the one to be called Durin in this most sacred of places.

Upon his waking, Durin discovered many others like him were also created and had lain with him until the proper time. They found that they deeply loved the earth and its bounty and crafting works of great wonder within the depths. Time passed and eventually these Dwarves discovered descendants of the other fathers' tribes and made Gundabad a place for the seven Dwarven houses to gather. Numerous mansions were carved into its slopes, at least one for each kindred; most of them connected to the Assembly Hall in the heart of the mountain. Though far short of the scope and splendor of Moria (which spanned the entire width of the Misty Mountains), the halls of Gundabad were sizable and impressive.

In the centuries after the fall of Morgoth, Gundabad came under assault by the Orcs, who, masterless but well-armed and very numerous, had fled eastward from Beleriand seeking new homes. In response, early in the Second Age the Dwarves formed alliances with the ancestors of the Northmen, for whom the Dwarves forged mighty armaments. For many long years the alliance defended both Men and Dwarves from Orc attacks, but it came to an end after Sauron invaded Eriador and destroyed Eregion in 1695 SA. Sauron gathered the Orcs of the North into his service and guided them to attack their enemies in force. The Northmen were engaged in a war against both Orcs and evil Men of the East, and thus they could no longer aid the Dwarves; when the war ended, the Men were diminished and scattered. Reinforced and commanded by the servants of Sauron, the Orcs overran Gundabad and infested the Grey Mountains.

Most of the remaining Dwarves of Gundabad wisely fled to the Blue Mountains or impregnable Moria or wandered to other Dwarf-holds in the east, but the Stiffbeards of Gundabad refused to flee and were killed to the last. In the third millennium of the Third Age, the Orcs of Gundabad expanded what Dwarf-halls they could find and dug their own network of connecting tunnels, transforming the ancient Dwarf-hold into the mightiest Orcish stronghold in the North. From their Gundabad fastness, the Orcs of the North from time to time raided across Eriador and Rhovanion, and remained a grave threat at the start of the Fourth Age.

NOTABLE FEATURES

Entrance Hall

Under Dwarf Rule: The Entrance Hall was a gathering place for trade and socializing with fellow Dwarves and members of other races. Its main gate was fashioned of steel by the greatest of the dwarven craftsmen of the seven houses, bearing symbols of each house along with one lock for each house that had only one key (held by the house's representative in Gundabad) and one master key that could open any of the locks (this was held by the master of Gundabad, Durin and his heirs). The Door of Gundabad required at least one key to lock the gate and the same number of keys to open it, though not necessarily the same keys that locked the gate. The opposite side of the Entrance Hall from the Door of Gundabad is a passage somewhat narrower than at the gate leading into the rest of the dwarf-city. This passage is well-guarded and only Dwarves are allowed to pass deeper into the realm.

Door of Gundabad
Protection: 7
Structure: 7
Special: For each lock after the first that is secured, add +1 to the gate's Protection. If all locks are secured, add an additional +2 Protection.

Under Orc Rule: The Entrance Hall looks as it is depicted in its corresponding map: all sharp corners, ornate carving, sculptures, etc. hewn away and broken stone littering the ground. The Gate of Gundabad is no longer present: it was destroyed when the orcs broken into the Dwarf-realm and has been replaced by stacked stone rubble. The room is guarded by a large force of orcs. There are also a number of well-armed and armoured stone trolls residing in some of the off-shoot side rooms where the sunlight cannot penetrate. The passage that leads further into Gundabad is heavily guarded, too, and has a dead fall rigged to block the passage if an enemy either defeats or tries to rush past the host in the Entrance Hall.

Dead Fall
Find: TN 10 Search or TN 15 Observe (Spot)
Disable: TN 15 Legerdemain (Disable Traps)

If the dead fall happens to be triggered, to clear the passage requires a TN 75 extended Stonecraft test to safely and efficiently remove the stone rubble; the test is broken down into 5 TN 15 Stonecraft tests with each test representing a day of work. Subtract 6 hours per test for every level of success greater than Marginal and add 6 hours per test for every level of

failure. On a Complete Failure, 1d6 minor NPC's are severely injured and, on a Disastrous Failure, 1d6 are killed and 3d6 are severely injured. On a Complete Failure, a random number of PC's and major NPC's helping suffer 2d6 damage and, on a Disastrous Failure, a random number of PC's and major NPC's helping suffer 4d6 damage and a 1 on a separate d6 will given them broken bones (represented by a temporary Crippled flaw for the particular body part broken).

Main Gate

GUNDABAD entrance hall

Dwarven City (ruins)
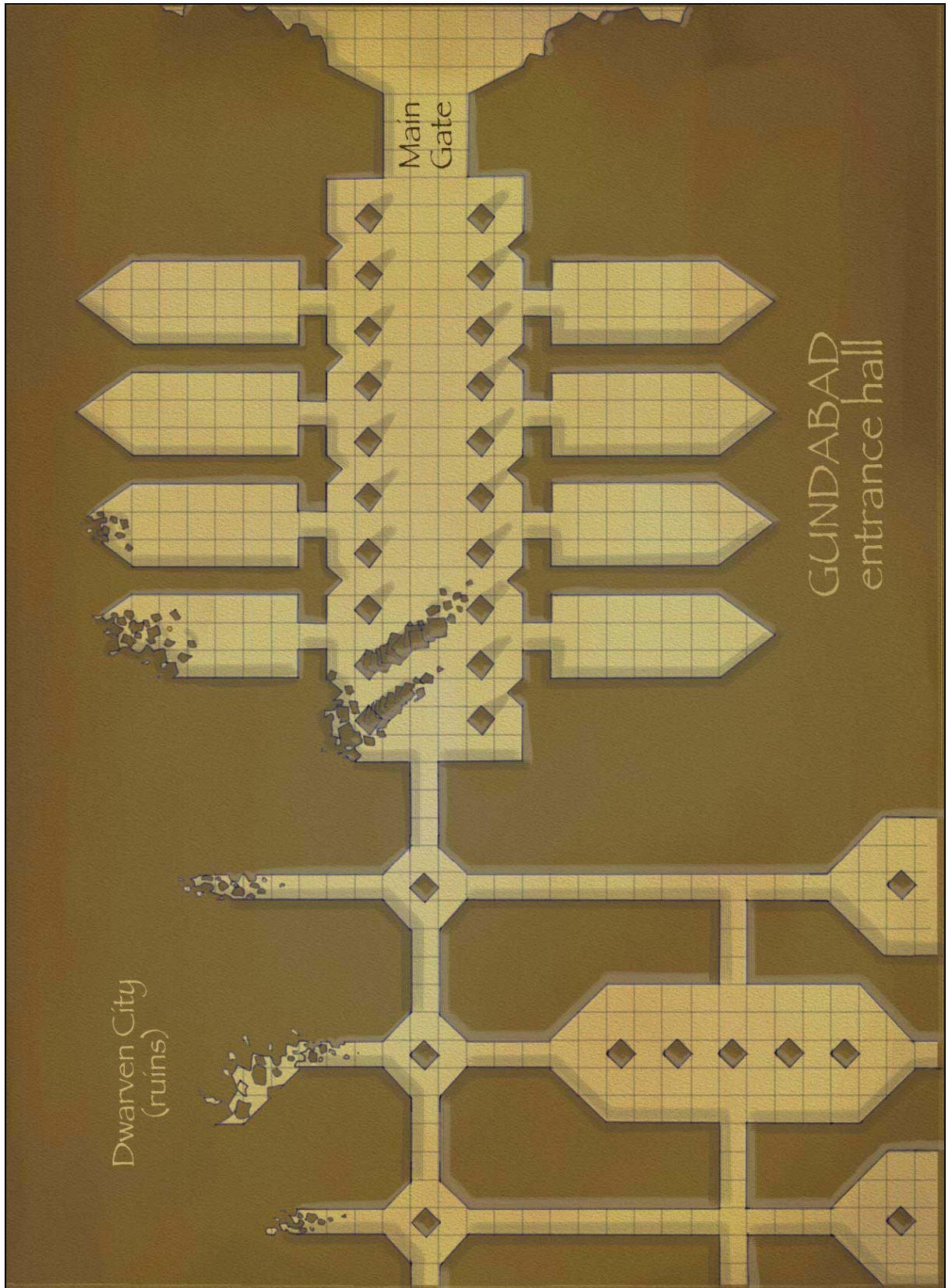
Outer Towers

These three towers were not a part of the realm's original design; they were built in response to the increased presence of orcs in the region and were finished shortly before Gundabad came under siege. The towers are heavily fortified, with a large garrison of Dwarves stationed in each.

Outer Tower
Protection: 7
Structure: 100

Unit Types	#	C	R	Me	T	S	M	Special
Heavy Infantry	10	9	5	16	15	6	6	Extra Protection, Mountain-friend
Light Archers	2	9	10	7	11	6	8	Mountain-friend
Stonemasons	1	7	5	8	10	7	1	Reinforcement, Mountain-friend

Extra Protection: Girded with large, heavy shields, dwarven infantry can use them in a manner to give a +1 bonus to the Protection of a section of wall they are defending, at the expense of forgoing movement and attacking maneuvers in the same round.
Mountain-friend: Dwarves do not suffer penalties for fight in "Mountain" terrain.
Reinforcement: This unit can restore an amount of structure equal to half (rounded up) the number of surviving members in the unit per round of mass combat.

Like the Entrance Hall, there is a narrow passage leading between the towers and the rest of the realm, with a dead fall to prevent invaders from penetrating the city.

Dead Fall
Find: TN 15 Search or TN 20 Observe (Spot)
Disable: TN 25 Legerdemain (Disable Traps)

If a dead fall is triggered, there is no way of getting down the passage short of an all-out mining operation.

The Bridge of the Fathers and Durin's Womb

Similar to the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, it was a narrow bit of stone, a quarter of a mile long over the great chasm called Durin's Womb, leading from the main part of the realm to the Room of Sleep in which are the fabled beds of stone that the Seven Fathers had lain upon when they were first created. Of all places in Middle-earth, this place is the most sacred to the Dwarves, which is why the bridge is broken. When the Entrance Hall was breached, word was quickly sent to a cadre of Dwarves dedicated to the preservation of the site. They gave their lives in the bridge's defense, and eventually sundered the bridge so as to not allow the foul orcs the ability to desecrate the room.

The path that leads to the The Room of Sleep winds its way through The Deeps down to the bottom of Durin's Womb. The room isn't a room but an area of worked stone amongst the stalagmites. The worked stone consists of a large circular slab hewn smooth with a diameter of 20 feet and seven evenly spaced smoothly-hewn stone beds that radiate lengthwise from the center like rays of the sun.

The Deeps

This part of the mountain is a great honeycomb of tunnels, passages, and hidden paths beneath the mountain that lead further into the depths of the earth or north towards the Grey Mountains or south following the Misty Mountains. One passage that wasn't known while the dwarves dwelt here eventually forks, with one part leading to the underdeeps of Angmar and the other leading into the deepest caverns of the goblin city near Rivendell and beyond to Moria. Within these roots of the mountains lurk some of the most savage of orcs, stone trolls, and other nameless evils lurking since the beginning of the world that bear no allegiance to any but themselves.

GUNDABAD cross section

The Dwarven City (ruins)

Entrance Hall

The Deeps

Durin's Womb
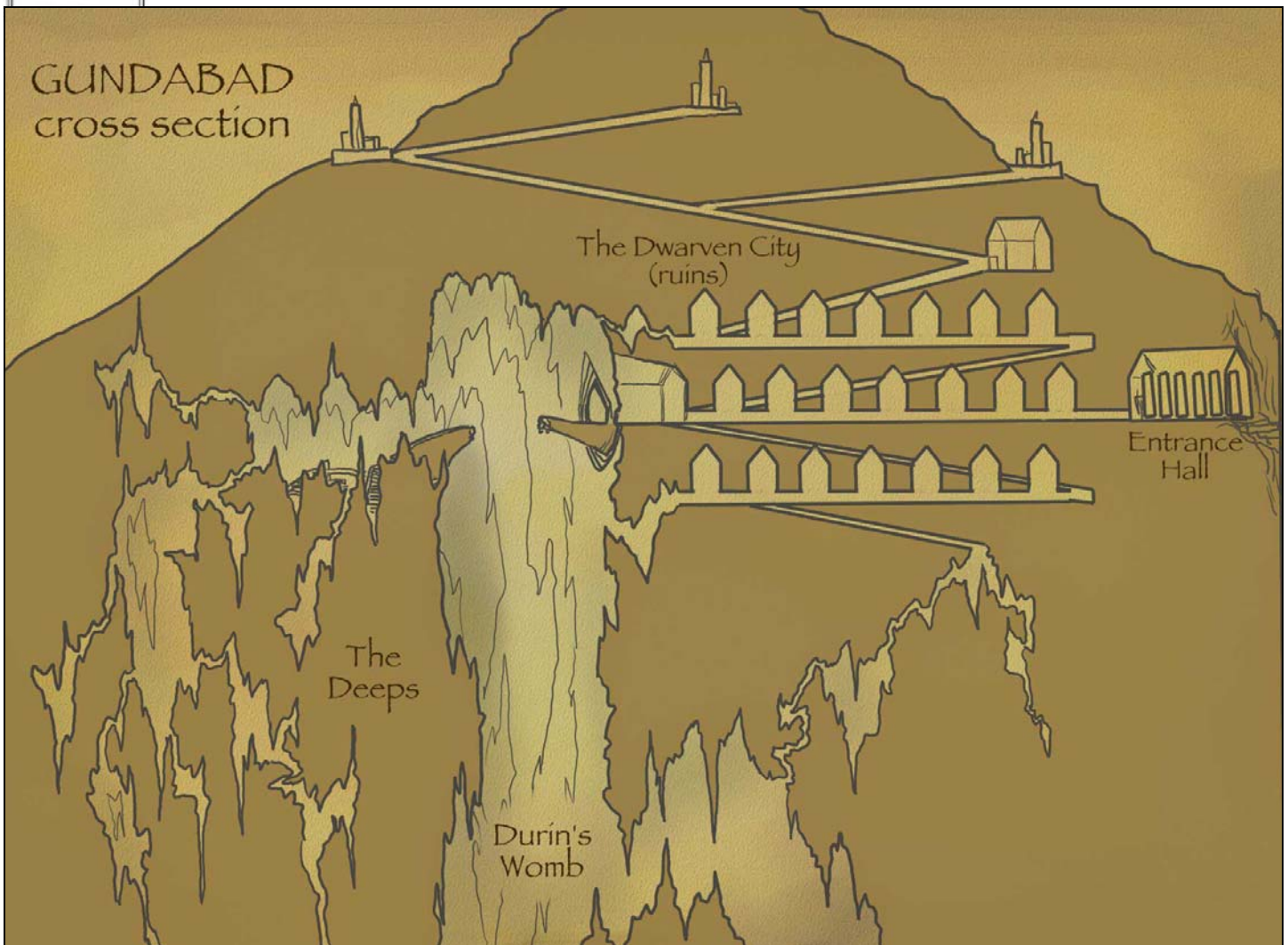
Common Rooms (Residences, Forges, etc.)

Under Dwarf Rule: There are extensive mansions built throughout the realm for each of the seven houses that include large residences, forges, common/feasting rooms, etc. Even what could be considered the poorest areas are still relatively well-to-do as compared to their counterparts in other places in the West.

Under Orc Rule: All rooms and halls have been looted and the riches stored in a series of rooms in one of the deepest levels of the city. In any given room there is 25-50 light or medium infantry orcs with 1-5 cave or stone trolls. In larger rooms, 2-4 of those forces can be found. At any time an alarm is sounded, 1d6 rooms' worth of forces respond in 1/2-d6 rounds and additional reinforcements respond at the same interval.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. **The Father Awakes:** Mt. Gundabad has been retaken and becomes the new home for the kingships of the seven houses. As The Deeps are further explored and cleaned out, rumors spread concerning strange things occurring the closer explorers get to the Room of Sleep. One day a strange Dwarf that none of the dwarven scouts recognized was found near the room, but announces that he is Durin Reborn and that he has come so that Moria may be reclaimed.

2. **Reclaiming the Sacred Hall:** The One Ring has been destroyed and the power of Mordor is broken, but Mt Gundabad, the most sacred place in Dwarf-dom, is still occupied by their most bitter of enemies -- the orcs! Dain II of Erebor has sent an envoy to the court of King Elessar to request his aid in reclaiming their ancient home and ridding the North of one of the region's biggest threats. After some deliberating and conferring with his generals about available forces and

the situation in the south, he responds to the request for leading a force of men from Gondor, Ithilien, and Rohan to the North along with a caravan of craftsmen and such to evaluate the ruins of Fornost and Annúminas.

3. **Darkness Unchained:** Long ago when the Dwarves were exploring and expanding their realm while they still were quite powerful in stature and skill, a great evil was discovered in the bowels of The Deeps. This creature was called The Dark Deeping. It would attack patrols in the area and eventually began making raids into the city itself, killing and destroying. Determined to rid themselves of this menace, a large force was commanded to rid the realm of the creature. Eventually, after a great loss of life, The Dark Deeping was captured, but it was found that they were unable to destroy it utterly, so the same craftsmen who wrought the Gate of Gundabad were commissioned to force manacles and thongs to bind the creature forever and made it so. Centuries pass and the orcs gain their domain over Gundabad. Curious and fearful of what the creature was they released it, obtaining the keys before the Dwarves could destroy them.

NOTE ABOUT THE MAPS: The cross-section map is of Gundabad before the dwarves lost it; it does not incorporate the additional tunnels delved by the orcs -- it would've been a bit much to include. I would highly suggest using the map tiles supplied in the Moria box set or something similar for creating maps of these sections along with depicting The Deeps and Durin's Womb.

GUNDABAD
Dwarven City
Sample

Forge

Residence

Forge

Shrine

Marketplace

Residence

Residence

Residence

Residence

Residence

Residence

Residence

Residence
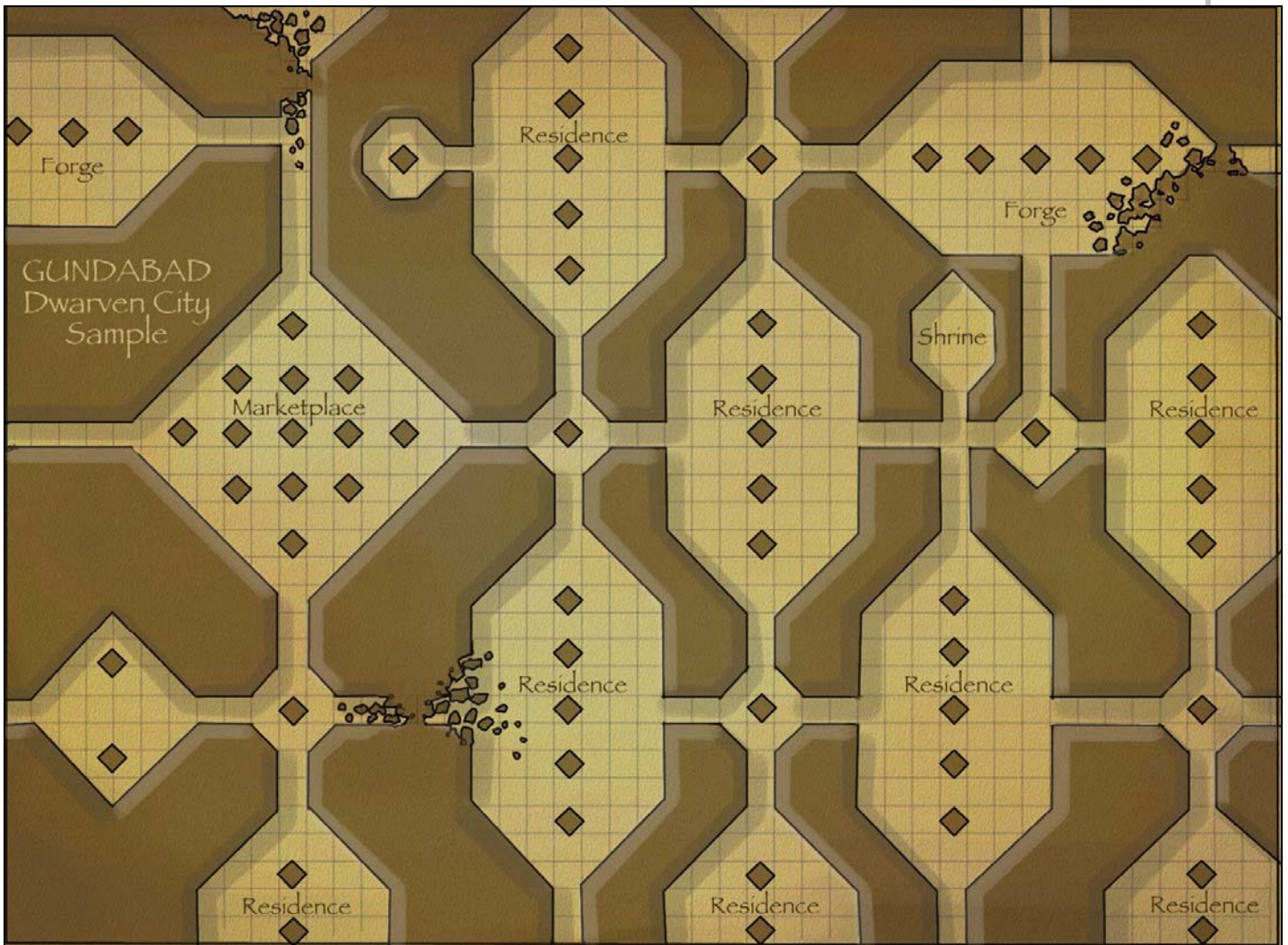
PEOPLES OF MIDDLE-EARTH - ORCS by GandalfOfBorg

"First seen in Beleriand toward the end of the third age of the Chaining of Melkor, Orcs appeared in force during the first battle of the Wars of Beleriand. Ever after they were the most numerous of Melkor's servants and soldiers."
The Complete Guide to Middle-earth

OF ORCS

There are many names for these creatures most commonly called Orcs: goblins, hobgoblins, yrch, glamhoth, etc. The word 'goblin' and such is used occasionally and interchangeably with 'orc' -- the fact that the larger kinds are given their own special word, such as the Uruks and hobgoblins, might suggest that goblins tend to be smaller Orcs, but the evidence on this is inconclusive.

HISTORY & LANDS

Even before their waking near the Lake Cuiviénen, the Elves, the Firstborn of Ilúvatar were in the mind of Melkor Morgoth. He both hated them and was jealous of them and sought to sully the work of the Creator, to twist them to his will. In anticipation of their arrival, the Valar sent a host to besiege the fortress Utumno. When the Elves did awake, there was still darkness in the world and even darker evil lurking in the shadows; many elves were lost during the long time before the Great Migration. It was those who strayed, became lost, or captured that were taken into the thrall of Melkor's lieutenants.

After the destruction of the trees and his return to Endor, Morgoth was pleased at what he found and set to work with his plans. Those in thrall were twisted by his evil machinations, eventually forming the accursed and foul race of Orc. The reason for Morgoth manipulating the works of the Song is because it is not within his power to create, only to pervert and destroy. From their first encounter on the battlefield until the end of the world, the Orcs and Elves hold each other as the most bitter of enemies.

Being creatures of bondage figuratively and literally to an extent, Orcs have no homeland nor do they create works of beauty. The lands they abide in are ones they've taken from others; the works they create are bastardized and brutal versions of those acquired or, in the off chance, learned from others. It is through their cruel cunning and malicious goals that their creations of wheels and gears and implements of torture and pain come to fruition.

PHYSICAL INFORMATION

Orcs initially were squat, swarthy creatures with grey, brown, black, or green skin. As time went on, with further development of the separate orc-breeds their appearances began to vary widely. Most have sharp claws and teeth to use as weapons and a thick hide giving them extra protection, allowing them to resist both the elements and some weapons. Born to darkness, the sunlight blinds orcs and can even cause them physical pain, reducing their effectiveness during the daytime to almost nil unless the sun is covered.

SOCIAL INFORMATION

No civilization of Man, Elf, or Dwarf compares to the brutality and sheer savagery that makes up the Orc race. On the simplest level, orcs are tribal in nature with the strongest and most cunning as the leader and his cohorts as lieutenants. When pressed into the service of either Mordor, Angband, or other great realm of evil, the tribal affinities remain but the rank structure keeps them in check as well.

Aside from their barbaric treatment of other races, orcs are also aggressively cannibalistic both in feast and famine. When it comes down to it, they will not hesitate to cut up a spawn- or tribe-mate in as easy a manner as a captive for their next meal.

ECONOMICS

Orcs have no need of a barter or monetary system; either they acquire what they have from being supplied per their station, or from those they've slain or robbed.

STANDARDS OR DEVICES

Orcs in the service of another primarily carry the standard of their master: The Great Eye, The White Hand, etc. In the wild, they carry flags and bear devices signifying their clan of origin or allegiance.

IT'S ALL OPTIONAL

NEW EDGE: PAWN OF PROPHECY by Doug Joos (inspiration from Taliesin)

'Eärnur now rode back, but Glorfindel, looking
into the gathering dark, said: "Do not pursue
him! He will not return to this land. Far off
yet is his doom, and not by the hand of man
will he fall."'

Appendix A; The Return of the King

This Edge may only be assigned by the Narrator and it terminates after a fated event of the Narrator's choosing or the Narrator may deem it to have a lasting benefit. The Edge is alterable in every aspect, defined by the Narrator to conform to their chronicle. It is even possible that the character assigned the Edge may never see its use. What it conveys to the Narrator is a game mechanic that may be called into play at a necessary time or place (i.e. when Éowyn faces the Witch-king, or when a character may need to perform some other heroic feat).

The Edge's effect may either give a Test Bonus (+10, +15, +20 - again based upon Narrator's choice) or perhaps it negates a special ability (i.e. Witch-king's Terror), or however the Narrator wishes to define the benefit.

The Edge does have the standard cost in Advancement Picks and must be spent when the Narrator decides the character is subject to its effects. The player will get no other information regarding the benefits of the Edge; they only will be told upon the fated moment when the effects are activated.

Imrahil tends his nephew *by Anke Eissmann*

NEW ABILITY: UNIQUE ABILITY by Mathew Kearns

This is a generic ability that can be acquired at any point in the character's life, regardless of his initial Order or whatever Order(s) the character buys into later on. The effects of this ability are at the discretion of the player himself, with Narrator oversight of course. When creating a unique ability, remember that it is to reflect the character's individuality above all else -- no one else, or VERY few, in the world would have a similar power.

Cost to Acquire

This ability costs the normal 3 Advancement picks and can be acquired more than once, with different effects. Yet after the first purchase, the ability's cost includes a cumulative permanent loss of 1 Courage point along with the Advancement picks (1 Courage for second, 2 Courage for third, etc.). This ability cannot be acquired during character creation.

Unique Effect

This ability can be used as a prerequisite ability for any Order ability requiring other unspecified ability in its prerequisite list.

As this is an ability and not a means for the player to do anything carte blanche, here are some example types of effects pertaining to skills and reactions; abstract effects can be granted, but consult with your Narrator for appropriateness to your character and the ability's relative power.

- +2 bonus to a skill
- +3 bonus to a skill (specialty)
- +2 bonus to one type of skill (academic, physical, or social) in a specific situation
- Spend 1 Courage and double the Courage bonus when making a test of a specific skill (stacks with edges like Bold and Curious)
- +2 bonus to a reaction in a specific situation
- +1 bonus to a reaction
- Spend 1 Courage and double the Courage bonus when making a test of a reaction in a specific situation (stacks with edges like Bold and Curious)

Improvement: Yes. When acquiring this ability more than once, the effects must be different than the previous purchase(s), and there is an additional cost of a cumulative permanent loss of 1 Courage (1 Courage for second ability, 2 Courage for third, etc.).

FAN FLAVOUR

THE EFFECTIVE MARINER by Mathew Kearns

Regardless of the Age in which your game is set, the Mariner is ever-present in the world -- even a large contingent of the Elves in the world would either be of this Order or have many related skills and abilities from living near and loving the sea for so long. Fishermen, traders, and ships of war can be found in and around the local waterways of the West and beyond.

BACKGROUND
The CODA system and the game itself almost beckons that you create your character's concept and background before rolling the dice. The Mariner is a viable Order that can be used at almost any time, barring characters who hail from the mountains or desert -- anywhere there is a body of water, you shall find Mariners. Think about where your character comes from, his motivations and maybe even sketch out a few of his personal goals. This will help both you in focusing your roleplaying and your Narrator in creating side adventures for developing your character. Work with your Narrator to come up with something suitable for the game in which you will be playing.

RACE
While there are no racial restrictions for this Order, a Dwarven Mariner is an most unlikely character. Even the Hobbits, who are little known for their seamanship, have some experience on the Brandywine. Elves and Men are the most likely to have Mariners in their midst, though. Of all races of the Free Peoples that would have Mariners within their societies, Elves (Sindar) and Men of all kinds would have more characters of this type.

ATTRIBUTES
Nimbleness may be the associated attribute for most Mariner Order skills, but Perception is probably more important to a true Mariner as it is associated to Weather-sense and Observe skills, likely the most oft used skills. This goes against what the CRB suggests, but Strength is associated with only a few skills and has little use really beyond that for a Mariner. Wits is also greatly prized both for the crafting, repairing of ships, and sea-lore.

REACTIONS
High Stamina will help keep a sailor at his post in the midst of a great battle or when fighting a deadly storm to bring his ship home. Swiftness is a wise choice for a favoured reaction because of the climbing, jumping, fighting, etc. that is done aboard ship.

SKILLS
Serving on a ship, reading the weather, and general seaworthiness are described in the Mariner's signature Order skills: Sea-craft, Swim, Weather-sense, and Observe. Many of the others I think are really filler, though some are useful as Order skills like the Combat skills, Climb, and Craft. Lore: Sea-lore or something similar is also quite beneficial to a Mariner even though it isn't an Order skill, but I would suggest spending a few Racial picks on it.

EDGES
There are many edges that enhance the effectiveness and give a bit of flavor to the Mariner: Accurate, Bold, Charmed Life, Command (wise to have to command a ship), Craftmaster, Favour of Fortune, Friends, Night-eyed, Rank (wise to have as an officer on a ship), Resolute, Tireless, and Travel-sense.

FLAWS
With the pros of being a Mariner, there are always cons -- the flaws -- that reflect their stalwart and sometime brusque demeanor: Arrogant, Code of Honour, Crippling Wound, Duty, Fealty, Fey, Grasping, Oath, Proud, and Reckless.

ABILITIES
Diver - This ability is only useful for characters that are in a chronicle that is focused on being aboard ship (why else would you be a Mariner?), or near the water, or as a thematic choice if the character has fairly poor stats and doesn't want to

choose Sea Legs. The only way it could be useful anywhere else other than near water would be to survive suffocation from choking or holding your breath in the midst of noxious gases.

Rope-craft - Another ability that is more theme than function. It may give a bonus to using rope, but it is really best used for characters of sea-based adventures; even then the ability is still not all that useful.

Sailor's Eye - Next to Loremasters, Mariners are the ones who understand the world of sea and sky the best. Though its use ties the bonus to be applicable only to near water, there are plenty of rivers (if you go by the strictest reading of the ability), lakes, and even a couple of large inland seas that make this a worthy choice if you meet the requirements.

Sea Legs - Diver's twin in overall usefulness and actual power. Its effects are very basic in getting rid of penalties for a moving deck and an immunity to seasickness, both conditions very unlikely to be found anywhere else other than aboard a ship.

Ship - All in all, this is probably one of the most powerful abilities in the game in that it grants the character a ship. And not just a ship, but a crew as well -- and it could even be a ship of war. The crew may be a neutral party within the context of the chronicle, but still is an incredible boon to the game's fellowship. The only thing I have a contention with are the prerequisites: they're not tough enough. Requiring one other Mariner ability (which could be Sea Legs or Diver) and slightly above average number of ranks in Sea-craft, but not a high or unbelievable number especially for the skill that will get the most attention by most Mariners. This is definitely one ability that a Narrator should review and give careful thought to.

Wind-mastery - One other decent ability for the Mariner that is left hiding behind a prerequisite that is, I think, a little too much -- I would've just made Sailor's Eye the prerequisite and maybe adding a lower Sea-craft threshold.

MULTIPLE ORDERS

Barbarian - Without being near large sources of water like rivers or lakes, there wouldn't be a need for a Barbarian to be a Mariner. Yet if such sources were available, there is no doubt that Barbarians would make skilled watermen, creating their craft from animal hides and/or wood. Their affinity for nature would also be quite applicable to skills found in the Mariner Order.

Craftsman - Of many of the other orders, this one goes quite well with Mariner. It covers both the tradesman aspect, for cargo haulers and entrepreneurs, and the builder aspect for shipwrights.

Magician - This order isn't likely to go well with Mariner, but there are some useful benefits from acquiring Lore as an Order skill and spells are always beneficial.

Loremaster - As useful as Magician, but maybe a little more considering Vala Virtue (see the last issue), though fewer picks and harder to get Spellcasting.

Minstrel - This is probably not a good fit with a Mariner unless the character is a ship's record keeper or other such thing.

Noble - This is a good Order to be a part of and helps thematically with obtaining a ship or giving a good reason to have a ship to start with (bought it via Hoard, inherited it from wealthy parents, etc.).

Rogue - If your character is or was a pirate, this is a good Order to have for stealth and survival through cunning.

Warrior - As useful as Rogue, giving a character access to some potent combat abilities.

Archer - With Ranged Combat as an Order Skill, this Order isn't outside the realm of possibility for a Mariner and would be especially useful for a crewman on a warship.
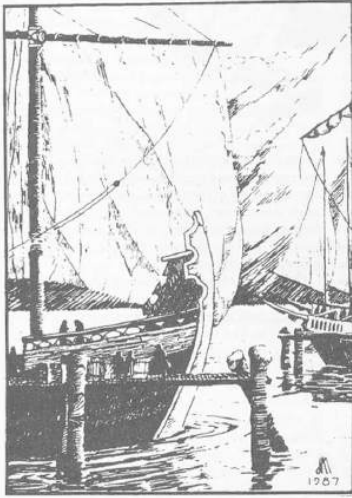
Captain - This Order is the natural progression for a Mariner who wishes to be in the position of command on a ship or to command a ship, either one of war or of trade.

Knight - This Order is somewhat an antithesis of a Mariner, dealing with war on the battlefield and upon horseback.

Ranger - As useful to a Mariner as Knight: not very, if at all. But a Ranger could benefit from some of the abilities for survival on the rivers and lakes of Middle-earth.

Spy - This Order is really only useful if your character is or was a pirate or roguish type.

Wizard - As an extension of the Magician and Loremaster, there are only a few powers that could benefit a Mariner.

SPELLS

If your Mariner does acquire the Spellcasting ability, there are a few spells that would be a boon to a man of the sea: Animal Messenger, Beast Speech, Beast Summoning, Calling, Crafting-spell, Farseeing, Farspeaking, Fog-raising, Fog-weaving, Misdirection, Mist of Speed, Quench Fire, Rain-ward, Sundering, Veil, Watershaping, and Wind-mastery.

PLAYING A MARINER

The greatest value a Mariner hero brings to any game is his prowess on the water, commanding a ship, and other such related skills. He can also be a decently trained fighter even though his training is geared towards being at sea. If ever you should need assistance in finding good examples of Mariners, look to Círdan the Shipwright, probably the greatest of all masters of the seas in Middle-earth, and the ancient Númenoreans who traveled to all ends of the world before the loss of their beloved isle.

NEW WEAPON: BLOW GUN by Mathew Kearns

A common weapon found in use by indigenous tribes of Wild Men such as Drúadan and jungle-orcs. It is a hollow tube of wood or bamboo used for blowing small darts at prey and enemies. Since the darts don't usually deal much damage, their barbs are typically coated with poison. Individuals and/or tribes can be identified by the type and colors of feathers used.

Damage: 1/2d6+Vitality modifier
Range: 0.5/1/2/4/+0.5 - each range increment is the character's Vitality multiplied with the specified value.

NEW POISON: SWAMP ORC POISON by Mathew Kearns

An insidious concoction made from concentrated spotted swamp viper poison brewed slowly with the remains of a bog ghoul. If it enters the blood of a living creature, the victim suffers immediately from an intense fever and delirium as the wound begins to rot away their flesh and bone near the initial wound, eventually consuming its entire body. Due to extreme evil in its creation, both its intent and ingredients, the ground upon which the fully-dissolved body falls becomes tainted with evil and a new swamp begins to form, unless the location has some sort of subtle magic on the side of good to repel it. This new swamp grows at a rate of 5 square feet a month for a length of time equal to the victim's Vitality * 1d6 of an increment as determined by the table below. It should be noted that it is due to this poison's use during the Last Alliance that the Dead Marshes was formed and continues to grow even after 3,000+ years.

Success Level	Increment
Marginal	Months
Complete	Years
Superior	Decades
Extraordinary	Centuries

Type:	Injury
Onset:	Immediate
Potency:	+7 (TN12)
Treatment:	+12 (TN 17)
Effect:	1/2d6 Vitality, Falls unconscious 1 Vitality, Spent
Stages:	Hours

REMNANTS OF LORE

HELM'S DEEP SOURCEBOOK REVIEW by Mathew Kearns

I. Mass Combat System

The Role of War
This section details the three major battles from The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings: The Battle of Five Armies, The Battle of Helm's Deep, and The Battle of the Pelennor Fields. Within each of those subsections are discussions of the events of the battle, how they affected the main characters and the world around them, and how the battle could be used as a template for a battle or battles in your chronicle.

Parameters of Battle
This section addresses the roles of the Narrator and players in epic combat along with discussing pre-battle prep for a Narrator and helpful hints for aiding the roleplaying aspect in combat of this nature.

Unit Creation
This section is about filling out a Battle Sheet detailing one side's army. It defines each of the unit attributes, what the entries are and how to enter a unit on a Battle Sheet, and gives numerous listings of example units from The Two Towers. Unit attributes are defined in abstract, textual descriptions and numerical values that are simply stipulated, while offering no meaningful way to derive them (base values for types of units, modifiers based on type, race, etc.). The explanation given for this is that such a level of detail is too granular and will have no impact on the actual outcome of unit creation. For example, some units can be described as "Heavy", but there are no clear modifiers to a unit's attributes for having a "Heavy" unit as opposed to "Medium" or "Light".

Combat: Abstract & Tactical
This section is the meat and potatoes of the Mass Combat system. It explains the steps to complete for each round of combat, how long a round of combat is per the size of combat, and details a list of Mass Combat maneuvers. The difference between the abstract and tactical systems is minimal, but in practice the tactical system can lead to a time-consuming event if not thought out in advance. The differences are primarily in how the battle is described -- descriptively (abstract) or through a Battle Web (tactical) -- and minor differences in the effects of the Mass Combat maneuvers. A Battle Web is a graphic overlaid upon a map of the site of battle distinguishing arenas (locations for unit conflict with attributes of the total number of units allowed and type of terrain of the arena) and the difficulty of the path between different arenas. All in all, the difference between the two is fairly small but the choices are fairly adaptable to accommodate a Narrator's preference for how to run mass combat.

II. Character Attributes

Orders and Packages
Helm's Deep doesn't offer any new Basic or Elite Orders, yet makes two new Order packages for Warrior: Derndeeper and Fastweard. The Derndeeper is a specialist in stealth, speed, and underground combat. The Fastweard serve Rohan with their love of extreme heights, climbing mountains, and combat effectiveness in these environs. Though not explicitly canon, they are reasonable extrapolations for types of warriors who defend the fortress and other outposts in the White Mountains like Dunharrow, and there are a couple of examples of high-ranking NPC's of these packages.

Abilities
There aren't any new Racial or Order abilities in Helm's Deep, but it does offer optional modifications to two of the Captain Elite Order abilities: Fires of Devotion and Hero's Strength. Their changes are made to correlate their effects with the use of the new mass combat rules, nothing more, so if you decide not to use the new rules, these changes mean little to you.

Traits
There are five new traits offered, corresponding to the new Order package choices in the Helm's Deep Sourcebook: (Edges) Fleetness, Master of Heights, Mobile Archer, (Flaws) Constrained, and Light-blind. Fleetness and Mobile Archer are good edges, applicable to many different Orders and character concepts, while Master of Heights will probably see limited use. Constrained would be another trait that could get some decent use, but Light-blind is not likely to get used all that often considering its limited thematic aspect.

III. Equipment

Orodrist, Axe of Endorion
This battle-axe is a famed weapon that helped define and found Helm's Deep long before the Eorlingas came to the plains of Calenardhon. It helped defend a contingent of Dúnedain against a barbarian horde by cleaving a hole into the mountainside, creating the entrance to Aglarond. Its wielder, Endorion, bore it with poise and ferocity, protecting his brother and the few remaining men who managed to escape into the caves. He gave his life in their defence, but managed to single-handedly fend off the invaders and they fled. Though a unique artifact, its concept is interesting and could easily be imported into Dwarf-centric campaigns or as part of a Dwarf-hoard.

IV. Maps & Art

The rumors are true: the art and pictures are color for up to about the first 30 pages and then the rest are in black and white. Personally, I could care less about that, but I would have made different choices for those on page 9 (an enlarged picture of a Nazgul not making much sense in this publication, or any other for that matter) and 82 (a picture of Elrond during the Last Alliance from The Fellowship of the Ring; though a picture of mass combat, it didn't really fit with the publication). All the original art was great, but there was one in particular that caught my eye: a painting of the Glittering Caves on page 14 -- its detailed features and simple grace that can catch your eye at the last moment causing you to double-take on it as you flip through the pages.

V. NPC's

Of the NPC's detailed in Helm's Deep, two are from canon: Erkenbrand and Gamling. The others are subordinates serving as captains of the different divisions in the fortress. The details given about the characters are limited, but leave much room for imagination. Aside from fully-statted individual characters, there are also templates for many types of the soldiers in Helm's Deep. I didn't try to break down the characters to see if they adhered to standard chargen for the Advancements allotted them, but they seem fine to me. The one thing I would alter in many of the canon characters in the publications is that their Renown should be much higher. Take Erkenbrand for instance... he has Renown 6 and he is the Lord of the Westfold, commander of one of the most well-known fortresses in the region, and one of the most respected men in all of Rohan. This to me is unacceptable.

VI. Adventure Hooks

There are both adventure hooks and some rough outlines for chronicle ideas as well. In my opinion, they come across as run of the mill fare, but there is a couple that did pique my interest. First is the hook called Flotsam, about the discovery of a small man-sized craft that came floating down the Deeping Stream from inside the mountain. The other hook is called Cave-dwellers, about rumors and phantasmal sightings of pale-skinned man-like creatures deep within the caves of Aglarond. Though the others didn't catch my eye, I'm sure they could be easily tweaked to fit into many different games as well.

In Conclusion...

Narrators
I would recommend it for Narrators for its wonderful treatment of this part of Rohan in its flavor text, but the crunch is quite light, which is a good or bad thing depending on the type of info you are looking for. When it comes to the Mass Combat system, it may seem like a lot on first impression and possibly a little overcomplicated, but if you take your time with it, it is a worthy revision for the system. As a Narrator, if you don't plan to play a game in Rohan, especially near Helm's Deep, aren't looking use Mass Combat in your game, are satisfied with the CRB rules, or would rather use house rules for it, then don't waste your money.

Players

I wouldn't really recommend this book to players unless 1) they are die-hard players of characters from Rohan, or 2) they want to get a leg up on the new Mass Combat system. There is a lot of good background on this region of Rohan and some of Rohan's history in general, which is ripe for a character's history and motivation. The few character stat options (Order Packages and handful of traits) won't help the majority of PC's, so don't look at this book for those sorts of things.

Collectors

Pros: The book is about a great part of Middle-earth and one of the most pivotal points in The Lord of the Rings. Even though much of the art and movie stills are in B&W, to me, it still is a great book to look at. The cover is softback, the pages are made of a heavy paper stock, and the binding doesn't appear to be all that flexible -- these attributes don't make it a bad book, but it's not up to par with previous publications nor even as good as the Moria books for print quality, but it still looks good on the shelf, it's great reading, and it's one more book to acquire in the set.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME PLAY-BY-EMAIL/POST By Scottomir

Face-to-face over a tabletop is not the only way to play a role-playing game. The advent of internet communication has made it possible to run a game "play-by-bulletin-board-post" (PBP) or "play-by-email" (PBEM). Over the past two years it has been my privilege to run a series of exclusively online "play by email" games for a group of talented, dedicated players. In this article I would like to share with readers the fruits of our labors and to offer thoughts about the benefits and difficulties of running a LOTR RPG chronicle online. First, let me begin by giving each chronicle a short overview and pointing out where the materials can be accessed for further reading. Then, I would like to reflect on the experience of organizing and writing a long-running set of chronicles online in hopes of inspiring more people to give it a try.

The Lord of Darkness: The First Chronicle
http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/lotrgame1.html

This chronicle was the initial experiment in playing the LOTR RPG by e-mail, run from May until September, 2003. It tells the story of a new fellowship tasked by Aragorn, now King Elessar of the Reunited Kingdom, to find his missing friend, a Dúnadan loremaster named Belemir. The King has called a Council of the North at Rivendell to plan war against the Orcs of the North, but Belemir has vanished. The new fellowship of heroes tracks the missing sage all the way to Rhûn, where they discover a grave new threat to Middle-earth from a very old power. The *Angril* ("Iron Jewel"), forged by Morgoth in the Elder Days in imitation of the *Silmaril* taken from his Iron Crown by Beren and Lúthien, had been long sundered and scattered across Rhûn, but now someone is putting the pieces back together. A shard remains at a villa in the Dorwinion countryside, but a horde of eastern goblins is marching to claim it. This first chronicle starts out in a writing style that definitely feels like a game but evolved toward the end into a more story-like feel. It is a good example of how online play is always evolving.

The Lord of Darkness: The Second Chronicle
http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/lotrgame5.html

This chronicle was a direct continuation of the storyline, run from January until July, 2004. It picks up where the first chronicle left off, in Dorwinion after the battle against the goblin army. The surviving heroes trek across Rhûn trying to prevent the *Angril* from being reassembled. If this ancient artifact of evil is restored, the Lord of Darkness will once again have a physical vessel in the world and the Shadow, formless since the destruction of the One Ring, will regain its strength. The heroes must track down the cursed jewel, withstand its temptations, and dispose of it once and for all—whatever the peril or personal cost. Building on the writing format worked out by the end of the first chronicle; the second chronicle is a cleaner, more story-like read. It demonstrates the increasing seriousness of the game and the greater quality of writing supplied by the players in response.

The War for Mount Gundabad
http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/lotrgame_gundabad1.html

This chronicle was a new story set in the aftermath of the events of The Lord of Darkness, run from February until August, 2005. It was both a sequel to the previous chronicles as well as a culmination of the greater story for the early Fourth Age of Middle-earth. This chronicle puts the heroes in the center of the fight to drive out the Orcs of the North from Mount Gundabad. It opens with a disastrous first battle of the slopes of Gundabad. Unable to storm the mountain or reduce it by siege, King Elessar dispatches a "Fellowship of Forlorn Hope" to find a secret way around the mountain and coordinate a supporting attack from the other side of the mountain. On the way the heroes (who include two veterans of the Quest for the *Angril*) must deal with dwarves from the distant East, lost mansions in the mountain, mysterious peoples of northern Middle-earth, and a sinister beast that holds Gundabad in its grasp. This writing style of this third chronicle benefited from the prior efforts and came closest to a novel-like structure.

The process of playing and writing up these online games was always changing. This is readily visible when a reader compares the composition style of the early parts of the first chronicle (second person, lots of in-line quotes and responses) to the third chronicle (third person, everything integrated into the narrative). I hope that the thoughts below about the benefits and challenges of running this kind of game will inspire and help others to run "play by e-mail" LOTR games for themselves.

Pacing

When running a game PBP/PBEM, nothing is more important than pacing—how often you expect the players to write messages for their characters and how often you, the Narrator, will write the next story narrative in response. In general, you want to provide enough days in between Narrator-issued game narratives to allow your players to write a couple back-and-forth role-playing messages. This means you need to know your players and be sensitive to their schedules. If your players are online a lot and send out e-mails daily, you might be able to do a game turn every other day. On the other hand, if your players have busy work schedules and are only able to check e-mail every few days then you might be able to do a turn only once or twice a week. If you as Narrator lag too far behind your players' pacing, you risk making them bored or having the game drift into idleness. If you push too quickly, you risk burning out your players and having the game collapse as people drop out. Finding the right balance is essential. Here's a good rule of thumb: three "game turns" per week is a fast, demanding pace; two "game turns" per week is a brisk, active pace; one "game turn" per week is a slow, easily manageable pace. I've heard of games doing more than three turns per week or less frequent than one a week, but it has been my experience that they very rarely last to their conclusion.

Just as important as short-term pacing is the long-term schedule. How many months do you want your game to last? A great many PBP/PBEM games collapse early, after only a month or two, because the Narrator doesn't maintain a pace that works for his players. Successful games, however, can last many months—and some last years. However, dragging out a game longer than your players are interested can really ruin it—you may find yourself having to wrap things up unceremoniously quickly when players suddenly decide they want or need to quit. It helps to plan out in advance roughly how many months you and your players want the game to last. Pick a duration to which your players will be able to commit. Multiplying the duration by the pacing will help you structure your story—for example, if you are doing two "game turns" per week and playing for 4 months then you have around 32 "game turns" to play out the story. Here's a good rule of thumb: three months is a quick, easy to handle game; six months is a long, demanding game; twelve months is a protracted, exhaustive game.

If your story is too long to fit in the number of months your players are willing to play, a useful trick is to take a "break" at an intriguing point in the story. Give the players a few weeks or a few months off, and they'll probably be re-energized and eager to start up the game again. If you look at *The Lord of Darkness*, you'll see that the two chronicles are really one long story with a sizable break between. Also, it is important to recognize when it is necessary to pause the game for a short break. If one of your most active, leading players is going out of town for a week then it might be wise to halt the game until he returns. Likewise, you'd do well to pause the game over major holidays—I always put my PBEM games on hold from mid-December through the first week of January. Chances are most of your players are gone anyway.

Role-playing Online

Role-playing PBP/PBEM requires a different mindset than role-playing tabletop. Players are gaming in an entirely textual environment, so the ability to write comprehensible sentences is essential. A player might be creative as all heck, but if he can't write well or spell then it will be lost in this gaming format. Furthermore, there is rarely rapid back-and-forth communication in PBP/PBEM. Perhaps two players are checking e-mail at the same time and might be able to bounce back a few short messages, but this is uncommon. Most of the game, players find a batch of e-mails waiting for them and must reply to them hours or days after they are sent. A Narrator must encourage players to role-play actively but also must cut off the role-playing at a certain point and shift the narrative to the next scene. It is essential that the Narrator let the players know

when things are occurring. Just because players respond to e-mails in the order they arrive in their inbox doesn't mean that's necessarily the order events occur in the game.

Equally important for role-playing online is the writing style. Basically, the choices fall along a spectrum. The most *game-like* games are in second-person/first-person and present/future tense. This style mimics what you see at the typically tabletop session: "I will put my sword down, raise my hand in a gesture of peace, and make a Persuade test to put the guards at ease." "Okay, you lower your blade and make a persuasive speech. The guards don't attack and are willing to parley with you." The most *novel-like* games are in third-person/past tense. This mimics the feel of a fantasy novel. "Finbor laid his sword upon the ground. He held out his palm to the guards, and they slowed their advance to listen to his persuasive words." In between are *movie-style* games that are usually third-person/present tense. This hybrid style mimics the feel of a film screenplay. "Finbor lowers his sword and holds out his hand. The guards comes to a halt just a few feet away and listen to his persuasive speech." The Narrator and players should choose the official writing style for the game together in advance. It should be a format that everyone enjoys and agrees on. There is nothing more jarring than for some people to write in one style, others in another, and then for the Narrator to issue the game narratives in a different style still. If you look at my three chronicles, you'll notice the game started out in a game-like style (second person) but shifted to a novel-like style (third person), yet it always remained in the active present tense.

Cast of Characters and Character Development

Nothing is more crucial to the long-term success of your game than having a core group of active, committed players. These are the people you want playing the most important characters in your game. It is just the nature of the beast that virtually every game, no matter how good, will lose some of its players. People get sick, lose jobs, fall in love, make a big move, and all these things interfere with being able to commit to a long-term online game. If you look at my three chronicles, you'll notice that only two characters make it all the way through. In the first *Lord of Darkness* chronicle, Barion's player had to drop out for personal reasons; Belegil's player did too—although he came back in the third chronicle as Biárki, who also went inactive by the end of that game. The lost characters were replaced by Herubrand, who was played by the cousin of Finbor's player. But Herubrand's player was new to PBEM and decided he couldn't commit to the schedule, so Herubrand was written out at the start of the second game and replaced by Bergalad, played by one of my own best friends. Unfortunately, Bergalad's player started a new professorial job and needed to be written out of the game before the end. Finbor and Frolin did not make it into the third chronicle, but their players did—as Gilavas Parmandil and Elboron, respectively. However, about half-way through the game Gilavas's player, who was incredibly active as Finbor in the previous games, dropped out of contact and had to be written out of the game. He was replaced by Luládi, played by my girlfriend. She had experience as a tabletop gamer but no PBP/PBEM experience—and she quickly learned that PBEM was not to her taste. Hence, Luládi's abrupt arrival and departure in the story. The gist of this account is that a Narrator always must be prepared to write out characters and replace departing people with new players and characters. Don't take it personally, and don't let it ruin your game. It is just a fact of life in PBP/PBEM, so be ready when it happens.

Perhaps the single biggest difference between tabletop gaming and PBP/PBEM gaming is character development. Tabletop gaming comes in big periodic dollops with naturally obvious time divisions (a game session). At the end of each session, the Narrator doles out experience points, restores Courage, and resets player abilities. Every session or few sessions, the characters gain an advancement. This regular standard doesn't hold in PBP/PBEM. There is no natural "session" to use as a time division. Instead, the Narrator must decide after a certain number of "game turns" that it is a new session or chapter. This requirements the Narrator to consider in advance how many experience advancements he wants the characters in his story to receive. This will usually be much less than in tabletop gaming. If you get together with friends a couple times a month for a year, the characters very likely are going to have at least 10 advancements. In my three chronicles Éogar and Rard were active for about 15 months of gaming total and achieved 8 advancements.

However, there is a silver lining to the slowness of experience advancement compared to tabletop. Character development online is also more gradual, more methodical, and more rewarding. Because a player writes for a character over so many months, he really comes to know that character well. The result is a great deal of emotional investment in a character that is very satisfying. Character death isn't just a ho-hum, roll up some more stats affair—it is a moving, heart-wrenching part of the story. Finbor and Frolin's players told me as much at the conclusion of the second chronicle. Éogar and Rard's players, whose characters made it all the way through the three chronicles, had the same reaction—the final life-resolution post of the last chronicle was a moving experience for both of them. This attention to character is, I've found, the most rewarding aspect of PBP/PBEM gaming.

Plots and Action

Just like the Narrator has to structure character development carefully, the Narrator also has to structure story development carefully. How much time will pass in Middle-earth during the length of the chronicle? How much story-time will be spent each game turn? Will the chronicle be one constant narrative or will the story "jump ahead" in time at certain plot points

(for example, in my third chronicle the narrative jumped ahead from FA 16 to FA 17 after the first battle for Mount Gundabad)? The Narrator should think over these questions before starting the game. Not every little detail needs to be written in advance—in fact, one of the great charms of PBP/PBEM gaming is that the Narrator has the time to make up a scene as the players come to it. Nonetheless, the game will drift and seem aimless if the Narrator hasn't decided the major plot points and the overall story in advance.

Combat scenes are often the most exciting moments in a chronicle. A combat scene in a PBP/PBEM game takes up more time, just like in tabletop—but whereas a fight in a tabletop game might take half an hour to resolve, a fight scene PBP/PBEM might take a week (usually two or three game turns). This can be a major portion of your available time. Think to the earlier example of a four-month chronicle with around 32 game turns total. A single fight scene might use up 10% of the time for the entire chronicle! This is why it is essential to keep a fight scene moving in your online game. Keep a fast pace—players need less time to write an instruction post for a combat scene than to write-up role-playing messages for other scenes. Consider squeezing in an extreme game turn in a week when there is a combat scene. For example, I usually ran three turns in a week with a combat scene compared to two normally. Furthermore, try to get multiple combat rounds done in each game turn. If you do one round per turn, you'll find that a challenging fight can drag out for five or six turns—that might be up to three weeks in real-life time! I've found that it is almost always possible to ask players to provide instructions for 2 rounds of battle in each game turn, and once the tide of battle has turned you can wrap up even 3 or 4 rounds in one concluding game turn.

There's an essential trick to making this work: *contingent thinking*. Explain to your players that they have to provide contingencies in their combat instructions. "Finbor attacks the orc with the axe" is not good enough. What if that orc is killed first by somebody else? What if that orcs runs away first? What if the orc gets the drop on Finbor and swings twice at him first? Players must provide contingencies that let the Narrator run the combat scene in a variety of situations without stopping to go back to the players and asking, "Okay, what do you do now?" A good example of contingent thinking is defensive actions. When would the character want to parry or dodge? How many actions would they set aside to defend or how many would they reserve to attack? What is the desired order of target priority (so if that axe-wielding orc is out of the picture, the Narrator knows who to turn the attack against instead)? Spending Courage is another contingency. Narrators should ask their players to state upfront on what kinds of actions in what kinds of situations they will spend Courage points. If Narrators get their players to take contingent thinking seriously, action scenes will go more smoothly and a lot faster.

Connections to the Professor

In closing, I'll suggest one final feature for playing *The Lord of the Rings* RPG online: connecting your story to details from Professor Tolkien's books. It's also important tabletop, of course, but in PBP/PBEM it needs to be stressed. Because a PBP/PBEM game plays out over many months real-life time, it is easy for players to forget details. Little clues encountered in February may be dim memories by May. As a consequence, a Narrator needs to make his plot details stand out. Make them big and important so the players will remember them. Coming up with big, memorable scenes that connected my stories and my players' characters to Tolkien's vibrant Middle-earth was one of the greatest joys I had running my games. It was fun role-playing King Elessar and Thranduil as NPCs. It was neat to let my players role-playing in the Last Homely House of Elrond's sons. It was cool to have the characters encounter Lossoth descended from the folk who guarded the Ring of Barahir until it was ransomed by the Rangers. Look for ways to fit your own unique stories into Tolkien's world, building on details that he suggested but never fleshed out (like the war to purge the orcs from Mount Gundabad). These authentic connections will make your online game exciting, plausible, and memorable.
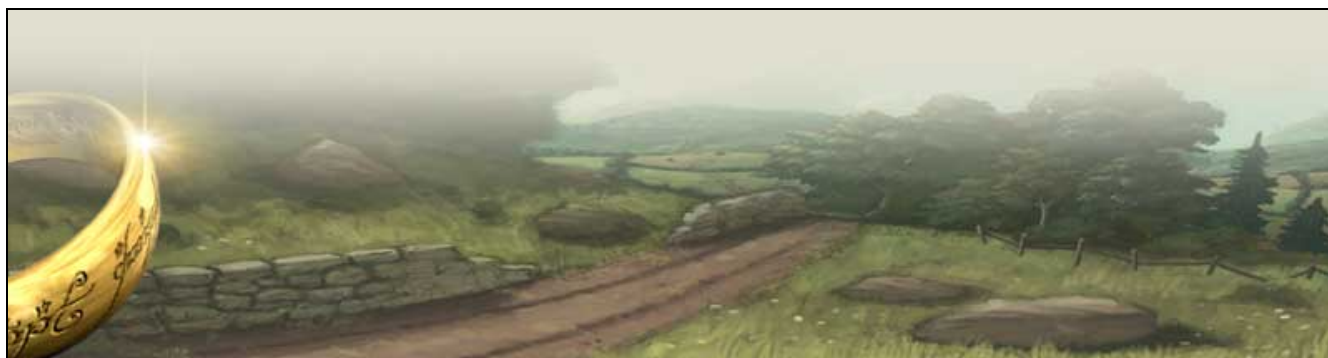
FEATURED CREATURES

ORCS by Mathew Kearns

This article is a continuation of the Orc entry in the Fell Beasts & Wondrous Magic, filling in some of the unlisted breeds of orcs found in Middle-earth.

HOBGOBLINS

'... the Grey Mountains... are simply stiff with goblins, hobgoblins, and orcs of the worst description.'
- Gandalf the Grey, The Hobbit

In the far north of the world where two of the great mountain chains lie, the Misty and the Grey, dwell the breed of orc called Hobgoblins. Greater orcs in stature, only the Uruk-hai are more powerful, but none are so terrible in their savagery. These foul beasts were the pinnacle of brute force and bloody terror, comprising most of Morgoth's vanguard in the final battle of the First Age. They are skilled bladesmen, both with sword and dagger, but are widely regarded as the most effective torturers.

When the world was broken, few of their ilk remained, escaping to the northern regions where they now reside. Though holding places of power in many orc tribes, their breed were never replenished and are dying out. There are hushed whisperings among orc-kind that the hobgoblin breed is tied to the power of Morgoth and that without his presence in the world they will never be great again. This is somewhat true as most of their kind did not heed the call from Sauron when he came to power, remaining in the North to their own devices: ruling over small tribes, running in war-bands that harry the Men of the North, or even the odd one in the service of the dragons.

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +3*, Swiftness +2, Willpower +2, Wisdom +1

DEFENCE: 11

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDER: Warrior

ORDER ABILITIES: Swift Strike, Warrior-born

ADVANCEMENTS: 5

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Orc-longsword) +8, Intimidate (Fear, Torture) +6, Language: Black Speech +3,

LANGUAGE: Orkish (dialect) +6, Lore: Race (Orcs) +5, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +5, Run +5, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +5, Stealth (Sneak) +3, Track (Scent) +1

EDGES: Fell-handed (Elves, Men), Night-eyed, Tireless

FLAWS: Hatred (Dwarves, Elves, Men)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour (tough skin, 1), Curse of Daylight, Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 12

GEAR: Orc-longsword, Orc-chainmail (hauberk), shortbow, quiver with 20 arrows

TN EQUIVALENT: 10 (band of four)

Ice-orcs

Like the cold-drakes, Ice-orcs are the eldest breed of orcs, as Morgoth's great fortress of Utumno once lay in the farthest north of the old world in the deepest cold and ice. The harsh environment demanded great fortitude and cunning intelligence to travel and survive. These orcs are tall, lanky, and are a pallid grey or white in color and due to their natural adaptations; their skin is tougher than other orc breeds, so they don't normally wear armour.

Like all other breeds, they were vastly diminished in the Final Battle, but managed to evade most of their enemies traveling the hard road by the high-elevation mountains. In the ensuing years, many found service to snow-trolls or as loosely organized bands raiding the Lossoth and Dwarf-colonies.

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 6 (+0), Nimbleness 7 (+0), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits 5 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 10

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDERS: Barbarian

ORDER ABILITIES: Hard March (Tundra/snow)

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Short sword) +4, Intimidate (Fear) +2, Language: Westron +2, Language: Orkish (dialect) +4, Lore: Race (Orcs) +4, Observe (Smell) +4, Ride (Wolf) +3, Run +3, Siegecraft (Scale Wall) +2, Stealth (Hide) +4, Survival (Northern Wastes) +2, Track (Scent) +1

EDGES: Keen-nosed, Night-eyed, Travel-sense

FLAWS: Craven, Hatred (Dwarves, Elves)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour (thick skin, 2), Curse of Daylight, Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 9

GEAR: Short sword, dagger, small shield

TN EQUIVALENT: 5 (band of three)

Desert-orcs

Out in the desolate plains, arid grasslands, and dust-choked deserts of Middle-earth, you will find a breed of orc that has adapted to this fell environment. Like the Wild Men that live in these unforgiving lands, desert-orcs roam in large bands of 30-50 hunting down anything that moves; some of the more powerful leaders even ride upon great wargs. The elements concern them little, so they construct shelters of any type and leave little more than piles of bones and ashes of campfires in their wake.

These orcs are short yet gaunt, with skin a mottled light brown and gray. Unlike any other type of orc before the emergence of the Uruk-hai, they were the only breed to be able to withstand the sunlight without penalty. Fewer in numbers as time went on; Sauron tried to cross-breed them with others so he could rid his armies of their sensitivity to sunlight, but all his attempts failed. This breed is mostly found in Rhûn, Nurn, and further east.

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 6 (+0), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 7 (+0), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits 5 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 10

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDERS: Warrior

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Orc-scimitar) +2, Intimidate (Fear) +2, Language: Westron +2, Language: Orkish (dialect) +4, Lore: Race (Orcs) +4, Observe (Smell) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Short bow) +4, Run +4, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +2, Stealth (Hide) +4, Survival (Desert or Plains) +2, Track (Scent) +2

EDGES: Keen-nosed, Mobile Archer, Travel-sense

FLAWS: Craven, Hatred (Dwarves, Elves)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour (thick skin, 1), Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 9

GEAR: Orc-scimitar, leather armour (hauberk), short bow, quiver with 20 arrows

TN EQUIVALENT: 5 (band of three)

SWAMP-ORCS

Probably the most ghastly orcish breed, swamp-orcs are the denizens of the grimmest and foulest environs of Middle-earth. Hardly distinguishable from their surroundings, swamp-orcs look as though they were deteriorating before your eyes, but when they become battle-crazed in combat, there is no question that these creatures are quite full of life. Never quite a populous breed, they have been around since the early days of the First Age and survived through the subsequent ages and even into the Fourth.

Swamp-orcs are smaller than most orc breeds, with green, brown, and black skin covered in moss, lichen, and bog slime. They are proficient poison-craftsmen, supplying the forces of Mordor with many of the poisons they use on their blades and darts; their most potent is derived from the remains of a marsh ghoul and the spotted swamp viper (see Fan Flavour for Swamp-orc Poison).

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 4 (+0), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 9 (+1)*, Wits 5 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 11

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDERS: Barbarian

ORDER ABILITIES: Brew Poison

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Orc-scimitar) +4, Craft: Brew Poison +3, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Language: Westron +2, Language: Orkish (dialect) +4, Lore: Race (Orcs) +4, Observe (Smell) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Short bow) +3, Run +4, Stealth (Sneak, Hide) +4, Survival (Swamp) +2, Track (Scent) +2

EDGES: Keen-nosed, Night-eyed 2

FLAWS: Battle-fury, Craven, Hatred (Elves)
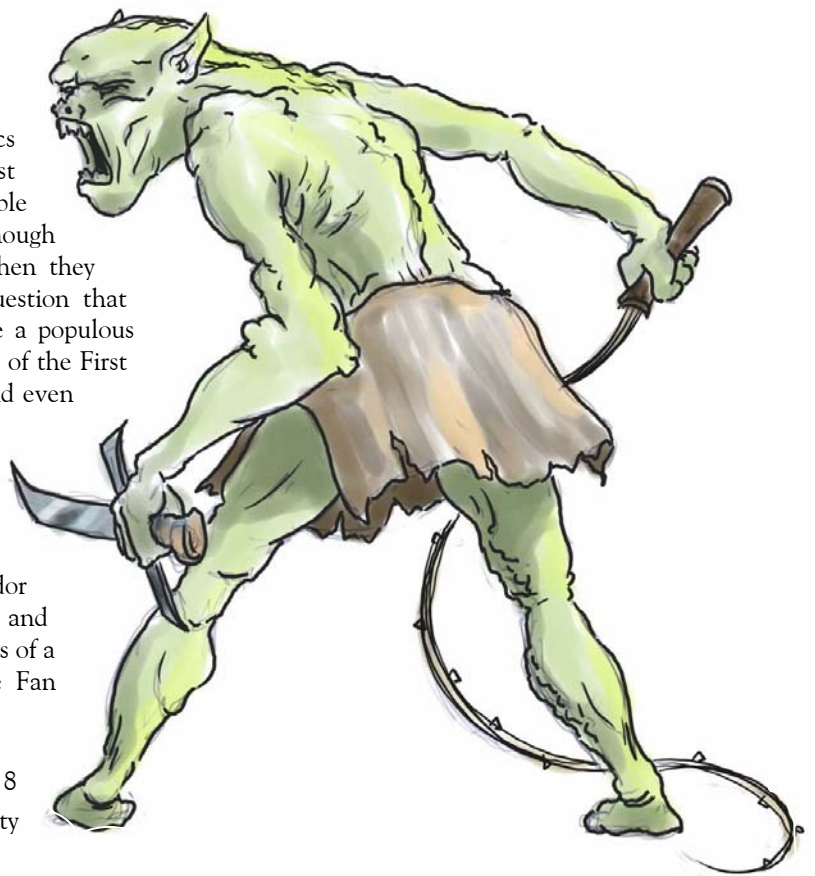
SPECIAL ABILITIES: Curse of Daylight, Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 10

GEAR: Orc-scimitar, leather armour

TN EQUIVALENT: 5 (band of three)

JUNGLE-ORCS
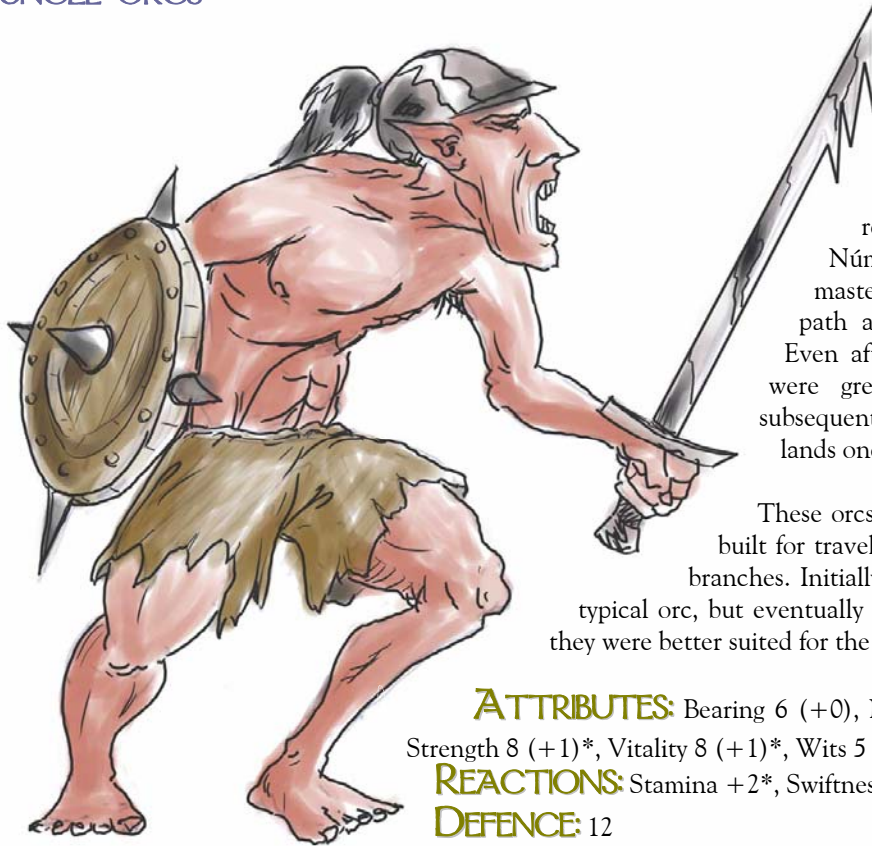
In the elder days when Sauron first took up in Mordor and began make his war upon the Free Peoples, he sent this evil spawn into the jungle-lands of the South to subjugate all those realms of Wild Men and outposts of Númenor. While many achieved their master's goals, there were those who lost their path and ended up starting their own tribes. Even after the War of the Ring, their numbers were great and they presented Aragorn and subsequent kings a major obstacle in freeing the lands once controlled by The Shadow.

These orcs are green and black skinned, lanky, and built for travel both on the ground and among the tree branches. Initially, they used swords and whips as per the typical orc, but eventually took up the weapons of their enemies as they were better suited for the environment.

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 6 (+0), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits 5 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 12

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDERS: Barbarian

ORDER ABILITIES: Brew Poison

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Clubs (Club) +2, Craft: Brew Poison +4, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Language: Westron +2, Language: Orkish (dialect) +4, Lore: Race (Orcs) +4, Observe (Smell) +4, Ranged Combat: Blow gun** +3, Run +4, Stealth (Sneak, Hide) +4, Survival (Jungle) +2, Track (Scent) +2

EDGES: Keen-nosed, Night-eyed, Woodcrafty

FLAWS: Battle-fury, Craven, Hatred (Elves)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour (tough skin, 1 pt), Curse of Daylight, Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 9

GEAR: Blow gun, dagger, leather armour, 10 darts (poisoned)

TN EQUIVALENT: 5 (band of three)

** - See Fan Flavour for description

Sea-orcs

Rarest of the orc-breeds in the Third Age and beyond, these foul creatures were mainly used by Morgoth in the First Age to attack the ports of Elves and Men. Unfortunately for them, their prowess in water in no way matched that of the Elves at the time, and the sea-orcs were routed on several occasions. Due to this and the breaking of the world, the sea-orcs have twice declined under their service to Sauron to the brink of extinction, but over the years their skill has improved as has their value when they work in concert with the famous pirates of Harondor -- The Corsairs of Umbar.

This breed has deep blue and aquamarine skin that has been softened over the ages from continuous exposure to water. Their additional protection no longer comes from their skin, but from the ever-present coating of barnacles all over their bodies.

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 6 (+0), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 9 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 7 (+0)*, Wits 5 (+0)

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

DEFENCE: 12

MOVEMENT: 6

ORDERS: Warrior

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Dagger) +2, Armed Combat: Polearms (Trident) +4, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Language: Westron +2, Language: Orkish (dialect) +4, Lore: Race (Orcs) +4, Observe (Smell) +4, Run +4, Stealth (Sneak) +4, Survival (Coasts) +2, Track (Scent) +2

EDGES: Night-eyed 2, Watercrafty**

FLAWS: Battle-fury, Craven, Hatred (Elves)

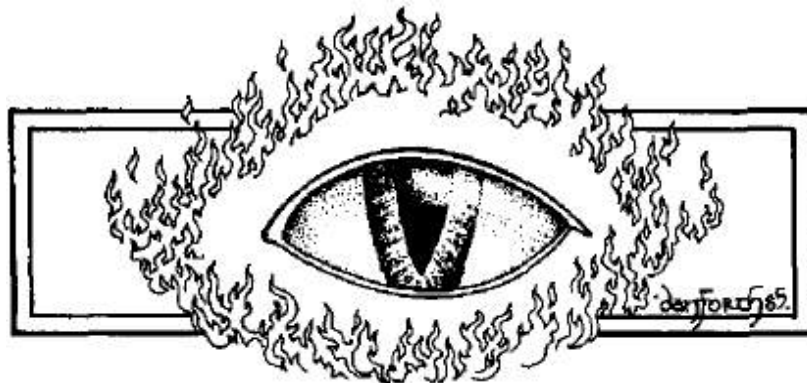**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Armour (barnacles, 1 pt), Curse of Daylight, Natural Weapon (claws, 1 pt)

SIZE: Medium (5 Wound Levels)

HEALTH: 9

GEAR: Dagger, trident, leather armour

TN EQUIVALENT: 5 (band of three)

** - See Fan Flavour for description

THE ROAD GOES EVER ON...

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPEAR by Ken Walton

This campaign is intended to be set sometime after 2989 TA, when Balin first enters Moria, but before 2994 TA, when Balin is killed and the colony in Moria destroyed. It can be set at other times, but then the heroes will get no help at all from Balin, and the grand finale will have to be altered accordingly.

The idea is to give Narrators a shape for their campaign, while leaving the details of what happens along the way to their own imagination. There's plenty of scope for side-adventures to be fitted in, and using the tools in the *Moria* box can keep the characters busy for some time. I originally wrote this with the intention of getting the heroes into Moria, but soon realized that it would make a great campaign.

Narrators should have the *Fellowship of the Ring Sourcebook*, and the *Moria* boxed set to run the campaign smoothly. *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic* would be useful too.

Of Aiglos and The Beginning

Gil-galad was the last High-King of the Noldor when he fell at Mount Doom along side his friend, Elendil, at the hand of Sauron in hand-to-hand combat. His favoured weapon was a long spear: a long shaft of sturdy wood with an intricate blade of elf-crafted steel. The blade shown with such a brilliant white light while in battle that it was named Aiglos. This renowned weapon unfortunately was never recovered from the field of battle that day, being lost among the carnage – many feared forever, but it was not so.

During the Third Age, Dwarves of Moria discovered it as a part of a great troll hoard in the Anduin Vales north of Lothlórien. Recognizing the weapon immediately and knowing of its great significance to the Elves, they took it into Khazad-dûm. There, they intended to return it to its former glory and present it to their allies as a token of goodwill between their peoples. But with the downfall of Númenor, a rift formed between the two peoples and the doors of Moria were closed. The spear disappeared into the treasuries of Durin's Folk and was utterly forgotten when the great realm fell to the shadow and flame.

The reclamation of the Lonely Mountain led to the discovery of Dwarven records pertaining to the spear's finding, and a messenger was sent to Elrond in Rivendell with the scrolls. The documents are incomplete, yet Elrond deems that Balin, the leader of the new Moria colony, may be able to lend some aid if shown to him. Worried by the unmasking and re-emergence of Sauron and the increasing orc activity in the Misty Mountains, Elrond gave the document to Aragorn, tasking him with assembling a suitable party to travel to Moria, meet with Balin, and request his aid in recovery of the spear.

On his way back to Erebor, fate wasn't kind to the Dwarven messenger and he was waylaid by Orcs, tortured and killed, but not before giving up the information about the spear; soon enough it found its way to the ears of Sauron. The news is garbled and incomplete (the Dwarf did not give up his secrets easily), but the Dark Lord knows there is a document telling of the resting place of Aiglos and that it is being carried from Rivendell by a Ranger. He sends out his spies and one of the Nazgûl from Dol Guldur to claim the document and acquire the spear before it falls into the hands of his enemies.

The Gathering

The heroes are met by Aragorn (*FOTRSB*, p.22-24) at the Prancing Pony (*FOTRSB* p.116-120) in Bree. It's possible one of them is a Ranger and already knows Aragorn; if not, you and/or the players will need to come up with some other connection so that Aragorn has reason to trust the heroes. He tells them of the Spear of Gil-galad and where it is now to be found. He gives them the document, and the task of going to Moria to get the spear, and finally returning it to the elves in Lórien. When asked for council, he suggests that they travel down the Greenway to the ruins of Tharbad and take the old road through Eregion to Moria. Once they have the spear, they must leave Moria by the East Gate to get to Lórien.

Aragorn does not know of the situation in Moria: how little of the ancient settlement has been retaken, how dangerous a journey under the mountains will be, and the form of the great evil within its depths. None know of the Nazgûl in pursuit of the spear as well.

What Happens Next?

That's up to you. It's your campaign. It depends on the capabilities of the heroes and the style of the Narrator. Below are a few suggested arcs that you can seed with your own ideas in between; use as few or as many as you wish:

· The heroes' rooms are broken into in the night by a thief looking for the document (perhaps it's a young Bill Ferny!).

· The heroes are ambushed by spies of Saruman's (at the behest of Sauron), half-orc thugs, in the wilds outside Bree.

· The heroes feel they are being watched as they travel down the Greenway, and realize that crebain are following them. They may be attacked by Orcs or wargs and wolves in the wild. The crebain may be spies for Saruman or sent as scouts by orkish raiding parties from the Misty Mountains.

· While camping in the ruins of Tharbad, they are first stalked by a Nazgûls. If they confront it openly, they may be in serious trouble. To save them if they can't escape, send in a party of wandering Noldor or possibly Gandalf.

· At Ost-in-Edhil, they encounter spectres of the deceased, who entice them to their destruction but in turn show them to heroic weapons hidden in the ruins. Giant spiders, wargs, and/or wolves, or possibly other fey creatures inhabit the area and in underground passages beneath the city, the descendants of those Sauron used to attack Ost-in-Edhil.

· Once the heroes get to Moria, they will have to get from the Western Deep to Balin's settlement in the Twenty-First Hall of the Seventh Deep. They will no doubt meet many Orcs and/or other dark creatures in the dark holes along the way, though they may be helped out by wandering groups of Dwarves. If/when they find Balin, he is friendly enough, but unwilling to spend much time looking for Aiglos – the Dwarves are too busy with their own concerns, and with keeping down the growing Orc menace. He may be able to lend the group a warrior or two (maybe replacement characters, if any characters have been killed), but the heroes are more or less on their own.

· The spear resides in the Twentieth Hall of the Dwarrowdelf, in the Seventh Deep (see *Moria*, p.33). This area is infested with Orcs, so should give the heroes a challenge, both obtaining the spear and getting out again. They should have plenty of chances to actually try the spear out once they've got it.

· Once they've got the spear, they'll need to get down to The First Deep and into the Dimrill Dale. On getting to the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, they find their way blocked by Orcs and a Cave Troll or more.

· Once outside, they find a host of Orcs, led by a Nazgûl (same as earlier if the previous encounter occurred), waiting for them. The Dwarves (and their allies, the woodmen from near the Anduin and Misty Mountains) rally to their aid and a big battle takes place (using the mass combat rules). The heroes escape but many of the Dwarves are killed. With their numbers depleted, Balin's party have no chance of staving off the Orc attacks later, so the players can feel they've played some part (if not a positive one!) in the history of the War of the Ring.

· The epilogue should be a meeting with the Elves of Lórien (maybe even Galadriel herself, if you think she'd let the heroes into the forest). For completing this chronicle, they should be given suitable rewards for such a significant feat: Renown, edges such as Elf-friend and/or Dwarf-friend, possibly enchanted Elven gifts or whatever you see fit. If the bearer of the spear has shown greatly uncommon courage and honour in the likes of Gil-galad himself, Galadriel may even consent for him/her to retain it, especially if the hero is an Elf. And then as further reward, she may have another quest for them...
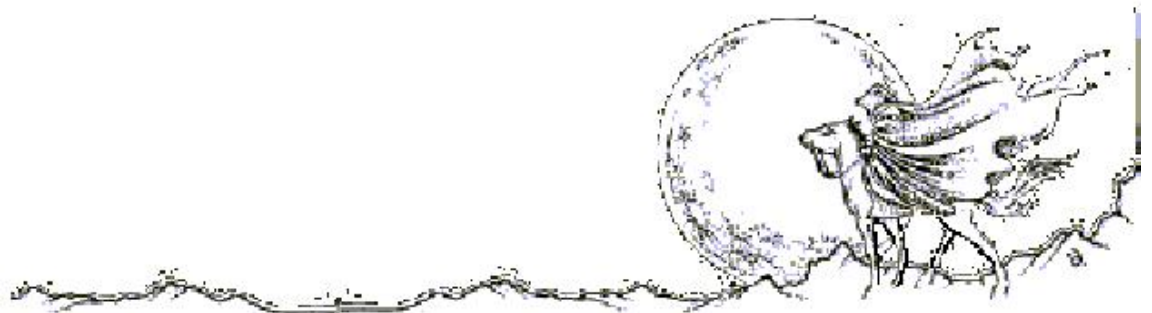
POSTMASTER

John Shiffler writes: I am a Narrator for a group of around four to five people, and I have often wondered about the mechanic of Corruption. It seems that, if the players are roleplaying correctly as heroes in Middle Earth (see CRB pp. 50-51), they should never acquire a single point of Corruption through their actions (this, of course, excludes situations like being near to some evil artifact of great power, such as The One Ring, which situation the players do not have control over). Is there ever a time when a Narrator could reasonably make use of the Corruption mechanic due to the actions of a player who is roleplaying correctly, or should such Corruption be reserved mostly for NPC's?

Using Corruption in a campaign can be difficult for a Narrator to do. If your players strictly adhere to all the Qualities of a Hero in the CRB at all times (personally I think the characters would be kinda boring), it would be nigh impossible to impose Corruption tests due to their actions, barring powerful sources of evil connected to The Shadow. If your characters don't normally perform actions that would be contrary to being a Hero, then a Narrator could look to set up circumstances where they must react to corruptive influences (use the Seven Deadly Sins as a basic list of things to start with).

As a Narrator, you do have a few choices for invoking Corruption altogether; some examples are:

- PC's encounter evil items
- PC's travel within noted lands of great evil (Mordor, Moria, Dol Guldur, Mirkwood to an extent, Angmar, etc.)
- PC's encounter persons or events that cause them moral conflict
- As a by-product of succumbing to Flaws
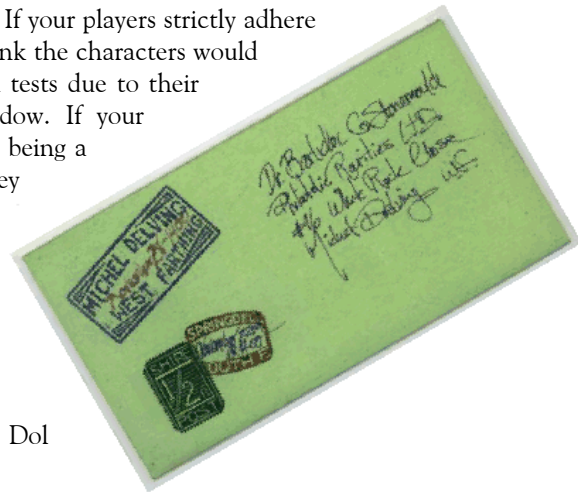
Of the above, moral conflict is probably one of the hardest ways to do it well, yet it can be a very rewarding gaming experience. I suggest Babylon 5 or Deep Space 9 for great examples of the grey areas in the world (modern though they are). In the end, Corruption as represented the CRB is a good attempt at representing one of Middle-earth's most defining thematic features, yet I find it somewhat lacking in my opinion. This is the reason I devised a Grief mechanic loosely based on Corruption and expanded the Fear mechanic (you can find these articles in back issues of The Hall of Fire).

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.fanhq.com/viewforum.php?f=164
DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG SUPPORT DOCS
http://decipher.com/lordoftherings/rpg/support/index.html
THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE SITE
http://halloffire.org
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/

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
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/
CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH
http://roleplay.avioc.org/lotr/index.htm

CALLING ALL GAMERS!

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

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

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

Fancy yourself a writer and would like to contribute to the webzine?
If so, write to us at **codawebzine@hotmail.com** with **'Writer'** in the subject line. One of the editors will get back to you with details about writing for THE HALL OF FIRE.

If you would like to post an advertisement for:
- A local or online RPG that you are hosting
- An RPG convention or tournament
- Or any events pertaining to The *Lord of the Rings* RPG or Star Trek RPG by Decipher

Write to us at **codawebzine@hotmail.com** with **'Ad'** in the subject line along with your advertisement. The advertisement is to be less than 100 words and a graphic to go with it no more than 1' x 1'

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