



THE HALL OF FIRE FAN WEBZINE

ISSUE TWENTY-EIGHT
MARCH 2006

Across Gorgoroth - by Ted Nasmith



GREETINGS,

SALUTATIONS... HELLO ALL!

Here we are once again with another great issue and with more great information for our favored game or at least favored setting. Yes, I know Decipher hasn't put out anything since Thanksgiving, but have no fear, there is work being done (albeit predominantly by one person who is in charge of many things besides just the RPG's). The game now has its own dedicated site at Decipher and they are progressing with the "living" campaign, Middle-earth Campaign Setting.

Well what do you have to look forward to in this issue? Here is just a taste: the first article in a new series that takes a more in-depth look at skills and traits, a couple more Orders of Magnitude, another Helm's Deep contest entrant, the final installment of The Triumph of the Witch-king in a new format to hopefully help Narrator's put together and tell their own chronicles, plus a whole lot more!

Happy Gaming,

Matthew A. Kearns
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Editor

THE MIDDLE-EARTH HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

IN THIS ISSUE

GREETINGS	1
TAKE ANOTHER LOOK	2
▪ Trade Skills, Part 1: Craft, Smithcraft, and Stonecraft	
FAN FLAVOUR...	5
▪ Orders of Magnitude: Loremasters and Mariners	
▪ New Racial Package: Man of Tharbad	
FEATURED CREATURES	10
▪ Fell Snow Creature	
THE ROAD GOES EVER ON...	11
▪ The Triumph of the Witch-king: Chapter 6- Nan Angmar!	
▪ Getting Started: 0-Advancement Character's for your use	
CALLING ALL GAMERS / CREDITS	42



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TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

TRADE SKILLS, PART 1: CRAFT, SMITHCRAFT, AND STONECRAFT

by Mathew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

The goal of this series of articles is to expand upon the concepts for the skills and traits outlined in the CRB and elsewhere. For skills, I aim to include descriptions of new and listed (where needed) skills, define sources of affinity and other bonuses, and maybe some optional rules. For traits, I will discuss more in-depth uses, slight alterations to their effects, and give an outline to define how to create your own traits pertaining to test bonuses (skill, attribute, test type, etc.).

CRAFT

Description: You have the skill and aptitude for creating items, be they utilitarian such as clothing or tools or works of art and beauty like woodcarvings or paintings.

Related Traits

Edges

- Craftsmaster (CRB)
- High Standards (HOF #6)

Flaws

- None

Related Abilities

- The Art [Elven Racial Ability] (CRB)
- Enchantment [Craftsman Order Ability] (CRB)
- Masterwork [Craftsman Order Ability] (CRB)
- Preservation [Craftsman Order Ability] (CRB)
- Deft [Craftsman Order Ability] (HOF #7)
- Item of Power [Craftsman Order Ability] (HOF #17)

Related Spells

- Bane-spell (CRB)
- Crafting-spell (CRB)
- Enhance Food (CRB)

Craft Expanded

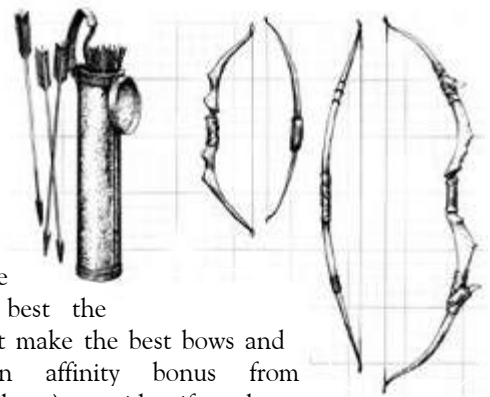
Optional item creation rules can be found in *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #5 and #27. Issue #27 also has some good information (albeit some is repeated here) regarding this skill in the Orders of Magnitude: Craftsman article.

Animal Handling

See *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #6, for more information on training and caring for animals.

Bowyer/Fletcher

This is the art of making bows and arrows. A weaponsmith or blacksmith is required to make the arrowheads, but the bowyer/fletcher is able to create the rest. You know best the kinds of wood that make the best bows and arrows (gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Wilderness: Plants), can identify makers or owners of types of arrows by their fletchings (gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Other: Heraldry), and appraise the construction and worth of these items (gives an affinity to Appraise (Weapon) tests).



Carpentry

You know how to create items from wood, be it a bookshelf, wagon, or home. You know what kind of wood is best used for certain tasks (gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Wilderness: Plants), are able to construct tools, implements, and transportation (gain an affinity bonus from Teamster with an additional +1 if you have the appropriate specialty), and are able to help reinforce structures for defence against a siege (gives an affinity to Siegecraft (Defense) tests). As you work with wood, you gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Woodworking.

Cooking

You are able to prepare food, from the basics of bread to ostentatious multiple course meals. If preparing for foreign guests, you may gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Realm or Lore/Race for the particular people and culture. There are also certain foods and concoctions you can make to help sustain the weary traveler, ward off disease (gain an affinity bonus from Healing (Treat Disease), or help fight off poison (gain an affinity bonus from Healing (Herbal Remedies)). Being a Hobbit gives

you a leg up in this skill through the Six Meals a Day Racial Ability.

Gardening/Farming

It's your green thumb that keeps the world beautiful and stomachs full. You know which crops work best in certain areas (gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Wilderness: Plants) and how best to protect against them from nature (gain affinity bonus from Lore/Wilderness: Animals (Insects) or Weather-sense).

Leatherworking

An oft overlooked profession, you help keep people moving, both on foot and horseback. You know how best to make and fit a saddle to a mount (gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Animal Handling or Ride (specific animal)), a boot to a man (gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Tailor), or other clothing and gear such as leather cuirasses for armor and barding (gain an affinity bonus from Smithcraft: Armorsmith and Ride with specialty for a specific mount).

Drawing/Painting

Your art is a luxury in this world which few may afford to support and fewer afford to do. You may gain an affinity bonus from Mimicry when attempting to paint sceneries or portraits or when attempting to forge another artists work or official papers (an additional affinity bonus from Lore/Realm for a specific realm), etc.

Pottery

Both art and utility, a potter can create crocks for every day use or beautiful vases for display in some wealthy noble's home.

Sculpting

Another luxury in this world, typically sponsored by the crown to create items of glory for posterity such as the traditional bust or carving ornate bas reliefs, columns, etc. Working primarily with stone, you gain an affinity bonus from Stonecraft.

Tailor

An important job to the more "civilized" of people, you make and mend clothing, from the common man to important and wealthy nobles. When attempting to recreate or augment foreign styles, gain a bonus from Lore/Race or Lore/Realm in regards to a specific people or culture and Mimicry.

Weaving

A weaver creates baskets, cloth, and the best combine these talents in making tapestries. When crafting tapestries of events, gain an affinity bonus from Lore/History for specific events along with Mimicry and a Recognition test (+1 per level of success) to get details about specific people correct and Lore/Other: Heraldry for armor, weapon, and standard styles.

Woodworking

Not quite carpentry, you work with wood to make works of art or more ornate versions of simple craft items (gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Sculpting or Craft: Carpentry).

SMITHCRAFT

Description: You are good with your hands and a hammer when it comes to beating out metal into a form of your design, such as a mighty sword or a delicate gold chain.



Related Traits

Edges

- Specialization (HOF #6)
- See Craft.

Flaws

- None

Related Abilities

- Enhanced Craftsmanship [Weaponmaster Ability] (HOF #7)
- See Craft.

Related Spells

- Blade Preservation
- See Craft.

Smithcraft Expanded

Armorsmith

Deep within the fiery forges, your task is to pound out small rings to be laced together, thin discs to be meshed as if scales on a fish, or ornate plates for additional protection. This skill doesn't include the crafting of leather for protection; it is covered by Craft: Leatherworking. You gain an affinity bonus from Ride with specialty for a specific mount when making barding for a mount.

Blacksmith

Your trade is to cater to the everyday affairs of people, from smithying a horseshoe (gain an affinity bonus from Teamster or Ride with specialty for a specific mount) or tapping out delicate pieces for an exception lock (gain an affinity bonus from Legerdemain when you have the Open Lock specialty).

Weaponsmith

Your skills are highly coveted by wealthy private owners who commission items as if they were works of art to the armories of kingdoms in need of mass production to aid in the its defense.

Metalsmith

Like gemsmiths, you create items of beauty out of a chosen metal such as gold, silver, and bronze (gain an affinity bonus from a related Craft skill when it comes to etchings, carvings, and sculptures). Your services can also come from the crown to cast coins of the realm.

STONECRAFT

Description: You know stone inside and out, from how and where to delve for it to working and shaping it into bricks for strongholds or chiseling it into a mastercrafted sculpture.

Related Traits**Edges**

- See Craft.

Flaws

- None

Related Abilities

- Shared Powers [Drúadan Racial Ability] (HOF #16)
- See Craft.

Related Spells

- See Craft.

Stonecraft Expanded**Fortification**

Fortresses of all types -- towers, keeps, castles, etc. -- are predominantly built using stone as it is the most resilient against

the enemy attacks (gain an affinity bonus from Siegecraft with the Defense specialty and Lore/Other: Engineering).

Gemsmith

Demand for your abilities mostly come from the wealthy and those want to become so. With exacting precision, you chip away the excess to carve exquisite finished works able to sparkle like the stars (gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Sculpting or Mimicry when working the item to resemble something).

**Jewelsmith**

Unlike gemsmiths, jewelsmiths actually craft the material themselves, fashioning the design of the finished item into the process. These creations outstrip carved gems in brilliance and quality as they manage to capture the actual light of the sun and stars, bursting with light during the day and slowly smoldering in the darkness (gain an affinity bonus from Craft: Sculpting or Mimicry when working the item to resemble something). The only race with the knowledge to create jewels are the Elves.

Mining

Before something can be worked into a final product, be it metal or stone, the raw material must be removed from the earth. Your knowledge includes where to mine for certain rock or metal ore, how to mine it, and process the ore into workable material.

Stonemason

On a smaller scale than Fortification, your talent lies within the construction of smaller buildings, bridges, aqueducts, roads, and the like (gain an affinity bonus from Lore/Other: Engineering).



FAN FLAVOUR

ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE

by David D. "Issachar44"

LOREMASTER

Introductory Note: In the Lord of the Rings RPG, your character's order is a key part of who that character is. The "Orders of Magnitude" series of articles takes a close look at the PC orders and offers ways to add new possibilities, flavour, and interest to role-playing them.

For those interested in playing Loremasters (or spellcasting characters), *Paths of the Wise* is an excellent investment. It treats the roleplaying aspects of such characters extensively and provides lots of crunchy bits in the form of new order abilities, elite orders, traits, skill uses, spells, and rules for magic items, herbs, libraries and more.

Instead of re-treading ground already covered in *Paths of the Wise*, I looked for new aspects of the Loremaster order to discuss in this installment of Orders of Magnitude. In consequence, the article is a bit of a patchwork, but hopefully you'll find it useful.

THE BEGINNING LOREMASTER

Starting characters multiply their Wits by 3 and spend that number of picks on background Lore and Language skill ranks. This is a huge advantage for Loremasters, because it frees up their racial skill picks – and a lot of their order picks – for acquiring a broad set of skills. Depending on your character concept, you can create a Loremaster who is at least competent (3 ranks, plus specialty bonuses) in combat and the heavy-duty physical skills, in addition to being expert in academic and social skills, the order's traditional forte. It's not hard for a brand new Loremaster to be quite the Renaissance man or woman – although they quickly fall behind those who advance in other orders.

When it comes to assigning Lore skill ranks, consider what you want to know *something* about, and what you want to know *a lot* about. In the former category, two ranks is typically all you need to consistently succeed a TN 10 Lore test ...that is, if you've taken the (overpowered) order ability "Perfect Recall" (*Paths of the Wise*, p 22), which gives you +2 to all Lore tests. For your real areas of expertise, buy six ranks in the appropriate Lore skill, which gives you good odds of succeeding TN 15 tests.

For areas of expertise, choose Lore skills with broad applications or that are closely associated with (or overlap) other Lore skills. This improves the chance that a question not directly covered by your Lore skill will at least be in a related category, so you can still attempt to answer, albeit at a penalty.

THE WISE ...AND THE OTHERWISE

Though some characters in *The Lord of the Rings* are referred to collectively as "the Wise", the term does not indicate an organized group with a well-defined roster. Rather, the Wise are individuals renowned for their great knowledge, experience, and understanding. Their counsel is highly prized, as is evident in Boromir's long journey to Rivendell in hope of solving an important mystery.

A character in the Lord of the Rings RPG might begin to be regarded as one of the Wise when he or she meets the following criteria:

- Renown 10
- Lore 10+ in one Lore skill and Lore 8+ in at least two other Lore skills
- Age in the Old or Aged category (if an Elf, at least 750 years old)

At some point, such a character will receive a visitor who has traveled from somewhere outside the immediate locality for the sole purpose of petitioning the character for counsel. Much depends on this interview, for if the character gives sound and helpful advice, and if the outcome is favorable, more petitioners will follow in the ensuing months and years. This gradually increases the character's Renown (at a rate subject to the Narrator's discretion), and eventually attracts the attention of powerful individuals who may themselves be among the Wise.

Age and extensive lore are two traits held in common by all the Wise. Yet these two qualities alone are not sufficient. Still more important is virtue, the loss of which has caused the fall of many who were *once* deemed wise, such as Saruman and Denethor. Virtue is what separates wisdom from mere cunning and subtlety.

A character counted among the Wise who acquires points of Corruption begins to use his or her prestige for self-serving ends. The trust of those who come seeking counsel becomes a lever by which to control them, and it may be long before this deceit is brought to light, as in the case of Saruman. In the struggle to bring such corrupted sages to justice, it is often the simple but virtuous heroes, such as Samwise Gamgee, who are most effective.



SECRET SOCIETIES

“Be careful, friends!” cried Gildor laughing. “Speak no secrets! Here is a scholar in the Ancient Tongue.”

-- *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The Loremaster ability *Secretive* invites speculation as to when such a quality might be of use. What if a Loremaster belonged to an organization whose existence itself is a secret and whose lore is available only to a select few? For those who want to pursue this idea further, this article provides descriptions of a handful of secret societies.

Treat membership in these secret societies as if they were Loremaster order abilities. Each society has the *Secretive* ability as a prerequisite, along with ranks in an appropriate Lore skill (and sometimes an additional requirement). It should be very unusual for a Loremaster to have membership in more than one secret society.

Additionally, Narrators should consider disallowing their players from viewing each others' character sheets if such societies are in the game (or even as a general practice); this heightens the roleplaying challenge of the Loremaster in maintaining the secrecy of the organization.

Edheluath (Sind. “Elf-shadow”)

Requirements: *Secretive* ability, Elf or Elf-Friend edge, Language: Sindar 4+, Lore/Race: Elves 4+ or equivalent

Description: Members of this society know the location of Rivendell and other secret Elven enclaves, such as the refuges used by the Wandering Companies. As a member of the Edheluath, you know the subtle markers to find your way to these locales, and the passwords and hand-signs to gain entry. You must never reveal this information to anyone outside the society (though you might lead a blindfolded ally to a secret locale).

You are taught a special sign that identifies your status in the society to any Elf; invoking this sign grants a +4 bonus to social tests with Elves. You also periodically receive news from the Elves on affairs that might concern or interest you.

Heritors of the Golden King

Requirements: *Secretive* ability, Lore/History: Númenor 8+ or equivalent

Description: Members of this society seek the secrets of eternal life that Sauron promised to Ar-Pharazôn, last king of Númenor. Some believe, despite Sauron's deception, that the longevity he promised was in fact attainable and that he showed credible tokens of its effectiveness to the king. To date, no member of the society has rediscovered this tantalizing secret, but they have recovered other Númenorean lore once believed to be lost. As a Heritor of the Golden King, you know the following secrets:

- **Health and Vigor:** You cultivate the seedlings of rare herbs and know how to prepare them according to a special method. After six weeks of including this preparation in your diet (consuming it once a day), you gain a +1 bonus to all Stamina tests. After twelve weeks, you gain an extra point of Health. If you discontinue taking the preparation for one week, the Stamina bonus and the point of Health go away.
- **Light of Valinor:** though the Blessed Realm has been removed from this physical world, one Silmaril is set among the stars and continues to shed the light of the Two Trees upon Middle Earth. You know the secrets of viewing this light through specially crafted prisms and lenses and of meditating upon it in such a way that the glory of Valinor is almost visible to your mind. After an hour of meditation on the light of the Silmaril, you gain an extra point of Courage that remains for one day or until spent. You can have only one extra point of Courage gained in this way at any time.
- **Brightsteel:** You know the craft of making Númenorean steel, which is lighter and harder than ordinary steel and has a bright silvery-grey sheen. Weapons made from this steel confer a +1 bonus to attack rolls and deal +1 damage, and armour made of brightsteel offers 1 point of protection more than ordinary steel. Brightsteel can also be used to make Númenorean steelbows. Items made of brightsteel weigh one-quarter less than their normal steel counterparts. It takes one day and a Smithcraft test at TN 20 to smelt a pound of brightsteel, and the Smithcraft test to forge the steel into an item is at +5 TN.

Society of Antiquarian Collectors

Requirements: *Secretive* ability, Lore/Other: Ancient Artifacts 8+ or equivalent

Description: Members of this society are treasure-hunters who painstakingly research the existence and likely locations of items of both historical and monetary value. They are scholars first and foremost, excited by the challenge of researching and acquiring such treasures even more than by the prospect of enriching their own personal fortunes. Under the society's pact, members agree to exchange the results of their research with one another; they use a special coded language to ensure that intercepted missives cannot be understood.

As an Antiquarian Collector, you gain a +3 bonus to any Appraise test or Lore test pertaining to items of historical value or great monetary value. You also gain a bonus to any Lore test pertaining to an individual with the Hoard edge; the bonus is +1 for each time the individual has taken the Hoard edge. When you are physically searching for a hidden object (but not an object concealed on someone's person), your Observe (Spot) or Search test receives a +2 bonus.

Black Hood

Requirements: Secretive ability, non-Elf, Lore/Group: Rogues 8+ -or- Lore/Other: Streetwise 8+ or equivalent

Description: Members of this society know the dealings of the criminal underworld. The Black Hood are information brokers; they themselves do not undertake to commit crimes, but they provide a network of contacts and a store of information about local people and events. The Black Hood operate primarily in large cities, but they have agents in some smaller communities as well. A few members of the Black Hood are acting as counter-spies, keeping tabs on the underworld while surreptitiously feeding useful information to the legitimate authorities. When discovered, such traitors to the organization are swiftly assassinated.

As a member of the Black Hood, you gain a bonus to all Lore tests to know about local events and personalities; the bonus is +5 for information about your own locality, +3 for information about localities in the same region, and +1 for information about localities in other regions. You also gain the benefits of the Friends edge in any locality where you can make contact with another member of the Black Hood; there is a 10% chance of this for every 100 people in the locality (1% per 100 people if an Elvish community). Finally, if you join the Rogue or Spy order, you pay only four picks to do so instead of five.

In exchange, you must make routine reports on the happenings in your own area, written in code and delivered to messengers who arrive every week in large cities, every fortnight in medium size cities, and every month in small cities. Failure to make your report invites suspicion and may cause you to lose the benefits of the Friends edge.

Watchkeepers

Requirements: Secretive ability, Lore/Wilderness: Star-lore 8+ or equivalent

Description: Members of this society believe it is their task to watch for signs of the future unfolding. They specialize in various forms of divination, the most popular of which is reading the stars. Watchkeepers also look for signs in the natural world: in beasts, stones, trees and clouds. However, the Watchkeepers strongly believe that knowledge of the future is perilous and fragile: it tempts men to act in ways that often result in their own ruin, while the thing they sought to prevent is made even worse. A Watchkeeper exercises the greatest care over his divinations. He does not reveal his talent to others, and seldom acts on what he learns unless he is certain that the time to act has come.

As a Watchkeeper, whenever the stars are visible, you gain the benefits of the Foresighted edge even if you do not meet the prerequisites. Also, once per day you can use the Insight skill to gain premonitions of impending events, as shown on the table

below. This requires a full-round action in which you stretch out your senses to the elements of the world around you, opening yourself to the impressions they give you. You can prolong your period of sensitivity to gain a bonus to the test: +1 if you spend one full minute, and +2 if you spend ten full minutes.

<u>Insight test TN</u>	<u>Quality of premonition</u>
TN 10	Minor premonition (arrival of a friend)
TN 15	Important premonition (arrival of an enemy)
TN 20	Life-saving premonition (arrival of a dangerous enemy)

You are bound by oath not to divulge what you learn through your Watchkeeper divinations to any other person, even another Watchkeeper. Whenever you act (in a non-trivial way) on the knowledge you gain through a divination, you must make a special test to avoid acquiring points of Corruption. Make a TN 8 Wisdom (not Willpower) test and gain one point of Corruption for each degree of failure. You may receive a modifier to your test result, depending on how much time has passed between the time you receive the divination and the time you act on it.

<u>Time since divination</u>	<u>Test Modifier</u>
Less than 10 minutes	-2
Less than 1 day	-1
Less than 1 week	+0
1 week or more	+1
1 month or more	+2

Morgoth-cults

Requirements: Secretive ability, Language: Black Speech 4+, Lore/Group: Servants of the Shadow 8+ or equivalent, 2 or more points of Corruption

Description: Various cults of Morgoth have arisen over the centuries following the banishment of the Dark Foe from Middle-Earth, some begun by Sauron himself and others by mortal followers of the Shadow. All such cults have as their aim the overthrow and enslavement of the Free Peoples, and they employ many means to that end, including sabotage, force of arms, and sorcerous arts.

Members of any Morgoth cult have certain common privileges. They gain +2 to any Lore test that pertains to the Shadow, its servants and its arts, and +2 to all Intimidate tests. They also have authority to command low-ranking cult initiates to perform errands or serve as bodyguards. If a Morgoth cult member acquires the Loremaster Spellcasting ability, he gains three spell picks instead of two, with the requirement that at least one pick must be spent on a Sorcery spell.



MARINER

The Sea. Ceaselessly shifting, never truly changing, in turns as violent as the clash of battle and as gentle as a mother's touch. To be out on the water is to know freedom, mortality, beauty, trouble, and faith. For some, the maritime life is only a means to earn a livelihood. But others fall victim to the enchantment of the water, which becomes their friend, their master and their love. These are the mariners of Middle-Earth.

In a world where most folk never travel more than a few leagues from home, the life of a mariner holds a wonderful fascination. Though seldom educated, sailors know more about the world than almost any others among the common class. A career sailor can be counted on to know a dozen fantastic stories and to have experienced two or three of them first-hand. Adventurous, romantic, tough and lean but also graceful, and usually glad of new company, mariners are among the most colourful characters you can play.

So why don't more people play them?

The obvious answer is that most adventures are based on land, where the special talents of the Mariner order are wasted. Yet the Craftsman order is in a similar boat, if you'll forgive the pun. Both are specialists whose skills only get the spotlight under infrequent circumstances. Making them more viable members of an adventuring party requires extending the application of their signature abilities, and also creating more situations in which a party might wish there were a Mariner around.

IS THERE A MARINER IN THE HOUSE?

If you can get a Mariner off his boat, you soon discover that he makes a passably good warrior, loremaster and rogue all rolled into one. The skills needed to survive on the water are also useful when negotiating the broken stairs and ledges of Moria, trekking across the wilderness, or scrapping with Orcs. Consider the following:

- In the absence of a Ranger, your Mariner can lead a party at night, navigating by the stars.
- When the Loremaster is sick at home, your Mariner can provide information – albeit mostly hearsay – about unfamiliar lands and people.
- A tree is just another mast, and a cliff wall is just rigging. Your Mariner is as skillful a climber as any Rogue, and can also keep his balance on slick surfaces better than most.
- When your captured foe keeps slipping his bonds and that last bump in the road knocked a piece off the wagon, your Mariner can fix both problems handily.
- Members of the opposite sex find your worldly-wise Mariner far more interesting than the local stay-at-homes.

So, how do you lure this capable person into joining your party of land-lubbers? Try one of these ideas:

1. Have your adventure take place in winter or during a stormy season, when water-travel is temporarily halted and the Mariner is looking for other work.
2. Your voyage with the Mariner ends in mishap, with the vessel damaged or lost.
3. Negotiate a payment that makes it worth the Mariner's while to do a stint on land. A character who begins as a mercenary can still end up a hero.
4. Adventure in a region with many inland waters – and take a Mariner with experience in boating and rafting.
5. Go ahead, take the plunge and adventure at sea!

MARITIME ADVENTURES

There is a wealth of information in previous issues of *The Hall of Fire* on mariners, ships, and adventuring at sea. Here's a quick summary of what's been previously published:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| • Commander Elite Order | Issue 2, pp 14 |
| • New Order Abilities | Issue 7, pp 23 |
| | Issue 10, pp 30-31 |
| • Ship construction | Issue 8, pp 10-14 |
| • Naval combat | Issue 9, pp 8-13 |
| • Encounters at sea | Issue 10, pp 22-23 |
| • Job descriptions | Issue 11, pp 15-17 |

In addition, next issue of *The Hall of Fire* will include an all-new adventure, "The Great River", which takes place almost entirely on the water!

MARINER ORDER ABILITIES

Call of the Sea

Description: When you take to the water in a vessel of any type, you temporarily gain an extra point of Courage that remains until you leave the water at the end of your travel. If you spend it, the extra point of Courage is regained in the same way and at the same rate as your normal points of Courage. In addition, the bonus granted by any point of Courage you spend while traveling on the water is increased by +1.

Cosmopolitan

Description: Choose two local regions other than your homeland that are accessible by water. You gain a +2 bonus to all Lore/Group skill tests and Language skill tests pertaining to those two regions. You can acquire this ability multiple times, each time choosing two more regions accessible by water.



Jury-Rig**Requirements:** Wits 7+

Description: You gain a +1 bonus to all Craft: Carpenter (or equivalent) tests, and you can make such tests untrained with no penalty if you have no ranks in the skill. Additionally, any penalties you suffer for working with inadequate equipment (for any type of test) are reduced by 3. If you use the optional rules for rushed work on a Craft: Carpenter or equivalent test (see the Orders of Magnitude: Craftsman article), the item you craft has 40% of its normal Protection and Structure values instead of 20%.

Knife-Fighter**Requirements:** Sea-craft 4+ -or- Profession: Sailor 4+; Nimbleness 7+

Description: One of your most frequently used tools is also your weapon of choice. You gain a +2 bonus to Armed Combat and Ranged Combat tests made with any kind of dagger or knife, and the Parry bonus for any knife or dagger you wield is increased by +1. Additionally, you can draw a dagger or knife as a free action once per round.

Star-Reckoning**Requirements:** Wits 7+

Description: You have studied the heavens extensively and can navigate by the stars. Under a starry sky, you can spend a full-round action to determine your location and direction. Make a TN 15 Sea-craft or Profession: Sailor test, adding your Wits bonus. (If you have an instrument to help you measure the position of the stars, add +2 to your test result.) Your estimate of your location is off by one league for every point by which your test result falls short of the TN. When estimating the optimal course to your destination, the distance you travel to reach your destination is increased by 5% for every point by which your test result falls short of the TN.

If you also have 2 or more ranks in a Lore skill that involves knowledge of the great powers of the world, you can call on the

Lady of the Stars (Varda or Elbereth, though you may not know her by those names) to part a cloud cover just enough to let you briefly see a few stars you can use to navigate by. You can do this only once per night.

Additionally, this ability reduces your penalty for seeing in conditions of darkness by 2 points.

Storm-Reverence**Requirements:** Sea-craft 6+ -or- Profession: Sailor 6+; 2+ ranks in a Lore skill that involves knowledge of the great powers of the world.

Description: You revere the great powers that rule the wind, wave and storm: the Valar Manwë and Ulmo, though you may not know them by their right names. When you call on these powers for aid, you receive a +2 bonus to any one of the following: Inspire, Observe (Spot), Profession: Sailor, Sea-craft, Survival (Oceans or Rivers), Swim, or Weather-sense. If you have any points of Corruption, you cannot use this ability.

Tales of the Sea

Description: The accumulated lore of generations of seafarers is yours to share. When you make a Perform (Storytelling) or equivalent test, add a bonus equal to one-third of your ranks in Sea-craft or Profession: Sailor, rounding up.

Also, if you fail any Lore test, you can add the same bonus described above to your test result, to see whether you know a story that pertains to the subject in question. If adding the bonus produces a success, an additional test is required to determine whether the story you recall contains reliable information. (The Narrator should make this test in secret.) Roll 2d6 and add your Wisdom score, then check the result against the table below.

<u>Result</u>	<u>Story is...</u>
4 or less	Entirely false
5-7	Mostly false
8-10	Mostly true
11 or more	Entirely true

NEW RACIAL PACKAGE by Mathew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

MAN OF THARBAD

Armed Combat +1, Craft +2 Debate +1, Persuade +1, Sea-craft +1



FEATURED CREATURES

FELL SNOW CREATURE by ZehnWaters

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 10 (+2), Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 11 (+2)*, Strength 14 (+3)*, Vitality 12 (+2), Wit 4 (+0)

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

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Natural Weapon (claws, fangs) +8, Intimidate (Fear) +8, Language: Westron (understand) +3, Observe (Smell, Spot) +7, Run +5, Stealth (Sneak) +7, Survival (Mountains) +9, Track (Scent) +6

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour 1, Camouflage (Snow), Cunning, Multiple Attacks (claws, fangs), Natural Weapon (claws, 1d6) Natural Weapons (fangs, 2d6), Regenerate

SIZE: Large

DEFENCE: 12

HEALTH: 14

MOVEMENT RATE: 6

DESCRIPTION: Fell Snow Creatures are large, hulking creatures that vaguely resemble a cross between a bear and a gorilla. It is covered entirely in white fur and has long limbs that come down to just past their knees, while the young have a light brown fur for the first few months of life. They have savagely long claws and teeth that mask a ruthless intelligence.

HISTORY: These vile creatures were created by Saruman to hunt mountainous folk in his earliest experimentations of cross-breeding. A mix of men, orc and white bears from the North, these vile creatures are both cunning and powerful. Saruman sent them into the mountains around Isengard where they continued into their upper climes. Some traveled South across the Gap of Rohan and settled into the White Mountains. Mostly preferring the high places where they can best hide and hunt, some come farther down during heavy snows to hunt the Rohirrim and Dunlendings, leading to stories of snow-wights that carry away the unwary.

HABITAT: Mostly the far Western regions of the White Mountains and the Southern reaches of the Misty Mountains. Some have emigrated farther east and north, however. They live mostly the snowy upper regions of these mountains.

SOCIETY: Fell Snow Creatures are decidedly solitary creatures and will attack any that come within their territory, including those of their own kind. The only time that Snow Creatures meet is when it is mating season. The females raise their young until they are old enough to hunt on their own then they are abandoned to fend for themselves. If they do not leave their mother's territory it is likely that they will be attacked and even eaten.

USAGE: Fell Snow Creatures make likely opponents for heroes adventuring around the Gap of Rohan, especially during the winter. Since they prefer to stay hidden they make excellent foes with which to keep your players on the edge.



THE ROAD GOES EVER ON...

THE TRIUMPH OF THE WITCH-KING – CHAPTER 6: NAN ANGMAR!

by Doug 'Tomcat' Joos

In this last installment of the Triumph of the Witch-king I have presented the chapter in a new format, it is presented in narrative form from my own game, all compiled from our board where we play-by-post. I chose to present it in this format for a few reasons - first, there have been a few new players asking questions on Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings* forum about how to run a chronicle and how to work within Tolkien's canon; second, I wanted to show other players how nice roleplaying can be in this format of play-by-post; and finally, I believe that this was the most climactic of all of the chapters and writing it out in the format of a module caused it to lose some of its impact.

Understand it is not our intention at the *Hall of Fire* to make the webzine into a story book; it is for players to reference for the fixes or extras they need for their game. In keeping with that idea, I have also included Narrator's Notes at the end of each scene that explain how I set up the scene and any relevant tests or other information. Happy reading!

"T'was friendship that brought you all on the trail to find me, and these Dwarf companions that you will not leave behind had as much a part in that as the rest. For this, I could not leave them to such a fate either. Come, let us get this done quickly and be off on the road home!"
-- Camentir, *The Triumph of the Witch-king*

Interludes:

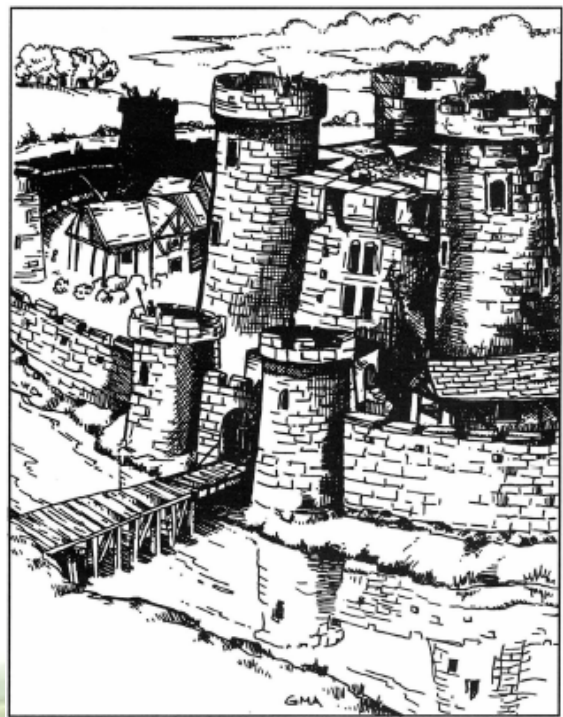
1. *The creak of the wagon was all he knew; that and the harsh bumping and shifting that the frozen road caused. He was blindfolded but he would not have had the wits about him to know anymore if his eyes were unweiled. He had been beaten, and now he lay freezing in the back of the wain on a doomed road. He had no doubts as to where he was being taken nor that his life would soon be over. The only thing he did have was the grim satisfaction that he and the men he had led had dogged the Witch-king and spoiled many of his plans. Camentir smiled at his fate and tried to block out the pain that stemmed from the tips of his finger to lace through his whole body...*
2. *He stood over a horridly ensconced bowl that glowed with a purple light that caused his garbs to occasionally flicker revealing the hooded robe was empty of any head. The wraith leaned back after his farseeing and silently cursed Arkish, the Asháktur of Barad Eldanar. The castle was lost?!? His glimpses to that area did not show him all, only that it was besieged. Who was this Company out of Fornost? Was it large? Did King Argeleb seriously send a force to threaten his iron land? Er-Múrazôr, the Witch-king turned towards one of his lieutenants that stood behind him and the man trembled from that gaze. The Nazgûl decided it was time to bring his ally into the game. It was a shame that the beast would not get to burn out the elves of Rivendell, but he would see to it that Scatha would stop any would-be attackers on Angmar! "Prepare my mount," was the whispered command...*

Setting: The Company stood winded and wounded within and about the once proud castle of Barad Eldanar. The fortress sat upon the very gates of Angmar and had for many years been under its rule. Their victory seemed complete but now horns

sounded out in the grey of the dawn and all wondered if there was enough strength to hold off their foes!

SCENE 1 – A FOOHOLD IN THE NORTH

Days 108-109 January 17-18, 1637 T.A., Barad Eldanar

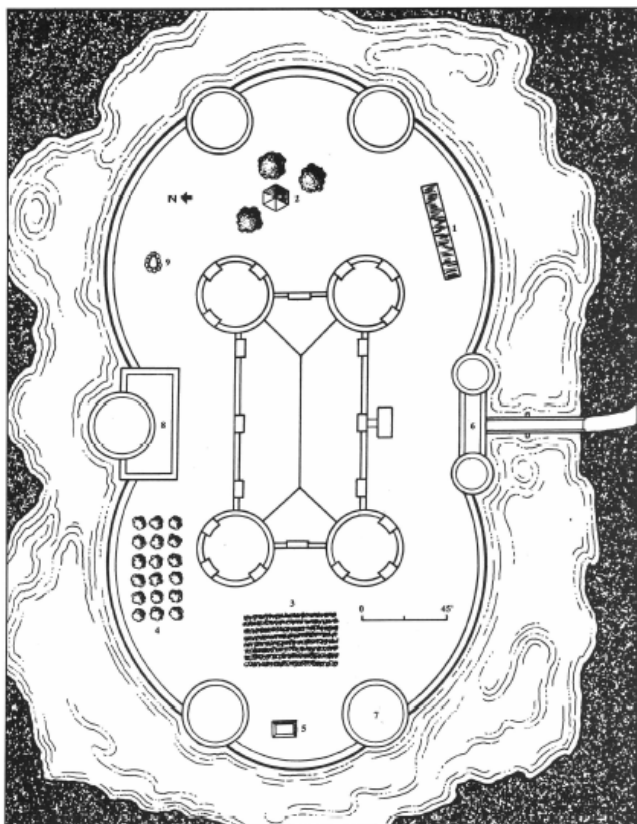


Horns! Horns rang out through the grey of morning. Dirnhael looked at the fallen form of Arkish and then about at his companions, many were wounded including himself. The Dúnadan did not know if his force was going to be able to repel a new attacker. Still, they needed to know what was approaching.

Upon hearing the blat of the horns, Dirnhael gestured to the nearest members of his party that were still hale enough to run, "Quickly! Search below and find Camentir! We must make haste lest we face an oncoming horde!"

Fengel and Durgil both jumped to respond to Dirnhael's command. The Éothraim yelled out to his companion, "Come Durgil, we will make haste and search this keep, but we shall go together so as not to be set upon by any stray Easterlings that may be about!"

"I am with you," the young Dúnadan replied. Tired as he might have been, Durgil followed eagerly to search for Camentir.



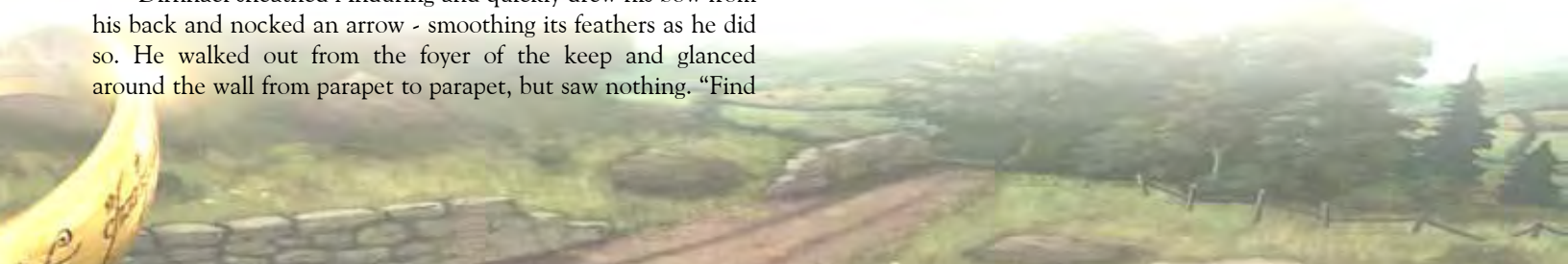
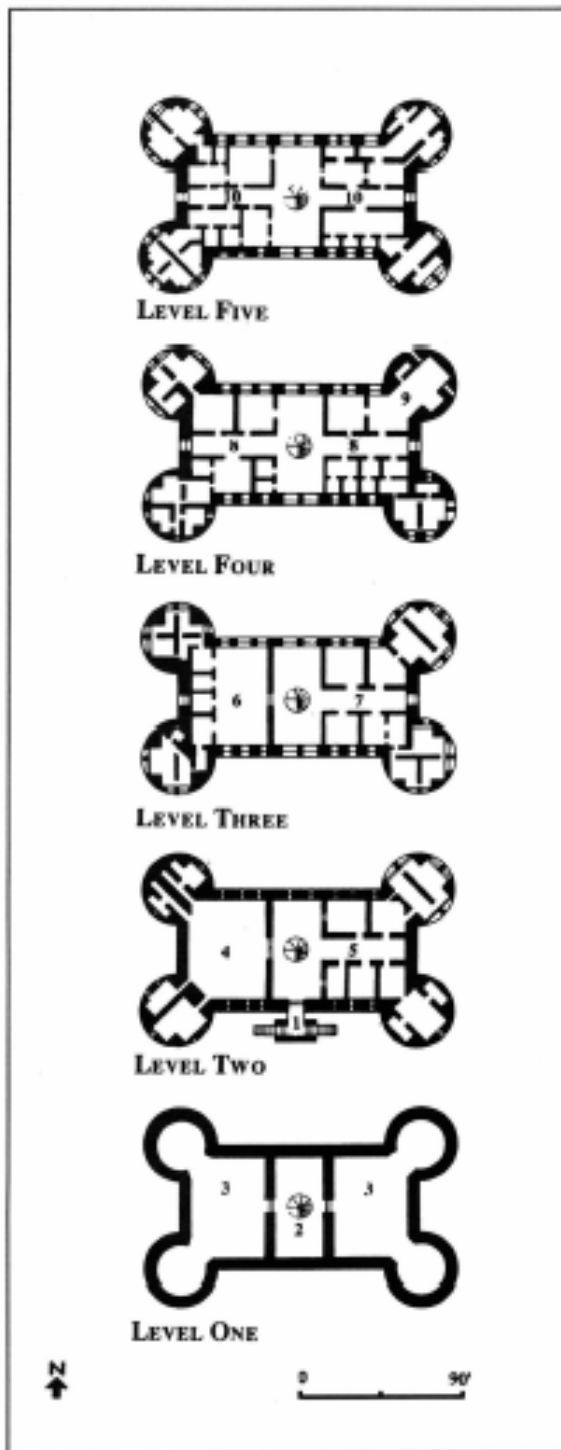
Turning with a piercing glare in his eyes, Dirnhael bent down and heaved the prisoner to his feet; and with a snarl, smashed him against the stone wall while holding the defeated man up by his collar. "Who comes this morn? Tell me!"

The Easterling quailed as the Dúnadan hefted him up and he cried out to him, "I know not for whom the horn sounds! But message was sent to Sacal for he and his troop to report here!"

Dirnhael sheathed Andúring and quickly drew his bow from his back and nocked an arrow - smoothing its feathers as he did so. He walked out from the foyer of the keep and glanced around the wall from parapet to parapet, but saw nothing. "Find

that man," he shouted to what was left of his force, "then return quickly and take defensive positions at the main gate."

He shouted down the stairwell to his men, imploring them to hurry - they were almost out of time. Then he put his bow back and drew Andúring once more. The blade glistened in the pale morning light, but did not glow of its own accord... yet.



Nain watched as the human blustered against their newly captured prisoner. Now that the fighting had ended the pain of his wounds was starting to be felt and he wished that there was an ale or at least a cot nearby to keep it at bay a little longer. He rested the head of his axe on the ground and leaned against it carefully, noticing as he did that the rivulets of blood seeping down his hands were not entirely that of his foes. With dire resolution he retained his consciousness as he turned his head to look in the direction of the horns and a wave of vertigo washed over him. As the echoes faded into the depths of the castle walls Nain looked back toward his companions.

"Friend Elf, when you have a moment, I find myself in need of your singular talents." He then closed his eyes and waited patiently for a response.

Edrahil nodded to Nain and came to him and helped the dwarf into the adjoining room. Within was a large dining room and there were many couches for the wounded to lie down. Along the west wall was a large hearth and the heat of the fire warmed the chamber. Once Edrahil had both Lûnduf and Nain within the hall, he began tending to their wounds.

Lûnduf gripped his axe as he laid upon the old couch. Upon hearing Dirnhael's words, he had realized that he would be of very little use to the group in his current condition but that did not stop his desire to play a part in any new attack. He looked to Edrahil, "We don't have much time, make this quick."

Edrahil heard the dwarf mumble but ignored him; he had others in the party that he had to get into the room before he could attend any of them. Thus the elf saw to his charges as Fengel and Durgil searched the donjon and Dirnhael and the few remaining soldiers sought the enemy that sounded the horn.

Fengel and Durgil ran first to the lower level of the donjon. They searched room by room trying to find any trace of the lost commander or any sign of secret doors that might keep him hidden. The rooms were littered with a variety of items from supplies to weapons and armors. Some of the chambers were used for sleeping by the castle guard but after thoroughly searching, it was clear to the two Company members that the lower level was empty. They quickly made their way back up the stairs to head up to the next floor up.

Edrahil looked over his shoulder at Fengel and Durgil, but then returned to his administrations. Nain's wounds were bad but the dwarf should live. They were a resilient folk, kind of like his elven kindred, as long as no poison or sickness was present in the wounds.

Dirnhael looked up to the parapet as his two remaining hale soldiers of Arthedain ran in opposite directions away from him. They would locate this stray troublemaker while he stood watching the gates. The only other man with him was Daelhun, they would offer little defense against any attacking force, but Dirnhael had no choice, if a new attack was inbound they would need to hold the gate as long as possible until the other men could make it back to the donjon.

While they stood there, the Company's scout came around the corner with his prisoner striding before him. Dirnhael

remembered Durgil saying that an Easterling had surrendered upon the wall in the initial attack.

The scout nodded to the two Dúnedain. "Sit down upon the stair and do not move," he said to his charge.

"Who sounds the horn?" he asked to Dirnhael.

Before he could reply, the sound of horse hooves could be heard thundering across the broken plain before the castle. It was apparent that they would all know soon enough. The three men gripped their weapons tighter and turned towards the broken gates of Barad Eldanar. Somewhere in the distance, the sound of the blowing horn ceased.

Suddenly, like a rushing wind, the castle bridge and then main gate was filled by a large number of haggard looking riders, their clothes, armour and mounts tattered. The Dúnedain could see in the morning grey that the men were also armed and ready!

Once the elf had finished wrapping the bandages around his wounds Nain immediately began feeling as if he might live at least to the next battle. He stood and flexed. It still pained him some but he would live that was certain. He glanced quickly around the room that they were in then picked up his axe and prepared himself for what was to come as he heard the hoofbeats coming into the courtyard.

"Sounds like it's time to fight again. I should have known getting involved with Humans would get me killed one day."

And with a mischievous grin he walked toward the door to stand and fight once again at the Donjon entrance.

Edrahil called from behind the dwarf as he strode back out into the foyer towards the sounds of the oncoming fight, "You may feel better Dwarf, but your body has still sustained great wounds. It will not take much to reopen them. You best take care!"

Daelhun stood before the oncoming rush of horsemen, by his commander, for whom he was starting to get a newfound respect. The man had stormed a castle with such a small gathering of men and won through to victory.

"Perhaps they should feel the sting of our arrows m'lord!" Daelhun said, never taking his eyes off the new enemies, hoping against hope that they would be able to stem the tide that would inevitably come rushing through the castle gates. Daelhun held fast his sword in front of him.

Hearing the arrival of the horsed men, Durgil was wary and armed himself with his bow and strung an arrow ready to defend his comrades to the last if he must. He ran to the open window of the third floor to look out. From this vantage he knew he would be able to give good supporting fire from his weapon.

He looked down upon Dirnhael, Daelhun and the Dúnedain scout all standing within the center of the castle's entrance. They looked small compared to the grey shapes that rode quickly across the bridge towards them. He could see them bring up their weapons in readiness to stave off the assault as long as possible, but then something caught his eye - the standard that

fluttered a couple of horse lengths back from the lead. It bore the markings of the King's Third Host... it was Camentir! Or his men! Could that be? Did Linwen survive that battle those many long days ago?

Surprised, but happy beyond all hope, Durgil yelled out over the courtyard, "DÚNEDAIN! DÚNEDAIN OF FORNOST HAVE COME!!"

As Durgil yelled, the scout that stood by Dirnhael lowered his weapon as he also recognized those that charged in. He ran forward his hands open in the sign of friendship, "HAIL... HAIL! Men of Fornost stand down!! Friends stand before you and Barad Eldanar has returned to the sons of Arnor!"

Daelhun stood fast for he feared a surprise, while hoping it was not. "With care m'lord, for we just used a ruse to force our way into the fortress, it may be these persons are as well..."

His sword still in hand, Daelhun looked at his leader and prepared for whatever was to come.

Dirnhael nodded to Daelhun and kept Andúring at the ready. They were deep within Angmar, and their arrival, while welcome if they were indeed of Arnor, was remarkably well-timed. He glanced behind him at Durgil, who appeared to be at the ready from above. They would assume they were facing the enemy until proven otherwise. It may be in bad form, but if the oncoming group were truly Men of the West - they would certainly understand Dirnhael's wariness...

FEAR not master Elf, I will do my best not to let the Easterlings reopen any of my wounds or create any new ones."

Standing in the open doorway of the donjon, Nain watched as the horsemen streamed into the courtyard. His axe ready he waited for the men riding in to identify themselves as friend or foe.

Hearing the cries from both above and before them, the chargers broke off and skillfully rolled their mounts off to the left and right of the three men in the courtyard. They encircled Dirnhael and his companions and others took up position to guard the exit of the donjon and any that may come from behind the small castle.

One man rode to the fore, to both challenge and to determine if the truth be spoken, pulling back his tattered hood as he approached Dirnhael...

"Stand down! If allies you be, then there is no need to brandish weapons so! Speak your names and let me look upon your eyes so that I may determine if there is truth in your hearts."

With that said, the large man dismounted. He was tall and his hair was jet black though it was quite unkempt. The eyes that looked upon Dirnhael and Daelhun were grey and looked out of a face that was dirty and weathered. Though he looked young and hale, it still seemed as if many winters sat upon his brow. He wore tattered clothes that were intermingled with thick furs, and he wore a longsword on his hip and carried a spear within his hand.

He looked Dirnhael up and down, but his eyes settled upon the sword that the Dúnadan held in his hand, the point lowered to the ground. There came an instant look of recognition upon

the man's face, "The blade Andúring of Borandil, given to a man out of Cardolan by my Lord Camentir! Is it you Dirnhael?"

"It is I," answered Dirnhael, trying to place the man's face. The large warrior knew how Dirnhael's blade had been gifted to him - that was a good sign.

"We have come north to Barad Eldanar in hopes of rescuing Camentir and returning him to his homeland. It is but repayment of a debt that I owe him. Alas, we have not found him here, and though we have taken this keep, our losses have been great. From where have you ridden, and why have you come?"

"Then our chance meeting is opportune indeed!" replied the warrior. "I am Eradin and I lead what is left of the King's Third Host. We have ridden far and spent many weeks in hiding in this northern territory of Rhudaur and lower Angmar using the skills that our once great captain taught us. When Linwen led us north after Camentir was captured, we rode almost to the gates of Barad Eldanar itself but were waylaid by another force out of this compound. Needless to say, our meager force was scattered and Linwen was slain. I rallied to me what men I could and we rode north into the Trollshaws and hid."

The Dúnadan looked about pausing his story to yell a command, "Stand down men! Search the rest of the compound to make sure there are no more of the Easterlings. We don't want anyone stabbed in the night!"

That done, Eradin turned back towards Dirnhael, "Ease yourselves... come we will speak more within the donjon. I wish to hear more of your tale and how you took this keep."

The two commanders turned towards the castle making small talk as they went. As they strode up the stairs to the keep's entrance, Dirnhael could see that Nain stood there. The Dwarf had unhinged a large door from inside and had set it across the broken span. "Makes it easier to come in," he smiled as the men walked across.

Upon entry, Fengel strode up to Dirnhael as Durgil could be seen descending the stairs from the upper levels. Fengel spoke, "My Captain, there is no sign of Camentir within the keep... and this one," Fengel pointed to the Easterling prisoner that sat dejectedly upon the floor, "He says that the commander was taken north but two days ago by wain."

"Alas then! We are too late..." sighed Eradin. He looked to Dirnhael, "As I said, we had continued north even after being routed and we watched Eldanar for some time. I knew not what force was staged here and so I did not dare make a move against the fortification. My hesitance has cost us dearly!"

Then Eradin's face brightened and he asked, "But come, tell me your tale and how it is that I do not see a great host before me and yet the castle is back in the hands of the Men of Fornost!"

Edrahil stepped into the foyer at that moment, his hands holding a great deal of parchments. "I think I can explain that mystery, my good sir. It seems that the Ashâktur of Barad Eldanar has been given a great deal of commands over the last two months; commands coming directly out of Carn Dûm, and they all appear to be directed at us!" He continued, "The first order commands for Arkish to send out one hundred of his horsemen to capture and bring to Angmar a small band of 'spies'

that have come north from Rivendell. The second order then commands that this upstart Host out of Arthedain be crushed and the leaders be brought before the Witch-king - that is the order that set the Angmarim and orcs upon us. With this last order, it would seem that Arkish emptied his castle leaving it an easy mark for our small force. I think luck had shined upon us when we captured the messengers that we did, for the Ashâktur did not get a chance to re-fortify. If the Witch-king discovers the status of Eldanar, he will not waste a moment in setting a large host against us to take back what was his. Whatever we do, we must be rapid in our decision making."

"Then it is clear," replied Dirnhael, "we must ride north and catch the wain unawares before the Enemy finds out what has occurred here." He looked around to the men. "We still have a chance! Those who are too wounded to fight should consider riding south. If this was indeed a ploy of the Witch-king of Angmar, then I do not think we shall be able to hold Barad Eldanar. It will not be a safe place for respite and healing. The Enemy has spies all around us... we must strike quickly and then make haste for Fornost."

Eradin walked over to the hearth to warm himself. He looked around at the dining hall, seeing Lûnduf lying wounded upon a couch, as well as the other Dúnadan soldier of Dirnhael's Company. He thought about what Dirnhael had re-counted to him and how only 25 had ridden forth from Fornost and have come so far and had such a victory here at the very gates of Angmar!

He turned back to Dirnhael, "May I make a suggestion Dirnhael... perhaps a ruse? We have stung our enemy - yes, perhaps only slightly, but he will take notice. Understand, we have seen much over the last few weeks hiding throughout these lands and I will tell you, the Enemy is powerful, but even his forces have been ravaged by the plague. So, here is my charade..." Eradin paused a moment as he thought of how best to make his presentation. "Perhaps we should make it known that Barad Eldanar is in our hands. Perhaps we make it look as if the castle is now garrisoned with a great host of men. This most certainly will draw the Witch-king's attention and he will send a great force to remedy this affront to his might. And while all of his attention is bent on Eldanar, a small group may slip into the Iron Land and rescue Camentir."

Eradin paused for the others to grasp his idea, and then continued. "Now do not get me wrong, my men and I have made great efforts in our struggles against the Enemy and I do not offer them or myself up as a sacrifice, but we will play our part in this plan so that the man who had led us for so long can be retrieved from the Witch-king's hands. We will work out the details as to how we can escape from Eldanar but hold it long enough to give those who ride into Angmar a chance to enter and exit with Camentir. In either case, I do believe we have at least a day to make any decisions and allow both our hosts of men to rest and heal. What say you to this idea?"

Dirnhael considered Eradin's plan. Once before, Camentir's soldiers had distracted the Enemy at great cost to themselves so Dirnhael and his Company could slip by unnoticed. While they had been successful, Dirnhael recoiled at the idea of sacrificing good men once more - he did not want their blood buying his

escape, and there were far too few Men of the West to hold the lines as it stood already...

He had to admit, however, that the young commander's plan had merit. Perhaps there was room for compromise.

"I have no wish to see you or your men die defending a keep we cannot hope to hold. But I see wisdom in your plan. Assuming we can recover Camentir, and make our way back - the forces of Angmar will undoubtedly be in pursuit. They will want both their captor and their keep back. I suggest that we let them have one and keep the other..."

He could see the confusion in Eradin's eyes, but the man simply listened intently. Dirnhael stroked the scruffy cheek and continued.

"Let us slip away under the cover of night. Two days afterwards - when we will be near the wain - raise your banners aloft Barad Eldanar. This will catch his eye and keep it focused on the keep. It will likely take time for the Witch-King to gather his forces for an assault, but not more than a scant few days. In that time, we will try to catch up to the wain and free Camentir from his captors. We will then turn tail and make haste for the keep - hopefully still ahead of the Angmarim forces. We will reach Barad Eldanar, and then you and your men will abandon it. The Angmarim will find their keep - but no other indications that we were ever here. We will all make for Fornost together - armed, ready, and at speed."

He saw the flicker of light in Eradin's eyes - Dirnhael knew the look well - the look of a man who sees the possibilities... "What say you?"

Eradin smiled, "I say that you have become as wily as my commander Camentir! This plan is very sound! We shall do this... you just promise to bring Camentir home. I will see to it that my men and I escape from this cold, harsh land."

That said, Eradin then turned towards the others, "Come then, is there no food in this place? Let us find it and discuss our plans further."

Barad Eldanar was re-manned with the Dúnedain of the King's Third Host, now under the command of Eradin. The towers were mounted and guards posted and some of the soldiers worked in earnest to build a barricade before the main gates. All the while the commanders worked within the donjon devising their plan.

During the preparations, a moment was taken by Daelhun to make amends and to extend the hand of fellowship. He walked to the couch that the dwarf Nain was resting on. They had barely had time to rest and think about the things that had happened since they had first met.

"Well met, Nain." Daelhun said as he approached the warrior. "It is good to have another of your kind amongst our ranks, you fight well." The Dúnedain warrior held his hand out to shake the hand of the dwarf.

Nain had been trying to listen to the conversations of the men but the distance and his wounds had made it difficult. Now one of the youngsters had come over to chat.

He extended his hand and took Daelhun's, "Likewise... thank ye for the compliment but I'm no warrior. I only fight because I have to. I'd just as soon be pounding dwarven steel as

Easterling skulls. Any idea what the captain is going to be leading us into next?"

The man looked at the dwarf, looking at his wounds... he had fought well and fought naught for a cause that was his own, there was honor in this dwarf. "I expect that the search for a brave friend will continue."

While the two talked, putting prior differences behind them, Dirnhael, Fengel, Eradin and Edrahil sat at the great table in the dining hall. The quartet had found a crude, but useful map of Angmar. On it showed the positions of the Witch-king's fortifications and even gave them a rough idea of his army's disposition.

The most likely route that Camentir would have been taken was the road north straight out of Eldanar. If they were to attempt Dirnhael's plan, then those that were to infiltrate Angmar needed to be swift on horse. Edrahil brought this point to the Men's attention.

"Dirnhael, if this errand is to be attempted, then it cannot be made by a large force and those that pursue must be swift. Our host that we have led out of Fornost is now but eleven strong and some of them are wounded. The Dwarves cannot ride with enough speed, if they can ride at all due to their injuries, this being said, I council that you select five of us that are able and willing to go and leave the rest with Eradin to hold and then escape the keep."

"There is no need for selecting all five for I will be going. I might also suggest, since stealth is our mode, that our scout accompany us. He has acquitted himself well and his skills would be boon to our errand," said Durgil smartly.

Getting up from the couch where he had been lying after hearing the ramblings of the commanders, Lûnduf walked over to the dining table. He gripped his torso and used his axe as a crutch to help him make the distance. "And I'm supposed to sit around this keep licking my wounds while you go off and have all the fun?"

Hearing Lûnduf's concern and knowing that he had been with them from the start, Edrahil spoke to his comrade, "Lûnduf, it is no disrespect to your talents but speed is required here and your folk have never been keen on riding horses. I believe your talents will serve better here in the temporary defense of Eldanar alongside the men of Eradin. In fact, I believe that you and they will have a greater challenge before you than the riders that go north."

Then Fengel spoke knowing that he would be one of the chosen to go north, "Aye, don't fret Lûnduf, there will be many more necks for your axe before too long."

Edrahil spoke again, "I suggest we all get some rest before the trek into the *Iron Land* and then leave with the cover of night."

At Edrahil's last statement, Durgil realized he was tired... completely worn out really. "I'll see to the incarceration of the prisoners before anything else. Lûnduf, would you accompany me? Your Folk know stone and its work better than I and I want to make sure the cells are secure with no secret ways to escape." Listening to Lûnduf's complaint and Edrahil's retort, Nain looked once again to the Men that were plotting their next move. He owed them the debt of his life at least, and possibly his

brother's soul. He didn't feel that it was right arguing with them about how to repay it... whether they understood the debt didn't really matter. He would stay or go as they saw fit. Maybe his skills could be used to help defend the castle since he'd proved his scant warrior skills already. Looking back at his human companion he remarked.

"You'd better get over there with your brethren or they'll have you sitting here guarding the keep with me." And with that Nain gave Daelhun a shove off the edge of the couch.

"Before you go Durgil, let us finalize this plan..." said Dirnhael. It was decided that the four Men (Dirnhael, Fengel, Durgil and Daelhun) and the Elf Edrahil would ride north, while the Dwarves would use their considerable skills to aid the Army of the North during their absence.

Dirnhael spoke to Lûnduf and Nain - the former his trusted companion in since the day he left Tharbad so long ago, and the latter had proven to be a stalwart friend to them all. He apologized to both of them - he hated leaving them behind - he felt much more comfortable with them at his side. But this was best for them all, and even a few days at rest would help the dwarves regain their strength - so much had they spent taking Barad Eldanar.

With that done, the party members went about small tasks and then settled down for some rest. They wanted to make sure that they would be ready for the evening's ride. As night fell, covering the dark lands in a star-less cloak, the Five Riders prepared to set out to take Camentir back into the light.

Durgil stifled a yawn as he prepared his gear and horse -- the day's rest had been short and now they needed to be off, yet he was ready. Taking a moment to appreciate his new blade, he then girded it to his saddle in a manner facilitating easy access; he mounted his horse and drew his bow wanting to be prepared for anything. The road would not be easy and he silently wished there was another tracker among them, but he vowed he wouldn't fail Camentir and so he wouldn't.

The rest of the Company did the same, all the while the two Dwarfs stood and watched. Lûnduf grumbled his feelings about the current plan but he made no other attempt to dissuade Dirnhael - in his heart he knew they were right, speed was the key.

Eradin came to see them off, "Well Dirnhael, good luck with your search. We will wait for two days before we make our presence known to the Enemy, after that we will hold Eldanar until the situation becomes untenable."

The two warriors locked arms in salute and Dirnhael mounted with his men and Edrahil. He looked to see Andúril hanging off his saddle and knew the sword would be seeing more battle soon enough.

With a click and a spur, the Dúnadan's horse leapt forth and his comrades followed behind. They sped through the open area of Eldanar's courtyard and out through the makeshift gates, the Host of Eradin yelling a salute to inspire them on. And in moments, the five riders were back on a perilous road the looming shape of Barad Eldanar disappearing behind them.

Fengel took up point, riding a few yards before the others; the Éothrain's eyes were sharp and accustomed to the night. They had a long road before them and an even longer and possibly more perilous one behind, and somewhere out there was Camentir!

Standing on the battlements of Eldanar, Nain and Lûnduf looked at their comrades riding away towards the north. It did not take long for the horsemen to become nothing more than shadows to be swallowed up by the darkness of night and when they could no longer see them, they turned back towards the keep. The Dúnedain had done a good job thus far but with the morning light, the two dwarves would show them how to work stone.

As soon as the men were out of sight Nain turned and assayed the strengths and weaknesses of the fortifications around him. Two days would be a short time to shore up the doors and make the place look well defended.

"Northman!" he yelled towards Eradin, "have a few of your men search the place for armor and weapons that we can use to make our numbers appear larger and the rest of us must begin repairs on the gates."

He then stepped down and began hunting about the castle for tools that would be needed for the work to come.

FAR to the east and south, on a spur of the Misty Mountains, the Fell-beast pulled its leathery wings close to itself to try and warm its hideous form. Its rider had dismounted and now the dark king moved quickly towards his goal. The beast of Morgoth may have not served Sauron directly, but its allegiances should still be there. After all, he had gotten it to come this far already from the far north and the Grey Mountains.

Still, the beast had not done his bidding in assaulting the Elves and now after the fact, the Witch-king was pleased. He *had* wanted to see Elrond suffer but he also knew the energy that these beasts expended in such a task - even its travel here had taken a great deal out of it. Perhaps that was why Rivendell had yet to burn. Scatha would have rested for many years and the wraith needed him now.

The dark form of the Witch-king entered the looming cave that housed Scatha's magnificent form and the dragon was immediately aware of his presence. Its voice boomed throughout the chamber as its eyes sought him out.

"I know you are here, though it is difficult to see you at times. What is it you want and speak quickly... you disturb my rest!"

The irritation in the dragon's voice made the wraith take pause... he wondered if even he was safe from such a beast!

Edrahil and the others rode through the night and they moved at a swift pace, they had two days of travel to cover before they could hope to overcome the wain that drew Camentir north. The Elf thought that the rate of travel of the wagon would work in their favour... surely the Company's horses would move more swiftly.

Dirnhael kept to the regimen that they had started those many months ago when they had left Tharbad - ten hours worth of travel before they rested, weather and their steeds permitting. They would not be stopping this leg of travel until the sun was sitting on the eastern horizon.

The companions followed along the northern road keeping an eye and ear to the darkness around so that they would not be ambushed by some force of the Enemy. From the maps that they studied, the only thing that Dirnhael knew was before them on the road was the towers of Cargash. The parchments had shown two fortresses that sat upon either side of the North Road like a large gate into the lands of Angmar - *Nan Angmar* as it was known to those who lived within. The towers were roughly 35 miles away... the Company would cover most of that distance by morning.

In the light of campfires and torches, Nain and Lûnduf studied the castle walls and inner donjon. They looked to find any potential weakness that could be exploited by the enemy. The duo also sought out any tools that would aid them in getting the fortification into a better state of defense.

It did not take long for them to find some tools that would aid and supplies that could be used. Inside the donjon there was an armory for the Men and Dwarves to redress themselves and a forge that was housed off of the barracks. The skill of Nain would be essential in the honing of weapons and the repair of armour. Lûnduf's knowledge in war-craft would aid in the preparations of their deception. The castle would be made to appear as if it was manned by a large host, a host that could threaten the forces of Angmar!

Narrator Notes:

First of all, this scene was set up as an answer to the cliffhanger that we left in the last chapter and hopefully, you and your players haven't been waiting all this time for the resolution.

Anyway, as a result this scene in my game was primarily roleplaying - the meeting of the two forces of Dúnedain, the searching of the captured Barad Eldanar and the healing of the wounded.

The key NPC to be introduced here is Eradin, the soldier that took up command of the host of Arthedain after the death of Linwen in Chapter 4. If you remember, Linwen led the King's Third Host north on the trail of Camentir when the players would have been racing for Fornost with the Ephanial flowers.

Eradin is a capable leader and a Narrator can feel free to generate stats as necessary for this character but I would suggest no more Advancements than the level of the highest PC in your group. You do not want Eradin to defer leadership, but you also do not want a character that would naturally take over command of the whole situation.

The other soldiers of Arthedain feel free to generate as needed. I only wrote up their skill at arms and other pertinent combat information. There are a total of 67 soldiers including Eradin that ride into Barad Eldanar at the beginning of this scene.

Lastly, if you use the CODA mass combat system from either the *Core Rule Book (CRB)* or the *Helm's Deep Sourcebook (HDS)*, then you can generate Unit strengths for the upcoming mass combats.

Tests that may be necessary for this scene include (TN's may vary based on your game):

- Heal tests to tend to any wounded from the previous battle
- Diplomacy / Bearing / Persuade / Debate tests to determine how Eradin takes to the party
- Search tests to look for Camentir, any maps, any important documents, or if treasures (if this is a staple of your game) – documents that will be found are maps of Angmar with notations of troop positions, and a couple of written orders to and from the Ashâktur

SCENE 2 – PURSUIT INTO RUIN

Days 110-112 January 19-21, Barad Eldanar and under the shadow of Cargash

They rode hard through the night but weariness began to enter their limbs and muscles and sap out their ability to continue. Durgil was the first to falter and he slumped forward almost sliding from his saddle. If it were not for the strong arm of Fengel to grab him and hold him up, the Dúnadan would have toppled to the icy ground below. Dirnhael observed the assist by the Éothraim and reined in his horse bringing all of the riders to a halt. They had only traveled for a few hours and covered only ten miles but they were exhausted. They had been going for the past two days, through combat and wounds, to now racing north towards an unknown goal.

"We must stop and gather our strength, my friends," Dirnhael said. "Though haste is needed, we will do no good for our companions if we face the Angmarim unprepared. We will make camp and set out at first light."

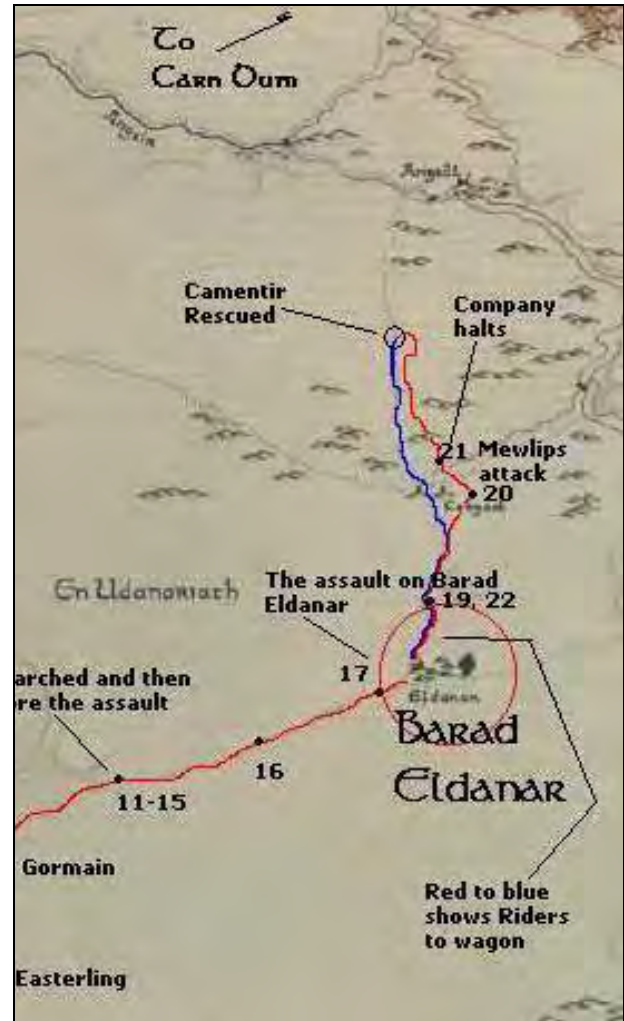
Durgil knew his friend was referring to him specifically, as for the last few hours his progress had been slow -- too slow to do them any good. This lowered his spirits even further than before. Fortunately, the others stayed away as he did not want to be near them in his mood.

With the break of day, Dirnhael went against his better judgment to make up the lost time by traveling under the sun. The riders mounted up and pushed on. They rode parallel to the road which was easily seen stretching north through rough prairie grasses and coarse rock. All was covered in snow and ice and looked very stark and bleak. Only the rich blue of the sky offset the grays and browns of the terrain around them, as the land rolled up and down. They were coming closer to a stretch of mountains that formed the lower border of Angmar. These high peaks could be seen on the distant eastern horizon.

They rode as stealthily as possible keeping an eye on the road to their left and the horizon before them, Edrahil's eyes straining to miss nothing. It was a difficult task with the roll of the land for Dirnhael did not wish to have his Company crest any of the high ground so as not to give away their presence.

Instead they wove around the bases of the small hills that were becoming ever more present.

The Company halted for a moment and Edrahil spoke as he stared north, "I am concerned Dirnhael - the eyes of the Enemy are many and though I have yet to see another person before us or behind, I can see large blackbirds flocking to our north... no doubt, these are Crebain."



Now a few leagues to the south, Eldanar was abuzz with preparation. Nain and Lûnduf and the men of Eradin worked feverishly to make the castle more defensive and to enhance their ruse.

Nain had men shore up walls that showed weakness; he had the great vines hacked from the walls so as not to allow an avenue of attack - one which he and his comrades had taken a great advantage of; and he spent time at the forge repairing and sharpening their gear. While he did this, Lûnduf's hands were not idle. The Dwarf of Khazad-dûm spent hours collecting old gear and emptying the armory of the castle. He prepared dummies of straw stuffed clothing and stood them up using pieces of wood along the towers and battlements of the outer wall and the donjon. To these dummies he added shields and spears creating ever present sentries to deceive their foes.

While the Dwarves did their part, Eradin's men did theirs by preparing discreet but deadly weapons about the keep - oil was poured onto the fields and crude caltrops were made. They spread these weapons as best they could but left a lane open for their own escape. The men also saw to the chopping of the iced moat. Using picks, axes and the strength of the horses, they broke up the ice around the castle to afford themselves the additional defense from the moat.

It had been two steady days of labor and Nain and Lúnduf looked about themselves at how their efforts were paying off and both smiled to themselves.

"It almost seems a shame to have to abandon this keep," thought Nain. It was beginning to look like a place that could hold off any horde the Enemy might throw at them. His revelry was swept away as a shadow seemed to blot the sun and he was seemingly smote by a wave of pure terror! The Dwarf hesitantly looked to the top of the donjon to see a great winged beast, like a huge hairless bird, roosting upon the crenellations. Mounted atop the creature was an even greater shadow!

He had achieved his goal. On his return flight to Carn Dûm, the Witch-king had decided to stop at Barad Eldanar and see for himself if the visions within his stone had been true. His great helmed head turned left and right and both Men and Dwarves quailed from his presence and gaze. He saw a host... a great host of Men and he knew that they did not serve him. They defied him! They had taken one of his most important fortresses and now they worked to strengthen it to oppose him. He would not let this be, Eldanar would burn and these upstarts would be slain and their dead bodies displayed along the borders of his country to show the penalty for attempting to bring war to his realm.

The great featherless creature reared back as he drew upon the reins and the Witch-king took one more quick glance about him. Then with a foul stench, the Fell-beast took to the air and bore the Nazgûl away.

The day's travel was long and they were all tired by the end of it, but at least a pleasant camp was set. As the evening set in, Dirnhael sat alone by the fire and began to worry. He had hoped they would have made better time - he wanted to be on his way back to Barad Eldanar soon. Every day they were away from the keep, his heart filled with dread - not for himself and his riders, but for Lúnduf, Nain and the Soldiers of Arnor. They may hold a mighty keep, but Dirnhael feared that his friends were in more danger there than he was in the frozen wastes of these wild hills... the terror gripped his heart. Like a blur in the sky, the winged shape flew over them heading north. The Company froze with fear, some dropping to the ground and covering their heads, others reaching for their weapon hilts. Even Edrahil showed signs of fear as the shape flew by, but then it was gone. The companions all looked at one another but none made a guess at what it might have been.

No more than five miles to their north and west sat the two towers that were called Cargash on the map that they had taken from Eldanar. Edrahil's long sight had espied them and Dirnhael decided it best to circumvent the fortifications. The Company

had ridden off their parallel course of the road and started a wide circle to the east.

As the sun was hanging low in the western sky, the five riders came upon a large swath of scrub that grew from one to five feet in height. The plant was a thick and hardy one that was suited for the clime - it also had barb like thorns that grew throughout. Edrahil knew the plant and called it Thistletyne. The briar stretched north for miles although there were broken paths through it that the riders followed until they found their discreet encampment. The one good thing was that the Thistletyne made for good fire wood.

Now Dirnhael, the fear subsiding in him, looked about and thought about tomorrow's travel. They should bypass the castles and hopefully be caught up with the wain that drew Camentir north. It was Durgil's first watch so Dirnhael laid back and closed his eyes. His comrades followed suit taking the advantage to get as much rest as they could.

The moon was rising in the cold winter sky over the lowlands of Angmar. The warg brought its snout up out of the trodden snow. The smell was different. It smelled the horses, and it also smelled Men-folk... but there was a strange scent of someone other. The large vulpine creature gave a growl to its fellows and loped forward. The coarse briars were scattered all over this land but that was okay, the beast knew well the way through the thorny maze.

It was gone. The Dwarves and Men began to recover from their despair. Nain stood and brushed himself off. He was angry with himself for running and he was still cursing to himself in dwarven when he got back to the foyer of the Donjon. The crisp morning air was clear and cold but there was no sign of the horrible beast that had struck fear into his heart. He went back to the forge and continued working, even gruffer than before because of his anger.

"Back to work ya layabouts, apparently the foul beasts know we're 'ere. Get back to work; we'll need to move double quick now."

Around him, the castle began to get back to work. It was the second day of their efforts and they still had at least five days to go until the two Dwarves would feel that the fortification was sufficient to hold off a formidable attacker. Little did they know that they had less than four.

Durgil took a position amongst the rock and brambles where he would have sufficient cover while also retaining the ability to keep an eye on the surrounding land. The night was clear with stars and some moonlight, but the wind over the land blew in such gusts that he couldn't hear much beyond the campsite.

Dirnhael's eyes opened to see the shadowy form of Durgil over him, his finger to his lips. "Shhhh...." was the only sound that Durgil made as he went to rouse the others.

Once all were awake, Durgil motioned to Dirnhael and the five companions quietly padded over to a low growth of

Thistletyne. From their vantage point and with the light of the moon above, they looked out upon a semi-clear plain of Angmar and the road that they had been traveling on far off in the distance. Movement could be seen; movement of what looked to be a great host marching south. From this distance it was not discernible as to who they were, but by the hour of night it could be assumed that it was a large group of orcs.

Dirnhael could not get a count of the horde, but by his eye he estimated their number to be at least two hundred... two hundred against the forty-eight that defended the walls of Eldanar. The Dúnadan made another estimate, this one of time and figured that they would reach the keep in two to three days.

"Hissthh," issued through Edrahil's clenched teeth and he grabbed Fengel's arm to get his attention, but all the Company members heard him. The elf pointed to the south and west as a hulking shadow, low to the ground, issued out of an opening in the bramble. The creature lowered its snout to the ground and sniffed at the ground. It was less than thirty meters from their encampment. Behind the Company, a horse gave a nervous, quiet whicker as it caught the Warg's scent.

Dirnhael quickly surmised that the possibility of evading the Warg was slim - the horses could be easily heard or smelled by the foul beast, and the creatures had the advantage of darkness and terrain. He glanced up at the moon, thankful that its pale light was bright and clear, and then quickly pulled his bow and nocked an arrow. As his fingers smoothed the fletching, he signaled to the others to do the same. At least the Warg had not spotted them yet...

Durgil readied himself as he spoke softly, "These creatures also fear fire... maybe we could set the brambles in the area aflame. It could keep them at bay, while giving us a chance to slip away. The only problem is that the enemy in the distance may see it and send some to investigate at the least, or, at the worst, send a message to Angmar."

"That is a large band of Orcs across the plain. I would rather they not know we are here," Dirnhael whispered. He smiled a quick smile at Durgil. The young man was talented and resourceful, but Dirnhael had learned by experience that sometimes men need to simply stand their ground and face a lesser enemy directly rather than risk being discovered by a larger one... his mind flashed back to Angbor for a minute, but then the snuffling of the Warg jarred him back to stark reality.

Daelhun and Fengel also readied bows while Edrahil began to ponder if there was any magical aid that he could offer. Meanwhile, the Warg was joined by another of its kin and it snapped at it causing it to slink down and return to a position behind the alpha. The lead beast turned its gaze towards the hidden Company and the moonlight glowed a pale yellow in its eyes. It sniffed the air in the Men and Elf's direction and began to take a few steps towards them, but then a crying wail pierced the night sky.

"AAARRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOOOOO!"

The Company and the Wargs all looked to the north in the direction of the cry and the Wargs seemed to be startled. Nervously, the lead beast looked about, then turned and led its pack the way it had come apparently abandoning their hunt of the riders.

"That was close," breathed Fengel.

"Nay friend... peril has not left us yet. I believe it has become worse!" whispered Edrahil as he pointed to the northern briars. Moving within the Thistletyne was a group of man-shaped creatures that slunk and snuffed at the ground. They had once been men but could no longer be mistaken for them...

Daelhun drew his sword and awaited word from his commander as to how they were going to handle the situation. Dirnhael whispered a moment later, "If we strike quickly, we can catch them unawares - if only for a moment. Better that then to wait for them to come upon us."

Heeding Dirnhael's command, Fengel pulled forth his blade and charged the first gaunt shadow that came forth from the Thistletyne bramble. Edrahil also reacted. The Elf knew his skills of combat were not as worthy as those of his comrades, and his *arts* could bring attention to the Company from the passing horde not far away. So, instead he took up a position between the moving shapes and the horses. If they were what he thought, they would take any kind of meat!

Daelhun charged off on his commander's order, his sword flashing quickly and his adrenaline coursing as he struck at the nearest foul creature.

Staying at a distance, Durgil fired an arrow and was pleased to see that it struck true. He then moved off to his right, near the rocky cliff, keeping an eye out for the wargs' progress.

The attacks made by Fengel and the rest of the Company landed on the gaunt undead, but did little to slow them down. The mewlips went into a berserker rage. With claws and teeth, the ghouls began leaping over the bramble taking the attack to the companions who found themselves pressed.

Fengel drew in his breath as claws tore through his heavy tunic and into his flesh; the Éothraim could feel his undercoat growing wet with blood.

Daelhun, who committed himself wholeheartedly to the attack, was ill prepared to defend himself from the deadly attacks by the mewlips. He struck a blow to the creature before him but then felt its claws as they tore back at him. He was only able to make a single, half-hearted attempt to block the attacks and failed miserably. The stings from the enemy were absorbed slightly by the armour that he wore but he still felt the pain as they tore through and into his soft tissue.

Cursing himself for his clumsy attack a moment before, Dirnhael pushed away the first slash, but the second found its mark, and the Dúnadan recoiled from a combination of pain and rage.

Another arrow winged through the night to strike one of the undead and Andúring and Cerduil both landed a successful blow and two of the ghouls fell to the ground dead. Edrahil from his distant position drew forth his own sword. He had thought through the spells he knew but none would suit their need so he resigned to engage the creatures alongside his friends.

Daelhun reeled back as he was met with a terrible attack from the enemies. Suddenly unsure of himself Daelhun began to back away, feeling his muscles weaken by the ferocity of his enemy. Yet the aid from Edrahil drew off one of the creatures though his attack was blocked away.

The horrific creatures were relentless. Dirnhael could hear his friends howl out in pain - pain that he felt, as well. He brushed away two slashes, but yet another slipped through his defenses, and he felt their sting once more... there were so many of them, and their stench stung the stalwart Dúnadan's nose even as he fought for his very life.

Weary and bleeding from many wounds, Fengel brought Cerduil up once more to try and vanquish one of his foes but the sword fell feebly to his side, the warrior unable to sustain any aggressive attack. Edrahil saw his friend was failing and knew he must do something. He began to chant under his breath.

Edrahil had never been to the land of Aman and he had not yet been born during the *Years of the Trees*, and thus had never seen their light. Yet with his arcane cant, a magnificent aura that seemed to dwell within others of his kin, who had seen those days, emanated from the Sindarin Elf causing the fell creatures before him to cower. Edrahil knew the danger of the use of such power in this land and this close to a horde of their enemy, but his comrades were faltering and something needed to be done. He spoke with a voice that was enhanced by the mana around him...

"Down curs of the Shadow! One of the Eldar stands before you and commands you thus! GO NOW AND FEAR THE COMING LIGHT!"

The mewlips hesitated and some staggered back into the bramble away from the elf and his companions. Again Edrahil spoke, but this time as a whisper to his friends...

"Disengage and quickly mount! We must take advantage of this distraction and use the bulk and speed of our horses to push through these creatures and move north towards our goal."

That said, Edrahil began to move slowly backwards but maintained his ominous stance. He feared his companions' wounds were severe but if they could at least put some distance between themselves and these foul creatures, he could tend them.

Edrahil had done it again - his magic had turned the tide of battle. Dirnhael knew his men were injured; some badly, and he needed to buy them time to get to their mounts.

"To your steeds," he said, as he brought Andúring above his head. "I will join you soon enough!"

Again Dirnhael slashed out at his enemies and Andúring struck. Another of the mewlips fell to his onslaught and the men around him were rallied by his actions.

Daelhun knew he should heed his commander's order, but he also saw the slight chance that they could finish the abhorrent creatures. Yet his wounds were bad and he had to get away. He fought himself in to heed the command but then turned and ran to get to the horses. Mounting quickly, he grabbed up Dirnhael's mount's reins and moved closer so that his commander could climb atop his horse and they all could clear the area.

Holding his side, Fengel slowly moved back from the two creatures with which he had been combating, never taking his eyes from them. The advantage that Edrahil had created may have saved the Éothraim for he felt weak and knew that if he fell, the ghouls would not allow him up again. He continued

backward until he bumped into the horses. The animals were skittish from the presence of the mewlips but they seemed to be calmed by their masters as they climbed into their saddles.

Edrahil stood just behind Dirnhael and Durgil. The effects of the magic were beginning to wane, but he needed to keep up the advantage for his comrades as much as possible. Again he yelled out an intimidating command.

"Return to your holes foul servants of the Shadow! Lest you feel more of our wrath!"

The creatures had very little intelligence, only the need to devour the flesh of the living. Still, they knew that before them stood one of the Eldar who contained great power and they feared him! Scampering and scurrying over themselves, the ghouls fled from the small encampment disappearing into the dimly lit night. They shoved through the harsh, spined bramble before them uncaring as the Thistletyne tore into their flesh.

In moments, the companions were alone with no threat before them, only the dark patches of bramble; the harsh, spined wood reaching up from the ground like cold, cracked claws. They were a dangerous reminder of the cold land around them... the cold land of Angmar.

Dirnhael immediately turned to see if the passing army had taken notice of the Company but they were further down the road from where they had been first seen. The fight had gone unnoticed! Still, Durgil slowly moved to where the wargs had disappeared to make sure that those creatures were not going to be threatening anytime soon. Except for their tracks, he saw no other trace.

Running back, Durgil mounted alongside his comrades. Though they were weary and wounded, they would take the opportunity to move from the encampment and try to find another location where they could hole up and rest and allow Edrahil to tend their wounds.

The only direction they could go that would take them north was in the same direction that the mewlips had fled. They had no choice and steered their horses through the bramble continuing the circuitous route around the towers of Cargash. The track weaved back and forth but still they made a northerly progress and did not again see the creatures that had attacked them earlier.

The Company pushed on under the wan light of the moon, the path bringing them to a small ridge that dropped less than five feet down to a mist cloaked plain of coarse, frozen grass. The horses began to whicker and they nervously put their ears back but continued to follow their masters' prodding. As they rode, the men and elf could see upon the frozen ground broken metal rings that were once shields and rusted and shattered weapons. The piles of wrecked pieces of war also showed evidence of the fallen - bones shone white from the moon above.

"We ride upon a field of battle," spoke Edrahil. "T'was long ago, but the Rhudaurim once tried to keep back the corruption of Angmar. Unfortunately they fell to greed and temptation, betraying themselves and their kin until at last they aided in the ruin of Cardolan."

Unbeknownst to all but the Eldar, the dead that still walked moved along in a parallel course with the riders waiting for some

opportunity. Yet the power of Edrahil kept the creatures at bay. "Hopefully," thought the Sindar, "until the break of day!"

Their progress was slow but went unhindered and at long last they climbed up off of the plain, back into the brambles, on the north-east side of the enemy's towers. The road was about 500 meters to their left when they came upon a nook within the Thistletyne that gave them ample cover. They slid from their saddles and most fell to the ground to lay exhausted. Dirnhael fell asleep as Edrahil tended the claw rakes on his arms, legs and torso.

Narrators Notes:

This scene is all about the chase after the wagon and the need to be stealthy, all the while the force left at Barad Eldanar prepares for the inevitable attack.

The Narrator will want to maintain the desperation in this chase and also play the environment of Angmar against the characters. Stamina tests for traveling are essential - this may cause Weariness which may also cause the need for the players to stop and rest, or at least make their test rolls a bit more challenging.

Remember, the further they need to go into Angmar the worse their situation will become. The landscape should be rough for the horses, the suppressed feeling of the land should be evident to the heroes and play against their morale, and the winter makes for very unpleasant rest and a warm campfire can be a mortal enemy.

If you look at the map above, you will see (unclearly) two little markings that represent the two towers called Cargash. They loom over the road into Angmar and the party will need to circumvent them to the best of their ability. The bad thing is that there is the ancient battlefield on the east side of the road and not all those that died here are at rest; thus the mewlips. You will find the stats for these creatures in the *Hall of Fire*, Issue #8. As Narrator, you will want to at least match the challenge of these creatures to your PC's strength, if not slightly supersede it.

One other point I'd like to mention, the appearance of the Witch-king at Eldanar was not to invoke a fight with the Nazgûl, only to add dramatic effect to the scene and aid in the demoralization of the defenders.

Tests or mechanics that may be used for this scene:

- **Overland Travel:** *This optional rule simplifies Weariness for long overland travel.* Rather than making many Stamina tests over time intervals, one roll is made with the TN of the test equaling the number of miles traveled (i.e. 20 miles = TN 20). Apply modifiers for Pace (Walk -2, Jog/Trot +0, Run +2, Sprint/Gallop +4), Terrain (easy ground -2, average ground +0, rough ground +2, very rough ground +4), and if any Beasts of Burden are used to make the travel (i.e. riding a horse) -5 to Stamina test TN. Degree of success determines the number of Weariness levels suffered: 3 on a disastrous failure, 2 on a complete failure, 1 on a failure, 0 on any success. Also, if a Disastrous failure is rolled, the character must stop there and then, too exhausted to keep going for that day. Roll 2d6 and subtract

it from the TN to determine how many miles were actually covered before the character needed to stop.

- **Sleeping in the Rough:** *This optional rule makes camping out in the wilderness more tiring.* A character recovers Weariness from the previous day normally, but upon waking after sleeping in the rough he must make a Stamina test at TN 5, plus modifiers for the following conditions: sleeping on the ground without bedding (+5), insufficient or interrupted sleep (+5), not sufficiently protected against cold, wind, or rain (+5), insufficient food or water (+5), sleeping in leather armor (+5) or in mail armor (+10). On any success, the character does not suffer additional Weariness; on a failure the character suffers 1 level of Weariness (2 levels on a disastrous failure).
- For the party members that chase the wagon carrying Camentir, the Narrator will want to require Track and Stealth tests.
- For any characters that remained in Barad Eldanar, the Narrator may require Siegecraft, Stonecraft or any related Craft tests to reinforce the old castle. No matter what, the Narrator should allow the gates of Eldanar to be barricaded only with the ruin of the old doors; they should not have time to fix the doors themselves.

SCENE 3 – BESIEGED

Days 112-115 January 21-24, Barad Eldanar and under the shadow of Cargash

The morning came bright with an icy blue sky over the white blanketed land and for a moment the Men in both Eldanar and those huddling close within a thorny hideaway, along with their Elven and Dwarven companions felt hope rise within them.

"We must press on," Dirnhael said. "Though we are weary, time is now our enemy - and the enemy of those back at Barad Eldanar."

He looked around at his men - was he pushing them too far? He hoped not - but he saw no alternative...

"I told you we should have burned the brambles," Durgil said in mild jest. "But I agree; this is no longer just for Camentir now."

Dirnhael laughed - for the first time in what had seemed like ages. He clapped his young friend on the shoulder, and wandered off to see how Edrahil was faring with the others...

Edrahil checked over all of their bandages once more and then they mounted. If the weather held, along with their strength, they would hopefully see the wagon upon the road. Hopefully. The time was running short and the miles to Carn Dûm were slowly dwindling.

They picked through the Thistletyne heading in a northwesterly direction back towards the road north. The towers of Cargash were behind them and now they should be able to make greater speed by once again using the roads and trails of Angmar.

Edrahil sat for a few moments staring back towards the south and the castle Eldanar two days away. He worried about those they had left behind and what they would soon face. He hoped that when he and his comrades once more passed by the Dúnedain keep that there would be many who would be able to accompany them back home.

"Come on Edrahil," said Fengel over his shoulder. The Éothraim had paused to wait for his Sindarin friend. With a nod to each other, the two spurred their horses after the others.

Standing on the battlements of Eldanar, Nain sniffed at the air and stared north. He had spent many of the last forty-eight hours hard at work in the smithy and his hands were tight from the laborious heat. He heard a shuffle and turned to see Lúnduf approaching. The Dwarf craftsman knew not why but Edrahil came to his mind and then he knew that they would have but one more night of peace.

The day drifted wearily by like those prior and while Dirnhael and his Company made good headway in catching up to the wain that drew Camentir north, Lúnduf was drawn from his labour by the sound of shouting. He set down the tool that he had been using and walked about the wall of the donjon to peer up at three sentries on the west outer tower. The Dwarf began to sprint towards the tower entrance and was met by Nain and Eradin who had also heard the alarm. The trio mounted the stairs that led to the roof and moments later stepped back out into the afternoon sky. One of the sentries turned to Eradin and spoke.

"Commander," he said as he pointed out to the white plain below, "It would appear that the Enemy has come, or at least a reconnaissance!"

Lúnduf peered through the crenellation and saw a recognizable banner unfurled - it was that of the Easterling, Sacal who had attacked them in the few weeks prior. He sat before his colors upon a large roan and behind him was a troop of cavalry roughly thirty strong.

"They are sizing us up..." whispered Eradin behind him.

Nain grunted. He was no warrior but had fought enough orcs and goblins to know a thing or two. Besides, you couldn't tell an orc from an Easterling at this height anyway. "Keep the men off the battlements till they come closer, there's no point in letting them gauge our strength without tasting it. Sentries only. If they charge or advance then we will open fire. Have everyone prepare for the battle just in case."

Dirnhael and his riders pushed themselves on through the morning and into the dusk of early evening. When the sun was beginning to fall towards the western horizon, the Company mounted a hill and from their new height could see the road north stretch out before them. The wagon was close enough to be seen by the eyes of the Men as well as the Elf - it still rolled north at a slow pace, being drawn by a pair of horses. Around their quarry rode an entourage of seven other riders. Dirnhael counted... seven riders and two men on the wain. It was going to be a challenge.

"We need a distraction," said Edrahil. "We need to draw the riders away from the wagon and while they have been drawn off, we take Camentir."

"I'll go. Three for the distraction and two for the rescue?" Durgil queried Dirnhael.

"The 'distraction' will be far more than that, I fear," said Dirnhael. "We may be able to make headway, but we will have to face at least most of these men with steel in hand."

Dirnhael looked to his wounded comrades, and then his eyes flashed momentarily towards his Elven friend - if they ever were in need of his powers, it was now...

Noticing Dirnhael's look around, Durgil asked, "Is there anywhere ahead that we could lay an ambush for them to maybe even the odds?"

"Exactly what I was thinking," said Dirnhael. They are not expecting us, and we have both bow and steed available - and Edrahil. This, plus the element of surprise, gives us a chance." He looked around the group. "I am open to suggestions. We need a plan that will deliver a deadly blow to our foes quickly. We do not wish to stand toe-to-toe with them in our present condition any longer than we must."

The Elf spoke, "The horsemen guard must be drawn from the wain and not for any purpose of combat. They must be drawn out and led away as far as is possible and for long as is possible. It will be a game of cat and mouse - the mouse, or mice, keeping the attention of the riders while the rest of our Company can pluck our friend from the Enemy's grasp." Edrahil continued, "I suggest this Dirnhael... Fengel and I ride about and come before those below us. We will give them a reason to pursue, I promise you." The humorless smile that crossed the Elf's face told the others what he meant.

"I choose Fengel as my companion because he is most wounded and would do best not to get into another skirmish. He is born to the saddle and will be able to evade pursuit alongside me. We will draw off our enemy, lose them from our tail, and then meet you at our encampment from this morning."

He looked to Dirnhael, "That is my suggestion..."

It was a risky plan. There were only five of them left, and if Edrahil and Fengel departed, that would leave only Dirnhael and his two younger charges to face the rest - and only Durgil was truly hale. They had to eliminate the guard and take Camentir back to their encampment quickly in case Edrahil and Fengel had not lost their pursuers. It had two large benefits, however - they may not have to face all the soldiers in battle, and they would already be on the run - looping around and turning back towards Barad Eldanar as quickly as possible.

"We will commence as the sun sets. The veiling darkness that follows will aid Edrahil and Fengel on the run, and will disguise our approach. After the horsemen have been drawn away, we must strike fear into our enemies and end the battle with haste."

Fengel listened intently to Dirnhael and a wolf-like smile appeared on his face. He had been raked many times by the abominable monsters that had set upon them the night before, but he would not let his friends down. He drew in a great breath and twisted the wood of his spear.

He reached behind him and pulled his quiver free from his saddle and handed it to Durgil... "You will need these more than I. Come Edrahil, let us head out east using the terrain to mask our movement and come to the fore of these rogues. Camentir will be freed of his captors soon enough!"

Durgil graciously accepted the quiver, his own being nigh empty, "May Elbereth shine upon your path." Though tired from the long day of riding, he was more than ready to get this over with.

Edrahil looked to Dirnhael while nodding at Fengel's words, "Remember, we shall meet at our last encampment... look for us there! We will not tarry on the way but should we not come, wait no more than a mid-day (or night) for us."

With that the Sindar turned towards Fengel, "Come!"

The two rode down the east side of the hillock and wove in between the available cover as they looped around north.

The afternoon sun sets leaving a dusky sky as Dirnhael, Durgil and Daelhun ghosted the wagon that slowly rolled up the north road. They had lost sight of Fengel and Edrahil soon after they had left the Company, the two riders moving with great stealth to overtake the Easterlings. Dirnhael prayed that they were all right. He had lost Angbor those many weeks before and he still felt the responsibility for his death... he did not want to lose another of his friends. Friends? Yes, that is what they had become. Good friends and true and very important to him.

They pushed on and the trio began to wonder if they would know when Edrahil would make his distraction. It was getting dark and it could only be assumed that they wain would soon stop for the night. Already, the three Men had lost sight of the moving caravan, they only knew that the road before him was the most obvious path and so continued riding along it.

Suddenly, the dark horizon lit up with a great flash and then it lit up again. The light was followed moments later by a very loud BOOOOOMMMM!!!

That was the signal...

Fengel and Edrahil had ridden in the recesses of the land and behind any foliage or elevations that they could find making a great half-loop north to come around the Enemy to their fore. There was no sign of any movement except for the occasional bird of prey slowly hanging on the winds looking for a small grouse or a rodent that would make an evening meal. The elegant birds espied the world uncaring of the borders of Men and the great events that took place below them. Yet, hanging on those same winds were some eyes that did care. Crebain flocked to the north and east and Edrahil kept a wary eye towards the treacherous creatures.

The two rolled up a hillside and saw that they were just north of the wagon and its entourage. They spurred their horses and continued their path. It would not be long.

Soon, Fengel heard the clop of his horse's hooves upon the gravel of the north road and he reached down and drew forth Cerduil. The wagon would be along very soon and the Éothraim wondered what the Sindar had prepared. As if he had read his thoughts, Edrahil spoke.

"Stay close but be prepared to make a quick escape to the east and south. We will use enough speed to keep our pursuers on our tail but enough distance to not allow them to engage us."

The Elf drew no weapon but Fengel could hear him begin to mumble and then he whispered, "They come!"

The wagon approached and the drivers and guards sat slumped in their saddles. They were tired and cold and very frustrated. Their prisoner did not look like he would survive the trip. They had at least three more days until they reached the city of Carn Dûm; still none dared think of what the penalty would have been not to see through their charge.

The lead rider glanced up and saw the dim grey shapes on the road before him. He quickly raised his hand to stop the caravan and all watched as the two shapes approached.

"Who are they?" he thought, only to have the question gruffly asked by one of his fellows. The north road through Angmar was usually a busy route but traffic became sparse in winter - especially this winter with the sickness that had taken hold of so many. They were in the heart of the land of the Witch-king; certainly this could be no threat. Still, there had been no call of greeting or challenge so the lead rider reached down to grab his weapon; it slid out of its scabbard with a cold ring.

"Who are ye?!" he yelled, but no answer came. The cloaked shapes just continued to approach. The guard thought of the haunted lands to the east and his heart began to pound, but then these two unknown individuals were riding horses. Surely no steed would accommodate one of the accursed walking dead?

The lead shape rode to where he stood just over 15 meters from the wagon caravan and stopped. The second rider took up a position right behind him.

With the darkening sky, the chief Easterling again made his challenge, this time more threateningly. "You'll tell us who you are or we will skewer you and leave you to whatever carrion will take your bones!"

Then suddenly, Edrahil drew back his cloak and the light of the Eldar seemed to shine within his face as he commanded loudly, "And you shall get thee gone rogue for war has come upon this land and it is you who are no longer safe! We have come to take back he who is our companion and you shall make no attempt to stop us in this!"

With his last words, Edrahil lifted his hand and from it was loosed a massive arc of electricity. The lightning reached out between the Easterlings and struck the wain's forward axle causing a great flare of burnt wood and scorched metal. The accompanying boom caused all of the horses around them to spook and the Easterlings were suddenly either thrown to the ground or were carried off by their panicked steeds. Even Fengel and Edrahil needed to make an effort to calm their mounts as they also began to bolt and buck.

The pair of horses that had drawn the wagon leapt at the massive lightning strike and they bolted forwarded literally ripping the damaged axle from the wagon and disappearing into the oncoming night.

Edrahil's horse reared from the explosive sound of his magic and the Elf was thrown to the ground, landing hard. Fengel also had his mount spook but the skilled Éothraim rolled from the back of his horse to land on his feet, a little unbalanced but weapon at the ready.

Before the two, the Easterlings were in disarray. The wagon that had been drawing Camentir north was a wreck with its yolk and fore axle gone and the few remaining guards and drivers lay sprawled on the ground. Edrahil stood up shakily and drew forth his weapon and readied himself for any attacks from the enemy.

The Easterlings, all but one, also began to stand up and Fengel and Edrahil could see now that these men, if some could be called that, were made up of both young and old. The Ashâktur had pieced together a wain guard of his least capable folk and now they stood before the Eldar, some cringing and others trying to make the most effective threatening stance that they could.

Edrahil and Fengel needed to decide a new plan and quick... it did not look like they would be drawing off these men, but then the Easterling's looked like they offered little threat. The Elf looked to his comrade to see if he had any ideas.

Not far away, Dirnhael and his two comrades began to move as soon as they heard the large boom that was most likely Edrahil's work. They paralleled the road in the fading light to approach close enough to see the situation and to see if Edrahil and Fengel had had success. They then would make their move, whatever that might need to be.

As they closed, a horseman came racing down the road, his mount obviously controlling his course, passing the trio with neither notice nor threat. This would have been a comical site to Durgil if it weren't for the possibility that Camentir could be further injured or worse.

"I see no reason for continuing this tactic; we can take Camentir and be off," he said to his fellows.

"Be wary of overconfidence," said Dirnhael. "We are in a dark land."

It was obvious that Edrahil had done his job well - they had the element of surprise and their opponents seemed ill-equipped for the role. His friend never ceased to amaze him. As he saw Edrahil and Fengel fall, however, he knew that the time had come - there would be no more waiting. Nodding to Durgil and Daelhun, Dirnhael flipped his shield from his back, drew Andúring, and began to sprint across the frozen plain...

The confusion of the moment had given Edrahil and Fengel the time to re-compose themselves and both began to move forward, ready for combat but also with hands out to try and calm the Easterlings. Edrahil knew his powers were still heightened by his spell and he spoke to the oldest of the guards, his voice softer and not as threatening.

"All is well, we will harm none of you if you just lay down your arms and leave the wagon and your prisoner behind and make no attempt to return here or follow us. Do you understand, and do you agree?"

The guard stepped back a few paces and held his hands out to his comrades to have them not do anything rash. The Elf was powerful, he could tell and though they outnumbered the two strangers, still the words held wisdom. He was cold, he cared not for the broken man that lay in the wain, and this was not worth an early death... not after the many years he had already spent living.

In his own language, he ordered the others to grab up what they could. At the same moment, Dirnhael and the other two Dúnedain rode into the circle of activity and the Easterlings suddenly drew back in defense. But Edrahil stepped between all and again confirmed his promise...

"No one will harm you!" Both groups looked at one another and then the Easterlings began to walk south down the road looking for their mounts and towards some unknown goal.

The tension in the air seemed to dissipate and the Company quickly ran to the back of the wagon. There lay the once proud man that they knew as Camentir. His hair and beard were matted and had straw clinging; his hands and feet were tied and seemed swollen from the bindings. He was bruised in many places and his clothing was a tattered mess.

Dirnhael pulled him carefully to a sitting position and Camentir opened his eyes with a groan. They were still bright and held the same defiant glint that they had when the two had first met. The Captain of the King's Third Host had not been broken of mind, though his body seemed to have been put through the trials.

A slight smile formed in the corner of Camentir's mouth and he whispered, "Dirnhaelll..."

Behind them all, Fengel glanced to Edrahil with a look of great respect - the Sindar had brought them victory and no harm had come to any of the participants. He placed a hand on Edrahil's shoulder and smiling, "You are truly a wise warrior my friend. I really wasn't up for the idea I had."

Durgil was overcome with emotion. Even though it was a lifetime and false name ago, there was the man whom he offered up his life for numerous times at his command and did so once again to rescue him. Dismounting, he rushed to the elder man's side. "Camentir! Lord, it is I, Findor... are you alright? Are you injured?"

Camentir looked up at the youth and he searched his cloudy mind to place the face of the man before him. "I remember an anxious young man that was in my charge. T'would seem that you heeded well your training to have brought you through such perils to come at last here to this cold land. Well met again, lad!"

"We must be moving soon Dirnhael," said Edrahil as he turned to summon his horse. "We must make for at least our campsite from this morn... there I can administer more aid to Camentir. Can you travel Captain?"

"I will manage what I must to put this place behind me!" Camentir flexed as Fengel cut the bindings from both hands and feet. Daelhun brought over a blanket from his horse and wrapped it around the man as he struggled to gain some composure.

"Daelhun, mount and scout the immediate surrounds while we prepare to depart," asked Dirnhael.

Daelhun nodded to his commander and went again to his horse. He mounted, rode about the wain and a ways down the road, looking for some high ground to search for any signs of their enemies. The night sky was darkening but the Dúnadan peered off into the evening.

Nain and Lûnduf continued in their efforts to prepare the castle but time was running short. While Dirnhael and Company were carrying Camentir back south in the cover of night, the dwarves stood together once more on the battlements looking to see if the dark had brought any change. None could be seen. Even the Easterlings had moved out of sight although Eradin and the rest knew that they had not gone far.

The Easterling force did not look enough to make any attack on the castle. In truth it had been no larger than the force that Dirnhael had led against Eldanar, but the Company out of Fornost had the element of surprise. If the night brought nothing new, then the next would for sure - the Dwarves did not know why they felt that... they just did.

The Company of rescuers rode into the hidden nook that they had spent the night before, the Thistletyne surrounding all. They slid from their saddles, bodies from wounds aching and limbs feeling numb. Edrahil assisted the others in prepping bed rolls and the elf dug a deep hollow in the ground. He then grabbed some of the dried out bramble and piled it in the hole that centered between their blankets. He had been training these past days though none of his friends knew it; his mind practicing new arcane words while he had ridden in a semi-trance like state. Now he felt it was time to give his studies the needed test. He chanted a short incantation and the twigs sparked into a small flame.

Smiling Edrahil spoke, "Make sure the fire does not burn higher than the hole."

He then stood and walked to his saddle bags and pulled forth a bottle that was sealed. He pulled forth the stopper and walked over to Dirnhael. "This is the last of Yarë's brew. He had given me the remainder whence we left his sanctuary and bid me save until time most dire. I believe that time is now... Dirnhael, Fengel, Camentir and Daelhun shall drink from this though it will make you sleep the night through. Do not worry, Durgil and I shall keep watch."

The Sindar handed the bottle to Fengel and instructed him to take a full draught of the bitter brew, which he did. With a nod of gratitude he took a he passed the bottle on, and then went to find a space to make his bed. He closed his eyes quickly began to drift off with visions of his home and his folk in his mind.

Dirnhael smiled at his wisest companion. "You are full of surprises, my friend," he said. "I had assumed it long since gone." He drank heartily. He hated to admit it, but he knew his strength was waning, and they all would need it to get back to Barad Eldanar, and then further south. The trip took longer than expected - he looked at the stars and hoped they did not tarry too long and put those they left behind at further risk. As Yarë's brew took over his battered body, he drifted off to sleep -

thankful that the healing potion would shelter him from such dark thoughts... even for one night.

"I heard a brief mention of this man, Yarë, when you arrived, but not much more than that. Who is he? Other than an apparently skilled healer," queried Durgil.

Edrahil looked to Durgil as he took the bottle from Camentir, "Yarë was a Dúnadan of Arthedain who had been tutored by an Istari named Radagast. He left the cities of his folk and took up sanctuary within the southern hills of the Oiolad and saw to the gardens of Ephaniel, the flower which may save the North. He was a shape-shifter as well and would take form of a great bear at times. He gave his life to aid us in the liberation of the town of Scotesfarm."

Upon the mention of the strange name Daelhun also perked up. Whoever this healer was, his skills were, or should be, legendary, yet he had never heard of him. Daelhun listened to the question that was presented and the answer that was given. Relaxing he could feel the strength come back to him, but he could also feel his eyes getting heavier each time he blinked and slowly the Éothraim began to drift off.

Nain looked over the battlement at the open field in front of him. The cold wind howled, chilling him to the bone. Nothing moved in the frigid air, as if the place were dead from the shadow that had lain over it for so long. In silence he turned and went back to his forge, there was more work to be done and he needed to complete it before the Easterlings came back with reinforcements. He did not know that tomorrow would be the last opportunity that they would have.

The sun rose bright and clear and the Company stirred. They all felt refreshed, even Camentir who had endured weeks of torture and malnourishment. Edrahil and Durgil also felt rested even though they had spent a great deal of the night awake. The stress that was released by the rescuing of Camentir made all of them more inspired. Now they need only get back to Eldanar and then out of this forsaken land.

After a brief meal, the group mounted, Camentir behind Fengel, and they began their road south. They wove through the bramble and hills of southern Angmar always keeping low to avoid being seen. The day passed for the riders and by sunset they were much closer to their goal. Unfortunately for their comrades, the orcs they had seen two nights prior had made it to Eldanar.

Again the two Dwarves and the Dúnadan commander were called to the walls. They had been working urgently to get as much done as they could in the waning light of day but left their labours to find out why they were being called. They climbed the tower on the north face of Eldanar and the reason was quickly apparent - moving on the horizon was a large force.

Eradin could see to the west as well and there sat on the field the small host of Easterlings that had been surveying them the day before. Their number had grown as well and the Dúnadan estimated a total of 300 hundred between the two

forces. He looked about at the battlements and the dummy sentries that they had displayed. He wondered if it would fool the enemy enough.

"Come," he said in a grim tone, "there is still much to do and our time is up."

Heeding the man's words, Nain nodded and began walking quickly down the stairs behind the great wall. "Aye... we'd best continue with the work on the gates. The rest will be less important soon enough."

Before the trio made it back down to the castle grounds, a voice called from atop the merlons. "Sir, a small group approaches with a flag of parley fluttering!"

Nain turned to Eradin, "I'll go out. You should stay here, the men will need someone to lead them if it goes badly and my contribution to the battle is mostly done. Although I would appreciate Lûnduf coming along in case things go badly."

He turned to look at the other dwarf expectantly and Lûnduf smiled with a wink and a nod.

Though it was less than half a day's ride to make it to the castle, the companions needed to stop. They needed to rest and be prepared for whatever they might find at Eldanar come mid-afternoon of the next day. Dirnhael sat and contemplated the travel that they had made the last... what?... twenty-two days? Yes, tomorrow would be the 23rd of January and the Dúnadan now desired to be back to Fornost as soon as he could. The lady that waited there held his thoughts as they drifted off to sleep.

As the others bedded down, Durgil approached Camentir. "Lord, you are looking well... it is good," he fumbled. "Tomorrow we likely ride into the midst of battle and I would not wish you to go there unarmed or unarmored. Since we don't have any spare armor with us, you could at least take this," he said, offering the great man his dwarf-made sword. "With my bow and short sword, I am adequately armed. I recently acquired this from a dwarf, one of those we are off to join at Barad Eldanar; it has served me well in the short time I've had it. I hope it meets with your approval."

Camentir gave a smile to Durgil as he took the weapon - the captain could see by its markings that it was a fine sword made by the Dwarves of the Ered Luin and it glinted in the waning light. "I accept thy offer of such a fine weapon and know you this that neither shall I dishonour the sword nor he that has lent it in time of such need."

Sacal looked down at the two Dwarves before him with a sneer, "This is who they have sent to parley!" he thought. He had not had many dealings with the folk of the mountains, although he had heard rumours that the Dwarves that inhabited the East were beggars. In either case, he decided that he did not like them and he thought even less of the Dúnedain for sending them. Well, he must get on with it...

"You come to parley for the soldiers of Arthedain?" he asked. With a nod from Lûnduf, he continued. "Very well... I am Sacal and I speak for my master, Sakalure, Akúlahr of these lands. The terms are simple and are non-negotiable... you and the rest of the thieves that have sought to steal from the Lord of

this land shall vacate Eldanar immediately and surrender your arms and yourselves to the forces that are arrayed here against you. If you do not, we will see to nothing less than the total destruction of your force and take back what is ours."

He stated his terms in a calm and quiet manner and then looked down at the ground, as if expecting nothing but the total acceptance of his offer.

Nain stood proudly in front of the Easterling and listened to his proposal quietly. When he had finished, Nain gave his counter offer.

"Well Sacal, this castle was built by the hands of the Men of Arnor. It was stolen from them and with our help it has been reclaimed. We intend to keep it. Go back to your master and tell him that he'd better bring a larger force if he hopes to prevail against this fortress now that the Dwarves of Erebor and the Blue Mountains have come to defend it."

The Easterling commander made no visible expression from the Dwarf's comment merely shook his head in resignation. "Very well - brave but foolish..."

And with no other word, the Dwarves watched as the Man turned his horse and rode back towards his ranks. It would be war, and Nain and Lûnduf also turned to run back to their own though both were not certain that they would see through the night.

Narrator's Notes:

In this scene, the wagon of Camentir should be caught up to - how long it took is dependent on how well the characters performed their Stealth and Stamina tests. Unfortunately, these are not over as the characters now must get back to Eldanar. The Narrator may want to use the same overland travel rules that I stated above to carry on the desperate struggle of the heroes.

As far as capturing the wagon and rescuing Camentir, I thought about the troops that would be stationed in Angmar and the constant oppressiveness of the command, and I felt that not all of the mercenaries would be happy. Whether they hated the Dúnedain or not, the stark, cold landscape of Angmar would make any soldier yearn for home - especially if home were the far off lands of Rhûn that would seem a little less inclement. Add to this the nature of those that the mercenaries serve and I think that one would ask themselves if it is worth dying for?

Thus in my scene above the mercenary Easterlings faltered when the wrath of the Elf was put upon them... the grizzled warriors thinking it better to one day see their home. As Narrator, feel free to play out the attack on the host guarding the wagon as you please. Hopefully, the players will be successful and Camentir will be saved.

Back at Eldanar, the Narrator will want to start building up the enemy troops as they arrive over the days and ask for any tests necessary to make the preparation of the keep interactive. Perhaps an opposed Siegecraft test to determine if the enemy commander can see past any ruse prepared by the defenders. Sacal's stats may be found in the *Hall of Fire*, Issue #20.

SCENE 4 – ENGAGEMENT!

Days 115-117 January 24-26, Barad Eldanar

It was not long after Sacal's return to his line that the forces of Angmar commenced their attack. The Dúnedain upon the battlements, watched as the enemy broke out into units of roughly fifty warriors, each taking a position on the field. Easterling Archers formed up in a long line well within bowshot before the gates of Eldanar; to their right flank sat Sacal and his cavalry. The remaining orc units marched forward as arrows flew from bows to rain down upon the men defending the improvised gates of Eldanar – the shafts sinking into wood and flesh.

Eradin watched from above, ordering a return fire from his own archers, but pleased to see that only one group of orcs could cross the bridge to his gates. Still, their numbers were great and they swarmed up over the barricades to engage his men and the battle was engaged.

The Dúnadan commander turned as a runner came upon him, "Commander, a gathering of orcs are maneuvering to the west side of the keep."

Lúnduf who had stood by spoke, "They must be looking for the way we had come in." He smiled a knowing smile, as he and some of the Men warriors had burnt the ivy off the side of the keep, "They will find the way fruitless!"

And with a wink, he hefted his axe and began to descend to the battle below - these Men would need help. "I have some necks to hew!"

Lúnduf climbed onto the piled wood that made up the improvised barricade, his axe in one hand, and shield in the other. He hacked at the orcs as they scrambled up the other side cleaving into neck and limb. The Dúnedain watched on as the stout Dwarf held the center all alone. Nain, not to be outdone, ran down the back of the battlement and followed Lúnduf up on to the barricade, axes in both hands ready to hew the orcs.

Dirnhael woke up feeling refreshed. He could see that it was still late at night and all of his comrades were fast asleep, save Edrahil. The Sindar sat quietly to himself staring off into the darkness - watching for any potential threats. He turned as he heard the Dúnadan stir and gave the Man a smile.

"You are awake," he said as Dirnhael came over to his side. "I fear we will be arriving at Eldanar with our Enemy outside its walls - hopefully not inside. I watched another large group moving along the road southbound."

"I must also tell you Dirnhael, I have had a vision... one of a wolf leading a pack. I believe it foretells of the return of the Easterling - the man who had confronted you on our road north a few weeks past. I must extend to you again... be wary of this one. I feel a great unease in my heart when I think of him."

With that Edrahil fell silent and only the pop of the small fire could be heard in the cold northern night. Far to the south, the two companions' Dwarven friends stood side by side over a broken gate trying to hold off an onslaught of orcs.

After thirty more minutes passed, Dirnhael felt that they had rested long enough. They needed to get back to Eldanar and assist their friends - at least in escaping the old fortress. He and Edrahil went about rousing their comrades and they broke camp.

As the group readied to race back to Eldanar, Durgil felt that they could move faster than they had been... if. He spoke, "From what I've noticed Edrahil, is that you ride much lighter upon your horse than Men do. I mean this as no slight to you, Fengel or your steed, but I think we could make better time if Lord Camentir rode with our elf-friend instead."

Dirnhael chuckled loudly. Perhaps the young man was right, but just the same. "A word to the wise," Dirnhael said to Durgil, "it is best not to suggest that an Éothraim - one of the Horse-lords - cannot decide how best to lade his steed. A slight you may not intend, but a slight you may deliver just the same."

Dirnhael clicked his heels to spur his horse to the front of the pack, smiling as he saw Fengel pull up beside the youthful noble. "Maybe I should get off and walk my old nag! Huh? What say you my keen eyed friend?!" Fengel barked at Durgil with a growing fury in his eyes.

Durgil was shocked at the explosion from his comrade. In a smaller voice he said, "Ah... umm... all I meant was riding at a full pace while injured and having to control your horse with more than one rider is taxing for any person and beast, even one such as yourself and horse. Edrahil's horse runs as if he had no rider and if things prove ill, our lord shall have a quick exit from danger while we rally the retreat."

Durgil went quiet and said no more.

Fengel brought his horse up close to Dirnhael, "Perhaps there is some sense in what Durgil said. We shall see... if at some point on our journey I see that my horse is getting tired Edrahil's horse will be a good choice to bear him the rest of the way."

Dirnhael nodded, "As you see fit, my friend."

He looked southward, knowing deep within his heart that they were too late - his plan had failed. "Our time draws short," he said to Fengel, his voice barely more than a whisper. "Our friends and allies are in grave danger... and if they fall, then so too will our chances of ever returning to our lands again."

"Do not let the gloom of this land dishearten you. We have much strength as well as stubborn friends," the Éothraim replied, remembering his friend Lúnduf, "The dwarves will hold Eldanar until we can bring them aid."

Fengel, knowing that he would give his life for Dirnhael, wondered if this might soon be required.

Dirnhael thought of his stalwart companions; Lúnduf and Nain, of Eradin and his brave Dúnedain soldiers... and of fair Ioreth. He had kept her from his thoughts during these weeks, but had not entirely succeeded in doing so.

A roiling wave of dark clouds had seemed to follow them all from the North, and the veiling shadow they cast upon the accursed land darkened Dirnhael's mind and its thoughts. He turned back towards his friends. "We must quicken our pace! We stop only when we must - ride as if the very Hosts of Angmar were at our heels!"

And for all Dirnhael knew, they may have been.

This was enough to break Durgil from his withdrawn state. With a yell to spur his steed forward, he burst forward to the head of the charge, "For the Light against the Darkness! To Eldanar!"

Nain swung his shining axe at the oncoming orcs hewing them left and right, all the while standing next to Lûnduf. In the path of the horde, the two dwarves cut a swath of destruction to make the Easterling take notice of those that he had taken so lightly in the parley.

Still, the orcs came. They filled the bridge before them and though they were not numberless, there were still so many more than the defenders of the keep, and slowly they were having success. They climbed up over the broken gate and along the gate tower walls trying to get a foothold, but each time the defenders threw them back. The carnage that was left in the wake of each attack was starting to hinder the Host of Arthedain. Blood from both friend and foe was causing the already slippery and uneven position even worse.

With the blat of horns, the orcs surged forward again and clashed with the two Dwarves that stood within the center of the bridged entrance. Axes swung to and fro and blades bit.

Wearied of limb and almost falling from exhaustion and the gore that covered the bridge and gate, the Men and Dwarves fought with as much vigour as they could muster. Black shafted arrows fell amongst them as they held off their attackers. They had been fighting now for almost two hours and the enemy had yet to gain the improvised barrier. Still, the constant attack was having its toll on the defenders.

Eradin had the wounded pulled back to the cover of the donjon where they were tended too. The Dúnadan commander worried as he watched his troop's number begin to slowly dwindle.

Lûnduf felt a heavy thud on his head as a mace struck his steel cap. Shaken but still on his feet, the doughty Dwarf swung his axe back and forth striking two of the orcs that attacked him and they dropped. As he recovered from his arcing swing, he again felt a weapon strike against his dwarven mail, again the weapons were turned.

Through the gore and mayhem, Nain cleaved taking orc left and right. Several blows glanced off his armor, some biting into his flesh. He couldn't feel the pain yet, but he knew that it would come. His arms, strengthened by the rise and fall of the Smiths hammer for more years than most of the men around him had known, were more than capable of hewing for hours. But he knew that if this kept up, the blood in his veins would run dry before the stream of orcs would end.

But then, horns began to sound from across the moat and the orcs began to waiver and then they disengaged and those that could, retreated back from the gates, over the moat. Lûnduf and Nain breathed out a sigh of relief as they saw that the archers also were drawing away from the castle. The Dúnadan archers on the walls above had made an effective defense against them and cut heavy losses into them. Nain chose not to jeer at them as they left; instead saving his strength for what must come next.

The enemy withdrew to a safe distance and there was a sudden quiet over all.

Fengel led the Company as they hurried south, his eyes keen in the night. Behind him, Camentir held on as the Éothraim masterfully led his steed over the frozen brush and bramble of the hard land of Angmar. They had broken camp about an hour ago and then made haste for Barad Eldanar and their friends that hopefully were still safe.

As they rode, Fengel caught sight of movement and quickly reined back on his horse bringing the others to a halt behind him. The quintet all trotted forward together slowly as both Edrahil and Fengel tried to discern what they saw.

The Elf spoke... "This must be the group I saw moving south just an hour ago." He continued to look in the direction as the other men squinted to try and make out... something. "The group is moving slowly and they seem to be short on number though they, or what they draw south, are large."

The Sindar's words hung there in the frigid night.

Fengel observed before him what Edrahil had spoken of, large shapes moving through the shadows of night. He peered deep trying to discern what he saw and the shapes slowly took recognizable form. The Éothraim could see two large engines, obviously of war, and two large hulks before each... dragging them?? Around these larger shapes, Fengel could see a number of smaller, man-sized shapes milling about.

Dirnhael saw the look of horror on his friend's face. He knew now that it was just a matter of time until Barad Eldanar fell to the Angmarim. Defeat at the castle was assured, but then again, that was always part of the plan. He hoped that Lûnduf, Nain and Eradin heeded his words as they parted. "Appear to hold the keep as if you never meant to relinquish it, but all the while, make plans to leave it as quickly as possible. If they feel they have won a victory at the keep, they may be too late to pursue us."

Dirnhael knew that the riders could beat this army to the keep - but by how much? And what would they face when they got there? There was no further opportunity to plan - only time for action and reaction remained. He gently tapped his steed on its flank, and the animal dutifully quickened its pace.

Durgil appreciated both the immediate and long-term danger this new development brought. "The larger problem was now Barad Eldanar would become more deadly than before for our approach," said Durgil somberly. "Angmar will have a much more powerful stronghold to launch forays into our lands."

"Perhaps we can hold onto the stronghold m'lord, we just need reinforcements and we can continue the holdout that our brave comrades are attempting as we speak." Daelhun knew not if the defenders had already been overthrown, nor if they were even still alive, but after the hard work and vicious fighting they had all endured to retake the place it was not overly appetizing to think about it falling back into the hands of the enemy.

Edrahil listened to all of the input from his fellows, while he stared at the shapes in the night so many meters away. "Though it is true that Eldanar was built by the sons of Númenor long ago, and their work was renowned amongst all the Free Peoples, and though it is strong, it is but a small island in a sea whose tide

will slowly erode its great walls. Still, this is a decision that must be made by the commanders of the Host that holds its walls."

He then looked back and forth at them all and commented, "Whatever is to happen with those engines of war, it will be tonight for those who draw them south must do it before the sun rises... otherwise they will return to the stone from which they were made!"

Edrahil's last words hissed out with a touch of anger due to the contempt he held for Trolls of all types.

Dirnhael listened carefully to Durgil and Daelhun. They were young, headstrong and brave - of course holding the keep would be of value to them - it would be a great prize. Barad Eldanar held little appeal to Dirnhael, however. Perhaps his journeys had dulled his desire for glory.

But the keep was also deep in the wastes of the North, and far more raiding parties were available to Angmar than supply lines would be from Fornost and Arthedain.

"Eldanar will fall," said Dirnhael, "Whether today or years from now, these lands are too covered in darkness for it to hold. Throwing good men into Angmar's maw is unwise - we would be better served fortifying our existing defenses and returning with the knowledge that we have already gained."

He looked over at Camentir - the ragged man had a keen military mind; which is why Dirnhael had led this endeavour in the first place. He was still Commander of these armies, and Dirnhael owed him much - though it was now likely that his debt had been repaid... "Camentir, your men defend the keep, and they will follow your orders. What say you?"

It was then that Dirnhael realized that Durgil and Daelhun answered to Camentir as well. He wondered where this would lead if Camentir saw things differently than he.

Camentir sighed, and for a moment it appeared to the younger men around him that he was old, and he was tired, but then he smiled with a wolfish-grin and all knew that he still had not been beaten.

To Dirnhael's question he replied, "What do I think? I think that this is for younger men to decide - men who have come forward in positions of leadership. Though it grieves me to see us surrender any part of Dúnedain territory, especially a keep that has been so recently re-captured, still I understand the mind of Dirnhael and the words of Edrahil. It would be long before Fornost could get us relief, but upon the gates of Angmar we are precariously exposed. The Witch-king would soon right the supposed affront to his might... we would be worn down like the sand under the tide."

Then to the two men that had once served under him, "Long, Durgil, did we feint the enemy... never exposing our position, never standing to fight for one position. You both learned well the tactics that these times force us to employ. These same tactics apply to Eldanar. We must not let the Enemy enclose us in this place and hold us there only to destroy us. We must survive."

Camentir fell silent deferring to Dirnhael the command that was already his, but hoping that his advice would help the young captain with what he needed to do.

At Eldanar, the Dúnedain and Dwarves withdrew back into the keep to rest and to aid those that were in need. Others saw to hasty repairs of the barricade that had been erected at the gates, repositioning the large pieces of lumber and throwing the bodies of the dead orcs into the moat or piling them out upon the length of the bridge - a soldier was heard to mutter, "Let the maggot-folk crawl over these before they are able to assail us!"

Inside the donjon, Eradin, Lúnduf and Nain stood before the hearth warming their hands and limbs, although the rage of battle had kept them warm in the frigid night.

Lúnduf questioned Eradin, "Our numbers have not decreased too greatly, but we are taking losses... what of our plan to escape this place? Do we wait for our companions or try to burst through the ranks of Angmar before it is too late? Do not take me wrong, it appeals to me greatly to make our stand here and defend these walls for a Dwarf's feet better serve him on the ground than being on the back of some beast, but those were the plans made by you and Dirnhael."

Eradin thought about that for a moment. It would soon get to the point where escape was no longer an option. He also reviewed the reports from his sentries - one unit had circled the keep during the first onslaught trying to find a weakness. They found naught, but now their numbers have bolstered the ranks of those they had just repelled. Eradin had no such relief, his men would slowly be beaten back though theirs and the Dwarves valour be strong.

"I'm not a warrior but I say we wait till the light of day to make our escape," Nain posed. "The orcs will be blinded by the sun so we'll have less of a foe to deal with and it'll give our friends more time to regain your Captain. The only problem will then be holdin' the fortress through this night."

Eradin thought Nain's idea had good merit and he nodded, "So be it... we will abandon this place with the coming of morn."

The Dúnadan commander took back up his weapon and began to walk out of the chamber of the donjon - he needed to tell his men the plan.

An hour and a half passed as the Men of Arthedain stood looking out over the battlements and the forces from Angmar regrouped, but as the time passed mid of night, the horns of the enemy began to blare. They were once more on the offense.

Eradin and his two Dwarf allies watched from the guard tower as once again the Easterling archer unit began to move into range and a re-organized group of orcs started to jog towards the keep. In the dark, Eradin could barely see that they were arrayed differently and those that followed on carried torches. The orcs to the fore seemed to be running with burdens in their hands, looking like... small pots?

The Dúnadan blanched as he realized the enemy's new tactic and he yelled to his men and began to climb down the stairs to the courtyard below.

"Ware! Beware! They plan to fire the gates! Archers... stop those runners!!"

The riders had skirted the small group of Trolls, and presumably orcs that drew the siege engines south, and had

made haste before them. It was not much further to Eldanar and they needed to get to their comrades to aid in any way that they could.

The time it seemed to pass quickly though the flat, snow-covered lands around did not seem to change. Still, they covered a great swath of land and finally, though they were not aware, passed into the lands that were formally under Arthedain's control. Eldanar was but another ten miles before them!

They reined in for a moment to rest their mounts and Edrahil squinted into the night. The horizon to the south, though dark from night glowed faintly.

"Something burns," said the Sindar in a calm voice.

ARROUS were loosed in the great arcs and they flew high and then fell back towards the earth and the charging orcs. Some found nothing but dirt and snow while others bit deep - the carnage that was created was dramatic indeed. Orcs bearing burning tinder and those that bore oil fell under the rain of shafts and a great WHOOSH went up as torches lit the now spilt fuel. The spawn of Morgoth broke rank, if that was what it could be called, as they dodged both arrow and fire.

Still they came on uncaring for their fallen and those who screamed as they were consumed by flame. They made the bridge and struggled as they climbed over the piled remains of their fellows and the orcs in the fore, with small clay pots in hand, sacrificed themselves to both Dúnedain sword and shaft just to splash their burden's content on the barricade of the keep. Most died. Others were unsuccessful in their attempt and the oil either splashed harmlessly in the moat or on the draw bridge itself. Some achieved their goal.

Oil soaked into the barricade and torches were hurled from the orcs that followed on. As each discharged their flame, they drew cruel scimitars and knives. Fire leapt up where it made contact with the oil and now the Men of Fornost were hard pressed to put out the flames and hold back the enemy, for still they came, leaping over the wooden fortification through the very fire that they had started.

Eradin, with the two Dwarves at his side drew his blade and began to melee with the onrush of orcs. His weapon clanged against a serrated scimitar and he could see that the cruel weapon was slick with poison. Nain and Lúnduf also jumped into the fray and the second battle for Eldanar began in earnest.

As they fought side-by-side, horns began to blare from behind them and Men called out, "ORCS! ORCS! THEY ARE WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE WALLS!"

Eradin's mind raced, "How could this be so!?"

But then the Dúnedain commander, who had become a brilliant tactician in his own right, realized his error. They were in a castle that had been under the command of the Enemy for over three hundred years; the Enemy had certainly either found its long lost secrets or created some of their own! The orcs had come under the moat, most likely through tunnels like the rats that they were. He then realized that the circling unit was a decoy to keep his men's eyes upon them as their fellows undermined his defenses!

Knowing that the danger posed by the orcs inside the walls was far more than the fire on the gate Nain grabbed Eradin's

arm. "Go, take your men and secure the keep, Lúnduf and I can hold the gates."

He then turned and began swinging his axe at the orcs as they come through the flames, slamming them backward into the fire that they had set.

The riding party could see smoke begin to rise from Barad Eldanar. Dimhael's heart leapt in his chest, and he cried out to his friends, "We are but a few against the Orc rabble, but we will make them pay dearly in the taking of the keep! Ride now!"

He leaned close and whispered softly into his horse's ear. It seemed as if the animal understood, for it leapt forward with a speed unexpected after so long a journey.

Hearing his commander's words, Fengel shouted, "Hold tight Lord Camentir!" He then gave a war cry in Éothrik, and his horse acknowledged and charged forward.

"FOR THE GLORY OF THE ARTHEDAIN!" Adding to Fengel's war cry, Daelhun shouted as he too prodded on his steed. The powerful beast under him responded with a great burst of speed. Daelhun pulled his spear from its holding position and prepared for the charge, couching the weapon in its stirrup cup.

Though both weary of the road, Durgil spurred his faithful mount on to follow the charge of his comrades, pulling his bow ready to fight from horseback if need be.

The gates had become chaotic with men trying to fend off the attackers while others ran buckets of water from the well to try and douse the fires that were beginning to engulf the wooden barricade. Lúnduf stood alongside Nain, smashing into the orcs as they overtopped the fire seemingly endless in their number. The Dwarf began to fear for their chances of escape as he watched the bridge itself burning. The icy moat would trap them in here as sure as the army about.

Lúnduf hefted up his notched shield to parry away an attack but then cringed as he watched the orc roll off his defense only to stab a Dúnedain warrior in the back. The man did not know the attack was coming as he received the bucket from one of his fellows - both he and the valuable water fell to the ground.

Sparks and fire burst up and towards the two Dwarves as a great shape smashed through the barricade leaving the defense all but impotent. It was a large Troll and both Nain and Lúnduf took a step back as it whirled around its great mattock. Behind the large fell-creature, orcs coursed through the opening and the Men of Arthedain abandoned the defense and took up their weapons to hold off the onslaught!

The five companions charged the distance, limbs re-gaining their strength from the adrenaline that began to course - they would be engaging the Enemy very soon. The mile and a half was quickly covered as they rode around the eastern side of Barad Eldanar trying to make for the glowing light that haloed the south end of the keep.

The orc warriors and the Easterling archers were all engaged and paid no heed to the oncoming riders, but Sacal sitting atop

his mount became interested in the five horsemen. He gave a shout and ten of his riders broke off and rode to the fore.

"Find out who they are, kill them if they are not of Angmar or part of any of our brethren's host."

Their order received, the ten Easterling horsemen rode fast and hard towards Dirnhael and his companions, their weapons drawn and ready.

Sacal sat and watched them ride away. He was not going to let anyone interfere in his taking of the keep, and he would take it. "By morning, we will have Eldanar scoured of the Dúnedain rabble!" he said to no one in particular.

Dirnhael saw the riders break off from the main group and head in their direction - it looked to be nearly a dozen of them. The battle - for them - would be joined here, and there didn't seem to be any recourse but to fight their way through it.

He pulled Andúring from its scabbard - the steel glinting even in the light of the moon, and called back to Edrahil. "We could use more of your majesty, my friend!"

He didn't know what, if anything, the Elf could conjure, but something was better than nothing. They had to find a way to get Camentir on his own mount. He spied the lead Easterling rider and surmised that his steed would be suitable. Dirnhael shifted his blade in his hand as he sought to take it from its vile owner.

He had flown from the mountains to finally answer the Witch-king's request. Like a horrific shadow in the night, his great shape soared through the sky over Rhudaur and his far-seeing eyes could already see his target. It glowed brightly in the distance, brighter than all of the other small pinpoints of light below. All of them were gatherings of those that went on two legs and in his heart he would love to be able to torment each, but he didn't have the energy to take on such a task.

Instead Scatha would do this 'favour' for the wraith-king and then he would settle... either in the mountains from whence he had just come or somewhere within the lands below. Perhaps he would find a suitable domain where he could gather his hoard.

Startled for a moment by the flying embers and the appearance of the hulking troll, Nain stepped back but quickly regained his composure. His arrogance would not let him quail, in front of the humans, in the face of this stupid beast. He pushed forward once again to stem the tide of orcs that had been let through and to face the troll before it ended the battle for them all.

"C'mon ye stupid beast! Come and feel the bite of dwarven steel."

The mammoth troll swung its fist at Nain, seeing him come forward, and it swung its great mace at the other Dwarf that defied its advance. Lúnduf brought both axe and shield up to block the huge mattock but still was knocked prone by the force of the attack... Nain fared no better!

Outside the castle, the Easterling riders charged down a slope into the oncoming companions. Edrahil had been following along behind the others towards the enemy and as he did, he incanted, laying his hand upon his now bare sword. Suddenly the blade bursts forth a bright light that swept away the darkness around his comrades. With his sword flaring, Edrahil pressed the attack and struck at one of the oncoming Easterling riders, their swords meeting and sparking in the night.

Daelhun targeted the nearest enemy with his spear, the point of the weapon seeking to rend flesh from bone, and more importantly to unhorse the rider and give the Easterlings less of a numeric superiority. Spurring on his horse he aimed for the breast of his target and prepared for the crushing blow of spear meeting armour. It did not take long. Daelhun felt the weapon wrench in his hands from the strike even though the man had attempted to evade the attack. The Easterling broke off and sagged down in his saddle while Daelhun searched for another.

Fengel set his shield and drew Cerduil attacking the first two riders fiercely. Camentir seeing that he was a burden to Fengel and his horse, shoved off of the back of the steed landing skillfully, though his years belied him. He lifted the Dwarven-made longsword lent him by Durgil and blocked an Easterling scimitar from slashing into him. He maneuvered between the horses and men aiding his comrades as he could.

Dirnhael strapped his shield on his left forearm, and it bounced against his thigh as his other hand held the reins on his galloping horse. He held Andúring aloft, hoping to strike fear in the lead rider. The Easterling saw Dirnhael's approach and veered his horse to intercept. The two came together and Andúring flashed in the bright light of Edrahil's magic but Dirnhael's opponent was not skilled enough - with two swift strokes the man fell backwards off his horse, his head cleanly removed.

The Dúnadan commander was set upon by yet another but Dirnhael brushed off the weak attacks; Andúring's steel deflecting this new opponent's blade with ease. Seeing the rider he dispatched fall from his mount, Dirnhael smirked back at Camentir.

"Camentir," he shouted while gesturing towards the riderless horse with Andúring, "your steed, sir!"

The young commander then turned his attention back to the Easterling that was still pressing an attack.

Sacal knew this one... they had fought before, some weeks ago on the cold plains of northern Arthedain. The Dúnadan had defied him then and here he was again. Was he the one that had taken Eldanar? The force that he had led had not been that great. Was the Dúnadan skilled enough to have defeated the Asháktur of Eldanar and taken the keep? He had proven himself on the field, hadn't he?

The Easterling commander reached out his hand to his squire, taking the longsword that was handed to him. "This one is mine," he said with a wolfish grin.



Daelhun dropped his spear and it clattered as it struck the rocky frozen ground under his horse. He would be back for it when his work was done. Drawing his longsword, Daelhun quickly went into action attacking the nearest Easterling, sharpened steel blade, aiming for a kill and a hasty end to this battle. If they were to survive and save their friends, they would have to rush through the forces of Angmar and wreak as much havoc as possible.

Ducking out of the way of the inept attack, Durgil drew another arrow, took quick aim to dispatch his foe, and fired. He gave a grim smile to see the fletched missile strike true and drop the man from his horse.

Dirnhael heard his friends in battle - it seemed to be going well enough for them; he expected nothing less from his stalwart companions. But there were only a few of them against so many of the enemy; they would fight only as many as they must to get the Men and Dwarves out of Barad Eldanar and make speed for Fornost. Perhaps if they dispatched this band quickly enough, they could make for the keep with relatively little resistance... but first, they had to fight their way through. Dirnhael gritted his teeth and let Andúring fly.

After dropping his first opponent, Fengel turned his fury upon the remaining Easterling bringing Cerduil down upon him.

Lûnduf swung some savage attacks with his axe into the mid-section of the Troll and the beast reeled in pain, his comrade Nain, also dealing grievous wounds. Unfortunately, the Dwarf failed to see the great mace of the troll come up and then back down, striking him and sending him flying back some 20 feet. Lûnduf hit hard and struggled to maintain both consciousness and to regain his feet.

Behind him, Nain also suffered a blow from the Troll's great fist. The beast panted hard, but his opponents were fading faster in their ability to bring down the monster.

Frustrated by the lack of progress that they were making against the troll and fearing for the life of his companion Nain jumped up and swung his axe with both hands. The troll would regret his attacks on the dwarves, Nain would see to that.

Lûnduf pushed himself up with his arms, his body a mass of pain. Around him was the chaos of combat and the Dwarf tried to focus. He knew if he did not get up and retrieve his weapon, he never would. His blurry eyes recognized the massive shape of the Cave Troll lumbering towards him, its mace rising up to make a killing blow.

Using the debris and rubble about him, he pulled himself up and swayed on his legs that felt as if they would go out from under him at any moment. But then he watched as Nain once more rushed in to attack, his axe rising above his head in both hands and hacking into the troll's midsection.

The flurry of blows that Nain struck on the raging troll left him unable to defend against the incoming swing of the troll's fist. The force of it was enough to knock him down once again, but the sight of the blood pouring out of the gaping wounds that he'd just inflicted on the troll brought a smile to his face - a flicker of hope in the darkness that was grasping to overtake him.

Sacal watched his men get cut down by the skilled warriors that had just ridden out of the north and spurred on his mount. He would get his vengeance, both for this night and the embarrassment he suffered at Dirnhael's hands those few weeks ago!

Over the stampede that was around him Daelhun could still hear more enemy cavalry coming towards them, the odds were becoming worse. Daelhun's heart fell but then swelled as he thought about his comrades, they were fighting a battle for what was right and just and that was worth dying for! With renewed vigor and strength, Daelhun swung the sword twice quickly hitting a warrior close at hand, screaming a challenge as he did... "Your bones will be picked from as carrion for the crows!"

Spurring his horse on in the direction of Camentir to lend aid, Durgil noticed the reinforcements led by none other than the savage Easterling they had recently faced. Drawing up to take steady aim, Durgil let loose an arrow, right across the Easterling's path, and into a flanking comrade. The arrow took his target in the throat, slaying him, but then the archer found himself dodging between curved blades. Skillfully the Dúnadan rode through the melee and broke out of the engagement to once again get in a position to fire his bow.

The next group of riders was upon them - but the group they were facing still had teeth. Seeing that Camentir was receiving help, Dirnhael turned into the fresh riders and set himself for the grim task of cutting down every single enemy within reach of his blade... and then he saw him. The Easterling he had battled on the frozen plain not so long ago. He was fierce and Dirnhael was hard-pressed in their brief and unfinished duel that day.

"Today will be better," he snarled through gritted teeth.

Dirnhael thought of Lûnduf, Nain, and the valiant men of the Army who followed his plan. They were his responsibility - and if getting them out of Barad Eldanar meant he must fight his way through this Easterling, his riders, and his entire army - then so be it.

The Dúnadan commander charged his Easterling counterpart and viciously swung his sword in a series of arcs that penetrated his opponent's defense and bit into flesh. Enraged, Sacal countered the attack with one of his own but Andúring came up and in a clangor of sparks, the Easterling's blade shattered at the hilt. Still, Dirnhael was hard pressed as more riders came in on him to protect their commander. He deflected a blow as it flew in from the side, but a third scimitar very nearly found its mark, cutting into Dirnhael's sleeve before he desperately batted it away. "There are so many of them," he thought.

Around Dirnhael, the sheer number of Easterling horsemen and their slashing scimitars once more imperiled his friends. Unarmored, Camentir parried away two deadly strokes but another warrior came from behind and slashed twice bringing the older commander to his knees!

Out of the darkened sky, he came. The dragon Scatha tilted his great mass downward and began to plunge towards the ground and Barad Eldanar below. He was 90' long from nose to

tail and the speed he attained on his approach could not be stopped, not by man, beast or even a stone wall. He swooped low over the battlefield where Dirnhael and his companions fought for their lives and both the intimidating presence and the awful stench of the drake caused both the horses under the Men, as well as the riders themselves to quail and panic. As the warriors suddenly found themselves thrown from their mounts or being carried off by a broken horse, the dragon struck the east wall of Barad Eldanar.

The castle had been built quite sound those centuries ago, but the builders never anticipated the mass of a dragon to smash into the ramparts and in an explosion of flying stone and debris, the east wall came down and the courtyard within doused in the dragon's fiery breath. What had already been the chaos of war turned into mayhem as both friend and foe turned in panic to flee from the dragon's fire!

Completely oblivious to the mayhem that was going on behind him Nain stood facing the troll. The cracking of stone and screaming of men and orcs behind him was a distant reminder that the troll must fall if any of them were to survive the night.

Dodging swiftly from one to side to the other in an effort to avoid attacks, Durgil reined in his horse and moved off to get a good angle on another foe. As he brought his bow to bear, a great darkness and gale, upon which blew a horrid stench, buffeted and nearly unhorsed him. His horse fretted at the arrival of the new threat and he was hard pressed to maintain control of the animal. Firing on the closest mounted foe, Durgil then scanned the sky for whatever had just passed.

They were surrounded; it seemed as if he was among a sea of enemies but Daelhun would never give up. His blade slashed yet again, seeking to find the flesh of the numerous enemies about. It was as if he couldn't miss.

The appearance of the Dragon chilled Dirnhael's blood and he was barely able to keep himself atop his mount, which quailed at the sound of the beast. The steel in his hand seemed to chill somehow, and the feel of it spurred Dirnhael back into the moment - a moment in which the large Easterling was unarmed as Andúring had broken his foul blade but moments ago. He set to finish this quickly - they had run out of time - and Andúring whistled as the fell blade sliced through the cool air towards the stunned Easterling commander.

The Orcs and Men that had been fighting within the castle's courtyard were the first to fall, consumed by the fire that belched forth from the Dragon. It could have been considered merciful with the quickness of their deaths, but the screams of those that were not killed by the Dragon's first breath belied that notion. The great monster began to look about itself at the situation before it and slowly began to move. Scatha stretched out his wings and brought them down in a huge buffeting gale of wind that drove the horrified survivors to the ground.

Nain's final series of attacks brought the massive troll to its knees and it then slowly fell forward to slam heavy on the frozen snow, dead. Relieved of his opponent, the Dwarf turned to see

the new threat and was suddenly aware that he stood in the midst of both Men and Orcs rushing past him, making for the bridge that allowed exit from the castle. It was as if neither of these peoples were hated enemies, both running side by side in apparent horror. The mass of both Orcs and Men pushed on those in the fore and many fell only to be trampled or were shoved off the bridge into the frigid water of the moat.

Then, rounding the donjon came Eradin upon his horse followed on by twelve others of his Dúnedain host. The Man looked as panicked as all the others and they drove their horses into those that crossed the bridge, hauling any Men aback of their horses and riding over any Orc that fell.

Nain could only stand and watch as the scene took place around him, but then the sound of the Dragon inhaling once more brought his mind back to action!

Dirnhael could see on Sacal's face that even the Easterling did not expect the arrival of the mighty fell-beast that had just sundered Barad Eldanar. The Easterling's face took on another look of shock as the Dúnadan's sword cut into him, not thrice, but four times. The Easterling slowly slipped from his saddle his dying eyes staring into the wild eyes of the Man that just killed him. With his enemy dead, Dirnhael looked about him to see his comrades that still stood by his side. There were no Easterlings left; they had fled with the arrival of the Dragon and the death of their leader.

Andúring seemed to flame in his hand with a cold, icy fire and Dirnhael knew that the mighty beast before him was the foe that his sword was crafted to resist. In the runes that laced its length, the Elves of Nargothrond had imbued their power into the sword and that ancient magic now surged and flared.

The great Dragon, Scatha, laid upon the ground, his body half in and half out of the ruined Eldanar, its mouth snapping at any that still lived and spewing flame over the grounds.

Camentir shakily stood up, his tunic dark from his blood and he looked to Dirnhael. "That beast is mightier beyond any of our skills; we must flee this place while we can!"

Dirnhael looked around and saw Fengel, Durgil, Edrahil and Daelhun all looking to him for an answer - still missing were their Dwarven friends and the Dúnedain host that Camentir had led over the past three years.

Narrator's Notes:

Battle! Well this was a fun scene for us and I want to say that it was not all that difficult to play out. The mass combat was important to the scene, but I focused most of the activity with one-on-one melee between the players and their nemesis.

The mass combat was performed by using the basic battle system in the **CRB** enhanced with the changes I presented in *Hall of Fire*, Issue #11 in the article called Making War! To this I also added some of the nice new maneuvers in the **HDS** by allowing each unit 2 maneuvers before they rolled their opposed Siegecraft rolls. I also gave terrain and situational bonuses in the **HDS** to both armies. These maneuvers and bonuses added or penalized the players Siegecraft rolls.

In my chronicle, the total count of Dúnedain was 67 men; the Enemy surrounded Barad Eldanar with a force of 150 Orcs, 40 Easterling warriors (cavalry and archers), and finally 2 trolls. There were more orcs on the way with siege weapons, but they did not make it to the fortress by the time the dragon struck and the forces of both sides dispersed.

The scene played out very well with the defenders doing an excellent job at holding off the frontal assault. Of course, I had a group of orcs secreting themselves into the castle and I knew that once they were inside and could melee, the defenders would falter soon after. Thus did I time the arrival of the dragon with this point because in truth, though the dragon would be the ultimate foe, he also created the confusion for the force out of Arthedain to escape... at least those that could.

I would suggest the same for your story. Do not bring the dragon in until the battle is at its most desperate for the heroes and when it does arrive, use the power of words to explain the disruption it creates, not just the dice. Feel free as Narrator to tell the players what is going on with the NPC's around them and not the inverse, don't let the players tell you what they are having their soldiers do. In the end, this was meant to be a show down between players and the great wurm, especially the PC that carries the sword Andúring.

One last point I'd like to make - the melee between Sacal and Dirnhael was not meant to end the way it did, I was hoping that Sacal would have survived. I wanted to keep the NPC as a recurring nemesis but as we all know, the dice and player character choices will determine the direction our stories will go.

SCENE 5 – IMMOLATION

Days 117-118 January 26-27, Barad Eldanar

“Camentir,” Dirnhael said, “take as many of your men as you can gather and prepare to make haste for Fornost. I will not leave until I know the fate of our Dwarven companions.”

He gestured towards the wreckage of Barad Eldanar and spoke to the Dúnedain commander once more, “You were the reason for all of this. You cannot be captured by the Enemy - your knowledge of the West's defense is too vast, and in the land of Angmar, that wisdom would be ripped from you and used against your people...”

He thought of Ioreth. “Our people,” he all but whispered. “Go now - while you can.”

He turned towards his companions, “Durgil, Daelhun - Camentir is your rightful commander, and if you wish to accompany him to Fornost, you may. Edrahil, Fengel - you have never been bound to go further then you will, but our friends need us now.”

He could hear the screams from the smoldering keep, and he too felt fear... but Lúnduf had been a stalwart friend since he left Tharbad so long ago and had risked his life for Dirnhael on more than one occasion, while Nain had been a boon companion in his stay with them. He would not leave these two to die in a broken keep on the frozen wastes of this accursed land - not while he himself drew breath.

“Your choices are your own - but make them now. We must move quickly if any of us are to see the morn.”

“I will not leave a friend behind,” Daelhun stated then moved his horse next to Dirnhael's.

Fengel sat on his mount and gave a quick thought of his now close friend Lúnduf, and the many pints of beer they had drunk together, laughing away the peaceful times. “Lúnduf would give his life to save ours if we were in need; let us ride into the very mouth of the beast if we must!”

Though torn between his comrades and the captain he'd admired for years, Durgil made the quick decision to stay. To Camentir, “Lord, if you command it, I will go with you now, but I must help those who made this possible.”

Camentir gave a gruff laugh, “T'was friendship that brought you all on the trail to find me, and these Dwarf companions that you will not leave behind had as much a part in that as the rest. For this, I could not leave them to such a fate either. Come, let us get this done quickly and be off on the road home!”

Edrahil had sat quietly in his saddle, trying to keep his steed from bolting with all the others. Again the Sindarin had taken a grievous wound, but his resolve was strong. “What do you propose we do then? Do we find our friends and flee, or do we attempt to drive off this beast?”

As the sound of the Dragon inhaling to spew flame once again into the courtyard, Nain looked for Lúnduf and saw his kin staggering amongst those that ran for the gates. He could see that Lúnduf's wounds had him confused and struggling to maintain his feet.

Nain ran over, grabbed and then quickly dragged Lúnduf to the massive carcass of the dead troll. They both dove to the ground as the flames once again washed over the area. The craftsman had never felt such heat, even over the mighty kilns that he had worked. He had heard tales of wyrms told amongst his kin, but he and Lúnduf had never experienced a dragon firsthand. The experience was one he did not relish.

Once the flames stopped, he hefted his friend onto his shoulders and ran towards the gate which was now clear of any escapees, only the smoldering bodies of those that had tried remained. Behind the two, the lumbering sound of the dragon moving could be heard.

Suddenly a great, booming voice was heard, “I smell you, Dwarves! You cannot escape me and oh what a pleasure it will be to see your bodies consumed in my flame! Long have your folk been like fleas to my kin... perhaps I will make you suffer over long years for the Dragons that have fallen to your foul spikes.”

Outside the keep, Dirnhael and his companions watched as the dragon's hind quarters began to slide into the ruins of Eldanar and then heard his awful voice. All around them, Men and Orcs disappeared into the night, neither caring about the other's allegiance.

“Let me go and find the Dwarves, you create a diversion to get the attention of the dragon. What say you sir, only by working together can we hope to save our friends.” Daelhun looked at

his commander after making the suggestion and awaited his response. But then with his keen eyes, and more than a little bit of luck, He saw the two dwarves through the smoke and bodies running across the bridge crossing the moat.

"There they are, let us ride and help them!"

Daelhun spurred on his horse, as he rode thinking about how he would carry them both on his horse. He had no answer to his question but hoped that one of his comrades would follow.

From his gesture, Fengel now also saw that Nain was carrying Lûnduf. The Éothraim began to fear for his friend's life, but he refrained from charging off with Daelhun. He had come to see Dirnhael as his commander and he would await any order that the Dúnadan would give.

Dirnhael watched as the impetuous, but brave Daelhun spurred his horse towards the gate. He gestured to Fengel - the horse-lord could close the gap quickly, and his skill on horseback could help speed the Dwarves to safety. Daelhun would need his help. With a nod to Dirnhael, Fengel raced toward the Dwarves.

Edrahil was wounded but still potent, and Durgil was a fine archer. Dirnhael's mind raced. If Durgil could attack at range, and Edrahil had enough strength left to call upon his powers, perhaps they could distract the dragon and give Daelhun and Fengel enough time to rescue Lûnduf and Nain from the dragon's flame. He knew that Durgil's arrows would be little but an annoyance to the creature, but hopefully, an annoyance would be enough.

"Find a safe spot on this ridge," he said to the Elf and Durgil, pointing as he did. "Do what you can to draw this wyrm's attention away from our friends!"

He took off his full quiver and bow, and handed them with a nod to the young archer. "In case you need them, Durgil - do not be frugal with your volleys."

Durgil pulled up and gladly accepted the replenishment of arrows.

The dragon was stunningly powerful, but it wasn't particularly fast, and it had wedged itself in the castle wall. While it was looking either at the dwarves and their rescuers or back at Durgil and Edrahil... it came to him.

He turned to Camentir, "One more ride, sir? The dragon's tail sits in the open. Ride with me and we may be able to wound it before it is aware of us." Dirnhael didn't wait for a response - Daelhun and Fengel were already off - they were out of time. He turned his horse towards the castle, and looked back at Durgil and Edrahil. "Wait until we are near the outer wall and obscured from the wyrm's sight. Then let loose your assault."

Dirnhael gave his steed a nudge with his heel and rode down the hill at speed, the increasingly cool steel of Andúring in his hands providing some comfort from the roiling fear in the pit of his stomach. Behind him followed the old warrior and commander, Nain's mastercrafted sword girded on his side.

Set for the task, Durgil rode off with Edrahil in the direction Dirnhael had gestured, bow and arrow in hand ready for the time to strike. Noticing Edrahil's state as they rode, "If we look to be successful in our distraction, bolt to the woods. I shall follow as I may to ensure the beast's attention is held. You will be needed elsewhere as your abilities shall be the salvation of the injured."

Once they were in position, the young Dúnadan simply queried, "Are you ready?"

Edrahil nodded and though he was wounded, he drew himself up in his saddle, "I am quite ready, Durgil. Do not worry; we will have the Dragon's attention very soon."

The Sindar once again began to cant.

Nain ran for his life. The weight of his friend on his back pressed him onwards away from the terrifying sight coming through the wall of the keep behind him. The Dragon's words froze his blood. He'd felt this terror before when the blackness had flown over. The same terror that now drove his feet. He had no thought of pride or courage, only the need to flee as fast as he could.

Scatha came on, squeezing between the donjon and the southern outer wall, his serpentine body pinched but not impeded. Still, as Dirnhael presumed, it slowed him down. But not enough to allow the Dwarves to make cover. The Dragon's head poked around through the gate and his eyes blazed from the firelight.

"STOP!" he commanded and Nain felt his limbs lock up, no longer answering his own command; behind him he heard a growling laugh. Lûnduf who had been hanging over Nain's shoulder now slipped to the wooden planks of the bridge. The wounded Dwarf could see that his friend was ensorcelled and was unable to move, but he could hear Nain yelling... "RUN! RUN!"

The Dragon once more drew a heavy breath and the fires within kindled.

Edrahil and the three Men could see the Dwarves and each wondered why they had stopped and Lûnduf now only kneeled upon the bridge. The Sindar knowledgeable of the arcane suddenly realized what was the matter and his heart froze.

"NO! RUN! YOU MUST RUN!" he cried.

The dragon hoisted its head and its mouth fell open ready to bathe the bridge and its occupants in his lethal flame. Lûnduf, seeing the danger to both he and his incapacitated friend, knew of only one thing to do. With the last bit of his strength, he grabbed Nain and shoved forward causing his rigid kin to fall towards the edge of the bridge. Nain hit the side, the wind knocked out of him and he felt himself fall off and splash into the water below - the freezing water saving his life.

Lûnduf was not so fortunate. Heaving into Nain, his boot caught a patch of ice and he fell sprawling forward, still on the bridge. The Dwarf looked up as Scatha breathed. From their vantage point some 45 meters away, Edrahil and the three Men saw Lûnduf disappear in a cone of flame.

Dirnhael and Camentir rounded the edge of the broken castle wall and peered inside. They had needed to dismount as their horses were much too skittish to continue and though they feared they no longer had an advantage of speed, the animals could not be trusted.

The Dragon's great form was across the courtyard, before the donjon and the gates. Terror began to creep into both of their hearts and then the fell-beast breathed a gout of flame over the bridge and their Dwarven companion.

Seeing Lûnduf die, Edrahil became absolutely enraged and his incantation took effect. He would catch this dragon's attention and keep it. It would hopefully allow enough time for Camentir and Dirnhael to deliver a blow that would save them all.

"MORGOTH'S WYRM! YOU HAVE TAKEN ONE OF OUR COMPANIONS AND FOR THIS YOU SHALL FACE OUR WRATH!" But then the Sindar began to envision a man, not unlike Fengel, and the man was in a great struggle with a dragon. The dragon was lame.

"HA! HA!" laughed Edrahil, "YOU HAVE SECURED YOUR OWN DOOM IN A NOT TOO DISTANT DAY! COME LET US ENGAGE!"

Enraged and emboldened with Edrahil at his side, Durgil let fly an arrow in a bit of haste. The shot, aimed for the beast's head, missed and sailed off, crossing the path of the dragon's line of sight into the distance. Cursing his luck, he quickly grabbed another and prepared to fire again.

Seeing the immense flame shoot forth from the terrible wurm Daelhun's shielded arm immediately shot up to protect his face, the meager buckler not large enough to have even protected his arm, yet it was a reflex to the terrible power that the wurm displayed. Though fear gripped him, Daelhun spurred on his horse yet again, riding to the spot where the Dwarf had fallen into the moat. He reached for Nain and heaved him up onto his horse with all his might.

Coming after Daelhun, Fengel's eyes went wide as he reined in his steed. He could not believe that his friend had just perished before his eyes. He was not quick enough to save him. Then he remembered that Lûnduf had pushed Nain into the moat and he was still in grave danger. Trusting that his comrades would distract the dragon, Fengel rode now with all speed he could muster from his horse to the aid of Daelhun in retrieving Nain.

Stunned by the actions of his companion and then the icy chill of the freezing water, Nain had barely stood again when he spotted the burned remains that had once been his friend. One might have seen a tear sliding down his cheek was it not for the chill water that was leaving its own trails. Lûnduf had saved his life and died for it. The Dragon would pay. He began clambering toward the shore when he felt himself being hoisted bodily off the ground and onto the back of a horse. One of the humans that had ridden to save their captain he could only assume, they all looked alike from the back. He hoped this man wouldn't suffer the same fate as Lûnduf for his bravery. Nain held on, still furious with the Dragon and with himself for being too terrified of the creature to do anything else.

With Nain on his horse and Fengel now at his side, Daelhun pressed his steed once more and they raced away from the bridge, the moat, and the Dragon

Dirnhael was carefully maneuvering around the massive and deadly beast when he heard Edrahil - the Elf had never seemed so... emotional. Then his words hit him: one of his friends was dead. He was too late. Was it Nain, who had already lost his brother to another vile beast in these lands? What a tragedy to befall one family! Or was it... Dirnhael could barely think it... Lûnduf, his companion since the day he left Tharbad so long ago?

As it all sunk in to Dirnhael's mind, he knew that Lûnduf was dead. He knew that Edrahil respected Nain, too - but Edrahil's sorrow and rage clearly came from the loss of a dearer friend. Dirnhael quailed. The death of his close Dwarven friend would be a wound to his heart that would never heal... another one...

Andúring grew icy in his hands; now almost painful to the touch, and Dirnhael knew that he would honor Lûnduf best not by collapsing in grief, but rather by avenging him and saving his kin, "I swear it," he said under his breath.

Rage began to swell within him as he motioned to Camentir to stand ready at the dragon's tail. As for himself, he would move farther along. The blood in Dirnhael's veins ran as cold as the ancient blade in his hand. For the first time in his life, Dirnhael - *Dúnadan* - wanted to kill. The dragon's tail no longer concerned him - he wanted its heart!

Scatha was not a young Dragon, but neither was he old. Still, his body reflected the many scars and wounds that he had suffered at the end of the First Age and the cataclysm that occurred with the destruction of Angband. The Dragon had slept many countless years in hiding, slowly healing, when the wraith-king came to request his aid. More time and healing would have been necessary to fully recover, but the Dragon knew he was strong enough to deal with these puny people.

He listened to the voice yell out to him and immediately knew Edrahil for what he was, a Sindar, an Elf, one of those that for so long had been a bane to his kind. The Dragon gave a gurgled laugh and spoke, "YOU WISH TO ENGAGE ME! DEAR ELF, I AM BEYOND YOUR ABILITIES TO OVERCOME! YOU AND THESE FEEBLE MEN ARE UPON DEATH'S DOOR AND FOOLISHLY YOU SPAR ME WITH WORDS! I AM SCATHA! I AM MIGHT!"

The Dragon's voice boomed in the night air, yet undaunted by his words, Edrahil responded, "FORGET THEE NOT SCATHA THE MIGHTY - IT WAS A MAN, AKIN TO THOSE WITH WHOM I ALLY THAT STRUCK THE KILLING BLOW TO GLAURUNG, FATHER OF DRAGONS! SLIGHT THEM NOT IN THEIR COURAGE AND WILL, TO YOUR FOLLY!"

With the mentioning of Glaurung's name, Scatha became incensed and he slammed his mass forward into the gate tower and wall of Eldanar's outer barrier and the structure began to tumble apart crashing down into snow and icy water.

"RAAAHHHHRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!" roared the Dragon as a flame emanated from his mouth, licking up over his long snout like a terrible tongue.

Behind Scatha, Camentir had moved into position to attack the Dragon's tail, per Dirnhael's instruction. The old warrior only needed to draw the fell-beast's attention to him long enough to allow Dirnhael to maneuver to the Dragon's right and get under his hopefully softer underbelly.

Hoisting the crafted blade of Nain's, Camentir attacked, slashing once to no effect against the scales, then again, and again. Please with his last cut, Camentir could see that he had cracked the vile armor and drew some blood. Sadly he knew it was but a pin-prick to the gigantic beast. Still it had the desired effect.

"Huh?" growled Scatha. The Dragon had felt the slightest twinge of pain and realized that the Elf had distracted him enough to allow one of his companions to sneak up on him. How could that have happened? Stretching his long neck about to look over his shoulder and behind, Scatha tried to turn in his tight confine.

The Dragon's booming voice froze Dirnhael, but only for a moment. He was frightened, of course - only a fool wouldn't be - but he would not be deterred. The dragon violently jerked its body up and back after it spoke, and Dirnhael knew Camentir had caught the vile creature by surprise. It was time. He readied his shield upwards and found the strength to stab deeply into the dragon's flesh over and over again. The hard scale of the dragon's coat provided less resistance to Andúring's eldritch steel than he expected, and Dirnhael thought of nothing else as he willed his arm to repeatedly thrust the icy blade into the inferno that raged in Scatha's belly.

The Dragon had not felt such pain since the elder days and the Wars of Beleriand against the very Hosts of Aman! The pain was intense and the icy cold flame that flickered up the length of Andúring caused a terrible, burning and lingering pain from each stab.

Scatha quickly swept his tail at the foolish attacker behind him and then smashed his body against the donjon to crush the Elf that had struck his underbelly. Surely it had been one of the Sindar, or perhaps even a Noldor, most hated of all of that kind! No other could possibly have harmed him in such a way. His body was coated in the most magnificent of armor and his strength was unmatched!

They had hurt him, but he would end this now. They would not get another chance! He turned his massive head back and around to his right and his gaze fell on Dirnhael and his enchanted blade.

"WHAT? A MAN!?" bellowed the Dragon.

The only grace that Dirnhael had was that the Dragon could not breathe his fire, for though the Dragon's mouth and scaled body was immune to his flame, his soft, leathery wings, which were draped over all in their great length, would be consumed by the fire. Though this Man seemed a threat, the Dragon would not willingly harm himself to destroy his attacker - besides, he had more weapons than fire.

Outside the keep, Edrahil saw the Dragon turn and knew that Camentir and Dirnhael had struck. The Elf made a soft prayer to the Valar that they watch over his friends this night. He had already lost one good companion; he did not wish to lose any more.

Steeling himself against the battle of wills between the Eldar and Dragon, Durgil held his own, drew a bead on the beast's great head, and released. Seeing his efforts were futile, he searched to find a softer part of the creature to aim for. All the while he kept an eye on his friends - Daelhun and Fengel were well within the dragon's reach retrieving Nain.

"Fengel! Daelhun! Get out of there!" Durgil yelled as he strung another arrow and fired, still in an attempt to distract the dragon.

Daelhun spurred on his horse. His position in this was to rescue the dwarf and take him a safe distance away and that was what he was going to do. Nain attempted to struggle against the hands that were holding him on the horse that was carrying him away from the fight. He had sworn an oath and nothing would stop him. And yet when the Dragon spoke Nain could only listen.

Hearing the Dragon had spotted Dirnhael, Fengel left the burning drawbridge and made his way toward the east side of the keep where the two Dúnedain had entered. He looked back at the bridge to see Lúnduf's remains and a hatred of the Dragon burned hotter within him. Fengel rode to the broken wall to aid Dirnhael and Camentir, hoping to exact some vengeance upon the dragon.

The great beast turned - it was faster than he expected, and he felt sheer terror as the dragon bellowed in rage. Desperately, he thrust with Andúring again, plunging the blade as deeply as possible into the fearsome creature. Its enormous body shifted, and Dirnhael realized that it meant to crush him against the castle wall. He ducked just in time as the dragon smashed into the stone; sending dust and small bits of rubble to the ground all around him, even as all was momentarily dark beneath the belly of the beast. It was just a matter of time before his life would be over, Dirnhael thought, but he took solace in the fact that he may have bought his friends enough time to escape.

Caught between the donjon and the castle wall, Scatha was not in a position to stop the relentless stabbing from the Man and the searing pain was unbearable. He needed to get out of here. He did not agree to this. His tail had missed the one behind him, he had moved more quickly than Scatha imagined and the one on his right had ducked under his girth and had been unharmed.

Again pain shot through his side and Scatha stretched out his wings and with a great sweep, he hoisted himself into the air. The sudden flight of the Dragon jolted Dirnhael up and lifted him as he held onto Andúring, the sword still stuck in the Dragon's great flank. Scatha twisted and the Dúnadan and his sword wrenched free. Dirnhael fell the 20' distance that he had risen and then struck hard into the broken shards of the donjon, bouncing a few more feet to tumble another length into darkness - both of night and the void of consciousness.

Fengel's horse reared up as the Dragon rose into the air and bathed the grounds of the castle in his awful flame. Scatha continued up into the darkness and disappeared in the night sky, all the while bellowing in a painful rage. The sight was one of the most frightening that the Éothraim had ever seen and hoped he ever would.

When it was gone, Fengel raced across the broken stones that now bridged the moat and entered into the ruined Barad Eldanar, as he did, the sun began to rise in the east making the sky a lighter shade of grey. Inside the courtyard, fires burned but nothing stirred that the Éothraim could see. But then, a figure rose out of the broken stones of the castle wall - it was Camentir. The Dúnadan looked singed and badly wounded, but he was alive! Fengel quickly glanced around to see if Dirnhael was visible but he saw nothing and in his heart he began to panic.

Narrator's Notes:

Well I think this last scene speaks for itself. In reading the narrative it is easy to see the magic used by the Elf and the dragon; the maneuvers of the warriors; and why the loss of the comrade. Remember to use the *Bewilder* ability of Scatha, this proved to be a valuable asset to confuse those that heard his voice.

Like the battle for Eldanar, this was not meant to be a battle to the end with the dragon... we all know Scatha's fate. Instead it was a desperate struggle for our heroes to drive from the north a potential threat and ally to the Witch-king. Though the heroes won, it was still a loss in the end as they realize that what they took back from Angmar is now naught but a ruin and must be abandoned. In fact, there was never any real chance to hold onto the keep anyway.

I hope you enjoyed the read and I thank you for taking the time. I also hope that your tale of the Triumph of the Witch-king is as enjoyable as ours has been. For new Narrators and players of the game, I hope this format has helped you in telling your own story.

Tomcat

epilogue

Dirnhael woke up to the touch of a cool cloth being dabbed across his brow. It was a bright morning and a clear sky stretched above him. His eyes focused on his Sindarin friend who tended an unseen cut.

With Dirnhael's questioning eyes, Edrahil spoke, "We found you in the hole in which the Orcs had undermined the castle's defense. It seems you took cover within when the Dragon

retreated from Eldanar... and it was a wise decision for the courtyard was bathed in fire."

Edrahil re-soaked the cloth and continued, "I am not sure why the Dragon retreated but I can only assume it was that..."

Dirnhael looked to where the Elf gestured and he saw his sword, Andúring's blade was broken off roughly a hand above the hilt.

"We were unable to find the shard", he said as he once again applied the poultice.



On March 1st, 1637 T.A., Dirnhael and his companions, along with Camentir, Captain of the Third Host of the King's Guard rode into the gates of the city of Fornost as heroes and much fanfare was extended them all. They had passed through the sad defeated lands of the North; they had passed through small villages that still felt the bite of the plague; and they had left behind friends both old and new.

As they had marched, Dirnhael thought about all he had been through and what he had seen, and who he had lost. He thought about far off Tharbad and the now dead house of Celephain - the entire family having fallen victim in one way or another to the dreaded sickness that had swept the land. He thought of Lúnduf, the doughty Dwarf that had marched from Khazad-dûm, so far away, only to fall in a cold and hard land for nothing more than... friendship. Finally the Dúnadan thought of Ioreth, and he was glad he was home.

"Home?" he thought. He was now a Knight of the King, with land holdings to do with as he pleased. Would this be where he settled?

"Welcome home, M'lord!" cried a young woman as she handed him a spring flower. Dirnhael nodded... it was good to be home.



The Shard of Andúring was deeply embedded within the Dragon's right hind quarter forever causing him a burning pain. He flew long into the night and through that next day, bringing terror to those who saw the fell-beast cross the sky, until at last he settled in the cold Grey Mountain range. There he rested and tried to heal, but Scatha the Mighty would forever be lame from the wicked blows dealt him by Dirnhael and the mighty sword of Nargothrond, forged for the very purpose of slaying the wyrms of Morgoth, by the master craftsman of the Noldor - greatest of all.

In distant future days, Scatha would fall to Fram of the Éothéod, the children of the Éothraim. The Dragon, lame from a long unhealed wound, would find his doom as foreseen by Edrahil in the years of Angmar, during the triumph of the Witch-king.



GETTING STARTED

by Mathew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

Below are presented a couple of 0-Advancement level characters for players or Narrators alike to use.

RANNOR

RACE, SUB-RACE: Man, Middle (Man of Tharbad)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 11 (+2)*, Strength 9 (+1), Vitality 7 (+0)*, Wits 7 (+0)

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

ADVANCEMENTS: 0

ORDER: Mariner (Riverman)

ORDER ABILITIES: Sailor's Eye

SKILLS: Acrobatics (Balance) +2, Armed Combat: Blades (Shortsword) +3, Climb +2, Craft: Sewing (Sails) +4, Debate (Bargain) +2, Games (Darts) +1, Jump +1, Language: Westron +3, Lore/Group: Riverman's Guild +3, Lore/History: Cardolan (Tharbad) +3, Lore/Race: Men (Men of Tharbad, Dunlendings) +3, Lore/Realm: Cardolan (Tharbad) +4, Lore/Wilderness: Greyflood River +4, Observe (Spot) +3, Persuade (Charm) +2, Ranged Combat: Thrown (Dagger), Sea-craft (Boating) +4, Swim +3, Weather-sense +4

EDGES: Doughty, Hardy

FLAWS: Dull-eared

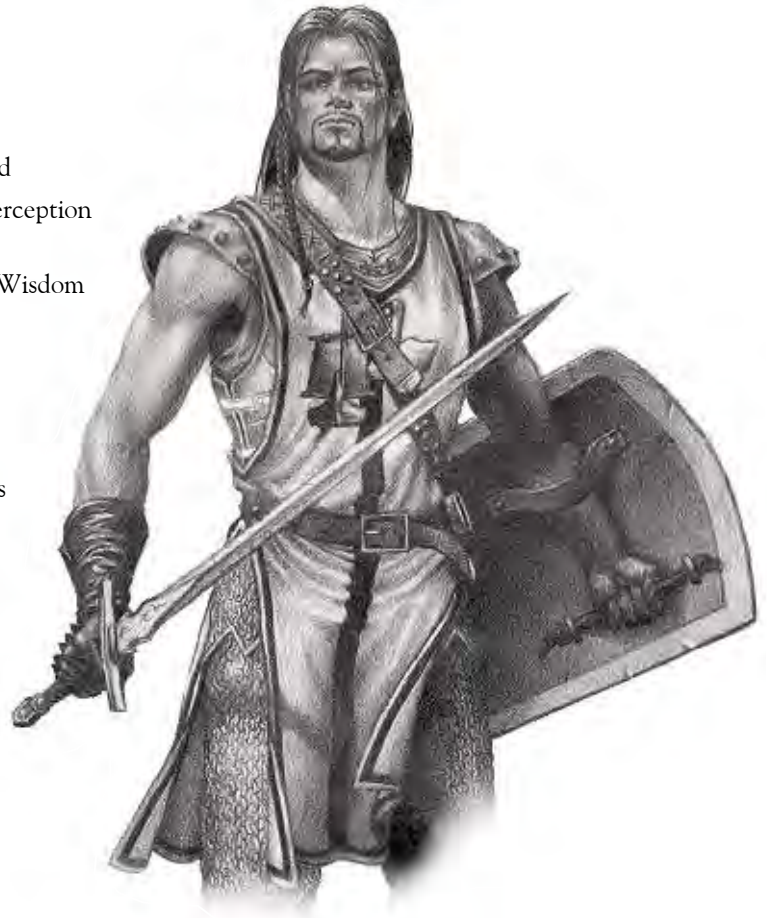
DEFENCE: 12

COURAGE: 4

RENOWN: 0

HEALTH: 7

GEAR: Shortsword, dagger



11/99

BACKGROUND

Rannor was a typical boy from Tharbad's middle class. He grew up on the river with his father, Nimengal, who ran a modest business of hauling cargo from Tharbad down to the sea and back or ferrying passengers to any place possible along the Greyflood up to the confluence of the Hoarwell and Loudwater. Time passed and he learned his father's trade, turning out to be a decent pilot. As he came of age, he sought freedom from his father's business and struck out on his own. With his experience, he began taking on jobs for hire from all shipping commissions in Tharbad, occasionally his father (at a discount) as well when there was a difficult task to be undertaken. His means are modest; enough to get him by for the short term while in the city or outfit him for a decent length of time on the road or water.

Rannor knows how to handle himself in a business transaction and in a fight, not being intimidated by too much. He is cocksure and confident, but knows (most of the time) when to stop before pushing his luck too far. He knows little beyond Tharbad and the river. His only weakness, as he sees it, is his diminished hearing. It was caused by falling into the icy waters of the Greyflood during the winter at the age of 5; he was lucky just to be pulled out alive.



ARDRIEL

RACE, SUB-RACE: Man, Elven-blooded (Man of Osgiliath)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 11 (+2)*, Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 10 (+2)*, Strength 6 (+0), Vitality 7 (+0), Wits 8 (+1)

REACTIONS: Stamina +0, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +4*, Wisdom +2

ADVANCEMENTS: 0

ORDER: Noble (Gondorian Lady)

ORDER ABILITIES: Courtier

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +3, Debate (Oratory) +4, Insight +3, Inspire +3, Intimidate (Majesty) +3, Language: Sindarin +4, Language: Westron +5, Lore/Group: Gondorian Nobility +4, Lore/History: Gondor (Osgiliath) +4, Lore/Race: Men (Dúnedain) +4, Lore/Realm: Gondor (Osgiliath) +5, Observe (Spot) +3, Ride (Horse) +2

EDGES: Fair, Hoard, Honey-tongued, Rank

FLAWS: Dark Secret, Fealty

DEFENCE: 12

COURAGE: 4

RENOWN: 0

HEALTH: 7

GEAR: Longsword, dagger

BACKGROUND

Ardriel grew up in a life of lavish privilege in Osgiliath during its height of power. She never wanted for anything and so from an early age she lived with the silver spoon in her mouth (quite literally) and became an insufferable brat for it. For generations, her family stood upon its laurels of its ancestors, yet did little to continue the good name; thus it wasn't surprising in the way Ardriel ended up.

That is, until civil disquiet came to the streets of Gondor's capitol. There were rumblings of discontent among the masses and rumors began to fly about who was behind it. Soon came the fomenting of the Kin-Strife and Ardriel discovered herself and what she had become. Always headstrong and feeling powerless without a cause, she went to her father her family to ask if there was anything she could do to help the rightful king. Incredulous at his daughter's impudence, he spurned her offer and laid bare the black heart hidden behind the family name for so long -- the jealousy and lust for power, and it was power that could be given to those faithful to Castamir. Distraught and disgusted at the news, she fled from the home she had known all her life and sought a new one away from the lies and deception of her family.

Ardriel is a woman of uncommon beauty, a daughter of noble blood from both Dol Amroth and Osgiliath. In her is found a hint of the elven descent of the high nobility in the fortress by the sea, both in her fair form and long sight of her mind. She is forthright and plain-spoken, but can verbally joust with the best of courtiers. Though she's lived a pampered life and suffered some of the consequences of it, she does her best to amend who she is, not just her person but to set right her family's name once again. She has enough personal wealth in coin and belongings to support her quite well for some time. Since life outside the province of her family has become more difficult, she keeps her sword that she was taught to use by her elder brothers, nearby but does not carry it often or openly if she can help it; the dagger is always within reach when having to travel in the Commons.



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://lotrrpg.fanhq.com>

DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG BOARD

<http://forums.fanhq.com/viewforum.php?f=164>

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/

CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH

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

THE LAST ALLIANCE

<http://thelastalliance.com>

RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES

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

THE SLAVE PITS OF BARAD-DUR

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

THE STEWARD AND THE KING

<http://www.stewardandking.net>

THE TOWER HILLS

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

TREK-RPG.NET

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

CODA WEBZINE REPOSITORY

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

THE ONE RING

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

TALES OF MIDDLE-EARTH

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

VALINOR

<http://sauron.misled.us>

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'

CREDITS AND CONTACTS

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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.