

THE HALL OF FIRE FAN WEBZINE



Issue Forty-Eight
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GREETINGS, SALUTATIONS... HELLO ALL!

Happy New Year to one and all! I hope your holiday breaks were full of good times and plenty of gaming. Well to start off with, there is a bit of interesting news in the whole Lord of the Rings front with the announcement of The Hobbit movie plus one more. Even though they won't bring back our beloved game to print, they should (hopefully) provide some interesting insights into Tolkien's world and fodder for us at the tabletop. I shall refrain from speculation on a new gaming system as I don't think it's appropriate for this publication.

As for this issue's content, I believe you will be happy with what we have to offer in the continuation of my magnum opus, A Return to Power, with Chapter 3 getting the fellowship in deeper with dealings up North. There is also some new information about armies of the Reunited Kingdom in the Fourth Age and Angmar, and more!

HAPPY GAMING,

Matthew Kearns, Editor
aka GandalfOfBorg

THE HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

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A RETURN TO POWER

A languishing elf in a distant Fourth Age has lost his way, not only in morality but also in his way to Valinor. Thus he seeks a means to force open the road to the Undying Lands that once existed in the First Age – the “straight path” – so that the dwindling power of the Eldar can once again flourish in Middle-earth. To do so he requires powerful artifacts of bygone eras to complete this task. Unfortunately for him and the rest of the world, a secret cult, devoted to Morgoth, thought long gone has discovered the elf’s plan and intend to twist it toward their goal of freeing the Dark Lord from his bonds from beyond the reaches of the world.

INTRODUCTION

"A Return to Power" is a campaign for *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* by Decipher, taking place in the Fourth Age during any year suitable to equate to the passing of 15 kings of the Reunited Kingdom. "A Return to Power" is suitable for a company of 4-5 characters ranging from 5 to 7 Advancements and at least 5 Renown.

Narrators will require the use of *The Lord of the Rings: Core Rule Book*, *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*, *Paths of the Wise*, and a few issues of *The Hall of Fire* (each will be specified) for running this adventure.

The campaign begins in Minas Tirith with a special request made by the king and moves across western Middle-earth. The missing *palantiri* are to be recovered, starting with those lost in the North, but another power behind the scenes seeks them as well for purposes unknown to but one other. More is going on than anyone knows with events conspiring to bring about the end of the world!

Players who plan to take part in this adventure should not read any further.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This is the Fourth Age – Eldarion is history, Elessar legend, and now Elendil II sits upon the throne in Minas Tirith as 16th King of the Reunited Kingdom. Peace has generally come to the lands of northwestern Middle-earth with Gondor having quelled most of the barbaric realms that surround the region.

The fellowship is in the northern reaches of Middle-Earth following the discovery that any *palantiri* to be discovered in the ancient shipwreck were taken by agents of Angmar or worse. They must decide on a course of action: give up, go into Angmar in secret, seek assistance from the steward of the North Kingdom, or some other choice of their own. Regardless of their choice, the characters will end up going to Angmar one way or another.

QUEST 1: STONES OF THE NORTH

CHAPTER 3: ALL ROADS LEAD TO ANGMAR

ADVENTURE HOOKS

If the fellowship didn't participate in the previous chapters, the Narrator should run Chapter 2, Act 4: "Found & Lost" before continuing on and/or using the following suggested hooks to bring the characters into the story. The Narrator should also feel free to create her own hooks; otherwise, just continuing where the previous chapter left off.

- The characters are a band of Lossoth on patrol, investigating an incursion by the Angmarim
- The characters are a group of Rangers or accomplices tracking the band out of Angmar
- The characters are waylaid by a party of Angmarim soldiers while traveling; the group is coming out of the west instead of the East (use Chapter 2, *Optional Act: Random Encounters* to open with). With them is a *palantir* recovered from the wreckage site.

ACT 1: GIVE UP

Obvious in and of itself but what the characters don't know is they're still on their way. What they do next is up to the fellowship but the Narrator could try a few things to get them back on track with going to Angmar. A few ideas include:

- Guilt them into it by encountering an envoy seeking them out and their progress (proceed to Chapter 3: Act 3: "On Their Own")
- Discover some other event that prompts them willingly to go to Angmar (proceed to the appropriate Act in this chapter)
- If things didn't go well for the fellowship with the Angmarim troop, have them be captured and taken to Angmar (proceed to Chapter 4, Act 1: "Captured!")

ACT 2: ANGMAR BY WAY OF FORNOST

The steward of the North Kingdom will listen to counsel (Indifferent) but will not give assistance unless he can be persuaded (extended test TN 60 Persuade or Debate, 6 stages of TN 10). The number of successes must overcome the number of failures and Failures must be matched by Complete Successes or better while Complete Failures must be matched by Superior Successes or better. If successful, he will send out a force of men (see Table 1 - Persuasion Results for size of force) to distract Angmar so that the fellowship may slip in to acquire the stones and get; refer to Chapter 3, Act 3: "On Their Own" for a possible plan of attack.

If failures outnumber the successes or any Disastrous failure is rolled, no assistance will be given; go to Chapter 3, Act 3: "On Their Own". If the fellowship is overwhelmed by a random encounter on the way, they are captured and so proceed to Chapter 4, Act 1: "Captured!"

Now would be an excellent chance to dust off those mass combat rules in the Helm's Deep Sourcebook. Where the Reunited Kingdom forces and the Angmarim engage in the mass combat is at the convergence of paths 3 and 5, in the foothills around the great mounts north of the Ettenmoors see map with battle web at the end of the chapter).



TABLE 1. Persuasion Results

<u>Success</u>	<u>Results</u>
Marginal	Small group of men (1 mass combat unit; medium archers); the steward is not so convinced that this the proper course of action and would like to consult with the king before committing any more men to a venture like this
Complete	Medium-sized group of men (2-4 mass combat units; 1 medium archer, rest light or medium infantry); you've managed to convince the steward that action is needed but doesn't believe he can commit too many men to a foolhardy venture into enemy territory, even if it just as a diversion to get the fellowship inside
Superior	Large group of men (4-6 mass combat units; 1/3 units medium archers, 1/3 light infantry, 1/3 medium infantry); the steward thinks as you do about the necessity of action and will readily commit men to support the fellowship's plan
Extraordinary	Army (6-10 mass combat units; ¼ medium archers, ½ light infantry, ¼ medium infantry); your silver tongue has kindled the fires of action in the heart and mind of the steward and see this as an opportunity to both accomplish the mission of the fellowship and deal a mighty blow to the enemy in the process

For stats on ally and enemy units, create your own (see *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #25) or use the ones found in *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #48; Fornost forces use the same modifiers and abilities for Gondorians. The enemy force should have at least 1.5x the number of units as the Fornost force. It is unlikely that the fellowship itself will fight directly in a mass combat situation if they are to use the battle as a diversion, but if the players want to, allow them to command units on the field while describing what the fellowship might see, if anything, as it sneaks into the enemy territory.



ACT 3: ON THEIR OWN

This decision could either be acted on after the discovery of the missing *palantir* or following one of the other possible decisions. If it follows Chapter 3, Act 2: "Angmar by Way of Fornost" and a force of men is sent out from Fornost, reduce the TN of first two legs of the journey by 1 for each level of Success of the Persuasion test to show that the diversion is working.

The going is slow for they must remain stealthy, even if they happen to clothe themselves in the garb of the enemy. This could go quickly in actual game time but the fellowship must make periodic Stealth tests as they travel through the hostile land (see the *Infiltrating Patrolled Areas* sidebar). They get a +2 bonus each for wearing native garb and having a map. An affinity bonus may be gained from a relevant Lore skill about Angmar or Survival if the character has the specialty for the particular terrain being traveled through.

TABLE 2. Stealth TNs for Sneaking into Angmar

<u>Path</u>	<u>TN</u>	<u>Terrain Type</u>	<u>Travel (Days)</u>
1	7	Mountain	2
2	10	Plains	8
3	12	Plains	6
4	10	Mountains	3
5	12	Plains	7
6	12	Mountains	4
7	10	Plains	6
8	15	Plains	10
9	15	Plains	8
10	17	Mountains, Plains	9
11	17	Mountains, Plains	9
12	10	Plains	2
13	17	Mountains	4
14	20	Plains	10
15	22	Mountains	3
16	25	Mountains	5
17	12	Plains	2
18	15	Plains	5
19	22	Plains	6
20	20	Mountains	4
21	22	Plains	2

Upon successfully navigating a way to Carn Dûm, proceed to Chapter 4: Act 2: "Seeking the Palantir". If at any time that they don't survive an encounter with a patrol or random encounter, the fellowship is captured; proceed to Chapter 4, Act 1: "Captured!"



INFILTRATING PATROLLED AREAS

Each member of the fellowship makes a Stealth roll with the Narrator comparing them to the TN's stated on his version of the map (see end of the chapter for the Narrator's map and Player's map). The worst result of the fellowship is used for resolving each leg of the journey. If it fails, an encounter is met along the way. If the encounter is an enemy patrol, subsequent patrol sizes will double if any enemy escapes during an encounter or successive failures occur. Use Table 2 - Stealth TNs for Sneaking into Angmar for referencing the Stealth TN's for the path being taken by the fellowship.

The fellowship should not have access to the possible paths, but should be told where they are starting from, either the origin of paths 12 and 18 or Fornost. They probably won't pick their path like what has been drawn so feel free to estimate the Stealth TN, terrain type, and travel time for the fellowship. Travel time is based on normal movement.

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES...

Look for further installments of A Return to Power in upcoming issues of *The Hall of Fire*. The adventure continues in Chapter 4: The Lion's Den!

TABLE 3. Chapter 3 Rewards

<u>Accomplishment</u>	<u>Reward</u>
Skill tests indicated in text	XP is the result rolled, +5 for each level of success
Any skill tests not in text that Narrator deems worthy of reward	XP is the result rolled
Combat encounters	XP is the TN Equivalent value
Infiltrates Angmar without encountering a patrol	100 XP and +2 Renown
Win the mass combat encounter	50 XP / size of the force sent from Fornost
Completed Chapter	250 XP and +2 Renown (double the Renown reward if Fornost sends Army against Angmar)
Captured by enemy forces	No award for completing the chapter

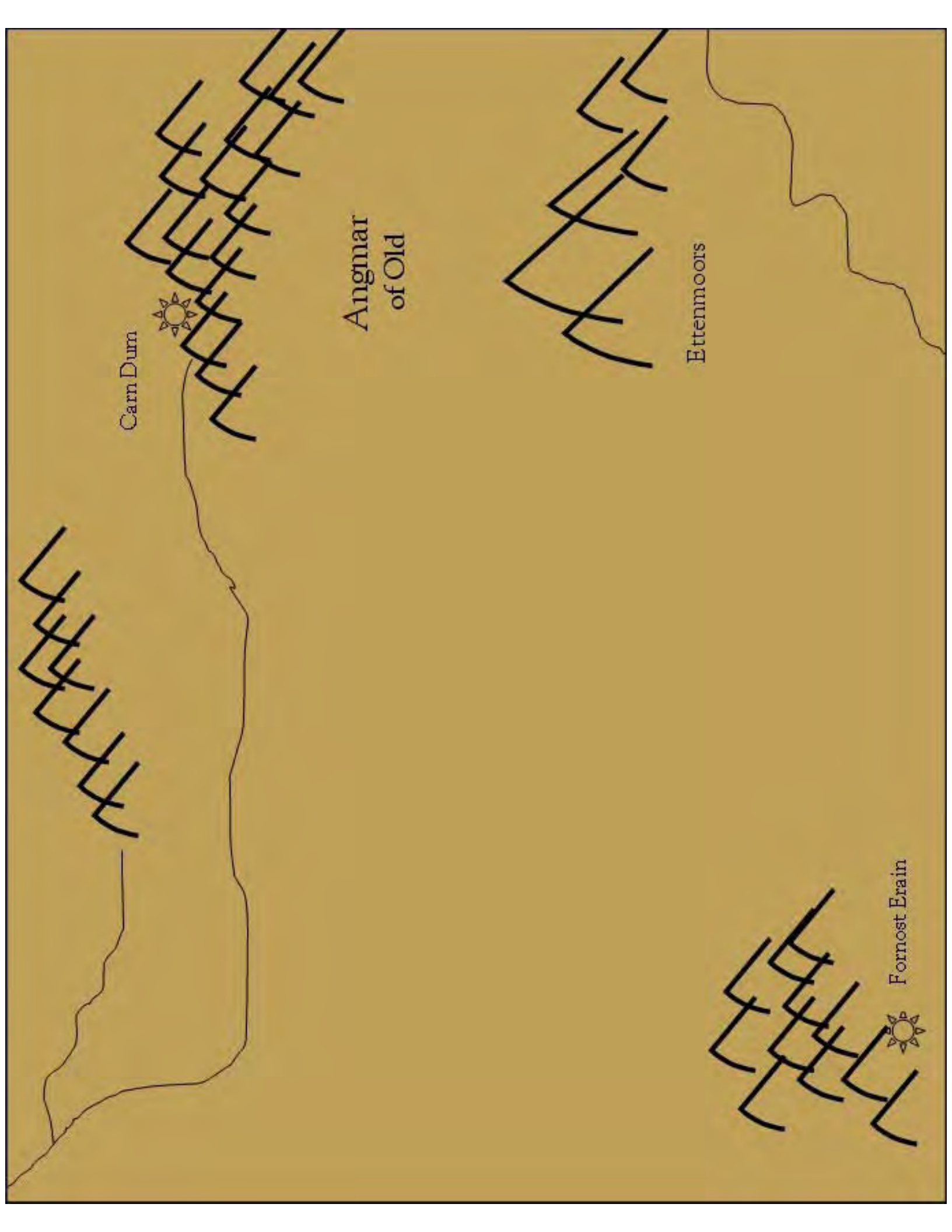
Carn Dum

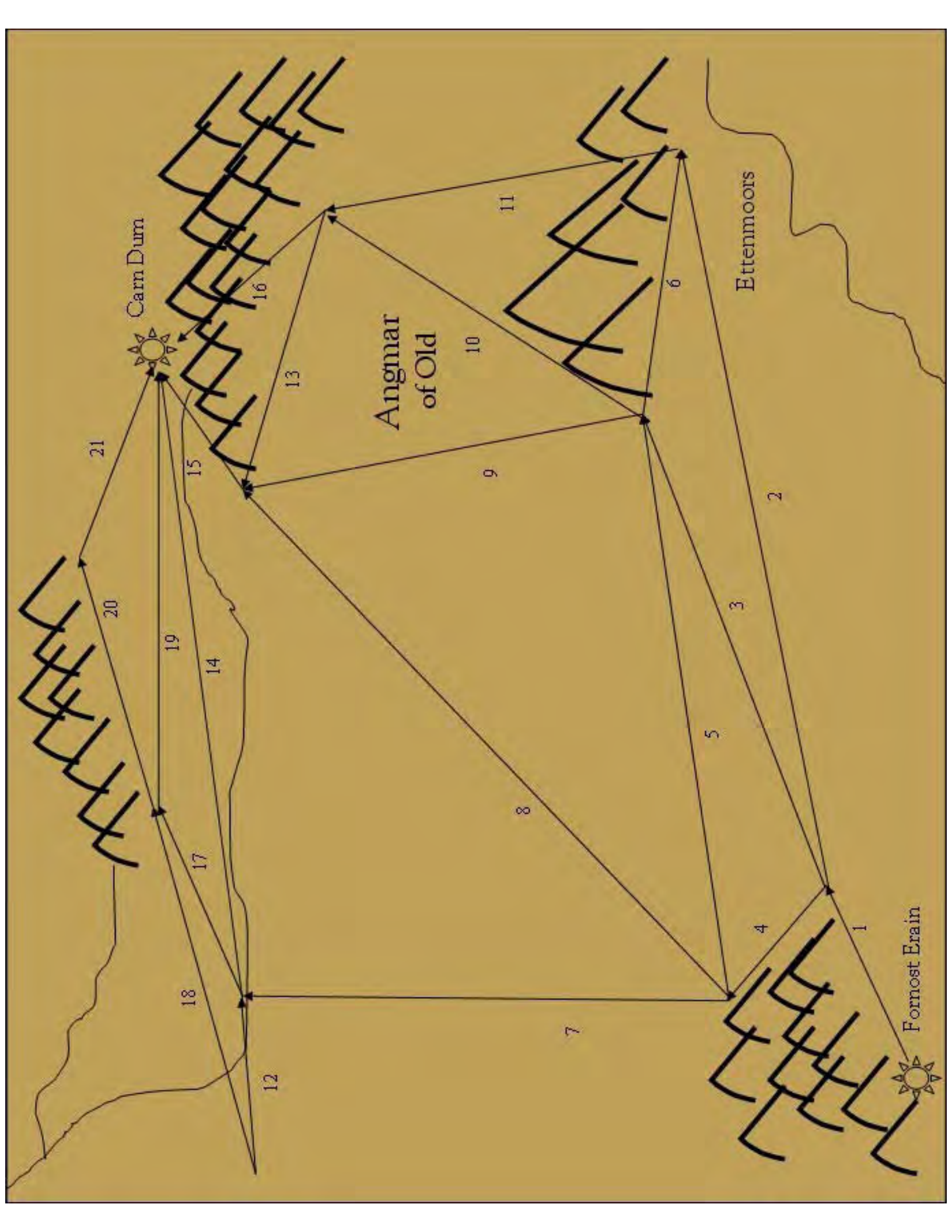


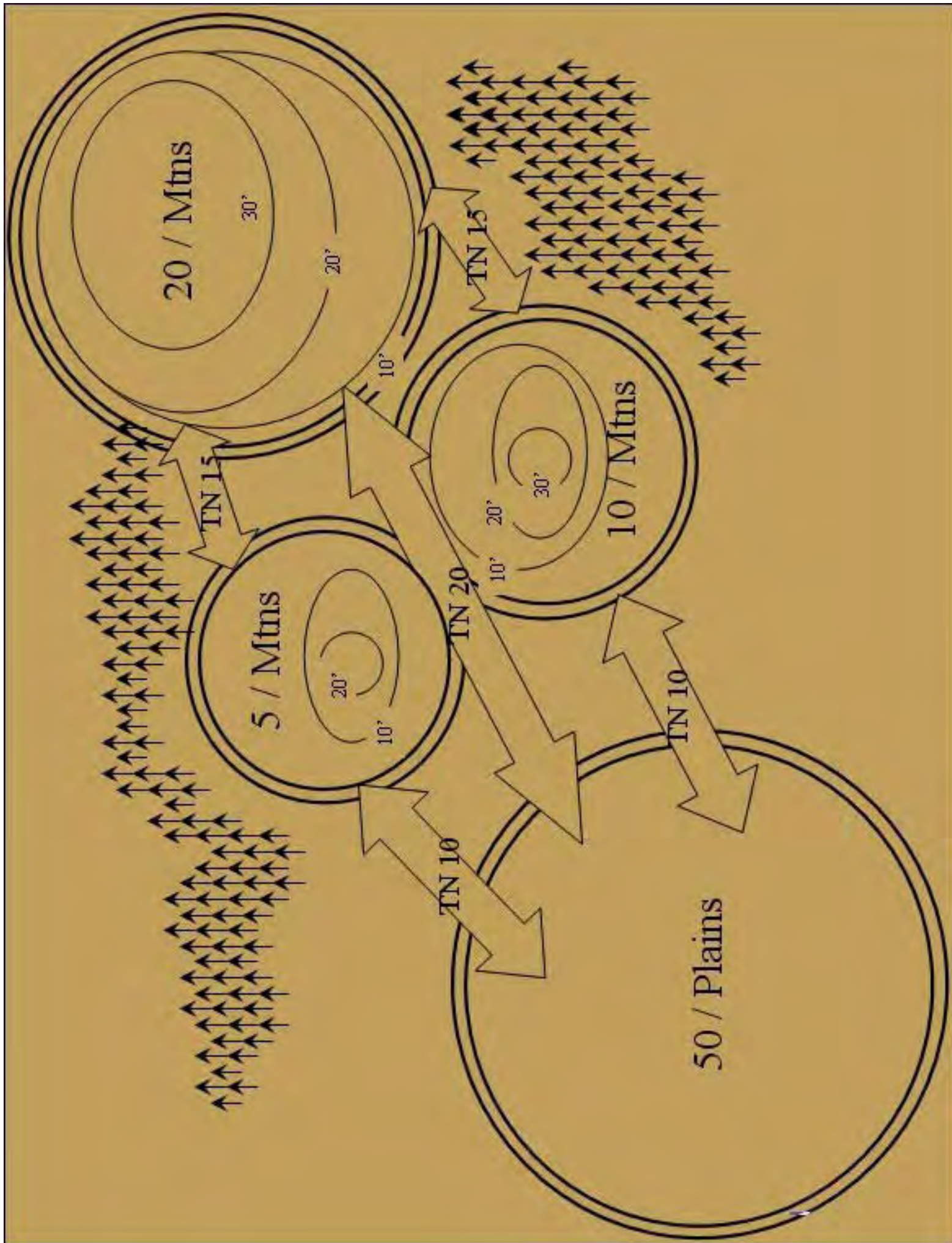
Angmar
of Old

Ettenmoors

Fornost Erain







FAN FLAVOUR

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

EVEN THE ODDS (MASS COMBAT MANEUVER)

MANEUVER TYPE: Leader

TN: 15

EFFECT: Through some ingenious means the leader may select an ability of one opposing unit and negate its effects until the unit performs another Command-type maneuver.



ANGMARIM FORCES

Throughout the span of its existence, the armies of Angmar have been a hodge-podge of elite units devoted to the powers-that-be in Carn Dum and the regular folk pressed into service for the Dark Lord's war-machine. Presented below are new and revised rules and stats for creating mass combat units for Angmar.

MODIFIERS

Angmar Mass Combat Modifiers

<u>Mass Combat Attribute</u>	<u>Unit Modifiers (Angmarim)</u>	<u>Unit Modifiers (Hillmen)</u>
Command	+0	-1
Ranged	+1 / -2	+1 / -3
Melee	+1	+1
Toughness	+0	+0
Support	-1	-2
Movement	+0 / +0	+1 / +1

ABILITIES

The Hall of Fire, Issue #36 contains a few abilities to apply to units of Angmar (Mountain-native, Disheartened, Whips at Their Feet, Devoted). The following can also be applied to Angmar units as well as others.

Conscripts: Conscripts are fighters forced into service, usually lightly armed and protected. They are typically used as fodder in great numbers to sacrifice as some grisly tactic (an opening salvo to test the enemy or as a defensive screen to protect a retreat in the face of defeat). Command maneuvers to lead this unit have +3 TN.

Elite: Elite Units gain a +1 bonus to all their mass combat attributes.

TACTICS

Here are some of the tactics and info about the forces of Angmar.

- About 75% of Angmar's forces are conscripts while the rest are the elite units (15% medium and 10% heavy).
- All their light units are made up of conscripts.
- Those pressed into service are the poor working class of Angmar (40%) or native barbarians from the mountains (60%)
- Angmar has elite medium and heavy units.
- Angmar will primarily use its elite forces only when they are on the offensive or cornered in a siege.

UNITS

Here are new Angmarim units and some revised from *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #36.

Angmar Native Mass Combat Units

<u>Type</u>	<u>Command</u>	<u>Ranged</u>	<u>Melee</u>	<u>Toughness</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Movement</u>	<u>Abilities</u>
Light Archers	7	8	8	7	6	10	Conscripts, Disheartened, Mountain-native, Whips at Their Feet
Light Infantry	7	5	8	8	6	8	Conscripts, Disheartened, Mountain-native, Whips at Their Feet
Medium Infantry	8	6	11	12	7	7	Devoted, Elite, Whips at Their Feet
Heavy Infantry	8	5	14	15	5	6	Devoted, Elite, Whips at Their Feet

Angmar Hillmen Mass Combat Units

<u>Type</u>	<u>Command</u>	<u>Ranged</u>	<u>Melee</u>	<u>Toughness</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Movement</u>	<u>Abilities</u>
Light Infantry	6	4	9	8	5	8	Conscripts, Disheartened, Mountain-native, Whips at Their Feet

FORCES OF THE NORTH KINGDOM

Well into the Fourth Age, Fornost and the North Kingdom have revitalized and have incorporated much of the technology, tactics, and skills of their brothers in the south, using soldiers who are all recruits, volunteering their service.

MODIFIERS

Units from the North Kingdom use the same modifiers as those from the South Kingdom (Gondorians), though will have leaders and captains who are well-suited for fighting against the threats of Angmar and the icy north.

ABILITIES

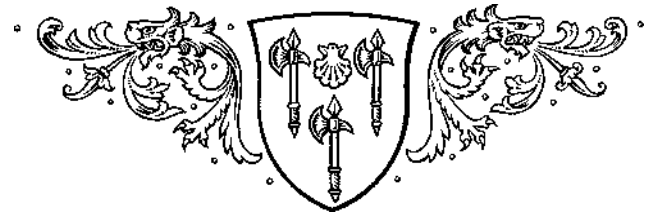
The small, mobile forces of archers of the North Kingdom are strictly trained for combat in many environments but each unit specializes in one type so any given unit would have one of the following abilities: Cold-hardy, Forest-friend, or Mountain-native.



TACTICS

Here are some of the tactics and info about the forces of Fornost.

- Fornost has a small contingent of stealthy and effective light archer force used in border patrols and hit-and-run tactics on the enemy.
- 10% of total forces are the elite light archer force, 15% medium cavalry, 30% light infantry, 25% medium infantry, 20% heavy infantry
- 20% of total forces are elite units
- Favor using cavalry in pincer maneuver or as spearhead formation followed by medium infantry and light infantry
- Archers always remain at distance out of danger from melee units while still providing backup for ally melee units
- Heavy infantry is used primarily in guarding the rearguard, the highest ranking leader on the battlefield, or in limited use as a surprise against the enemy



UNITS

Reunited Kingdom Mass Combat Units

<u>Type</u>	<u>Command</u>	<u>Ranged</u>	<u>Melee</u>	<u>Toughness</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Movement</u>	<u>Abilities</u>
Light Archers	9	10	8	7	6	10	Elite, Environment Ability*
Medium Archers	9	12	8	9	6	8	
Medium Cavalry	9	6	15	13	6	14	Fell Charge
Light Infantry	9	6	9	8	6	8	
Medium Infantry	9	6	11	11	6	6	
Heavy Infantry	9	6	13	14	6	4	

* See Abilities section for more information.

FORCES OF ROHAN

Ever since Eorl the Young led his folk out of the Anduin Vales in the North to the aid of the Gondorians, the cavalry of the Rohirrim has been the mainstay of the horse-people's armies for generations - there is none that can match it.

MODIFIERS

The mass combat attribute modifiers for the Rohirrim are found in *The Hall of Fire*, Issue 25.

ABILITIES

Most abilities of the Rohirrim units can be found in the *Helm's Deep* sourcebook. The following ability would be highly appropriate for the Rohirrim or other units that heavily use mounted archers.

Mounted: This unit may now use half the Toughness and Movement bonus for cavalry units of equivalent type (rounded down) but may only attack units that are adjacent to themselves as if they were a melee unit. This ability is only applicable to Archer units.

UNITS

The following units are new while the rest of the mass combat units of Rohan are detailed in the *Helm's Deep* sourcebook.

Rohirrim Mass Combat Units

Type	Command	Ranged	Melee	Toughness	Support	Movement	Abilities
Light Archers	8	10	8	9	6	11	Mounted
Medium Archers	8	12	8	11	6	10	Mounted



IT'S ALL OPTIONAL: SIEGECRAFT

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

SIEGECRAFT SKILL

During mass combat, a character may make a TN 10 Siegecraft test with affinity from an appropriate Lore skill about his foe to identify a singular property of the typical make-up of enemy forces using Siegecraft. For example, Bardol of Fornost is leading an assault against Angmarim forces and succeeds at his Siegecraft test. He recalls now that the Angmarim use conscripts for most of their units in mass combat and instructs his captains that one of the ways they can win the day is to demoralize the enemy and they will flee.

INTERVIEW

THE PERSON

1. What is your name, where are you located, and what is your profession (if you have one)?

My name's David DeBoe. I'm 35 years old, a technical writer for a software company, and a resident of Raleigh, North Carolina.

THE EXPERIENCE

2. How long have you been in gaming?

I started playing D&D in the 4th grade, circa 1980. My next door neighbor, who was a year older, got me to roll up a character using the red-box Basic Rules, and DM'ed a solo adventure for me using module B2: Keep on the Borderlands. I remember finding the green slime room and the owlbear particularly exciting. :-)

3. What games are you into (besides Lord of the Rings, of course)?

I keep track of the latest developments in D&D, but haven't gamed in any system other than Decipher's LotR RPG for many years. Once I was out of college and married, I no longer had any friends who were into RPGs.



THE GAME YOU PLAY

4. Are you running/playing in a game right now? If so, what is its format (tabletop, Play-by-Post, etc.). Tell us about it and your character.

I'm playing in a few online, play-by-post games. The characters I like best are Paolan (a snobbish, effete minor noble) and Robin Pickthorn (a shy, good-hearted craftsman prone to bad luck).

I've been trying for awhile to start a new Pbp game set in TA 1999, in a small Eotheod town in the northern Anduin Vales. I'm excited about the setting and the plot ideas, but no one else seems to be. For now, I'm delaying the start of the game until at least a small group of players sign up to participate.

THE GAME ITSELF

5. How were you attracted to the game? Are/have you been involved with the creation or playtesting of the line?

I've always been interested in things related to *The Lord of the Rings*. I first read about Decipher's LotR RPG in 2004, found the message board, and started posting. I had no involvement in the creation or testing of the products...but I would have loved to proofread them!

6. Out of what is available officially from Decipher, what do you own? What is your favorite? Least favorite?

I own the Core Book, *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*, *The Fellowship of the Ring Sourcebook*, *Paths of the Wise*, and the Cities and Strongholds collection of maps. My favorite is the Core Book, simply because I refer to it most often (followed closely by *Paths of the Wise*). I haven't found the FotR Sourcebook to be very useful yet, so I suppose that's my least favorite.

7. What do you think is done the best? Worst?

I think the designers did an admirable job of capturing the "feel" of Tolkien's works. The game is not simply a swords-and-sorcery RPG dropped into a Middle-earth setting. I also like the CODA dice mechanics and the flexibility of the character creation rules.

There are many flaws in this RPG line, but the only one I feel is worth complaining about at this point is its discontinuation by Decipher. The game has suffered without the continued support of its publisher. Despite its many good qualities, it seems doomed to obscurity among gamers, especially after the LotR license is eventually picked up by a new company.

8. If there were to be only one more supplement released, what would you like it to be?

Anything that would draw fresh interest from the role-playing community – perhaps something based on *The Hobbit*, released concurrently with the eventual movie based on the book.



9. If there were to be a second edition for CODA, what would you scrap, change, and/or add?

I'd rework the combat system and eliminate the "mook rules". I'd streamline the skill list. I'd rewrite unbalanced edges and order abilities. I'd add pages and pages of rules-clarifying information and examples of the way things are supposed to work. And I'd add web features to facilitate online play. Fans of D&D are complaining that the designers are turning Fourth Edition D&D into an MMORPG, but a strong online element is going to be a key factor in attracting new gamers.

10. If you don't like using the CODA system, what system do you use?

I like certain aspects of d20, and there's a lot about the upcoming Fourth Edition D&D line that seems promising. But I prefer the bell curve effect of CODA's dice mechanics to the flat distribution of d20 dice results.

THE HALL OF FIRE

11. How long have you read the webzine (if you read it at all)? How did you hear about it?

I heard about *The Hall of Fire* on the Decipher message boards in late 2004. I started browsing the back issues and then began reading each new release.

12. What do you think of it? What's your favorite section(s)?

I love the magazine, but I think it's a dim reflection of what it could be if Decipher's LotR RPG had a wider following among role-playing gamers. Sometimes it feels as though *The Hall of Fire* is like a theatrical show that plays to an audience of about twenty. It would be great if more people could discover this RPG and get excited about it.

My favorite sections of the magazine are those that expand the options for characters and those that provide useful in-world details for Narrators. GandalfOfBorg actually wrote an article on the prices of ferry tolls once, and if that isn't dedication to the most minute needs of the Narrator, I don't know what is. :-)

13. Besides *The Hall of Fire*, where else do you find information and inspiration for your gaming in this system?

The original sources, mostly. I re-read *The Lord of the Rings* every few years, and this year I had the great pleasure of reading *The Children of Hurin*. Apart from that, I try to think about locations and cultures in Middle-earth that excite me, and plotlines that deal with human love, hardship, sorrow and heroism, 'cause I get all emo over those. :-)

THE SOURCE

14. What got you interested in Tolkien's writings?

I started reading *The Lord of the Rings* when I was ten years old. I don't remember who suggested it to me. I was incredibly distraught when Gandalf fell to his death in Moria, and I didn't see how the story could possibly go anywhere satisfying from there. Fortunately, I persevered and finished the trilogy, and before long I started to read it again.

15. What did you think of the movies?

I like FotR a lot, am mostly okay with TTT, and sort of cringe my way through RotK. For me, the movies haven't worn well over time – I like them a little bit less every time I watch them. But I'm glad they were made, and I really enjoy watching the DVD extras that show how all the lavish sets and costumes were made. A lot of passionate people put an incredible amount of work into making those films, and their achievement is outstanding.

ADVENTURING IN...

MICHEL DELVING by David "Issachar" D.

OVERVIEW

Michel Delving (which simply means "Large Excavation") is the largest town in the Shire at the end of the Third Age. Located in the west half of the Westfarthing, Michel Delving is commonly regarded as the capital of the Shire, and is home to several important persons and landmarks. Characters adventuring in the Blue Mountains, Arthedain, or the Shire itself might well pay a visit to this town.



GEOGRAPHY

The Westfarthing of the Shire is bisected from north to south by the White Downs, a series of chalk hills. The Great East Road runs through a gap in these hills hewn by Dwarves, and the town of Michel Delving was founded at this point along the road. Grass, scrub and heather cover the White Hills, but few trees or large bushes, so the hilltops command a long, unobstructed view of the lands around. The rough hills make for difficult and sometimes treacherous travel, and there are many sudden drops and small cliffs where the bare rock is exposed.

The hills, formed of porous chalk and limestone, retain a large quantity of ground water, and many wells have been dug around Michel Delving through the centuries. A small westward-flowing stream also runs beside the town, providing an ample supply of water.

In bygone years, the White Downs were extensively mined for flint deposits by Dwarves and later by Men. In the late Third Age, almost all the old flint mines are abandoned, their entrances overgrown with heather and long grass. One site near Michel Delving is still mined not only for flint, but for limestone to grind and mix into mortar or to use in glassmaking.

Three roads lead west, north, and east from Michel Delving. Travelers heading west for about thirty miles arrive in Greenholm, a small town nestled among the Far Downs, the line of hills that marks the outer boundary of the Shire's Westfarthing. The Far Downs run roughly from north to south, curving to the southeast and paralleling the White Downs in a concentric arc. Continuing west from Greenholm, the trail eventually leads to the steep Tower Hills, upon which stand three ancient Elven towers. In the Fourth Age, king Elessar (formerly known as Aragorn) granted the land between the Far Downs and the Tower Hills to the Shire-folk, and it became known as the Westmarch of the Shire.

An off-road trek north along the feet of the White Downs brings travelers to Little Delving, situated at another gap through the hills about twenty-five miles north of Michel Delving. From this village, dirt trails lead away northwest to Tighfield and Gamwich on the fringe of the Westfarthing, northeast to Nobottle, and southeast to Waymeet.



Heading east-northeast from Michel Delving brings travelers into the heart of the Shire. After about twenty-five miles the road passes through Waymeet (sometimes spelled Waymoot), a market town built at the point where the Great East Road meets two other roads: one from Little Delving to the north, and the other from the Tookland to the south. Continuing along the Great East Road from Waymeet, after another twenty miles one arrives in Bywater, only a short distance downstream from Hobbiton.



HISTORY

The land known to Hobbits as the Shire was originally settled by Men in the First and Second Ages, first by Northmen and Dunlendings, and later by Dunedain colonists from Numenor. Dwarves from the Blue Mountains also frequented the area, some living and working in the chalk hills where Michel Delving stands today. After the North Kingdom of Arnor was founded at the end of the Second Age, the lands were ruled continuously by kings of the Dunedain until the year TA 1974, when the Witch-king of Angmar overthrew the Dunedain capital of Fornost.

Hobbits began to migrate westward from the Anduin Vales in the late 16th century of the Third Age, and in the year TA 1601 they obtained a grant from king Argeleb II to settle the region that became known as the Shire. For this reason, TA 1601 is Year 1 in the Shire-reckoning. At the time of the king's grant, Hobbits had already immigrated to Michel Delving, where they lived together with Men and a few Dwarves.

The Great Plague struck Arnor and the Shire within two generations of its colonization by Hobbits, and although many lives were lost, the Shire-Hobbits recovered and began to thrive once again. The kingdom of Men was in decline, however, and the Shire-Hobbits gradually became more insular and concerned with their own affairs. When the armies of Angmar overthrew the Dunedain at Fornost, the Shire-folk were in great danger and were only saved by the arrival of an army from Gondor who, with the aid of Elvish allies, defeated the Witch-king's army and destroyed the threat of Angmar once and for all. Of these great deeds the Shire-Hobbits probably knew little, and by the end of the Third Age such events belonged to the remote past, over a thousand years before.

The former kingdoms of Men surrounding the Shire became a desolate place in the centuries after Angmar's defeat. The Shire-Hobbits got occasional news from traveling Dwarves and Men, but did not concern themselves much with doings outside their lands. And within the Shire, things changed very little over the latter half of the Third Age.

LIFE IN MICHEL DELVING

Michel Delving has been inhabited by Dwarves, Men, and Hobbits in succession over the years since the Second Age. In the latter half of the Third Age, it is populated entirely by Hobbits, primarily of the Fallohide and Harfoot clans. Because of their town's location on the Great East Road, the Hobbits of Michel Delving see more than the usual number of travelers, especially Dwarves from the Blue Mountains and Men from the north, either furriers and hunters or the occasional Dunedan Ranger.

Like Hobbits elsewhere in the Shire, most residents of Michel Delving and its environs are farmers or shepherds. Other important trades are represented as well, including blacksmithing, brewing, candlemaking, carpentry, glassblowing, leatherworking, thatching, and woodcutting. The windblown tops of the White Downs used to feature several windmills, but at the end of the Third Age only one has been maintained in a functional state. This mill, only a thirty minute walk from the middle of town, is a frequent destination for Hobbits from nearby villages, who bring wheat- and barley-laden wagons to Michel Delving to convert the raw grains into flour.

The Mayor of Michel Delving is the most important elected official in the Shire and is commonly regarded as the Mayor of the Shire itself. Elections for the office of Mayor are held every seven years during the Free Fair. The Mayor's duties include running the postal service and dealing with issues of law enforcement, generally through his Shirriffs. Primarily, however, the Mayor is required to preside over feasts and festivals. Will Whitfoot, a distinguished Hobbit who served many terms as Mayor, performed these latter duties with great relish and for a time was considered to be the fattest Hobbit in the Shire.

POINTS OF INTEREST

THE TOWN HOLE

As the "capital" of the Shire, Michel Delving is home to the Town Hole, where the Mayor oversees official Shire business. The Hole was originally delved by Dwarves, but after the Hobbits settled the town they enlarged and refurbished the place. In TA 3016, the ceiling of the Hole partially collapsed while Mayor Will Whitfoot was inside. He emerged with his rotund body covered in white chalky dust, which prompted waggish onlookers to observe that he looked like a big flour dumpling. The nickname "Old Flourdumpling" stuck with Mayor Whitfoot for the rest of his life.

In addition to housing the Mayor's office, the Town Hole doubles as the headquarters of the Messenger Service, which carries mail all over the Shire. A volunteer corps of couriers make their regular rounds weekly through the four Farthings, and there are also pony riders who deliver mail of special urgency; this is known as the "Quick Post".

THE MATHOM-HOUSE

An old but sturdy wooden structure protected by locked gates and deadbolts on the doors, the Mathom-house contains the Shire's largest collection of curiosities. Bilbo Baggins' *mithril* shirt and the sword Sting were on display here for years, until Bilbo retrieved them some time prior to his secret departure for Rivendell on his eleventy-first birthday.



Visitors to the Mathom-house are asked to donate a penny at the door to help pay for the building's upkeep; other funding comes from well-to-do Hobbit patrons. One or two volunteer guides, usually older Hobbits, are on hand to show visitors around during the day.

The Mathom-house is a two-storey building, unusual for Hobbit structures, and its floorplan is a gloriously jumbled series of tiny halls connecting stuffy, dusty rooms with paneled walls. There is a basement level as well, which is piled high with boxes of items not currently on display.

In addition to its antiques, the Mathom-house contains books and manuscripts of interest to scholars of Shire-history and, to a lesser extent, the larger history of Arnor.

THE LOCKHOLES

Old Dwarf-dug caves long ago converted for use as prison cells by the Hobbit settlers. The Lockholes are seldom needed except as a place to bring disorderly Hobbits who have had a bit too much to drink at the inn. On the rare occasions when the Hobbit Shirriffs apprehend troublemaking Men within Shire bounds, they bring the captives here.

When Saruman and his ruffians briefly took over the Shire at the end of the Third Age, the Lockholes were used to imprison Hobbits who resisted the new order. These prisoners included Mayor Will Whitfoot, Lobelia Sackville-Baggins, and Fredegar "Fatty" Bolger.

THE FAIRGROUNDS

A short walk east from the edge of town, the fairgrounds lie on the gently curving top of a low grassy hill. Here many local festivals are held, especially during the three-day midsummer holiday that the Hobbits call Lithe. Once every seven years during Lithe, the Free Fair is held here. On this occasion Hobbits come from all over the Shire to buy and sell their goods, to eat, drink and dance, and to elect the next Mayor of Michel Delving. The Fairgrounds are also used to hold annual Shire-moots, ostensibly for discussing matters of business and government, but generally amounting to little more than social gatherings.

THE GOLF GREENS

Ever since Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took defeated a company of marauding Orcs by knocking the head of the chief Orc Golfimbul off his shoulders and down a rabbit hole, the game of "Golf" has been a popular pastime among Hobbits of the leisure class. No town in the Shire has a better golfing green than Michel Delving, at least according to its resident golf-players. Grass in the expansive meadow is kept short by allowing flocks of sheep and goats to graze there on days when no golf games are scheduled.

THE QUARRY

About a mile south of Michel Delving lies the only quarry of the many dug here by Dwarves that still remains in use in the latter part of the Third Age. The quarry supplies all the limestone, chalk and other stone that the Hobbits of Michel Delving require to keep their homes and roads in good repair. A mine shaft is dug

into the hills on one side of the quarry; this shaft descends gradually for about four hundred feet and still yields flint from a deposit discovered by Dwarven miners long ago.

Young Hobbits regard the mine as dangerous and exciting, and will occasionally venture inside after dark on a dare. The mine is perfectly safe, of course, although other abandoned mine shafts elsewhere in the hills around Michel Delving have become the lairs of wild animals or refuges for ruffians and desperate Men.

THE WINDMILL

This, the only functional windmill remaining on the White Downs, is maintained and operated by the Noakes family at the time of the War of the Ring. Milo Noakes and his eldest son are gregarious Hobbits who enjoy the fairly steady stream of company provided by Hobbits from neighboring farms and villages, bringing grain to the mill to grind into flour. Milo happily shares any and all news and rumours that come his way and is a good source of local information.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

RUFFIANS ON THE DOWNS

While traveling near Michel Delving, the party is accosted by three Hobbit Shirriffs armed with bows. The Shirriffs demand that the PC's lay down their arms and announce their identities and intentions. The Shirriffs are looking for a small group of ruffians reported to be stealing from local farmers and shepherds. One Hobbit shepherd who tried to defend his flock was badly beaten and left for dead on the hilltop.

If the PC's can convince the Shirriffs that they are not the troublemakers, they might decide to assist the Hobbit lawmen in locating and apprehending the real criminals. The ruffians have taken an abandoned Dwarf-mine a few miles from Michel Delving as their hideout, and carry out a raid on a farm or house every three or four days.

THEFT FROM THE MATHOM-HOUSE

While the PC's are staying in Michel Delving, an important heirloom is stolen from the Mathom-house: a ring given by King Argeleb of Arthedain to Marcho Fallohide in token of the agreement granting the Hobbits rights to settle the lands that became known as the Shire. The ring is silver, set with a blue stone, and bears an inscription in Sindarin letters that reads "Breathe the free air under the noon sky, and sing."

Suspicion immediately falls upon all strangers in Michel Delving, including the PC's. After being questioned by a Shirriff, they are instructed not to leave the town until the Mayor returns to handle matters. The two Hobbits on duty at the Mathom-house report on all the visitors they can recall seeing on the day of the theft, but unfortunately there is a small local festival going on and more than a dozen people were in the Mathom-house at various times that day.

The PC's can help solve the case themselves if they wish, by looking for clues in the Mathom-house and talking to the people who were there that day. If the stolen ring is recovered with their assistance, the Mayor will certainly reward them.

MISSING POST-RUNNER

One of the mail carriers has gone missing, being more than three days overdue to report back to the Town Hole at Michel Delving. His last route took him north toward Little Delving along the small footpath at the base of the White Downs. Some fear that the runner might have fallen prey to wild animals or bandits.

The Shirriffs are all out on patrol at the present, and the Mayor of Michel Delving would be most appreciative if the sturdy-looking group of PC's would follow the trail of the missing post-runner and bring him back safely if possible.



ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

WILL WHITFOOT by David "Issachar" D.

RACE: Hobbit (Fallohide)

RACIAL ATTRIBUTES: Six Meals a Day, Small Folk, Soft-footed, Sure at the Mark, Tough as Old Tree-roots

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

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

ORDERS: Noble **ADVANCEMENTS:** 1

ORDER ABILITIES: Bon Vivant (HOF 33:12)

SKILLS: Craft: Cooking +2, Debate (Negotiate) +6, Inquire (Converse) +7, Inspire +5, Language: Westron +6, Lore/Group: Shire-Hobbits (Michel Delving) +6, Lore/History: Shire (Michel Delving) +3, Lore/Race: Hobbits (Michel Delving) +4, Lore/Realm: The Shire (Michel Delving) +5, Observe (Hear) +4, Perform (Tell Stories) +2, Persuade (Oratory) +7, Stealth (Sneak) +1

EDGES: Command 1, Eloquent, Friends 1 (Westfarthing), Hoard 1, Rank 1, Resolute

FLAWS: Duty (Mayoral duties), Wide of Girth x3 (HOF 24:6)

SIZE: Small

MOVEMENT: 3

DEFENCE: 10

HEALTH: 7

COURAGE: 3

RENOUN: 1

GEAR: Fine tailored clothes, pipe, pouch of pipeweed, money pouch with 20 copper pennies and 3 silver pennies

DESCRIPTION

A genial and very popular fellow, Will Whitfoot served multiple terms as the Mayor of Michel Delving. He traveled throughout the Shire frequently to preside over various social events and, of course, to enjoy plenty of food and drink. Mayor Whitfoot was considered by some to be the fattest Hobbit in the Shire.

Will proved that his corpulent body held a courageous heart when he stood up to the ruffians under Saruman's command at the end of the War of the Ring. He was imprisoned in the Lockholes for months and was weak and rather sickly when he was freed at last, but later he recovered his health and went on to serve another seven-year term as Mayor before resigning and being succeeded as Mayor by Samwise Gamgee.



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WHAT'S OUT THERE

This is a list of Web sites along with Decipher's official Web sites. We have found they supply useful *Lord of the Rings* game information.

<p>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 ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARDA http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/default.htm FAN MODULES FOR MIDDLE-EARTH http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules SCOTT'S RPG CENTRAL http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/ CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH http://roleplay.avioc.org/index.htm MERPCOM http://www.merp.com OTHER MINDS MAGAZINE http://www.othermindsmagazine.com</p>	<p>THE MAD IRISHMAN http://www.mad-irishman.net THE LAST ALLIANCE http://thelastalliance.com RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rpgtools/ 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.COM http://www.theonering.com/ THE ONE RING.NET http://www.theonering.net/</p>
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Interested in submitting...

- A mini or side adventure?
- New creatures, or fell beasts?
- New Orders or Elite Orders?
- Racial / Order packages?
- NPC's?
- Weapons / equipment / 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 must be less than 100 words and any graphic to go with it must be no more than 1' x 1'.